



BUILDING

**Britomart
Sustainability
Report 2024**



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Cooper and Company's
Matthew Cockram on a year
of sustainable progress

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On the cover: The newly refurbished Maritime Building. At left: The 5 Green Star Kiwi Building. Photos by Samuel Hartnett.

Letter from the CEO



The world of sustainability is changing quickly. Methods of measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions are evolving, and our systems (and our team members) are constantly adapting to keep up. New technology arrives and makes some things easier, while fresh challenges appear from unexpected directions.

At Cooper and Company, we have always taken the long-term view that social, economic and environmental goals are mutually supportive. We have had a formal sustainability framework in place since 2017 and began reporting annually on our progress in 2019. Our experience so far shows us that sustainable progress isn't a series of trumpet-blast breakthroughs and 'aha' moments. Instead, it is founded on incremental day-to-day improvements and constant analysis of the areas in which we could do better.

Some examples: when we began producing these sustainability reports, we didn't have a way of adequately measuring our greenhouse gas emissions. Now, thanks to our work with Toitū and our Carbonreduce certification – as well as the addition of better monitoring systems in our buildings – we are getting more and more effective at tracking our emissions, identifying problem areas and making improvements.

Similarly, our work within the NZ Green Building Council's Green Star ratings system – which we began in 2008 – means our design and construction processes are becoming more refined, ensuring reductions in waste and emissions from the beginning of the development process and better-performing buildings at the end of it. These are things we are learning as we go, incremental improvements that, week by week, become baked into our way of doing things.

As we all know, greater sustainability is a collective pursuit, which is why we're also pleased to highlight the innovative work of some of our lease partners in this report, including EY's new investigation of the concept of natural capital, Westpac's focus on the economic sustainability that home ownership brings, and Comensa Group's participation in the Kai Keepers food waste reduction scheme.

As well as the important data it contains, this report is an opportunity for reflection, as it marks 20 years since Cooper and Company began its work regenerating Britomart, restoring its heritage buildings and designing new ones in the spaces between. This process, too, was one we embarked on with a broad long-term vision but very few specifics. Looking back, it seems like the regeneration of Britomart – and the evolution of our sustainable practices – has happened in the blink of an eye. It's something that shows how a focus on day-by-day change can, over time, quickly yield more substantial results.

Matthew Cockram
CEO, COOPER AND COMPANY



The Northern Steamship
Building on Quay Street.
Photo by Jessica Gernat.



Artist Shane Cotton's mural, Maunga, on the Excelsior House exterior. Photo by Jessica Gernat.

Mana Whakahaere Governance

This report is a way to hold ourselves accountable: as our sustainability policies and practices evolve and deepen, we report on key changes in our approaches and on our performance against last year's targets.

Britomart is a nine-block business community in downtown waterfront Auckland, offering a mix of carefully refurbished heritage buildings, new buildings designed to high environmental standards, and welcoming public spaces. The Britomart Group of companies operates under the oversight of Cooper and Company.

We are urban investors with a long-term focus on creating a central city district that makes people feel a deeper connection with the city.

This report summarises our sustainability efforts, both internally and externally, and our work with recognised accreditation agencies to verify the value of the efforts we have made.

Takutai Square, Britomart's central gathering space, with The Hotel Britomart on the right. Photo by David St George.



About Britomart

Britomart's Stakeholders

Peter Cooper
Cooper and Company's founder and owner.

Britomart Board of Directors
The group of people governing Britomart's work.

Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei
The local Māori iwi who hold mana whenua over the land Britomart is built on.

Auckland Council and AT
The local council that Britomart works alongside and the Council-Controlled Organisation responsible for the Britomart Transport Centre beneath the precinct.

Britomart Group employees
The team members who develop, manage and run the Britomart neighbourhood.

Lease partners
The corporations, organisations, retailers and hospitality outlets who lease space within Britomart.

Downtown community
The residents and businesses who live and operate in the downtown area.

Visitors and guests
People who shop, eat and spend time in Britomart.

Sustainability Partners

NZGBC
The Green Star certification system, administered by the New Zealand Green Building Council, is Australasia's foremost sustainability rating certification. Originally developed by the Green Building Council Australia, the system has been adapted for local needs and is internationally recognised. The system awards commercial buildings a rating from zero to six stars, with one representing minimum practice, five being stringently high and representing excellent performance at a national level, and six indicating world-leading standards.

NABERSNZ
NABERSNZ is a system for rating the energy efficiency of office buildings. It is an independent tool, backed by the government, which assigns star ratings to commercial buildings based on their level of energy efficiency. Britomart currently holds ratings of 4 stars or above for six buildings within the precinct.

Toitū Envirocare
Toitū Envirocare is New Zealand's leading greenhouse gas emission assessment and accreditation agency. Its name translates as 'to actively sustain'. The agency works with all types of businesses to assess, accredit and give guidance on managing environmental impacts. Britomart is currently in its third year of Carbonreduce certification with the agency.

Britomart's Values

Community
We create more than just a place to shop, work and eat. Britomart is a community where people feel they belong.

Design
We value the way thoughtful design and attention to detail, as well as the combination of heritage and modern architecture, can transform the experience of place.

Sustainability
Britomart takes pride in making decisions for the long term and working with recognised organisations to accredit our sustainability work.

Care
Britomart cares deeply about the experience of its workers and visitors, and the totality of their experience in the precinct.

Boldness
Britomart pursues the unexpected, the new and the next with confidence and in a style unique to the precinct.



Our Green Building Ratings

Britomart has an ongoing commitment to work with the New Zealand Green Building Council's Green Star rating system for all significant building refurbishments or new developments.

Our first rating under this system was awarded in 2008, just three years after the Green Building Council was established in New Zealand, for the then-new Charter Customs Building that houses Westpac's head office. In 2020, when The Hotel Britomart was completed, it was the first time a hotel had been awarded a 5 Green Star rating in New Zealand, paving the way for others to do the same. And our most recent completed project was the 5 Green Star refurbishment of the Kiwi Building on Galway Street, reopened in January 2024. Looking to the future, another 5 Green Star project is already underway – the substantial refurbishment of the Chief Post Office, which is due for completion in late 2025.

| BUILDING | Year Constructed / Refurbished | Green Star Design and As Built Rating |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| HAYMAN KRONFELD BUILDING | 2022 | 5 Star Design and As Built Rating |
| THE HOTEL BRITOMART | 2020 | 5 Star Design and As Built Rating |
| EAST BUILDING | 2011 | 5 Star Design and As Built Rating |
| CHARTER CUSTOMS BUILDING | 2008 | 4 Star Built Rating |
| KIWI BUILDING | 2024 | 5 Star Design and As Built Rating |

Above right: The newly refurbished 5 Green Star Kiwi Building. Photo by Samuel Hartnett.

Report Card 2024

Every year we set ourselves new sustainability targets and report on how we measure up against our previous year's goals.

Mana Whakahaere Governance

01

Achieve a WELL Performance Certification for the Maritime Building, once the building's renovation is completed.

UNDERWAY

We're continuing to work towards achieving a WELL Performance Certification for the Maritime Building. Although ongoing monitoring has shown some aspects of air quality are in compliance with WELL specifications, VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) have been an ongoing problem, with levels exceeding WELL standards most of the time. As yet, it's unclear why. The factors seem to be external to the building which, due to its age, is difficult to make airtight. As a result, some air-quality points will no longer be pursued, and Cooper and Company will look to achieve alternative points to reach the total required for the certification.

02

Complete a material issues assessment for Britomart.

UNDERWAY

Members of the Cooper and Company sustainability team undertook training in material issues assessment and developed a framework for a material issues survey. This is currently before the executive for approval. Read more about what a material issues assessment is and how it applies to Britomart on p.16.

Te Tāngata People and Culture

03

Work with Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi Marae to broaden Britomart's vocational programme with the school and introduce students to a wide range of career opportunities and work experience options.

ACHIEVED

Britomart businesses including EY, Westpac, Tailor Inc, Comensa restaurant group and Karen Walker hosted students from Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi Marae for four career orientation visits for Year 12 and 13 students. Subsequently, five students had six days of work experience placements at EY and Café Hanoi. The programme will continue in 2025.

04

Complete two further research projects relating to the future of work and the interconnected future of the central city, focusing on the benefits of in-person connection and community development.

PARTLY ACHIEVED

In July, Britomart released a new online and print interview series entitled *This is our place*. Featuring interviews with 17 inner-city residents, the publication responded to negative media stories about Auckland's central city by asking its residents about the challenges and rewards of living in central Auckland, and the aspirations they hold for the future of their neighbourhood. The project – which included a free talk at Britomart about the issues raised by the interview series – was an effort to start a wider conversation about the direction of the central city and its importance as a social and economic hub.

05

Continue Britomart's community engagement through arts displays, cultural performances, and social gatherings in Britomart throughout the year.

ACHIEVED

See the Te Tangata section of the report (p.38) for a summary of the specific community engagement and social sustainability activities Britomart held through the year.

06

Continue with our emissions reduction programme as guided by Toitū Carbonreduce.

ACHIEVED

Britomart's facilities management team continued to work closely with tenants to maintain awareness of our energy-efficiency and carbon reduction goals, and to operate the neighbourhood's buildings well. This year, Britomart saw a fall in its overall greenhouse gas emissions, which for the first time fell below the baseline year established in 2019. There is more information about this reduction in emissions on p.14.

Te Taiao Environment

07

Work with the Restaurant Association of New Zealand to develop a food waste pilot programme in association with two of Britomart's restaurants, and share the results of the pilot with other lease partners.

ACHIEVED

Four of Britomart's restaurants have been participating in the Kai Keepers Food Waste Reduction programme in 2024 – kingi, Café Hanoi, Ghost Street, and Perch. Our report on the progress they've made can be found on p.62.

08

Start gathering data from the solar panel pilot on the roof of Maritime House after the building renovation is complete.

CANCELLED

After conducting a detailed investigation into the suitability of solar power for the roof of the Maritime Building, it was decided that the installation of solar panels on the roof did not offer sufficient benefits to justify the investment – partly because a large building to the north shaded the solar panel area for much of the day. There is more information on this project on p.30.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Our Progress

Five years into our greenhouse gas reduction programme, our emissions are down almost 20 percent on our baseline year.

