



Planning Quarterly

THE VOICE OF PLANNERS IN NEW ZEALAND

Issue 223 / February 2022

*The Journal of the
New Zealand Planning
Institute since 1965*

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Planning practice

Cultural and natural heritage

Urban planning process

Coping with change

Planning discipline

Milford Sound Piopiotahi

Masterplanning manaakitanga

PLANNING TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE TREATY OF WAITANGI PRINCIPLES



I HOPE THAT SOME OF
THE WORKING FROM
HOME CHANGES
LAST, WHETHER IT
IS THE GREATER
ACCEPTANCE OF
CHILDREN OR
MUCH-LOVED PETS
*interrupting online
calls, or the time to go
for a morning walk
rather than commuting
or getting on top of
household chores in
your lunch break.*

Claire Booth – Locked down

Detail of a carving at Tuturu Pumau at Te Hotu Manawa O Rangitaane O Manawatu Marae

Credit: Gordon Consulting 2021

PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL FOR A BETTER NEW ZEALAND



REWEAVING NATURE *Into our cities*

HE KāINGA TUNA KI TE TāONE: TŌ TāTOU TāONE
TOITŪ | URBAN EELS: OUR SUSTAINABLE CITY

Fiona Gordon,
Director & Principal Consultant, Gordon Consulting.
Assoc. NZPI. PRIMed Resolution Institute.
B.A. Sci.Cert



— Urban Eels

OUR SUSTAINABLE CITY

"The cover of the 'Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City Implementation Plan 2018' features a photo of a carving at Tuturu Pūmau at Te Hotu Manawa O Rangitaane o Manawatu Marae."

Credit: Gordon Consulting 2021

Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City" received the New Zealand Planning Institute Rodney Davis Project Award 2021 and won the Commonwealth Association of Planners Award (CAP) 2021 for Conservation of the Built and Natural Environment and Cultural Heritage, announced at the Malaysia City Expo November 2021.

CAP Judges citation: "The project, which has a strong link to Māori heritage and natural environment, represents an excellent example where cultural and natural heritage interpretation is innovatively embedded into the planning process and the urban fabric. A replicable example of how planning process can result in greater awareness and education on the significance of heritage, providing opportunities for people to reconnect with natural and culture."

TODAY, 56% of the world's population live in urban areas¹. This proportion is projected to rise to nearly 70% as our planet welcomes an additional 3 billion people between now and 2050². As our cities expand faster than at any point in history, so too does their ecological footprint³.

With such staggering numbers reflecting the intensity of urbanization it is clear that the future success of nature conservation will depend in large part on the support of these urban voters, consumers, donors, and communicators. At the same time, however, people living in cities have diminishing contact with nature^{4,5}.

Taking the view that the value of nature can best be appreciated when it is both experienced and understood, the future of nature conservation then faces a conundrum – how to reconnect urbanites with nature in ways that enable them to realise their vested interest in it⁶.

Of course many people already choose to seek out nature. In New Zealand our major cities undergo the weekend mass exodus as people venture out of town to the beach, lake, the family bach, camp ground, or nature trail. Longer holidays might see us travel further afield to some of our most iconic nature-based experiences such as the Tongariro National Park, Heaphy Track, or the historical Otago Central Rail Trail.

While these opportunities allow us to reconnect and re-energise away from the bustle of the city, they require an amount of planning, effort, travel and budget – obtainable for some, but certainly not all. At a time when we are starting to understand just how vital access to natural space is for mental well-being, there are obvious implications and opportunities for how we design cities worldwide.

Somehow, we need to “put nature at the heart of urban development”⁸. Essentially, it is time to bring nature to the people, not the other way around.

Of course ‘nature’ is not limited to the biological diversity of flora and fauna alone, encompassing much broader considerations of geological and geomorphological features and processes, and including aesthetic, historical, spiritual and other cultural elements. Among these cultural elements are landscapes and wild plants and animals appreciated for their beauty, as well as the history and legends associated with them.⁹

Hence, Urban Eels in Palmerston North was created to provide a new space for nature within the urban fabric, to make nature more accessible, and to provide interpretation and education through the expression of the Māori world view¹⁰.



