

## Open Space and Recreation Strategy: OBRA submission (draft)

### 1. Overall direction, mission & principles

Te Whai Oranga Pōneke, the Open Space and Recreation Strategy, provides strategic direction for how the Council will manage our public open space, recreation facilities, and recreation programmes and services.

- Do you support or oppose the overall direction of the strategy? **Strongly support**

The mission sets out our aspirations for Wellington's public open space and recreation network: "To create a flourishing network of parks and recreation opportunities, interwoven into everyday life, that supports Wellingtonians to live well and connect to nature and each other".

- Do you support or oppose the strategy's overall mission? **Strongly support**

The draft Strategy has five principles to guide the Council's decisions about managing its public open space and recreation.

- Do you support or oppose the following draft Strategy's guiding principles?

#### Guiding Principle

**Tiakitanga:** We recognise our intrinsic responsibility as individuals, as the Council, and as a community, to be guardians and stewards of all our resources. We nurture and manage our open space and recreation resources to be environmentally and economically sustainable for all generations to come. **Strongly support**

**Wairuatanga:** We recognise the importance of nurturing a spiritual connection of all things living by preserving the mana and mauri (life force) of the environment and supporting the natural balance of Te Taiao. There is an unyielding spiritual connection between people and their environments. People are part of the environment. **Strongly support**

**Whanaungatanga:** We recognise that relationships and social connections are central to our wellbeing, our sense of belonging and social cohesion. We foster relationships throughout our recreation and open space communities, partnering to share our knowledge, backgrounds, and resources, and strengthening our sense of community. **Strongly support**

**Manaakitanga:** We show respect, generosity and care for others and the environment. We are good hosts throughout our open spaces and recreation, seeking to be just, honest, and equitable, and showing respect, humility and kindness. **Strongly support**

**Parekareka:** We recognise how important it is to have fun, play and enjoy ourselves. Recreation and open spaces will help people to thrive by supporting balanced, fun, and joyful lifestyles. **Strongly support**

Please provide any comments you have on the overall strategic direction, mission, or principles.

The Ōwhiro Bay Residents Association (OBRA) supports the direction and mission of the Te Whai Oranga Pōneke – Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy.

The Ōwhiro Bay catchment and wider community is home to some of Pōneke's special open spaces, such as Te Kopahou Reserve, Taputeranga Marine Reserve, and Ōwhiro Stream, one of Wellington's only remaining daylighted streams. Other open spaces and recreation areas in the area include Tawatawa and Oku Street Reserves, Pariwhero (Red Rocks), Happy Valley Park, Mokai Kainga (Ōwhiro Bay community gardens) and the Ōwhiro Bay playground. We also have many berms and verges around the Ōwhiro Bay area, including the Ōwhiro Bay Parade berm/community lawn. Moreover, we are increasingly part of the 'halo effect' of birds expanding beyond Zealandia and the Capital Kiwi project is happening in Te Kopahou Reserve.

While we support all the guiding principles of the draft strategy, we especially support a focus on **tiakitanga**. OBRA takes our responsibility to be kaitiaki of our local open spaces seriously. We are especially motivated to ensure that core challenges for open spaces in the area, such as the landfill pollution, stormwater and wastewater management and climate change adaptation are addressed by actions in the draft strategy.

We want to tautoko Wellington City Council - particularly the Parks team - for their contributions to protecting and improving our open spaces. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you to progress the actions in this strategy.

## 2.Strategic focuses

The strategy has five strategic focuses that will direct our open space and recreation planning, management, and investment over the next 10 years. The following section asks question about the five strategic focuses.

**Strategic focus 01 Integrated** is about ensuring we have well-distributed, multifunctional, and integrated spaces, places and programmes that respond to Wellington's current and future needs. This strategic focus is a key response to how we will support our growing and changing city, where residential development is intensifying, and where people will be less reliant on cars.