In 2019, Britomart Group began working with Toitū Envirocare to develop a base-case emissions profile for our group of businesses*, which gives an overall picture of our climate impact. The Toitū Carbonreduce plan that we are working to includes a five percent reduction in total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2026, which we plan to achieve through a wide range of undertakings, including monitoring building air temperatures to improve energy efficiency and upgrading plant (building systems) over time to improve efficiency and reduce refrigerant loss.

This year our total GHG emissions from all sources were 592t CO₂e. This is a 19 percent reduction in total GHG emissions from our 2019 baseline emissions of 730t CO₂e, and the first time that our emissions have fallen below that baseline (although last year was only 2t over the original baseline).

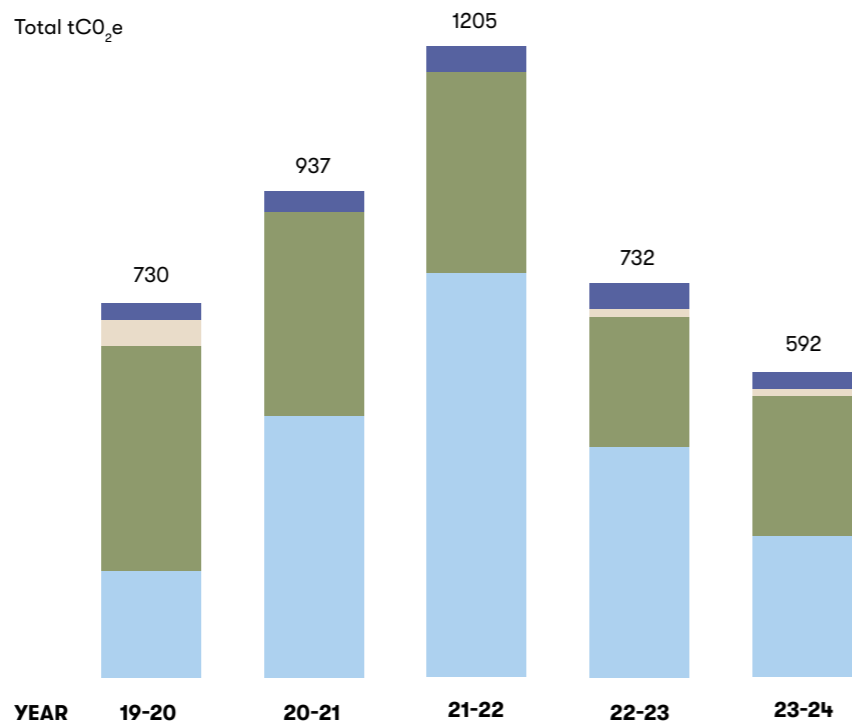
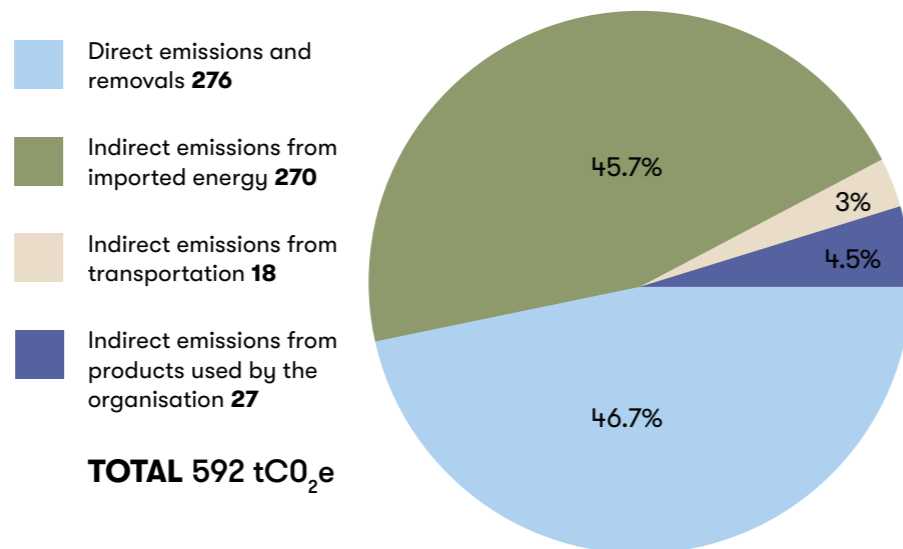
This is good progress, but we know it doesn't guarantee ongoing reductions. Unpredictable events – like refrigerant leaks, which are behind most spikes in our emissions in previous years – can cause totals to vary from one year to the next.

In the year we're currently reporting on**, our electricity and gas usage were both up slightly – in line with our expectations as we see growth in workers returning to city offices – and we also saw a slight increase in air travel emissions.

However, our emissions from accidental losses of refrigerant gases (which are very GHG-intensive) to the environment decreased substantially. Most of this decrease is thanks to the repair of a major

Britomart Group tCO₂e by category

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 location-based method



refrigerant leak in the HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning) system in the Stanbeth Excelsior Building, and repairs of smaller leaks in the Charter Customs Building. However, as the Stanbeth Excelsior Building's HVAC system is coming towards its end of life, the chance of future leaks is fairly high.

"We may see new leaks in it over the summer, when the system is working harder and there's a higher chance of sudden changes in pressure," says Shane Belch, head of facilities for Britomart. "In the long-term, replacing the system is the solution, which we will take the opportunity to do while the building is unoccupied in its next lease changeover."

The Excelsior Stanbeth Building (right). Photo by David St George.



*Britomart's emissions profile is calculated on the emissions of 15 buildings within the precinct, as well as from outdoor usage like fairy lights, exterior uplighting and Takutai Square lights, and electricity supply for activations in Takutai Square. The Hotel Britomart has its own Toitū Envirocare emissions profile and Carbonreduce plan. In the 2022/23 year, The Hotel Britomart's total carbon emissions were 247tCO₂e.

**Base year period: 01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 | Current year period: 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

A new approach to our emissions reporting is coming

To improve the accuracy of emissions reporting, our accreditation partner Toitū Envirocare is changing their requirements. Until now, our reporting has covered Scope 1 (direct emissions from burning fuel or refrigerant losses) and Scope 2 emissions (indirect emissions associated with burning fuel), as well as a small number of Scope 3 emissions (such as staff air travel and emissions produced by waste to landfill).

From the 2024/25 financial year, our reporting will include all Scope 3 emissions, which are generated through the full value chain of the organisation. While this will result in an increase in reported emissions, it will give us a more complete picture, while also allowing us to reset our baseline measurements to a year that better reflects the post-Covid flexible working environment and its effects on office occupancy.

Energy efficiency: Our NABERSNZ performance

At Britomart, six buildings are rated for their energy-efficiency under NABERSNZ (National Australian Building Energy Ratings System New Zealand). Each year, the buildings are re-assessed and re-rated.

The NABERSNZ system has different categories of ratings that differentiate whether the property owner is responsible for the energy efficiency of the entire building or just the common areas, with each tenant responsible for the energy efficiency of their own leased areas.

Two of Britomart's buildings are rated as Base Buildings (where the tenants are each responsible for their own energy use) and four are rated as Whole Buildings (where Britomart takes responsibility for the efficiency of

the entire building). Often, especially in older buildings, Whole Building ratings are necessary as there is insufficient metering to be able to differentiate between the landlord's energy use and individual tenants' energy use.

This year, three of our buildings maintained their rating from last year. Two buildings saw a slight drop in energy-efficiency, which was mainly due to increased gas usage. The Hayman Kronfeld Building entered NABERSNZ for the first time, achieving a 4.5 star (excellent) rating.

Our NABERSNZ ratings

| BASE BUILDING | Rating | | Energy intensity (kWh/m ²) | |
|-------------------|--------|------|--|------|
| | 2023 | 2024 | 2023 | 2024 |
| 1. EAST COMPANYY | 4.5 | 4.5 | 76 | 73 |
| 2. CHARTER CUSTOM | 4.5 | 4 | 84 | 92 |

| WHOLE BUILDING RATINGS | Rating | | Energy intensity (kWh/m ²) | |
|------------------------|--------|------|--|------|
| | 2023 | 2024 | 2023 | 2024 |
| 3. ALTRANS QUAY | 5.5 | 5 | 68 | 86 |
| 4. AUSTRALIS NATHAN | 4 | 4 | 155 | 146 |
| 5. EXCELSIOR STANBETH | 4 | 4 | 139 | 129 |
| 6. HAYMAN KRONFELD | N/A | 4.5 | N/A | 131 |



The East Building in Britomart is home to Westpac, EY and the Financial Markets Authority. Photo by David St George.

20 Years of Heritage Restoration at Britomart

It was two decades ago that Auckland Council signed an agreement with Britomart Group's leaders that established a vision for the area's regeneration, which included the retention and restoration of one of the most remarkable collections of heritage buildings in the country. Here, we take a look at 20 years of Britomart's regeneration – and the environmental advantages of repurposing existing structures.

A lot happens in 20 years. Since 2004, we've seen six prime ministers and six Auckland mayors, four US presidents, three popes and a whole new generation of royals. Social media, touchscreen phones and streaming services were invented and have become ubiquitous, the world has gone into recession twice, the solar system lost a planet and New Zealand gained an extra million people.

At Britomart, New Zealand's largest heritage urban regeneration project, the last two decades have also seen a substantial transformation. April 2024 marked the 20-year anniversary of the signing of the Development Deed that entrusted Cooper and Company (and its partners at the time, Phillimore Properties and Multiplex) with Britomart's long-term renewal and development.

When that original development consortium, then known as Bluewater, won Auckland Council's international competition for the right to redevelop Britomart, the waterfront was a completely different place. Most of the buildings in the area had been abandoned for years, with windows broken or boarded up and exterior paint faded and peeling. Some spaces housed squatters, while others were dumping grounds for rubbish, furniture and old mattresses, infested with rats and pigeons.

Some buildings, including the Chief Post Office and the Hayman Building, had been damaged by fires and water leaks. And in the centre of all the dereliction was an empty, three-block-long, partially gravelled space on top of the new tunnel that had been created



to link to the brand-new Britomart Transport Centre.

Cooper and Company's successful proposal undertook to transform the area into a vibrant, low-rise precinct, with the century-old brick warehouses restored and new modern buildings that embraced the character of the place added. Open public spaces would give people places to gather, while artworks would nod to the history of the area, going back to the time before the land was 'reclaimed' from the sea and it was an abundant seafood-gathering spot known as Onepanea Bay to the local Ngāti Whātua iwi.