“THE URBAN EELS PROJECT IS A FINE EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN PEOPLE HAVE A DREAM AND PASSION TO WORK TOGETHER to protect a taonga and create a space where the community can learn about tuna and its significance to our environment.”

- DANIELLE HARRIS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TANENUIARANGI MANAWATŪ INCORPORATED

¹ World Bank Group (2020) <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS>

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>

³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/11/innovation-to-accelerate-the-transition-to-nature-positive-cities/>

⁴ <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/urban-conservation-strategies>

⁵ D.T.C. Cox et al. / Landscape and Urban Planning 160 (2017) “The rarity of direct experiences of nature in an urban population.” Landscape and Urban Planning Volume 160, April 2017, Pages 79-84 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204616302729>

⁶ Christopher D. Ives, David J. Abson, Henrik von Wehrden. Christian Dorninger, Kathleen Klaniecki, Joern Fischer (2018) “Reconnecting with nature for sustainability.” Sustainability Science (2018) 13:1389–1397 <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11625-018-0542-9.pdf>

⁷ Kate Douglas and Joe Douglas (24 March 2021) “Green spaces aren’t just for nature – they boost our mental health too”. New Scientist <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24933270-800-green-spaces-arent-just-for-nature-they-boost-our-mental-health-too/>

⁸ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/11/innovation-to-accelerate-the-transition-to-nature-positive-cities/> “We now have a chance to choose urban development and planning models that helps us transition towards a nature-positive future and acknowledge cities as living systems: super-organisms teeming with life and providing huge benefits to their surroundings.”

⁹ Trzyna, T. (2014). Urban Protected Areas: Profiles and best practice guidelines. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 22, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xiv + 110pp.

¹⁰ Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City Implementation Plan 2018 (See “Part II”, p22). <https://gordonconsultingdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/urban-eels-final-nov-lo-res.pdf>

The Place

“Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City” is located along the bustling He Ara Kotahi, the ‘shared pathway’ connecting Palmerston North and Linton. It sidles up against the historically and culturally significant Turitea Pa near the confluence of the Manawātū River and Turitea Stream. Its placement within Palmerston North’s urban transport network, attracts purposeful visitation and ‘incidental immersion’ of commuters alike.

This urban sanctuary for tuna (eel), an at-risk species, is gently reacquainting our people with tuna and the enduring relationship between man and tuna - all with a focus on the expression of Tikanga Māori and the Māori world view.

Visitors can meander down through the Rangitāne o Manawātū art installation, past kanuka palisades and native plantings to the edge of the Turitea Stream where they can feed the tuna. The story board explains that tuna maintain a special place in Māori culture and are an important part of preserving the practice of cultural traditions. For a people who relied on seasonal foods, tuna was a gift from the gods. Sadly, the longfin eel (tuna kawharuwaharu or tuna reherehe) is in steady decline due to the historical destruction and degradation of its habitat.

In the 18 months since the official dawn blessing of the site on 31 July 2020, which saw a fishing rahui (ban) put in place by iwi and tuna released to the Turitea Stream, Urban Eels is already being touted as “one of the highlights for the city’s residents and visitors”¹¹.

With further art installations, storyboards and other initiatives already planned for the site, and future linkages via educational content at Central Energy Trust Wildbase Recovery and exhibitions at Te Manawa Museum of Art Science and History, Urban Eels is set to continue to grow in its popularity and reach.