To get there, we are proposing four approaches:

- 1.1 Optimise open spaces and facilities to be multi-functional. By designing our parks and facilities to support varied and flexible use throughout the day (and night) we can provide better for changing needs and offer people more choice close to where they live.
- 1.2 Provide well-distributed and connected recreation opportunities. We want everyone to have choices of activities close to where they live.
- 1.3 Grow the open space network. People need to have easy access to green open space for a good quality of life. As our population grows and more people live in high density development with little private outdoor space, we will need to provide more parks to ensure everyone is within a 10-minute walking distance of a park and those living in high intensification areas are within a 5-minute walk of a park.
- 1.4 Share our quieter streets as recreation and nature spaces. Streets are important places of public life where both community and environmental wellbeing can be enhanced through design. We will reshape our streets where possible to provide for social and recreational use and increase greening such as rain gardens and street trees.

Do you support strategic focus 1: **Strongly support**

Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose this strategic focus.

OBRA supports the 'integrated' strategic focus, as we recognise the importance of multi-functional open spaces that can be enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

Regarding **approach 1.1**: We want to raise the importance of ensuring that various parties comply with expectations when using these public spaces. Specifically:

- There is an increase of long-term 'freedom camping' at the Ōwhiro Bay Parade car park/entrance to Te Kopahau reserve.
- There are also increasingly large groups of people setting up their own temporary infrastructure (e.g. toilets) to film or host events in the carpark and surrounding Reserve areas. While we welcome such groups, we hope that the Council emphasises the importance of being good visitors and complying with Council regulations.

- There is an ongoing problem with commercial vehicles parking in the carpark adjacent to Happy Valley Park and fly-tipping (although we are already working with WCC to address this).

Regarding **approach 1.4**: We have several berms and verges across the Ōwhiro Bay area that could be better utilised for recreation and nature purposes, but which are often nothing but parking bays for visiting cars. We support the draft plan's focus on using these, including to create safe spaces for children and their whānau to explore, play and be active. We note the importance of using appropriate traffic-calming measures to increase safety. This is particularly relevant in Ōwhiro Bay, as large commercial vehicles travel to and from the landfills using central roads. Additionally, traffic to and from Te Kopahou Reserve on weekends and holidays is heavy and impacts on the environment and pedestrian use of the space.

**Strategic focus 02 Inclusive** is about providing inclusive, equitable, and accessible spaces, places and programmes that make everyone feel inclusive safe and welcome. It recognises that not all people and communities have an equitable experience of parks, open space and recreation, and that supporting everyone to feel welcome and that they belong is important. In order to get there, we are proposing four approaches

2.1. Drive universal design. We will apply universal design principles in all our projects to make access to open spaces, recreation facilities and programmes available to as many people as possible.

2.2. Take an equity approach to reducing barriers to active recreation and sport. Some Wellingtonians are missing out on the health and wellbeing benefits of active recreation because they encounter barriers to participation. We will prioritise reducing these barriers where participation levels are low, such as amongst disabled people, girls and young women, Pacific and Asian communities, and in high deprivation areas.

2.3. Take an equity approach to increasing greening. Trees and vegetation in urban environments provide important ecological services and benefit people's health and wellbeing by providing everyday contact with nature. However, there are inequities in the distribution of greening in Wellington, with lower socio-economic areas tending to be less green. We will improve greening in these areas, using new techniques where necessary to improve plant survival rates.

2.4. Empower our diverse communities to feel safe and comfortable using our spaces, places and programmes. We will support inclusivity in numerous ways, including: crime prevention design of our public spaces, events and programmes designed to meet specific needs, extend play opportunities beyond playgrounds into the city environment, foster a sense of belonging and identity through place-based art and story-telling, support trans-inclusive sport, provide whanau-friendly places, provide public toilets in all recreation centres, community parks and destination parks.

Do you support strategic focus 2: **Strongly support**

Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose this strategic focus.

OBRA supports the 'inclusive' strategic focus. Our Ōwhiro Bay community is diverse and we want to ensure more people (especially those who are currently underserved) can enjoy our special open spaces and recreation areas.

Regarding **approach 2.1**: We recognise that Wellington streets are often narrow, and it is difficult to retrofit infrastructure using universal design principles. However, there are several areas in the Ōwhiro Bay area where footpaths are narrow, stop abruptly, or have cars parked on them.

