

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa Our Capital Spaces

Contact person: **Ellen Blake**
Email: **wellington@livingstreets.org.nz**
Phone: **021 106 7139**
Date: **9 July 2013**

About Living Streets

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".

The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

Wellington is the local walking action group based in this area which is working to make city and suburban centres in the region more walking-friendly.

For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz

Submission

We understand the Our Capital Spaces policy is an overarching policy to give guidance to the management of all parks, sports fields and other open spaces managed by the Council.

1 Links to other plans

It is not clear from this draft how this plan links to other plans, such as the Town Belt Management Plan, and it is difficult to see how they all fit together if there is no stated links. For instance there are 3 priority tracks for development identified – how do these link with the existing priorities in other plans.

2 Coverage

There are some gaps in what is covered – the sea and beaches are not included yet are popular outdoor recreation areas.

Private recreation areas are not mentioned, e.g Miramar golf course, yet may provide good partnership opportunities. The application of this policy to non- Council managed areas would then need to be considered. School grounds are considered and should be promoted for child-friendly activities.

3 Outcomes

As an over-arching policy some of the outcomes seem narrowly focused.

Presumably the main outcome of these open spaces are for the enjoyment of Wellington people and our visitors, whether this is a passive or active enjoyment, and it would be useful to see this reflected in the outcomes.

While it is a worthwhile social outcome to ‘get’ everyone active and healthy it seems a big ask of open space, or the main purpose of open space. There are many other factors involved in personal health.

There is a lot of assumption about what will ‘make’ people more active without any supporting information. What will encourage people not currently active to get out into our open space? There is a focus on formal and organised sport and recreation yet it appears that most people access our open space on foot, and in informal, local situations.

We would expect that walking to local open spaces are a key stepping stone for people to explore further and should be a priority.

4 Standards and rules

As this is an overarching policy some standards and rules applicable to all areas would be useful, in particular:

- a track standard for ‘natural’ areas, e.g Standards NZ HB 8630:2004 of DOC Track construction and maintenance guidelines . We would like to see walk access tracks maintained with appropriate use of steps and zig-zags, use of appropriate surface materials, consideration of slope etc.
- a standard for areas that are intended to be accessible to all, e.g. wheelchair users
- rules for vehicle use (including bicycles) in ‘open space’ areas, e.g. NZ Road rules apply, a 30 km/hour maximum speed limit in all areas (the speed at which pedestrians are likely to survive a collision)
- a standard approach to charging fees would be useful, e.g for closing parts of an area for exclusive use activities. Fees could then be used for maintenance of the open spaces.
- the ability to close tracks to vehicle use in certain circumstances, eg very wet weather to protect tracks – as is done with sports fields for the same reason

5 Multi use tracks

The change to multi-use tracks from the previous walk only access in our parks has meant that there are now no vehicle free spaces in Wellington. We understand that most people access open space on foot and should have the opportunity to 'get away from it all' in walk only spaces.

We would like to see on-foot only areas re-instated, particularly on some of the high use tracks such as the Mt Kaukau and Mt Victoria lookout tracks, and in a range of other areas so that people have the opportunity to relax and enjoy 'nature' without constant vigilance for vehicles. Outcome 3 should have a priority to develop on-foot areas so that Wellington can be recognised as a premier urban walking environment.

Great Harbour Way – this is a path that requires further development to ensure it is walk friendly. Currently it is not wheelchair accessible as the footpath is sub-standard.

Similarly, if beaches and the sea are included in the scope of this policy, we would expect that there should be some swim-only beaches in Wellington free from boats and other motorised craft, such as the high use areas like Oriental Bay.

6 Priority parks

There is a focus on big spaces, which ignores the effect of the multitude of small spaces on what the city feels like to people out in it. Getting people more active will mean utilising local, easy to access (and therefore free) open space where they live and work. This will often be through, and to, small spaces.

We question what it means to be an "under-used walking area" . Is there some target or level at which a space is 'properly' used. Walking routes frequently traverse out of the way spaces, and will not be monitored by formal groups. Providing a good network of the small spaces that provide routes around the city should be a major function of the open space network.

We support the idea of providing open space within a 10 minute walk for all areas of Wellington.

We support the provision of open space within new subdivisions. This should be linked with good foot access (using steps, zig-zags and other walk routes) through subdivisions to open spaces.

We would like to be heard in support of our submission.