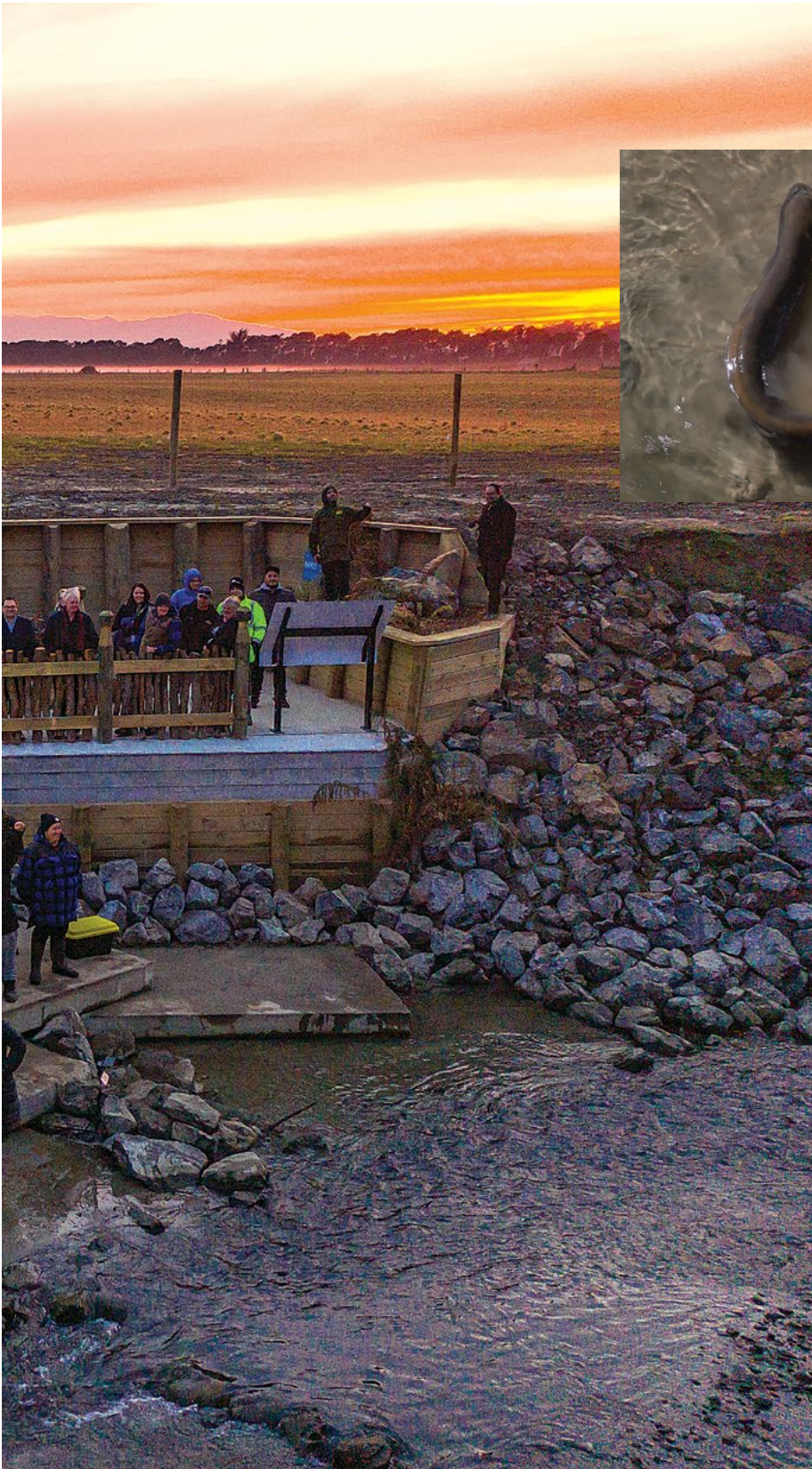


“Dawn Blessing of Urban Eels on 31 July 2020, Palmerston North.”

Credit: Palmerston North City Council 2020

¹¹ Palmy Proud, Spring 2021 Issue 12.

"Release of Tuna to the Turitea Stream during the Urban Eels Dawn Blessing on 31 July 2020, Palmerston North."
Credit: Palmerston North City Council 2020



ITE TAPERENUI A
WHATONGA, ME
TE TAPERENUI A
KUPE HE TANGATA
RANGITĀNE KA ORA
ANO. FROM THE
GREAT FOOD BASKET
OF WHATONGA AND
THE GREAT FOOD
BASKET OF KUPE
MAY RANGITĀNE
WHANAU ONCE
AGAIN BE SUSTAINED.

*"This is a quote
from the Rangitāne
north island fishery
plan presenting
our aspiration for
revitalising our once
great fishery, with
the aid of urban eels
raising the awareness
of the plight of our
tuna."*

- PAUL HORTON,
TATEC OFFICER, TE AO TUROA
ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE

The Process. The Partnership

The concept for Urban Eels focused on making nature more accessible and on providing interpretation through the expression of the Māori world view. It drew its inspiration from the IUCN Urban Protected Areas¹² and work of the IUCN Urban Specialist Group¹³.