Combined with frequent car traffic, this can make it difficult for people with mobility issues or small children to easily navigate the area.

Regarding **approach 2.3**: We support the equity-focused approach to re-greening given the current low tree coverage in our area and the significant opportunity for more coastal vegetation (although we welcome work that has already started on this, such as in Tawatawa and Oku St reserves). The pollution caused by the landfills is an ongoing impediment to the wider health of our local ecosystems and therefore, the ability of native bush to regenerate properly. We discuss the challenge presented by the landfills more in strategic focus 3.

**Strategic focus 03 Regenerating and resilient** is about lifting the mana and mauri of our environment to support the long-term resilience and regeneration of our city. This focus recognises that the open space network contains much of our remaining natural habitats and is critical to supporting the natural environment to regenerate. At the same time our permeable open spaces act like sponges and collect up excess rainwater. They will play a critical part in how our city will adapt to climate change and support the resilience of our city.

To get there, we are proposing five approaches:

3.1 Embed a ki uta ki tai (from the mountains to the sea) approach in caring for the environment. Recognising the inter-connectedness of the environment, we will think about the health of whole catchments as we weave biodiversity through our public open spaces in partnership with mana whenua as kaitiaki.

3.2 Restore the mauri of our waterways. We will take care of our streams. Water sensitive urban design will be implemented across our public open spaces and new facilities, to help store and filter rainwater, avoid polluting our streams, and see if we can restore natural drainage systems.

3.3 Design facilities and infrastructure to minimise environmental impact. Future recreation facilities and infrastructure will be designed to minimise environmental damage, improve their longevity and resilience, and harmonise with the natural environment wherever possible.

3.4 Reduce our carbon footprint. Wellington is aiming to be a carbon-zero city by 2050. We will support this goal by reducing our operational carbon emissions (e.g. converting from gas to renewable energy to heat our swimming pools) and encouraging parks and facility users to be less car-dependent. We will do this by providing good quality parks close to where people live, and linking the parks network with active and public transport options, and promoting behaviour change e.g. car pooling to attend sports activities.

3.5 Adapt to a changing climate. Our parks and recreation facilities will be impacted by the effects of climate change, so we need to plan ahead. Adaptation is likely to include protecting what we've got (e.g. damaged track network), relocating threatened assets (e.g. risks from sea level rise), and acquiring more open space through managed retreat of at-risk residential development. There will be opportunities and a need to expand some parts of our open space network to provide an important role in protecting other parts of the city from flooding.

Do you support strategic focus 3: **Strongly support**

Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose this strategic focus.

The 'regenerating and resilient' strategic focus is of paramount importance to OBRA, given that many of Ōwhiro Bay's open spaces are protected natural habitats; part of the outer green belt and including more than one Significant Natural Area. Currently, these taonga are being negatively

impacted by pollution from the landfill, wastewater issues, and problems caused by climate change.

Regarding **approaches 3.1 and 3.2**: We strongly support the 'ki uta ki tai' holistic approach to the environment and the emphasis on restoring the mauri of our waterways. Key points to note:

- Our catchment collective is *Ōwhiro Mai Uta ki Tai: Ōwhiro from the Mountain to the Sea*. The collective focuses on addressing the pollution affecting the stream.
- Addressing the three landfills and related consent/compliance issues is essential if we are to restore the local environment and waterways. Pollution, both from the landfill itself, and toxic waste falling off trucks and flying into surrounding areas, affects every aspect of our open spaces and recreation areas. As well as being a major threat to the cleanliness of stormwater, landfill pollution is also a threat to regenerating bush, native bird and invertebrate life and to pleasant recreational use in the surrounding area.
- The same applies to the longstanding wastewater issues affecting the stream and therefore the water quality at Ōwhiro Bay.
- We have many local volunteer groups (e.g. Stream Team, Ōwhiro Bay Environment Group, Tawatawa, Manawa Karioi teams) who would appreciate additional support with weeding, planting and trapping.