It was a daunting vision to realise. The first buildings to be cleared were some of the smaller and more manageable ones – the Art Deco Maritime Building 1, on the corner



of Gore and Quay Sts, the Northern Steamship Building directly across the road and the Levy Building 3 on Customs St East. The enormous Chief Post Office 4, had its ground floor transformed into a grand entrance for the new Britomart Transport Centre, with Cooper and Company restoring the floors above for offices.

The initial refurbishment of all four buildings was completed by late 2006, by which time Cooper and Company had bought out the other two

partners in the Bluewater Consortium and established sole responsibility for Britomart's future.

The Maritime Building was chosen as the location for Cooper and Company's head office for its clear view across the centre of the precinct, Downstairs, the Britomart team leased the space to a branch of the popular Ponsonby cafe Santos. The Northern Steamship Building 2 also had a ground floor that became a buzzy gastropub. Together, the two eateries

- 1 Maritime Building
- 2 The Northern Steamship Building
- 3 The Levy Building
- 4 Chief Post Office Building

became an early drawcard to bring people into the neighbourhood.

The refurbishment of the Chief Post Office was led by established Auckland firm Jasmx in partnership with heritage architects Salmond Reed, working alongside Mario Madayag, who led the design of the Britomart Transport Centre.

Auckland practice Cheshire Architects, who at the time had their office in the Maritime Building alongside Cooper and Company, worked on the other early refurbishment projects. Working closely with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (previously the New Zealand Historic Places Trust), Ngāti Whātua Orākei and the Cooper and Company development team, the firm took a big-picture approach that took the development of the whole precinct into account, and used a light touch when stripping back buildings so the layers of history in each would remain apparent.

Meanwhile, a programme of ongoing public events and activations was underway to give the public assurance that the dark days of the area were in the past. A pavilion tent set up in Takutai Square quickly became a centre for art fairs and exhibitions, festivals, product launches and private

APRIL 2004

The Bluewater Consortium and Auckland Council sign a 150-year Development Deed to redevelop Britomart, a run-down 19-acre neighbourhood of derelict heritage buildings and brownfield sites on Auckland's downtown waterfront.

The Britomart Art Foundation is established with a \$1 million gift to spend on public artworks in the precinct.

LATE 2004

The Oriental Market site adjacent to the Britomart site is acquired with the intention of building the Britomart Carpark on it.

DEC 2005

Cooper and Company buys out the other two partners in the Bluewater Consortium, taking over sole responsibility for the development and management of Britomart.

FEB 2006

The Northern Steamship Building 2 is the first of 18 heritage buildings at Britomart to be refurbished and reopened.



2006

The Chief Post Office's 4 initial refurbishment is completed.



2006

The refurbishment of the Maritime Building 1 where Cooper and Company NZ's head office is based, is completed.



- 5 Seafarers Building
- 6 Union Fish Building
- 7 East Building
- 8 Charter Customs House
- 9 Excelsior Stanbeth
- 10 The Showcases
- 11 The Pavilions
- 12 Australis Nathan Building

events, while a Saturday farmer’s market and high-impact events like the first Laneways Festival and the Red Bull City Scramble made downtown Auckland feel exciting and relevant again.

Instead of undertaking full refurbishments of the buildings one at a time, the Britomart team chose to get as many buildings as possible cleaned up and brought into safe and functional states so they could be leased at accessible rates to creative agencies, up-and-coming fashion retailers, new eateries and bars and other businesses. This holistic approach focused on bringing energy and innovation to the whole area at speed – and it worked.

The broader clean-up was achieved over the first five years, and a second round of more substantial refurbishments began. One notable

approach was the decision to internally blend together adjoining buildings, like Excelsior House and Stanbeth House (now the Excelsior Stanbeth Building 9), creating larger floor plates that major commercial tenants required, and making the precinct accessible to a new range of businesses – law practices, financial management firms and government agencies.

Following a research trip to the United States in 2009, the Britomart executive team became enthused about greening urban areas, and on their return immediately established more

than 20 specimen trees within the area, the lawn in Takutai Square, and the first of what would eventually become hundreds of tree and flower-filled planters and pots.

By 2010, the Seafarers 5, Union Fish 6, Charter Customs 8 and Excelsior Stanbeth Buildings 9 had been refurbished, and the new building that would house the New Zealand head offices of Westpac and EY was rising at the edge of the precinct, next to the Britomart Carpark, on the site of the former Oriental Markets. The East Building 7, as the new office

development was known, was the first building the Britomart team worked on in collaboration with the New Zealand Green Building Council. At the time of its completion in 2010, it was the first 4 Green Star commercial building in Auckland.

For Auckland, this was the start of the contemporary sustainable building movement. The New Zealand Green Building Council had been established just five years earlier and progressive developers, architects and clients quickly recognised the benefits that sustainable buildings offered their users in terms of

health, comfort, resource efficiency and cost savings.

Britomart’s heritage buildings represented a unique opportunity to create a precinct founded in sustainability. Refurbishing an existing building is inherently more sustainable than building a new one, and refurbishing to a high Green Star standard – although it can be challenging – is perhaps the most sustainable building approach of all.

“There are numerous advantages to reusing our existing buildings,” says Andrew Eagles, CEO of the New

Zealand Green Building Council. “To create a new building involves a lot of concrete, steel, timber, glass, and other materials that account for about 9 to 10 percent of New Zealand’s overall carbon emissions.

“The other exciting element is keeping the heritage of New Zealand buildings and dispelling this myth that older existing buildings can’t perform. We’ve seen at Britomart that’s been evidenced with really high NABERSNZ ratings for quite old buildings. You can take an existing building and not just perform up to

2006
The refurbishment of the Levy Building 3 on Customs St East is completed.



EARLY 2009
The Charter Customs Building is completed, joined to the refurbished heritage Charter House.



2010
The Seafarer’s Building 5 refurbishment is completed.

2010
The Excelsior Stanbeth Building 9 refurbishment is completed.



2010/2011
The Showcases 10 and Pavilions 11 open in the central block of Britomart.

2011
The new 5 Green Star East Building 7 is completed, housing Westpac and EY’s head offices.



13



14



15



16

where the current Building Code is for a new building, but outperform that significantly. And that's down to really good facilities management, good controls, good analysis, and good engagement with tenants. And that energy saving makes up the other 10 percent of carbon emissions that New Zealand's construction and property creates. So it's half embodied and half operational."

Soon after the East Building reached completion, a set of new temporary buildings known as The Showcases were being assembled in the centre of the precinct. These were designed by Cheshire Architects to house a range of fashion and food businesses, and were soon followed by The Pavilions 11, a set of small-scale contemporary buildings on the same site. Together, these buildings were intended to provide tenancies of a few years while the prospect of a more substantial new

building on the site was explored. As it happened, the life of these much-loved buildings extends to the present day.

In 2016, Australis House and the Nathan Building 9 were refurbished and blended together internally in a project designed by Britomart-based architecture practice Peddlethorp. This was a milestone in the evolution of the precinct, bringing the international luxury houses Tiffany & Co and Chanel into the neighbourhood as retailers, and adding a new 'face' to what was previously the back end of Australis House, facing Takutai Square.

From 2017, the Britomart team's focus moved to the development of The Hotel Britomart, along with the surrounding city block. The 10-storey, 5

Green Star hotel (the first such hotel in New Zealand) was designed by Cheshire Architects in a style that nods to the brick heritage buildings around it.

At the lower levels, the new building adjoins the heritage Masonic House and Buckland Building 14, which were refurbished and combined internally at the same time. A new brick-lined pedestrian laneway, gifted the name Tuawhiti Lane by Ngāti Whātua Orākei, was created to wind through the base of the hotel from Customs St East to Galway Street. As part of the project several long-term tenants of the precinct, including the restaurant Cafe Hanoi and fashion boutiques Karen Walker and Huffer, moved to new and larger sites within the block.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit when the hotel was midway through construction, although it only caused a three-month delay in opening, with the first guests welcomed in October 2020.

The refurbishment of the Barrington and Sofrana Buildings on Galway Street followed. These buildings, which had their original names reinstated in the redevelopment process, were awarded the precinct's first 5 Green Star rating for a heritage building and reopened as the Hayman Kronfeld Building 15 in November 2022.

With the refurbishment of the Kiwi Building in January 2024, a significant chapter in Britomart's development came to a close. The Kiwi Tavern 16 was the last of the 18 original heritage

buildings within the neighbourhood to have been carefully refurbished.

Unlike many of the other buildings in the precinct, the Kiwi Building has remained in near-constant use ever since it was built, and never reached a state of dereliction. One of the smallest buildings in the precinct, its refurbishment has also achieved a 5 Green Star rating – now business as usual for the development team.

This is not the end of the process. Work began again on the Maritime Building in 2023, with a roof refurbishment and modifications to the third level (added in the 1970s) to bring it more in keeping with the original structure. Work has also begun on a refurbishment of the three levels

of offices above Britomart Transport Centre (the former Chief Post office Building), this time targeting 5 Green Stars and a WELL Gold rating (for more information on WELL ratings, see pgs 26-29). These projects illustrate the true nature of development – a process that's never complete, looping back on itself over time.

Each building refurbished over the last 20 years has been unique in design and size, with its own quirks, challenges, opportunities and stories emerging from the refurbishment process. The development process can sometimes seem slow in the moment, but it also offers great opportunities for learning how to become more sustainable along the way.



2011
Britomart
Carpark opens.

2017
Cooper and
Company
adopts a formal
Sustainability
Framework.



2017
Australis Nathan
Buildings 12
refurbishment
is completed.

OCT 2020
The Hotel Britomart 13, a 10-storey hotel of 99 guest rooms and 5 suites, opens. The hotel is New Zealand's first 5 Green Star hotel, as certified by the New Zealand Green Building Council, and constructed to high standards of thermal comfort and water and energy use. The heritage Buckland Masonic Building 14 adjoining the hotel and housing some of the hotel's facilities is also opened after refurbishment.



DEC 2022
The refurbished
Hayman Kronfeld
Building 15 is
opened.



OCT 2023
The Wharf Police
Building, which
had been sold to
another developer
during the dissolution
of the Bluewater
Consortium, comes
back into Cooper
and Company
management.



DEC 2023
The refurbished
Kiwi Tavern
Building 16 is
reopened.

INTERVIEW

“With any heritage building, you can plan for as much as possible, but inevitably there are always hidden challenges”.