The planning process that moved Urban Eels from an initial concept to a fully-fledged project, was embedded in an authentic partnership between Gordon Consulting and Tanenuiarangi Manawatū Incorporated (TMI), a mandated iwi authority for Rangitāne o Manawatū.

This innovative and inclusive approach purposefully steered away from ‘consultation’ and ‘engagement’ stereotypes, to instead facilitate community empowerment, ensuring that the direction for Urban Eels was set by TMI from the very outset.

The initial planning steps focused on listening, researching and writing to document historical and cultural information from written and verbal sources. This was followed by guiding the issue identification process and development of the vision, mission, objectives and action plan, and the identification of a suitable location.

It was an iterative process that included working closely with local hapu Te Rangimarie and Ngāti Hineaute Hapū Authority, and then widened out to collaborative partners Palmerston North

City Council, Te Manawa Museum of Art Science and History, Horizons Regional Council, and Massey University.

The Plan

The planning process culminated in the “Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City – Implementation Plan 2018”. The document was purposefully developed to ensure TMI and local hapu control over the narrative, to prioritise their values, expectations and wishes regarding the development of the Urban Eels site.

The structure of the document itself reflects this, presenting Whakapapa O Tuna, Whakatauaki, Karakia, Whakatau Mihi, before setting out acknowledgements and the foreword prepared jointly by Paul Horton (TMI) and Fiona Gordon (Gordon Consulting).

The background section (Part I) presents “Environment and Mana Whenua”, “The Realm of Atua Tangaroa and Descendants of Whātonga”, “Tuna” and “Tuna Fishing Methods”. The brevity of the references to Western science is noticeable and intentional. Part II sets out the issues, vision, mission and objectives, and Part III identifies key actions, timeframes and potential funding sources.

Parameters for future site management are also set out. Located within the Palmerston North City Council’s Manawatū River walkway network, Tanenuiarangi Manawatū Incorporated sought responsibility for the day-to-day management of operational activities required to maintain the Urban Eels site.

The Plan prioritises Tikanga Māori, maps out a clear pathway forward to create Urban Eels and presents a full suite of information to help inform future decision making - including external decision making, such as local government and the private sector,

with regards to any future bids relating to planning processes, sponsorship and funding.

The Plan was initially endorsed by Tanenuiarangi Manawatū Incorporated (TMI), Gordon Consulting, Te Rangimarie, Ngāti Hineaute Hapū Authority, Te Manawa Museum of Art Science and History and Massey University. Sign off from Horizons Regional Council and Palmerston North City Council was then sought via formal submissions and presentations through the local government annual plan processes.

The Plan was formally endorsed by all signatories in 2018, cementing it as the key reference document for the development of Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City.

The Build

TMI, Gordon Consulting and PNCC worked together with Local Landscape Architects to develop a site design reflective of the narrative and direction set by TMI.

Drawing on the strengths and capabilities of collaborative partners, the resource consenting and construction of Urban Eels was managed by Palmerston North City Council (PNCC).

The challenging construction phase included the temporary shifting of a stream, placement of rock and prefabricated concrete steps, and a retaining wall into the steep side of an incised stream. The eel feeding platform was created from repurposed concrete panels and the Kanuka fence panels were repurposed from another site of cultural significance. The last few weeks of construction occurred during the country’s Covid-19 Level 4 lockdown and declaration of a National State of Emergency, in March 2020, requiring the works to be listed as essential works in

¹² IUCN (2014) IUCN Urban Protected Areas: Profiles and Best Practice Guidelines <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/44644>

¹³ IUCN website: <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/urban-conservation-strategies>



“THE VISION FOR THE MANAWATŪ RIVER FRAMEWORK IS TO SEE THE CITY TURN BACK TO THE RIVER, AND FOR MORE PEOPLE TO ENJOY THE RIVER EVERY YEAR. *Urban Eels has been a complete success in providing interest in the river, connections to our native wildlife and a great half day walking or cycling visitor experience. Projects like this are the cornerstone to achieving that vision.*”

- JASON PILKINGTON, PLANNER,
PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL

order to complete construction before the spring rains.