Regarding **approach 3.4**: We agree with the need to create a less car dependent open space network. Regular, well-connected and affordable public transport to Ōwhiro Bay will ensure that people can visit the area without requiring use of the limited parking facilities. If implemented as part of wider Wellington mode shift and vehicle kilometre travelled (VKT) reduction plans, this could reduce car traffic and increase perceived safety in the area, increasing use of the spaces. Strong leadership will be needed to deliver on essential public and active transport infrastructure (e.g. separated cycleways and light rail), so we hope that this strategy reinforces the co-benefits of wider transport planning for our open space and recreation network.

Regarding **approach 3.5**: We recognise the need to address climate change through a wider climate change adaptation plan. Given that parts of Ōwhiro Bay are highly vulnerable to issues like sea level rise and extreme weather events, we want to ensure that we are involved in relevant conversations about intended actions.

**Strategic focus 04 Re-indigenising** is about a future where, Te ao Maori, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and matauranga Maori are reflected in the decision making, management, activities and the visual presence of our places, spaces, and programmes. At the core of this focus is about the visibility and the recognition of mana whenua and tangata whenua. In order to get there, we are proposing five approaches

4.1 Raise the visibility of Te ao Maori narratives, identities, histories, and landmarks. We will work with mana whenua to tell and recognise their stories and histories in the design and interpretation of our open spaces and recreation facilities, for example in Maori heritage trails and te reo in place names and signage.

4.2 Normalise and incorporate traditional Maori games and initiatives into our spaces, places, and programmes. We will provide places and opportunities to learn and play traditional Maori sports and games, such as nga mahi a réhia and taonga takaro, so they become an everyday recreational activity in Wellington

4.3 Support traditional customary practices in our spaces, places, and programmes. This support will include providing places to express manaakitanga and whanaungatanga,

planting species used in the rongoa (traditional medicine) and providing opportunities to learn about mahinga kai (food and natural resources).

4.4 Support iwi as kaitiaki in their rohe. We will partner as equals with mana whenua in managing, restoring, and protecting te taiao (natural environment) and support mana whenua and Maori-led initiatives to restore its mauri ora.

4.5 Build matauranga capability across our open space and recreation network. We will improve our skills and understanding of te reo and matauranga Maori, support employment of rangitahi in the parks and recreation sector and improve our capability to support partnership models of working with mana whenua, such as in co-governance, co-management and co-design.

Do you support strategic focus 4? **Strongly support**

Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose this strategic focus.

We support the strategic focus of 're-indigenising'. In particular, we support **approaches 4.4 and 4.5**, partnering with mana whenua as kaitiaki and working together to restore the environment and building capability to work together.

Regarding approach 4.1, we see lots of opportunities to work with iwi and Māori to raise visibility of mātauranga Māori and the history of the Ōwhiro Bay region. For example, OBRA supported our community to celebrate Matariki in 2022 with several community events, including a lecture on the pre-colonial history of the area with Holden Hohaia. We hope to build on this work for Matariki 2023. We are also discussing the possibility of installing signs about pre-colonial use of the area by mana whenua if we can work in partnership with mana whenua to do this appropriately.

**Strategic focus 05 Diverse** is about ensuring a future where diverse recreation experiences across our places, spaces, and programmes equitably support our communities' physical, social, and restorative needs. This focus recognises that our community is diverse, they correspondingly have diverse interests. In order to support their different recreation needs equitably, we should support a variety of different experiences. Supporting recreation opportunities for everyone.

To get there, we are proposing five approaches:

5.1 Take an equity approach to supporting diverse recreation and sporting activities. Some sports of declining popularity are more supported due to historic arrangements than emerging sports that are growing in popularity. To respond more fairly to changing recreational trends and competing demands on facilities, we will update our leases policy, fees, grants, funding, and investment frameworks to be more equitable.

5.2 Support diverse recreation clubs and organisations to thrive. Diversity of recreation means more choice for Wellingtonians to get active and involved. However, many clubs and community organisations are struggling to attract enough volunteers and to cover costs. We will help them thrive by: encouraging facility-sharing; replacing old, under-used buildings with community hubs designed for multi-functional use; making our funding processes easier; and investigating administration training opportunities for volunteers.

