

Wellington City Council joint revised Long Term Plan and Annual Plan submission

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Submitter details:

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Submission:

Introduction

1. Recreation Aotearoa is a registered charity and the organisation responsible for providing leadership, advocacy, and professional development opportunities for those involved in the broader recreation sector. We work at an agency, industry and professional level to build capability, develop partnerships, and equip individuals and organisations with the skills they need to deliver high quality recreation experiences that engage participants.
2. Recreation Aotearoa's membership includes recreation policy makers, territorial local authorities, voluntary organisations, regional sports trusts, consultants, outdoor recreation organisations, and others involved in the delivery of recreation throughout New Zealand.
3. Our mission is enhancing wellbeing through recreation.

General Comments

4. Recreation Aotearoa welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Wellington City Council's Draft Long-Term Plan (LTP) Amendment and the 2025/26 Annual Plan Consultation Document. As the professional and industry association representing over 5,000 members dedicated to enhancing wellbeing through recreation, we recognise the significant role Wellington City Council plays in providing opportunities for physical activity and fostering healthy, thriving communities.
5. We acknowledge the information presented in the consultation document regarding the financial challenges facing the Council, including under-insurance risks and the need for investment diversification. We understand the current economic climate necessitates careful consideration and, at times, difficult decisions to ensure the city's financial sustainability. However, we strongly believe that investment in play, active recreation, and sport (PARS) is not discretionary spending but a crucial investment in the long-term wellbeing, health, social connectedness, and economic prosperity of Wellingtonians.
6. Echoing our submission on the previous Long-Term Plan, Recreation Aotearoa reiterates the vital value proposition of investment in active

recreation. Research consistently demonstrates a significant social return on investment in PARS, with each dollar allocated yielding substantial benefits to society. These benefits extend to improved physical and mental health, stronger social connections, enhanced community identity, and a more resilient and productive society.

7. Drawing upon our previous submission we must again emphasise the critical importance of accessibility and inclusion in all recreational developments and service provisions in Wellington. With a significant portion of Wellington's population living with disabilities, it is imperative that the Council prioritises initiatives that ensure equitable access to recreational places, spaces, and opportunities for everyone, regardless of age, fitness level, ability, or socio-economic background.
8. We urge the Council to ensure that any proposed capital programme changes do not negatively impact the accessibility features of existing or planned recreational facilities. Furthermore, we encourage Wellington City Council to increase investment for the provision of more accessible play equipment across your network of playgrounds, as previously recommended. Genuine consultation and collaboration with people with disabilities and their whānau throughout the design, development, and upgrades of recreation spaces remains essential.
9. Recreation Aotearoa strongly supports the recognition of the importance of urban green spaces, as highlighted in our previous LTP submission and by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. Urban green spaces play a vital role in temperature regulation, stormwater management, air filtration, carbon sequestration, habitat provision, and, crucially, the health and wellbeing of the city's population. We reiterate our call for a considered, regionally appropriate, and well-funded programme of tree planting in public spaces, particularly in areas adjacent to streets and footpaths where much physical activity takes place. We trust that the proposed LTP amendment and Annual Plan will continue to prioritise and enhance Wellington's green network.

Specific comments

10. Recreation Aotearoa wishes to express its strong opposition to any reduction in funding for active transport projects, including the Paneke Pōneke bike network plan and City Streets projects. As we stated in our previous submission, investment in active transport infrastructure achieves the dual symbiotic benefit of easing traffic congestion and making it easier for residents to integrate healthy recreational activities,

such as walking and cycling, into their daily lives. We note the high levels of participation in non-competitive activities like walking and cycling in the Wellington region.

11. The proposal to rephase and rescale the Paneke Pōneke bike network plan over a 20-year timeframe is of significant concern. While we understand the need for financial prudence, deferring the completion of the strategic bike network will hinder the ability of Wellingtonians to choose active modes of transport and will negatively impact the achievement of a dynamic, sustainable, and vibrant city envisioned by the Council. We strongly urge the Council to reconsider this extended timeframe and prioritise the timely delivery of the planned cycle network. Similarly, any rescope of City Streets projects that reduces provisions for walking and cycling would be detrimental to promoting active recreation and sustainable transport options.
12. Recreation Aotearoa remains concerned about any potential for deferred renewal spending and upgrades of playgrounds and other essential recreation infrastructure. As noted in our previous submission, with Wellington's growing and changing population, play and active recreation infrastructure are under increasing pressure and must be maintained and enhanced to meet community needs. We urge the Council to ensure that planned investments in playgrounds, walkways, connecting green spaces, and public toilets are implemented as planned and are not subject to significant deferrals or reductions as part of the LTP amendment.
13. We note the proposed changes to various capital projects outlined in Appendix 1. We request further clarity on how these changes will specifically impact active recreation opportunities and facilities across the city. We support proposals that enhance community outcomes, such as the potential landscaping of the Khallandah Pool site into a new park entrance if the current facility is underutilised. However, we caution against the removal of funding for projects that directly contribute to active recreation without clear evidence that community needs will still be adequately met.
14. Regarding the proposal for the Mātai Moana Reserve, Recreation Aotearoa supports the preferred option of the Council partnering with Taranaki Whānui on the management of this culturally and ecologically significant area. We believe that joint management has the potential to protect and restore the reserve's unique values while creating opportunities for public use and passive recreation benefits for future

generations, aligning with the principles of Te Whai Oranga. The proposed operational funding is a positive step towards realising this potential.

15. While we acknowledge the need for the Council to review its fees and user charges, Recreation Aotearoa urges the Council to consider the potential impact of any increases on participation in active recreation, particularly for lower-income individuals and families. Ensuring affordability and accessibility to recreational facilities and programs is crucial for promoting equitable access to the benefits of physical activity.

Conclusion

16. Recreation Aotearoa appreciates the opportunity to provide input on Wellington City Council's Draft Long-Term Plan Amendment and 2025/26 Annual Plan Consultation. While we understand the financial challenges faced by the Council, we strongly advocate for the prioritisation of investment in play, active recreation, and sport as essential for the wellbeing and future prosperity of Wellington. We urge the Council to reconsider any proposals that would reduce funding for active transport, diminish play opportunities, or compromise the accessibility and quality of recreation infrastructure.
17. We believe that by working in partnership with the community and prioritising strategic investments in PARS, Wellington City Council can continue to build a dynamic, sustainable, and vibrant city where people and nature thrive. Recreation Aotearoa remains committed to working collaboratively with the Council to ensure that recreation opportunities flourish throughout Wellington.