Above the soaring lobby of Auckland’s Chief Post Office building – now the nexus of the city’s rail network – are three floors of office space under refurbishment to 5 Green Star and WELL Gold standards. Development manager Deidre Gourlay talks about the changes inside this grand heritage structure and how sustainability is being built into them.

Auckland’s Chief Post Office Building (CPO) was designed in the Imperial Baroque style by Claude Paton with government architect John Campbell, and opened with much fanfare by Prime Minister William Massey in 1912. It served as the city’s main post office until the 1990s, when it was transformed to the Britomart Transport Centre as rail was brought back to the central city. Now the office floors above the station entrance are being renovated to celebrate the building’s heritage features.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Hi Deidre. Could you tell me what your role is at Cooper and Company and how you’re involved with the Chief Post Office refurbishment project?

DEIDRE GOURLAY I’m a development manager for Cooper and Company, where I oversee everything from the initial planning stages to finishing touches of our development projects. My role is to ensure the project stays on track, on budget and delivered to a high standard – essentially turning our vision into a reality, if you like. Right now, my focus is on the Chief Post Office Building refurbishment that we’re undertaking for a very important incoming tenant. I feel incredibly fortunate to be involved in a heritage building refurbishment as special as this one and lucky to be working with Campbell Williamson [Cooper and Company’s development director],

the internal Cooper and Company team and a very talented design and construction group to create a dynamic and special workspace for its future occupants.

MELINDA WILLIAMS The Chief Post Office, or CPO, has a long history of refurbishments and alterations. Are you able to talk briefly through what has already been done to the building, and what’s happening in this phase of development?

DEIDRE GOURLAY So, from 1912 until the early 1990s, the Chief Post Office for the country operated out of this building. In the early 2000s council chose to transform the Britomart area into a transport hub and set about converting the lower level of the building into an underground train station. As you can imagine, there were significant alterations undertaken including a major structural upgrade.

Then around 2004 Cooper and Company took over a long-term lease of the upper floors of the CPO and undertook significant works to return those floors to lettable office space following a long period of vacancy and deterioration within the building. This refurbishment involved engagement with Heritage New Zealand and the Auckland Council heritage team. I think back then the heritage approach was, if you’re adding anything new to the building it needed to be distinctive from the heritage features and so

there was a lot of stainless steel and glass incorporated into the building as modern additions.

Between 2017 and 2021, the CPO was closed again for the City Rail Link (CRL) works, which involved extending the train tunnels underneath the building to connect the link. So the poor old dame was looking a little tired come 2024. This latest refurbishment is to re-reveal her character, to create a beautiful office space, but then to also put in some modern additions to ensure that the office space is fit for purpose for the next 20 or 30 years, along with further structural upgrading.

Due to the CPO’s Category One heritage listing, the highest threshold for heritage conservation, our design looks to transform the space into a vibrant sustainable workspace while celebrating her unique character – stripping away a lot of materials that have been added along the way, revealing original features such as the timber flooring, high ceilings and cornices. We’re also activating some areas that haven’t previously been occupied, like a rooftop terrace that will have amazing views over the city and a lightwell located in the middle of the building with beautiful stained-glass domes that sit in the floor of that space filtering light down into the train station below. We’re converting this area into a wintergarden, which is exciting.



MELINDA WILLIAMS This renovation and refurbishment is targeting both a 5 Green Star rating from the New Zealand Green Building Council and a WELL Gold rating from the International WELL Building Institute. What do each of those systems mean you need to consider during the development process?

DEIDRE GOURLAY When you’re aiming for both a 5 Green Star rating and a WELL Gold rating, you’re essentially looking at two different but complementary sets of criteria focused on sustainability and human health. For Green Star, that’s a Design and Construction As Built rating system certified through the New Zealand Green Building Council. What it does is put sustainability in the forefront of our minds for all decisions that we make, including things like replacing building services for more energy-efficient systems and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing indoor air quality, efficient water management, the use of sustainable low-emission materials that can be recycled or recyclable such as the reuse

of native timbers, and choosing low VOC [Volatile Organic Compound] paints. We’re also implementing a construction and operational waste management plan, including diverting demolition waste from landfill by more than 70 percent, which is a great story.

For WELL certification it’s all about how the built form can improve the health and wellbeing of its occupants, so it’s similar to Green Star in that the focus is on air, water and light quality, acoustic and thermal comfort, with the addition of mind, nourishment and fitness.

MELINDA WILLIAMS And what does the WELL Gold rating involve? Does it cross over much with Green Star?

DEIDRE GOURLAY Both aim to create healthier, more sustainable buildings but WELL focuses on occupant health while Green Star focuses on environmental sustainability. In a WELL certification there are a number of initiatives that cover air quality, water quality, thermal comfort, lighting movement, nourishment, sound, mind, community and materials. There are a

number of operational processes and procedures we put in place to maintain a WELL rating – such as regular air and water testing, acoustic and lighting comfort assessments and cleaning protocols. This ensures that the building continues to be a healthy and great place to work for its occupants.

From an architectural design perspective, we are designing wellness rooms into each floor, which allow for a range of activities and functions. This could be a parents’ room or a mothers’ room, so there will be a sink and fridge. It could be a prayer room or meditation room. It’s available for the occupiers to use how they see fit to support wellbeing. We have also designed gender-neutral bathrooms, which is a great step towards inclusivity. And to enhance the connection with the natural light and environment, Cheshire Architects have reimaged



The redevelopment of the CPO Building is being designed by Cheshire Architects and includes the addition of a new roof terrace (above) and a wintergarden in a former light well (right).



the central light well within the CPO building to be a wintergarden space for the enjoyment of its occupiers.

MELINDA WILLIAMS You mentioned waste reduction is an important consideration – what are you doing to manage the reduction of waste to landfill?

DEIDRE GOURLAY We're working with Bracewell Construction as our construction partners, and they have brought on board Greenway Demolition and Green Gorilla. Both companies focus on collecting, separating and recycling waste product to reduce the amount of construction waste going to landfill. They're doing some great things. You'll see on site they compartmentalise the types of waste which then gets sorted at Green Gorilla's depot. They have their own waste processing facility where the building material is separated, so steel goes off to a specialised steel recycling plant, as does the glass and so on. But then they also have their own processing of Gib board, where the gypsum is extracted and made

into fertiliser, and untreated timber converted to woodchip to go into gardens, which is great.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Could you describe what's happening in the light well space?

DEIDRE GOURLAY Cheshire Architects have an amazing vision for the conservation and restoration of the CPO. Included in their thoughtful design is the activation of a light well which is situated in the middle of the building providing natural light to the office spaces and the Britomart train station below via some beautiful lead light domes. This will be a three-storey

wintergarden with fresh air, trees, and plants, which can be used as a central hub for informal meetings and relaxation. It's an all-weather space with a glass roof to keep the Auckland weather at bay. I can't wait to see it finished.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Have you encountered any major challenges during the course of the refurbishment?

DEIDRE GOURLAY With any heritage building, you can plan for as much as possible, but inevitably there are hidden challenges you can't possibly foresee until you're underway on site.



You name it, we've found it, from exposing damaged floorboards after pulling up the carpets, pockets of hazardous substances, some further structural upgrading needed and roof leaks. Luckily we have a great number of experts who have assisted us in solving these issues. 'Solutions not problems' has been my favourite saying so far on this project!

MELINDA WILLIAMS The construction industry has traditionally been a fairly male-dominated place, but something that's interesting about this project is that you have a number of women involved. Could you talk about some of the women who are involved in different ways on this project?
DEIDRE GOURLAY Yes, the design team have a number of experienced and emerging women on the project, which has been really great to see. Our architects, Pam Sando and Lucy Hayes-Stevenson from Cheshire Architects, are our lead project

designers. Pam brings a depth of design experience and Lucy is a heritage architect specialist, so her involvement has been invaluable in terms of understanding what needs to be done to look after the CPO from a heritage conservation perspective. Pamela Dziwulska from Salmond Reed Architects is also assisting as our heritage architect, providing specialist advice on the preservation of the building's heritage features. At Norman Disney Young, we have Taja Canlas and Yun Zhou as project engineers and Renee Young, an associate director, who oversees and signs off on the mechanical design. Kimberly Dennis and Sofie Andersson are our fire engineers from Holmes Fire, and Natalie Morrison from Holmes Structure. And there's a number of others as well who are working on the project in the background. So it's great to have a strong team like this in what is, as you say, quite a male-dominated industry.

The development team on the CPO project features a large number of women, a sign of progress in a male-dominated industry. From left: Reesie Devoe, Alyssa Tan and Taja Canlas from NDY, Sofie Andersson and Kimberly Dennis from Holmes Fire, Deidre Gourlay, Natalie Morrison from Holmes Structure, Pamela Dziwulska from Salmond Reed, Lucy Hayes-Stevenson and Pam Sando from Cheshire Architects, and Renee Young from NDY.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Is this something that you've seen slowly change over time or do you think there's been a more recent big step forward?
DEIDRE GOURLAY I think it has been evolving over time but there has been a noticeable shift in recent years, helped along by a push towards more gender diversity and educational opportunities. There's just a lot more support out there for women in this industry, which I think is fantastic. There's probably still a bit of work to do on the on-site construction side of things, but certainly with the design team, yeah, it's girl power.

INTERVIEW

“It’s tricky when you’re refurbishing old buildings because you don’t want to make it too perfect.”

Development manager Dave Bensley discusses the balancing act of bringing new life to Britomart’s Maritime Building, originally built in the 1940s.