5.3 Ensure diverse opportunities to connect with nature. Contact with nature enriches our lives and supports our wellbeing. Therefore, we will ensure that Wellingtonians are able to experience the diversity of nature in many ways by greening the streets and parks of our everyday environments, making our nature reserves more accessible, and promoting nature play.

5.4 Provide world-class experiences. We will support Wellington's economy by promoting the city's unique identity through the varied experiences and cultural interest our public open spaces offer. Our destination parks will be accessible for all and capable of supporting international, national, and regional events with high visitor numbers, such as sports tournaments and cultural festivals. We will continue to support the city's reputation as a walking and mountain-biking destination.

5.5 Embrace and accept our furiously windy and wild city. Wellington is one of the windiest cities in the world. We propose to work with the wind, celebrating it as a fun feature and invigorating point of difference, while also providing and publicising sheltered places so people have a choice of recreational experiences on windy days.

Do you support strategic focus 5: **Strongly support**

Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose this strategic focus.

We support the 'diverse' strategic focus but have no further specific comments.

Thinking now specifically about the actions proposed in the strategy - do you have any feedback regarding any proposed actions or any ideas of actions that we should include/prioritise?

We have comments regarding the following proposed actions:

- **P4 and P13:** Regarding any plans that affect our community (i.e. the proposed ocean recreation and facility plan, wider coastal reserve management plans, and any climate change adaptation plans) we want to note our desire to partner with WCC closely. We wish to emphasise the principle of doing "nothing about us, without us".
- We support the actions referencing partnering with community groups (i.e. **C2, C3, C6 and C7**). Additionally, WCC should invest in resourcing communities to participate in water management. This includes stormwater and wastewater, as both are crucial to the future health of our waterways, land, and coastal marine environment.
- **P12:** Regarding community gardens, we support the proposal to support community gardens and remove barriers to both traditional community gardening (such as our local garden Mokai Kainga) and other more innovative/indigenous approaches to garden access (e.g. community composting, berm and verge orchards and mini gardens, integrating community gardens into public parks, rongoā gardens etc).

We have also identified a range of actions WCC should consider as part of delivering on the aims of this strategy, relating to strategic focuses (SF) 1 – 3:

- Monitor and enforce compliance with rules for open spaces and recreation areas (SF 1).
- Prioritise investment in improving inclusive pedestrian access and progressing with plans to increase active and public transport modes around popular open spaces and recreation areas (SF2).
- Monitor and enforce compliance with rules for all private landfills (SF3).
- Support and resource communities to develop Catchment Management Plans in partnership with Wellington Water and other agencies (SF3).
- Enable information sharing across catchments and communities by developing a 'digital toolkit' and resources to help communities with vision and planning processes (SF3).
- Provide strong technical support from Wellington Water, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Wellington City Council for any plans developed by community. This signals a cultural shift towards effective multi-party collaboration (SF3).

- Provide adequate resource to deliver a digital platform that aggregates water data catchment by catchment. This idea was first promoted at the time of the Mayoral Taskforce. Wellington Water ran a modest but successful pilot but it requires adequate investment to deliver on its potential to provide Wellingtonians with the ability to be informed and active participants in their waterways and coastal marine environment (SF3).
- Action some of the 48 recommendations of the Mayoral Taskforce on Three Waters and the 111 recommendations of the Whanganui-a-Tara Whaitua report (SF3).
- Increase monitoring of waterways and have a far more rigorous reporting regime to disseminate to communities (SF3).
- Formally support Wellington Water to fund community catchment and regional panels led by communities with strong terms of reference and adequate funding, and link to WCC and the Advisory Committee (mana whenua and the asset owners) (SF3).
- Support the launch of the Wellington Catchments Collective - Te Hononga ki Te Upoko. This is a new important intermediary organisation that provides an effective channel for contact and joint action with WCC (SF3).
- Firmly commit to the upcoming extension of the landfill being the last (SF3).
- Recognise the serious soil stability issues, seismic risks and flooding risks that exist in the Ōwhiro catchment and ensure future development is responsibly managed (SF3).

Please provide any further comments you have on the Draft Strategy, including aspects we haven't specifically asked about. Is anything missing? Any other ideas?

[No comment]