The freshwater stream environment, native riparian plantings and rock lining now provides a suitable freshwater habitat for tuna and ensures unimpeded access to the Pacific Ocean where the tuna go to spawn at the end of their life cycle.

The Results

Envisioned to ‘bring nature to the people’, Urban Eels is attracting a steady, daily stream of visitors. It is building an appreciation for tuna as taonga; improving our understanding of the historical and contemporary relationship between man and tuna; and providing that narrative through the expression of Tikanga Māori and the Māori world view. Understanding these beliefs and values represents an important aspect of sustainable development.

The cultural and natural heritage of places is often fragile and threatened by growth pressure. The Urban Eels planning approach focused on the principals of partnership and collaboration, and deployed iterative and empowering processes to:

- reinvigorate connections with the cultural, historical and environmental values of an area or landscape;
- re-weave nature into the urban fabric and/or reconnect urban dwellers with nature;
- address tensions between urban development and nature conservation, and between urban development and conservation of historical and cultural values;
- address a situation where heritage may be previously ‘hidden’;
- mobilise support for conservation and the interpretation of heritage.

By re-weaving nature into the urban fabric, Urban Eels is helping more and more people to reconnect with nature, generating an increased sense of guardianship and building a greater appreciation of cultural, historical and environmental values.

As a result, Urban Eels is delivering social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits at the local level. It is also contributing towards the achievement of the United Nations Development Goals: SDG11 Sustainable cities and communities, SDG15 Life on land, SDG6 Clean water and sanitation, SG17 Partnership for the goals, SDG12 Responsible consumption and production, SDG 14 Life below water, SDG10 Reduced inequalities, SDG13 Climate action.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. While the SDGs are global, their achievement will depend on our ability to make them a reality in our cities and regions. Hence, the SDGs require localization and the inclusion of SDG 11, Sustainable cities and communities, is considered to be “the lynchpin of the localizing process”¹⁴. Mapping out Urban Eels, against the SDGs was a beneficial exercise in building an understanding on how local, community-led initiatives can actively contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

¹⁴ “Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level.” Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UN Habitat for a Better Future, UNDP. https://www.global-taskforce.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/bfe783_434174b8f26840149c1ed37d8febba6e%20%281%29.pdf



Figure 1. Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City actively contributes to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals”. Credit: Gordon Consulting 2021

Perpetuity

Urban Eels has become a destination for everyone to enjoy. It was always about creating a physical space for nature within the city landscape, but it was also about allowing the temporal space necessary for the process itself. It was about dismantling and throwing out the constraints wrapped around “consultation” and “engagement” to instead forge new rules together - ones that reflect what genuine partnership and collaboration should look and feel like.

Urban Eels was only able to develop and grow because of the people. Those people brought their skills, their knowledge, their time, their energy, and their resources to the table – along with a big dose of passion and persistence. It’s future success continues to hinge on trust, partnership, collaboration, and sticking to the plan and the narrative agreed upon.

In these ways, the Urban Eels journey serves as a reminder to place equal importance on the quality of process and outcomes alike.

The work of planners can contribute positively towards the conservation of areas and landscapes, by aiding in their interpretation and bringing focus to indigenous cultural values. By seeking out opportunities to re-connect urbanites with nature, we can foster the mainstreaming of nature back into our social, cultural, physical and economic landscapes.

Innovative processes are needed to identify and mobilise support and, in my view, this can be best achieved through genuine partnerships, collaboration, inclusive planning and leadership – the kind of leadership that involves ‘sharing the reins’.

Anyone can own an idea. To bring it to

fruition means that, at some point, you have to be brave enough to share it. To genuinely share it, because the more people that own the idea, the more invested they are in its success. As planners, we can aim to engender that ownership, for perpetuity.

**NAKU TE ROUROU
NAU TE ROUROU
KA ORA AITE IWI
WITH YOUR BASKET
AND MY BASKET
THE PEOPLE WILL LIVE¹⁵**

¹⁵ Whakataurangi in Urban Eels: Our Sustainable City Implementation Plan 2018 (p4). <https://gordonconsultingdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/urban-eels-final-nov-lo-res.pdf>