The gracious three-story Art Deco Maritime Building was built in the 1940s. It was designed by renowned architect BC Chilwell, who in partnership with Cecil Trevithick was behind many iconic Auckland buildings, including the Ferry Building, Myers Park Kindergarten, the Endeans Building and the original Nestle Factory that was later transformed into the Axis Building in Parnell. A series of modifications in the 1950s and 1970s altered the original façade and added a third storey. The building was the headquarters for Cooper and Company’s operations as the regeneration of Britomart began 20 years ago. This year, an extensive refurbishment restored the Maritime Building to its former glory.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Dave, you’re a development manager at Cooper and Company – which is headquartered at the Maritime Building – and you oversaw the building’s refurbishment this year. What were the main areas that needed to be upgraded and why?
DAVE BENSLEY The Maritime Building has always been a great building, but there were a few quirky elements that we had the opportunity to tidy up. The roof had leaks and we had hatches everywhere in the top-floor ceiling so we could silicone up the leaky holes. It wasn’t the best way to operate. Putting on a new roof also provided an opportunity for us to insulate it properly. The parapet was an old ‘70s Mansard roof made from corrugated iron, which was architecturally not that great and needed a change to tie in with the rest of the building. The lift

and stairs hadn’t been upgraded in a long time and there were some layout changes that needed to happen for the way that we work and bring better efficiencies. The reason for the timing was that we didn’t have any other big projects running in the precinct and we had some other space available, so it was a great opportunity for the Cooper and Company team to vacate the building and go ‘camping’ so we could fix the roof and leaks at our HQ.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Since a new roof was part of the project, was introducing solar power a consideration?
DAVE BENSLEY We looked at that quite long and hard as there’s a cost-benefit analysis that you want to do on it versus the idea that adding solar is just the right thing to do. A lot of time, effort, energy, money and material resources go into putting solar panels up. So, you have to ask, “Would we be doing all this just to feel good about ourselves?” We had numerous schemes done and actually, the answer turned out to be, “Yes.” There’s a massive building right next to Maritime House that blocks all the afternoon sun. We only really get sun in the morning, so the modeling just didn’t stack up. The roof is also quite small and you really need a large roof space to make solar work. We spent a bit of money up front, but it turned out that this particular building wasn’t suited for it.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Having put in better ceiling insulation, do you expect to improve the building’s efficiency?
DAVE The insulation that they’d

previously put in was very light. You wouldn’t even put that insulation in a house these days. The new insulation is very thick and now satisfies the latest code requirements, so we would expect that the heating and cooling usage for the building should diminish because it will be a more stable environment inside. We won’t have to heat it up a lot in winter and conversely, in summer, it won’t get too hot so that you don’t have to cool it down so much. There’s a lot of concrete in that building, but there’s also a lot of glass, and it’s single pane glass. So that’s the tension. You do lose warmth through there, so you’re never going to get it perfect. Overall, there will be a reduction in the power usage.

MELINDA WILLIAMS One of the issues the sustainability team was hoping the refurbishment would address was improving the internal air quality as part of work towards gaining a WELL Performance certification for the building. Were you able to achieve an improvement?
DAVE BENSLEY We had the air monitoring installed prior to the refurbishment so we’ve got some data from then. And now that we’ve got the building fully done, fully insulated and finished, we’ll have new data to compare it against. There’s a tension with these heritage buildings in that it’s difficult to make them airtight so that the inside atmosphere can be fully controlled. Being airtight has got its pluses, but it’s also got its minuses. The minuses are, for example, not being able to just open up a window and feel the fresh sea breeze blow in. On the plus side though, we don’t want that all



the time because Quay Street can be pretty busy sometimes with its traffic externality. So, it’s a compromise when we’re doing up these old buildings, and we have to try and make up those gaps as best we can.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Were there any other major considerations for the project?
DAVE BENSLEY I’m quite big on making sure everyone comes along for the ride and all the stakeholders involved have a say in what they want. Because there’s no point getting to the end and someone going, “Well, what about this?” Or, “Wish you’d done that.” One of the big stakeholders was our facilities management (FM) team. The reality is that the development team manages the build at the front end, but we hand the keys over to the facilities team at the end. So, if the FM team hasn’t been involved with the design of



The Maritime Building (top) after refurbishment. Photo by Samuel Hartnett. The project was led by Dave Bensley (above). Photo by Jinki Cambroner.

the inner mechanical and electrical and hydraulics through the build process, that’s a missed opportunity. When you have got the walls and the roof open, they can see where all the pipes and cables etc are. I oversaw it all, but I made sure I gave good autonomy to the facilities team to run those parts of the project to get the best outcome for us. We ensured the FM team was across all these issues so it made for a collaborative approach to the project. Another group I want to give credit to is the team at Alma, the restaurant on the ground floor of the building. They had to work with us while we did up the building. We planned things on the redevelopment to accommodate them as best we could and I take my hat off to Jo and Tash who had to manage that refurbishment situation with us.



The Maritime Building in the early 1990s (far left) and today (left). The refurbishment celebrates the building's original curves (right), and included the addition of a hand-crafted lift interior (below). Photos by Samuel Hartnett.



MELINDA WILLIAMS The internal circulation core of the lift and stairwell also had an upgrade. Could you talk those through?

DAVE We re-plastered and painted, all of the plastered walls, all of the dado lines throughout and installed new heritage-style marmoleum flooring, which was nice. It's tricky when you're refurbishing old buildings because you don't want to make it too perfect. That's actually not what this is about. It's an old building that needs to show its character, like a distinguished person with lines on their face and that's a good thing. So it's knowing what to tidy up and refresh and knowing what to leave and express.

MELINDA WILLIAMS The interior of the lift is obviously modern, but it also harks back to a mamaku-style pattern that appears in several places around Britomart, including the wood panelling at The Libraries in The Hotel Britomart. Who crafted it?

DAVE BENSLEY Wood panelling is a big thing that we have throughout the building, so really it was about going, "How can we take a timber panel but do something a little bit special?" The

first sketches were quite heartening of a wonderful little timber jewel. And so I was thinking, "What we're going to need is a craftsman." I reached out to a few different people that I knew. I knew one gentleman, Henry Lin, who absolutely loves wood and timber and quite liked the challenge of the project. He texted me saying, "I think I can save you a bit of money by automating it." Which meant he was wanting to do it on an auto lathe. But what we wanted was him to do it with a chisel: chiseling these scallops out of one piece of timber is craftsmanship. So, we asked him to carry on with the chisel and he said, "I'll come back to you when my wrist gets sore!" He then burst out laughing.

It was quite wonderful when he completed it all by hand. The beauty is when you look closely, there are some mistakes, and you know what? That's actually good, we didn't want it perfect, that's the art form of it. Then the bluestone floor puts a nice solid foundation on the lift that flows through from the lobby and from outside. There is a Britomart language that we like to use, and this was an expression of that.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Most building projects at Britomart today are Green Star-rated projects but this was a much smaller job and not suitable for that. But were there aspects of how you approached, for example, waste management, that drew on our Green Star experience?

DAVE BENSLEY Yes there was. We actually used the same building contractor that we used for the Kiwi Building, which was a Green Star project and a lot of those practices we took straight over to our Maritime project. Waste separation, taking it to the right refuse disposal centers, recycling where we could, sourcing eco products where appropriate, the types of paint that we used to give us a good sustainable project while under refurbishment as well as a long term sustainable building for the works we had done.

MELINDA WILLIAMS The Maritime Building isn't heritage listed, but you've had a tradition of working with Heritage New Zealand on non-listed projects. Was that also the case with this one?

DAVE BENSLEY Yes, absolutely, with

both Heritage New Zealand and the heritage department from Auckland Council. We always let them know when we are refurbishing, and we really engage with them very early on in the concept stage before it even goes to consent, they have seen what we are planning, the ideas, the sketchbooks. We then get an early steer on whether we are on the right path and we can walk that early journey together to get the best outcome.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Looking at old photos of the Maritime Building, I can see that the name of the building has been restored, but it's moved from the Quay Street facade to the Gore Street facade.

DAVE BENSLEY That's right, and there was a lot of discussion about that. On

the whole, Heritage New Zealand like to work from a purist point of view, what things were like at the very beginning. However sometimes you can propose a different approach and to give them credit they do understand that the commercial realities need to be taken into account and that forms part of our discussions.

The Australis Nathan Building is a perfect example. The front door addresses of those buildings used to be on Customs Street 100-plus years ago because that was where all the custom was. That's not the case anymore. Now it's all on the north side, the Galway Street side, the sunny side of the building and they allowed us to make design changes to facilitate this – respect to them.

So it was the same sort of thing with

the Maritime Building. Quay Street is busy but how many people walk down Quay Street and look up with a bent neck to see the name of the building? A few, but not many. How many people sit in Takutai Square and look up at Maritime? That would be a lot. Things have changed, and they recognised that. So we pitched moving the building name and they agreed with it. That planning side is really important; giving time for people to mull through ideas.

MELINDA WILLIAMS What aspects were you personally pleased with?

DAVE BENSLEY I really liked the bespoke plaster render on the parapet and its final form with its curved edges and flashings. When you look back at it from Takutai Square, it's got this tonality in the sunlight which is really hard to achieve. The plasterers did such an amazing job. I also really enjoyed the project and build team. There were so many different trades who all turned up and created a really good vibe as everyone bought into the vision of the place. And I was also pretty happy to have fixed the leak above my desk after 17 or 18 years; I don't have to worry about a bucket on my windowsill anymore! But my highlight is the lift. The little brass curves that surround the handrail and how the pin-size downlights light up the scallops in the timber walnut paneling is quite magic. It's a small little piece of joinery really, but quite lovely. It was a great collective team effort.

Our 2025 Goals

Mana Whakahaere Governance

To prepare Britomart's Scope 3 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reporting to be ready for the 2024/25 financial year, reporting in 2026.

To write a Modern Slavery policy and evaluate Britomart's current supply chain against it.

To create a green certification transition plan for Britomart's buildings, covering Green Star and NABERSNZ ratings, aimed at maintaining the precinct's green accreditations that support its Sustainable Finance Agreement.

Te Tangata People and Culture

To create two events and related content around the topic of social connection in workplaces (and workplace loneliness) and invite Britomart lease partners to use these events to encourage social connection in their spaces.

Te Taiao Environment

To produce one art project and content series that focuses on raising awareness around ocean health.

To collaborate with Trees That Count for this year's Greening the City event.





The Australis Nathan Building on Galway Street. Photographs by Jessica Gernat.

Te Tāngata People and Culture

At Britomart we work hard to foster connections between people and place with a social sustainability programme featuring art, performance, music and other events. Our theory is that people will be more inclined to live sustainably if they value each other and the places they share. This section of the report covers some of the highlights of social sustainability efforts.

Takutai Square, Britomart's central gathering space, is a focus for many social sustainability events and activations. Photo by Jinki Cambroner.





Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Festival
Street performances, from comedic acrobats to open-to-all line dancing, livened up Takutai Square during the summer arts festival.

