

## Wellington City Council

### **Shelly Bay Development – Proposed sale and lease of Council land**

Nicole Miller (WUC President) on behalf of the Wellington Underwater Club

#### **Summary**

Design and development of Shelly Bay area as well as the infrastructure supporting services (road and sewage system) in an area of such high public and environmental value must be implemented to international best practice in ways to:

- Protect marine and coastal biodiversity (seaweed, vegetation) & restore natural habitat (penguin nesting)
- Avoid stormwater overflows, outfall events, run-off of contaminants and sediments into marine environment
- Implement modern and innovative facilities management to stop urban pollution from increased number of residents and visitors
- Consider sea-level rise and more frequent and stronger storm events
- Minimise vehicle traffic to and from Shelly Bay and provide alternative transport options
- Recognise value of maritime history and archaeological artefacts
- Enhance value of Shelly Bay for families and public

#### **Introduction - Why we care about Shelly Bay and the Miramar Peninsula**

Wellington Underwater Club is the oldest active scuba dive club in New Zealand connecting divers with a shared spirit for underwater exploration and passion for the marine environment. Over the decades members observed the impact that our actions on land have on the marine environment. The Club runs a range of initiatives exploring and documenting Wellington Harbour and the South Coast and educating the wider public on marine issues.

The Miramar Peninsula is unique in its setting and a significant landmark of Wellington – it is not only an extension of the city into a suburb, the peninsula has the potential to be a significant public asset and biodiversity hot-spot with easily access from downtown Wellington. The peninsula also connects the harbour to the South Coast and provides recreational opportunities above and below the surface and along the beaches.

The peninsula & marine environment is a destination, not only for the Underwater Club, but for the wider dive community – with many dive shops using the sheltered bays from Miramar wharf to Shelly Bay to train new divers. These bays also provide seafood for Wellington dive and free-dive community.

Wellington harbour is still blessed with a comparatively diverse ecosystem compared to the highly developed and modified harbours of Auckland, Tauranga and Lyttelton and many community groups are working hard to maintain the coastal diversity.

The Underwater Club is contributing with our activities to the Blue Belt initiative – an initiative bringing all the community groups together who work for a healthier marine & coastal environment. The Underwater Club organises and participates in clean-ups along Miramar Wharf to Shelly Bay, we run a citizen science project documenting kelp along the peninsula, and we document historic artefacts at Shelly Bay. *(Noted that the Club is not only a special interest group, but that marine environmental projects draw 10s of thousands views on social media and bring hundreds of volunteers together)*

## Our Concerns

Plans for a development in Shelly Bay raise many concerns:

- Threat to marine and coastal biodiversity through road & infrastructure developments: We are concerned about road widening. Around the peninsula seaweed only grows close to shore where rocks provide a suitable substrate to grow on. On the coastal side extension of the road will be a threat to near-shore marine environment including seaweed. Seaweed is an important habitat for fish and marine life, it also buffers wave energy and captures carbon dioxide. We dive along or close to the seaweed line as that is where we find most of our #CrittersOfWellington! Seaweed doesn't just grow back after a major shore development as it is very sensible to the substrate it grows on. Invasive species often grow quicker on reclaimed shorelines. Seawalls often have a negative effect on the ecosystem close by as walls change the wave action at the shore. We would welcome blue design if extension of the road is required into the coastal marine area (i.e. elevated cycle and running lane). On the land side vegetation is important habitat to coastal birds including our Little Blue Penguins who nest all around the peninsula. Road widening might destroy nesting habitat.
- Stormwater events and run-off of contaminants and sediments will be other threats to the coastal ecosystem. We expect the plan to include water sensitive urban design concepts and stormwater quantity and quality management- pre, during and post construction. Is there funding for the infrastructure upgrades required to service the development? Especially the sewer system. We don't want to see more load on a pipe that is not designed to service higher loads and we can't accept additional overflow and outfall events into the bays. How will other concepts be implemented (i.e. soils and plants to slow & treat urban run-off, swales, rain gardens and the like). How will the provision of services following a big quake/tsunami be supported?
- How will climate change be considered in the development? Just a few days ago 40cm of sea-level rise by 2050 made headlines. This will include stronger and more frequent storms. Natural barriers like healthy kelp and natural shorelines will be more resilient than manmade structures.
- The significant increase in vehicle traffic will have a serious impact on wildlife – especially penguins. Protection of these species and mitigation measures needs to be assured (i.e.

safe crossings). Are alternatives considered (i.e. ferry transport or other public transport options to minimize traffic of residents and visitors to that part of the peninsula)?

- Shelly Bay is one of the key dive sites in the harbour for the Underwater Club. We run an archaeology documenting historic artefacts around the wharf ('marine archaeology trail'). What are the plans for developing the wharf? We would also like to see access ensured to be able to further document the artefacts and structures during the development and on ongoing basis. Will access along the road to other dive sites be compromised and how can this be mitigated during and after development?
- We have many family members with younger children who enjoy a visit to the green spaces and parks and the local cafe after a dive on the peninsula. We would like to see the character of an area that is open to families and young & old alike maintained.
- Residents and ongoing services in the developed area will have impact on the coastal environment. We like to see obligations for specific rubbish and recycle collection schemes to avoid pollution of the surrounding areas, predator-free best practices implemented in the development and an obligation to restore coastal environment that might be impacted by development or the increased number of residents and visitors to the area. Other restrictions to avoid impacts of pets should be dogs on leash only areas.

## Conclusion

Wellington lives of its reputation of green and blue spaces close to town for all Wellingtonian's to enjoy and to attract visitors, talents and residents. Developments and intensification of housing in relative green areas and so close to sea need to accommodate wildlife & marine life according to international best practice. Green and blue engineering solutions are available to city planners and developers. These concepts as well as modern and innovative concepts for running facilities have to be incorporated in the design and development so higher numbers of future residents and visitors don't impact further on the marine and coastal environment.

Commercializing the area with a high-density development and to lowest costs will benefit a few. Shelly Bay area and the peninsula is a high value area – environmentally and as public space. Developing the area building on blue and green design concepts and recognising the value of the area to the public Wellington City can create an internationally outstanding showcase combining public space, tourist attraction, residential and commercial facilities.





**Miramar Wharf Wellington – Seafloor Photomosaic,**  
N. Miller, J. Bungert & M. Carter (La Trobe University, Melbourne),  
Wellington Underwater Club, Project Baseline Wellington  
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