As part of the 18-day Auckland Festival, Britomart played host to Street Beats, a series of free events programmed by festival organisers. Latin and line dancers showcased their skills in Takutai Square, Anua Dance Troupe performed traditional Cook Island drumming, the Undergrand outdoor piano brought classical and pop tunes to lunchtime audiences, Jessie McCall and Unitec Dance performed a contemporary dance work called Industry Party (below) and the Biggest Little Circus (above) amused and amazed an enthusiastic crowd of kids and adults with their acrobatic swing skills.



Photos by Jinki Cambroner.



World Choir Games
Takutai Square came alive with the sound of music.

The World Choir Games is the largest global choral competition, with vocalists in choirs from all over the world sharing their love of music through a diverse range of musical styles. The 2024 WCG took place in Auckland and to celebrate, Britomart worked with organisers to host a series of Friendship Concerts – free, informal and fun lunchtime musical performances by choral groups from Australia, Canada, China and New Zealand.



Pocket Market
A selection of artisanal products nestled in a pocket of Britomart.

The Pocket Market is a seasonal market held in Takutai Square that celebrates local artisans and producers, offering them ways to connect with new customers. The market, which was held three times in 2024, features local designers, artisans and craftspeople selling products from ceramics and tea to soaps, food and flowers.

Photo by Jinki Cambroner.



Auckland Pride
Artist Peter Wing Seeto brought intimate portraits to Britomart's Pavilion Panels.

Throughout February and March, the works of Peter Wing Seeto (they/them) ringed the Pavilions on our display panels. Peter (top) is a queer multidisciplinary maker who hails from the archipelago of Vanuatu, although these days they are based in Papatoetoe, Tāmaki Makaurau. Their practice focuses on imagery shot on film. For Pride 2024, Britomart featured a range of Peter's photographs in which their friends presented themselves – or amplified, aspirational versions of themselves – for the camera (one of these images is shown above).

Photo by Geoff Matautia.



Undergrand
More than 20 pianists took to the keys as an adjunct to the Auckland Fringe Festival.

Alongside the Auckland Fringe Festival (a celebration of the best of Auckland's independent and unconventional arts scene), Britomart curated a line-up of local pianists to take weekday crowds on a musical journey. Over the course of five days in mid-September, the Undergrand baby grand piano was played outdoors in Takutai Square or in the Atrium on Takutai by players of all ages, from budding 10-year-old virtuosos to international concert pianists and teachers. At each lunchtime (and one evening) showcase, pianists took their turn at the keys, performing live renditions of baroque, chamber, classical, pop, jazz, and Latin pieces.

Photos above and right by Geoff Matautia.

Britomart Cocktail Hour
Using complimentary cocktails and complementary live music as a tool for connection.

Britomart Cocktail Hour is a simple invitation for people to connect in Takutai Square over free (and alcohol-free) drinks, with bartenders serving non-alcoholic Seedlip spirits with locally made mixers from a colourful cocktail trolley custom-designed by theatre and exhibition designer Micheal McCabe. Westpac's tap-and-go terminals allowed people to donate to the Auckland City Mission and the Breast Cancer Research Trust. Local DJs Fraze, Mala, Rain Katayanagi and Maniac Milli supported the giveaways, elevating the experience with fun and mellow tunes for people to listen to on the Takutai Square lawn or at communal tables.





The Photographer of the Year panels on Galway Street (top, photo by Geoffery Matautia); a photo by portrait category finalist Joe Harrison (middle); a photo by wildlife category finalist Jason Grant (bottom).

NZ Geographic Photographer of the Year
New Zealand's best photographers shared the spotlight in Britomart.

For the past four years, Britomart has worked with New Zealand Geographic magazine (whose team is Britomart-based) to exhibit the finalists of their annual Photographer of the Year awards. The competition was established to create a space for local photographers to gain greater recognition for their work, and this year, judges combed through more than 6000 entries. Our large-scale panels throughout Te Ara Tahuu and the Atrium on Takutai in October and November displayed a series of Wildlife, Portrait, Built Environment and Aerial award category entries, where passersby could also vote for the People's Choice winner.



Bersatu Malaysia Carnival
A taste of Malaysia to accompany the 2024 Bersatu Games in Auckland.

The Bersatu Games is a sporting tournament in which Malaysian students from around New Zealand come together to compete. To celebrate the games, Britomart worked with student volunteers to host the Bersatu Carnival, a day-long event that brought a sense of Malaysia's rich heritage to downtown Auckland, with authentic Malaysian food, batik workshops, cultural performances and cooking demonstrations held in Takutai Square. This free winter event drew large crowds to Takutai Square.



Photos by David St George.

Coffee and Pastry Giveaways
Keeping Britomart well-fuelled with free coffee and treat giveaways.

Conscious of cost-of-living challenges and the need to reinvigorate the central city, Britomart marked the winter solstice with a straightforward series of warm and delicious freebies to help kick the winter blues and encourage more people to head into the city. Double Dutch Fries parked their food truck in the square one Wednesday lunchtime, handing out 700 cones of free fries to long and sociable queues while DJ Fraze played tunes. We followed this with a morning giveaway of 600 Amano almond croissants. The in-person connection these simple events offer is palpable, with friends organising to attend them together and sharing their experiences on social media.

To spread some end-of-week cheer to the local community, we hosted six Free Coffee Friday giveaways in partnership with Espresso Workshop, and repeated our Reusable Coffee offer on the International Day of Climate Action in October (this was accompanied by a free low-carbon breakfast served by the team at All Good bananas and oat milk). In late August, we ran a special Daffodil Day Free Coffee Friday to collect donations for Cancer Society Auckland: for every cup we gave away, one dollar was donated.



Free almond croissants from Amano to mark the winter solstice (above and right); while free Double Dutch fries were given out the same week (below left). Free coffee activations throughout the year offer simple social opportunities. Photos by Geoffery Matautia.



People queuing for free fries with Double Dutch (above), and for free low carbon breakfasts in Takutai Square (right). Photos by Geoffery Matautia.





Auckland Writers Festival Waituhi O Tāmaki
 Britomart played host to a fast-paced, fun evening of literary hijinks.

Streetside: Britomart is a cornerstone of the Auckland Writers Festival Waituhi o Tāmaki. This year's event saw more than 30 poets, musicians, performers, authors and artists show up at locations across Britomart for a series of free, high-energy performances, talks and readings (above and above right). Book fans arrived in their hundreds to dash from event to event, catching their favourite writers and discovering new ones. At the same time, visitors could check out a poetry series entitled *Voices from the Pacific* on the Pavilion Panels, where young Pacific artists voiced their concerns about climate change's effects on their ancestral homes. The panels were designed by Samoan New Zealand graphic designer Aitken Hawkins (right), and featured a repeated motif of gogo terns, a symbol of hope and change.

Photos by David St George, portrait by Geoffery Matautia.



Takutai Live
 As summer approached, local musicians brought live vibes to lunchtime.

In spring, Britomart celebrated local musicians by staging free lunchtime performances in Takutai Square. From October and early November, Auckland performers including MayJun, Sam V, GreatSouth (left) and Spdrtwnbby (pronounced Spidertownbaby) – showcased their diverse musical styles for the enjoyment of midday crowds lounging on the beanbags or eating at picnic tables.

Photo by Jinki Cambroner.



Dance Battles
 Street dance showdowns for Britomart Backyard Battles.

In February, March, April, May, October and November, Britomart partnered with dance collective Projekt Team to bring a series of live street dance battles to Takutai Square. At each battle, a panel of judges and Friday-night crowds gathered to see freestyle dancers of all ages competing to be the night's champion. Spectators were treated to a variety of styles, including street dance, popping, krump and open style.

Photo by Geoffery Matautia.



K-Pop Sundays
 A fun and inclusive dance group brings K-Pop to Britomart on Sundays.

Throughout February, March, June, October and November, the New Zealand Korean Dance Association brought their dance routines to Takutai Square with monthly K-Pop Sundays – a series of fun and lively K-Pop events where fans of the genre get involved in Random Dance Play (a popular game where participants jump in to dance if they know the choreography of a K-Pop song). As a genre, Korean Pop has a real focus on choreography and teamwork, making it a fun and easy way to connect with other fans through dance and community. In 2024, NZKDA held 10 Random Dance Play sessions in the square, with sessions continuing through the summer.

Dancers do the moves to their favourite K-Pop hits in Takutai Square (left and above left). Photos by Geoff Matautia.



Late Night Art

Britomart staged a special series of dance vignettes for this city-wide celebration of creativity.

Late Night Art is an annual event organised by Heart of the City, the central city business association. This year for the event Britomart worked with Projekt Team to present Ko Au: He Pō, a dance performance blending street dance, traditional movement and contemporary dance to create bite-sized short performance pieces about the search for identity, drawing large crowds to Takutai Square and Te Ara Tahuu. Projekt Team is a South Auckland-based dance collective that aims to create welcoming spaces where street dancers can meet up and learn from others in the community.



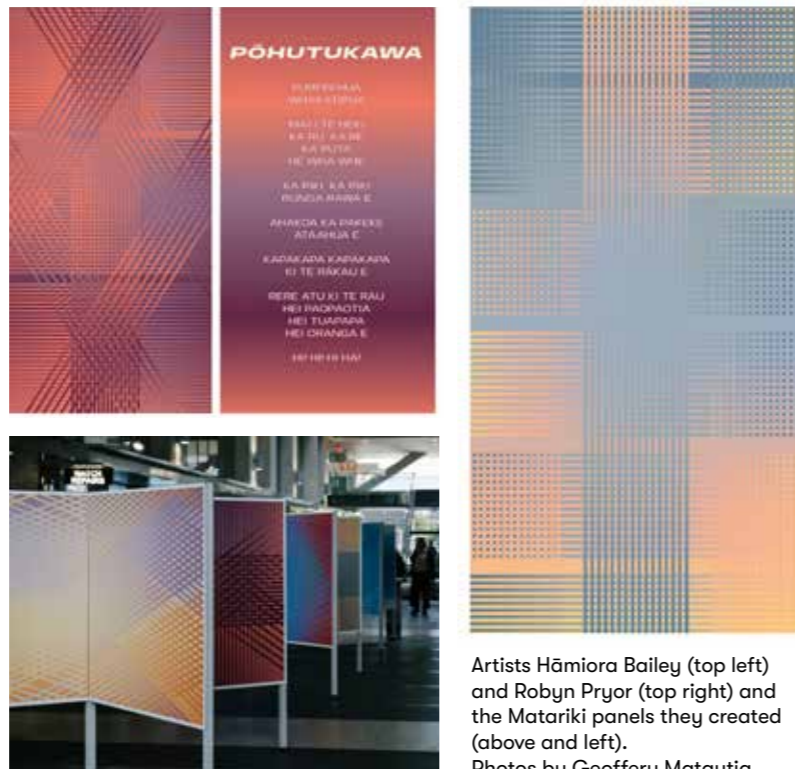
Photos by Jinki Cambronero.



Kua Tirama!

A Matariki exhibition represented the nine stars of the cluster, paired with affirmations for those who looked towards them.

To celebrate the Māori new year, Britomart invited artists Hāmiora Bailey and Robyn Pryor to create a series of artworks for our Pavilion and Atrium panels. Their simple but striking graphic works represented the stars of the Matariki cluster; and each was accompanied by an affirmation in Te Reo Māori and English for stargazers to ponder as they looked towards the sky. For Hāmiora and Robyn, the project was a way for them to explore their ongoing tuakana-teina relationship, where an elder mentors a younger person, and the younger person shares their own knowledge and perspective with the elder.



Artists Hāmiora Bailey (top left) and Robyn Pryor (top right) and the Matariki panels they created (above and left). Photos by Geoffery Matautia.

Kapa Haka

A celebration of Te Reo Māori through exceptional rangatahi performances.

To celebrate Matariki and Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori, Britomart hosted a series of kapa haka and waiata performances in Takutai Square. Talented students from James Cook High School's Te Kapunga and Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi Marae (right) brought out big lunchtime crowds. Videos of the kapa haka performers proved a TikTok hit, gathering over three million views this year.

Photos by David St George.



Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi Marae careers orientation

Our workplace orientation programme connected Britomart businesses with rangatahi from one of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland's first full-immersion Te Reo Māori schools.

For the third year running, Britomart has worked with the high school at Hoani Waititi Marae to offer its students a careers orientation programme aimed at giving them insights into a wide range of career and tertiary education options. The first part of the programme involved introducing students to Britomart businesses in a series of workshops that outlined possible career paths in particular industries. The participants included fashion designer Karen Walker, Comensa Group (owners of Café Hanoi, Ghost Street and Perch), interior design firm Tailor Inc., business advisory group EY, and Westpac. In the second phase of the programme, five Hoani Waititi students elected to take work placements at EY and Café Hanoi for one day a week for six weeks. The programme is continuing to evolve, and will be offered to students again in 2025.



Photos by David St George.

CASE STUDY

This is our place: charting a new future for the central city

A slew of challenges for the central city – including deteriorating security and a reduction in pedestrian numbers – prompted a research project into the city’s potential as seen through the eyes of its residents.

Auckland’s central city – like many of its global counterparts – hit a rough patch sometime after Covid lockdowns, as the acceleration of flexible working practices and the country’s closed borders took their toll on central city retail and hospitality. In central Auckland, this coincided with ongoing waves of construction disruption as streets were dug up for work on the City Rail Link.

It is true that violent crime and theft rose (these increases are now being reversed) and office occupancy dropped – but the way these incidents were framed in the media made it seem as if the central city was a wasteland that people entered at their own risk. The reality was that while the central city had its challenges, it remained a rewarding place to work and gather in person.

Britomart’s response to a wave of negative stories in early 2024 was to ask questions of the people who know Auckland’s central city best: its residents. ‘This is our place’ was a collection of 17 interviews with central city residents that asked them about safety and security, the advantages and disadvantages of living downtown, and how they regarded the central city’s future.

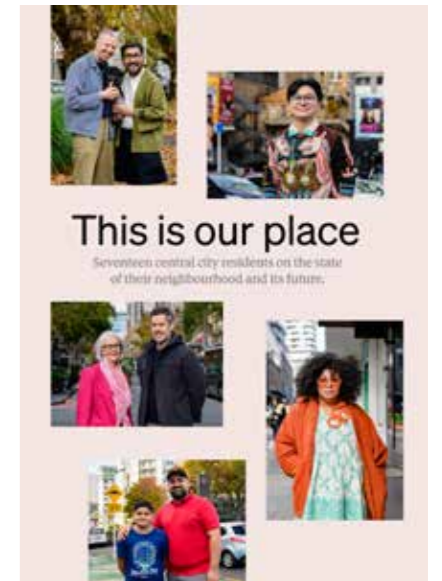
The interviews covered a wide range of residents, including students and creatives, hospitality workers and business owners, old and young, recent immigrants and long-term central city dwellers. Their opinions about the central city were rich in their variety, but remarkably clear in some commonly held beliefs: that Auckland’s downtown area was not broken, that it remains a vibrant place in which



Central city residents Nathan Joe (top); Stuart Houghton and Kier Ibanez (above left and right); Ken Lee, Nur Athirah Mohd Nor and Izzat Naim Zulkifile (left to right). Photos by Jinki Cambroner.

to live, work and connect, and that the things that need to change are achievable.

The interviews were published on Britomart’s website (and shared with The Spinoff) and in a free publication available in the Atrium on Takutai. All in all, the project served as a reminder to readers and to city leaders to remember that the central city is not a theoretical place, but a home to more than 40,000, as well as being an economic and cultural engine on whose success the entire country depends.



Central Auckland scenes by Samuel Hartnett; the publication’s cover; central city resident Cathy Veninga (below) and Auckland City Missioner - Manutaki Helen Robinson (below right). Portraits by Jinki Cambroner.



INTERVIEW

“We need to be creating beauty because ultimately, that's what people want and deserve.”



Frith Walker is the Head of Placemaking at Eke Panuku, the Auckland Council agency tasked with the regeneration of Auckland's central city – an area that has had its challenges due to construction disruption, a retail downturn, and the acceleration of flexible working. Here, she talks about the importance of the city's “third places” such as Takutai Square and their fundamental role in the central city.

JEREMY HANSEN Central cities all over the world have been facing some unique challenges with the acceleration of flexible working practices. That's created a stronger focus on the amenities that central cities offer, including public squares and gathering places, which are sometimes known as “third places”. Could you begin by explaining what a third place is?

FRITH WALKER A third place means there are two other places, which are work and home. So a third place is neither of those things – not a workplace or a home, but something in between, like a library or a public space. What's different now is that our work isn't necessarily something that is just nine to five, and our homes aren't necessarily separate from our work. So third places are now spaces that support those other two aspects of our lives. If I'm in the city, where do I go to meet someone? Third places are like the glue that connects us: parks, civic squares, and libraries, of course.

JEREMY HANSEN Are third places like public squares more important amenities than they used to be?

FRITH WALKER The more digital our lives become, the more we desperately need real human contact. How do we know how to be good citizens? How do we remember our responsibility to our fellow people? Third places are shared,

so they're the places where you explore the answers to those questions almost unconsciously, where you bump into people and have to negotiate or navigate your way around a crowded place.

A lot of our lived experience at the moment is scrolling on our phones. If we wonder why we are sad or distracted or alone or stressed all the time, we're actually not living a life that is good for our heads or our hearts. There are social cues that only come from hanging out with another human being. We need to build community and connections, and third spaces create those opportunities to get to know other human beings. We're talking about social glue and how we hold together as a community.

JEREMY HANSEN Where does the design of these places come in?

FRITH WALKER It's about designing spaces that connect people, but also connect the city as a whole. The design needs to help the people who use it care about it, and therefore look after it. Just plonking award-winning pretty things into space without thinking about how they serve a community isn't necessarily going to work. You have to think about the ongoing care of them, you have to programme them to give people reasons to connect.

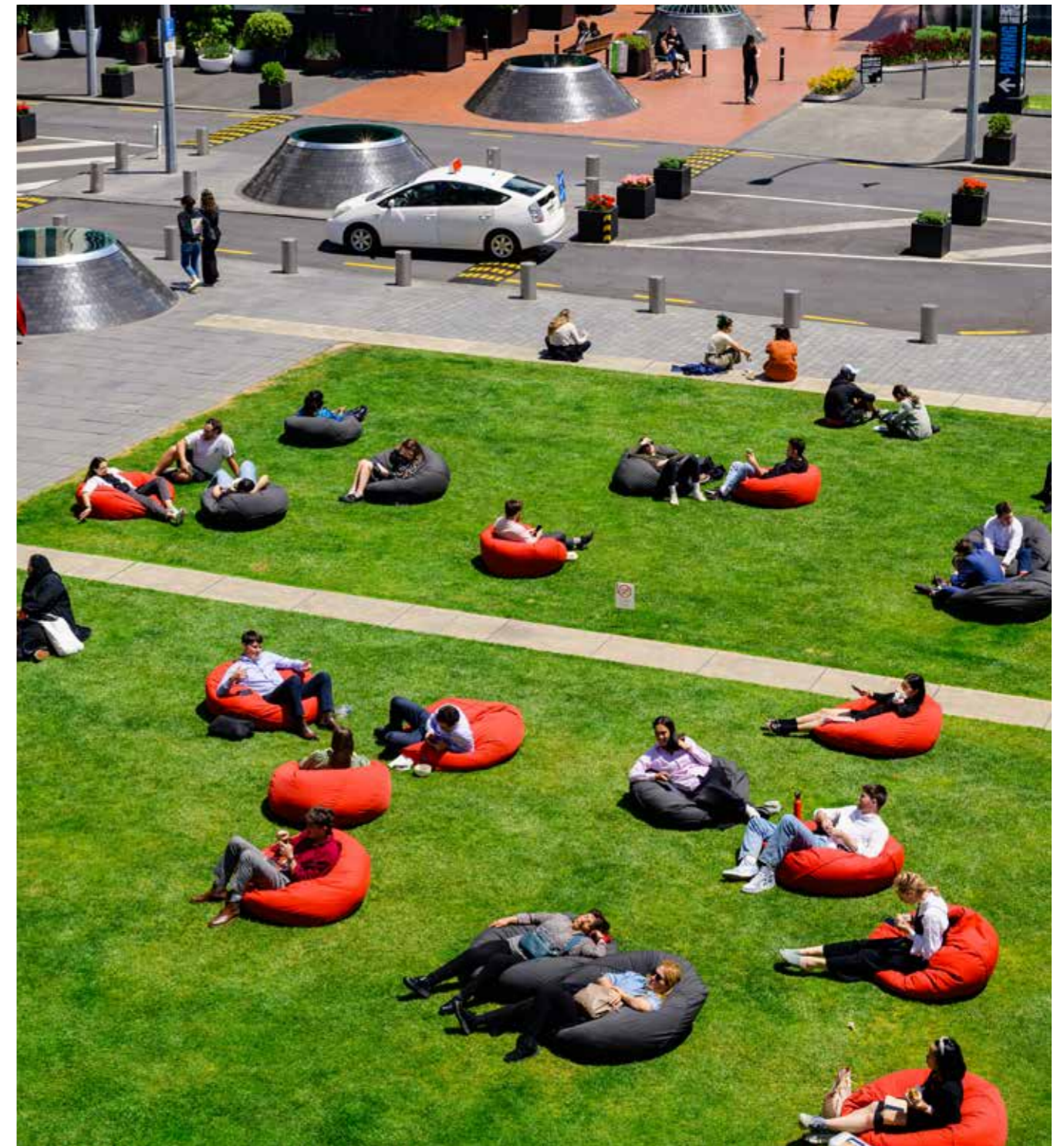
JEREMY HANSEN There's a great deal of construction fatigue in Auckland's

central city at the moment, from the now-complete revamp of Quay Street to the ongoing work on the City Rail Link and its stations. That's been tough, but how do we remind people that much of this construction is also bringing positive change?

FRITH WALKER If we think about Silo Park, Wynyard Quarter and the revamped Quay Street with Te Wānanga, as well as Te Komititanga and Takutai Square, we now have a city that has much better connections to its waterfront, and a much more established pedestrian journey for people who come here. It's just a much better place to hang out. We need to make sure we are co-ordinated and thoughtful about the how, when and why of works most definitely, but a city needs to evolve to meet its changing needs and peoples. The way these third places are serving the city and giving people reasons to connect is really exciting.

JEREMY HANSEN This interview is for our sustainability report, and I wondered what links there are between the creation of successful third places and the quest for greater sustainability?

FRITH WALKER A successful city is built like an ecology that understands the rhythms of all the people who use it. And I truly believe that if we could live more densely, if we could



understand cities as ecologies, we'd be more sustainable. Care for the place is crucial to this. And those moments where you meet each other as a community and learn to care for your place are what underpin the whole sustainability conversation.

JEREMY HANSEN Are there also economic arguments you can use to advocate for third places?

FRITH WALKER For sure. If you beautify a street, people are going to want to be in it more, which means they'll

want to be in the shops that are there, too. Or you can think of a place like Central Park in New York City. It's lined with incredibly expensive apartments because the amenity value of the park is so high. But more important than a real estate outcome is the broader value that so many people – not just those who live nearby – get from being in a beautifully designed, much-loved place. A place with fabulous amenity is going to be much better off economically than a place that is difficult, hard, ugly and sad. We need to be creating beauty because

People lounging on bean bags on the lawn in Takutai Square, a popular “third place” in the central city. Photo by Jinki Cambroner.

ultimately, that's what people want and deserve. And for me, as a longtime central city resident, I remember less about the buildings I've lived and worked in and more about the third places I've been in: Aotea Square, the libraries, Albert Park. They're the places where memories are made.



Britomart's mid-winter free fries giveaway in Takutai Square. Photo by Geoffery Matautia.

Te Taiao Environment

Britomart's environmentally focused activities range from the creation of Green Star buildings to public events in Takutai Square. It's a broad scope of engagement with a two-pronged focus: raising environmental awareness and working to ensure our buildings meet nationally accredited standards. This section of the report covers our environmentally focused activations and events, the precinct's planting programme, and some of the innovative sustainability work by our lease partners.

The shared space of Galway Street opens into a courtyard connecting with the pedestrian laneway of Te Ara Tahuu, with gardens created by gardener Sayburn Miller and the Britomart operations team. Photo by Jessica Gernat.





Greening the City
Turning downtown green with thousands of free native trees.

To encourage action on climate change (and bring a little extra greenery into the square), Britomart’s annual Greening the City activation is a three-day giveaway of native trees from The Landing, a Bay of Islands heritage estate under the stewardship of Cooper and Company. In exchange for an optional donation to the Native Forest Restoration Trust, visitors to the Greening the City pop-up could select their own native sapling, including mānuka, oioi, kawakawa, ti kōuka, pōhutukawa and more. The Landing’s nursery manager, Caleb Scott, hosted free half-hour workshops each day – one for children and one for anyone else interested – covering the basics of planting and successfully raising native trees. Across the three days, over 6,000 native trees were distributed and \$8000 was raised for the trust.



Britomart’s popular Greening the City giveaway of native saplings from The Landing ran for three days in Takutai Square, featuring illustrations of native plants by Hope McConnell. Photos by Geoffery Matautia.



Reusable Tuesday
A free hot drink for every reusable cup.

Britomart's coffee-oriented activation, Reusable Tuesday, encouraged the use of reusable cups, offering free coffee to anyone with one at any Britomart cafe, including Amano, Daily Bread, Espresso Workshop, kingi, Miann, Ortolana, The Store and Yeah Bowl. The events were also notable for the way they encouraged in-person connection, as groups from offices headed out together to take advantage of the offer. The event resulted in about 1700 people enjoying a free brew.

Britomart ran two giveaways of free coffee for anyone with a reusable cup (above). One of the coffee giveaways coincided with a free low-carbon breakfast (right) in Takutai Square offered by All Good bananas and oat milk. Photos by Geoffery Matautia.



International Day of Climate Action
Low Carbon Breakfast
Supporting world climate action one low-carbon breakfast at a time.

For this year's International Day of Climate Action in October, Britomart joined forces with three sustainable local brands and all of Britomart's cafes to provide free breakfast and coffee in Takutai Square and throughout the precinct. With the support of All Good, Blue Frog, Raglan Coconut Yoghurt and Decent Packaging, 700 low-carbon breakfast bowls were served. In addition to the giveaway, anyone who brought a clean, lidded reusable cup received a free cup of coffee from Britomart cafes for our Reusable Thursday event.



Nohonga Toru
The third iteration of the biennial Nohonga design competition invited landscape architects to create a seat based on the theme of haumanu or renewal.

Throughout September and October, Takutai Square was home to three new nohonga (seats), designed by teams selected from a competition run by the Auckland branch of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Tuia Pito Ora. The competition, supported by Britomart, Resene and infrastructure and civil construction company JFC, invited teams to respond to the prompt of haumanu (renewal or restoration), a theme that drew inspiration from the cyclical nature of all things and the desire to find balance between whenua (landscape) and tangata (people). Three winning teams received funding to make their nohonga, which were enjoyed by visitors to the Square during the spring months.

Nohonga at right by Ryan Peralta (left) and William Chrisp; below right by Zak Kelland, Hamish Murphy and Nicole Tune; and below by Jo Kearney, Alfred Chan and Zak White. Photos by Joe Hockley.



CASE STUDY

“It was incredibly insightful and quite shocking really.”

Comensa Group chef Nathan Houpapa is one of the participants in a pilot programme to help the hospitality industry decrease waste to landfill and its greenhouse gas emissions. The results so far have surprised him.

Managing waste well is an ongoing environmental project at Britomart. As well as ensuring recycling streams are available to keep as much waste as possible out of landfill, Britomart also works to support businesses within the precinct to manage and reduce their waste where possible.

One of the trickiest waste streams to manage is food waste, a critical problem in New Zealand: Over 150,000 tonnes of food are thrown away every year, with 25,000 tonnes coming from the restaurant industry. Experts estimate that 61 percent of that waste is avoidable.

With more than 25 restaurants and bars located at Britomart, food waste is a significant issue, one that a waste-reduction initiative named Kai Keepers is designed to begin tackling. It was developed and launched this year by the Ministry for the Environment, Edge Impact (a sustainability consultancy with its New Zealand base at Britomart) and the Restaurant Association.

At Britomart, four restaurants were involved in the Kai Keepers pilot programme: kingi at The Hotel Britomart, Café Hanoi, Ghost Street and Perch (the last three are all owned and operated by Comensa Group). They were among 120 participants across the Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty area that, for a week in March, tracked and weighed their food waste, which was categorised into ‘avoidable’ or ‘unavoidable’.

Edge Impact then analysed the results and data was fed back to each restaurant on their total waste, average waste per customer, with an estimate given how much the food waste was costing the restaurant each week, as



well as the GHG impact. This data formed a baseline for later testing of food waste reduction interventions, with an ultimate goal of helping restaurants reduce their waste by 20 percent or more.

Across the one-week period, the 120 participating restaurants served over 108,000 customers, producing more than 13 tonnes of food waste – on average, 171g of food waste per customer. Collectively, the 13,142kg of food waste produced in the week released 1.84 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent gases, or about the same amount of carbon dioxide produced by a petrol car driving for a year.

Nathan Houpapa, executive chef at Café Hanoi, Ghost Street and Perch, says the pilot programme has changed the way his team sees and manages food waste. “It was incredibly insightful and quite shocking, actually,” he says. “We’ve carried on with what we were doing in the pilot, because we saw all



Chef Nathan Houpapa (top left) and his team at Cafe Hanoi (above). Photos by Jinki Cambroner. Cafe Hanoi interior photo at left by Samuel Hartnett.



At right, left to right: executive chef Andrew Lautenbach, head chef Stefania Palermo and Matthew Wallis at kingi at The Hotel Britomart, who participated in the Kai Keepers programme. Photos by Jinki Cambroner.



the benefits of it immediately. And it kind of gave us a bit of an uppercut where we realised that sorting our waste properly isn't in the too-hard basket like we thought it was."

To support businesses in minimising their waste to landfill, Britomart provides food waste bins that are sent to a composting facility. However, businesses must be diligent in keeping non-food items like skewers, tinfoil or plastic wrappers out of the bins, or they will be rejected. "We'd get told on a regular basis by the Britomart operations team that our food waste was contaminated and it was going into general waste," says Nate.

But taking part in the Kai Keepers programme gave them the push they needed to put food sorting systems in place – and to their surprise, it was easier than they imagined. "Separating the liquid waste just took five minutes of thinking," says Nate. "And the result of sticking with the programme is that it's reversed the number of red bins

[landfill] and green bins [composting] we use. We used to have one green bin and maybe four reds, and now we have one or two reds and the rest are green."

Another substantial benefit of the programme was gaining black-and-white confirmation that they had been over-serving portions of rice. "We found through monitoring the plate

waste that we were giving customers too much rice. So we've cut down on the size of the bowls that we're serving and cut down on our waste, and no one has blinked. And that's saving us money."

Next door at kingi, the pilot programme also gave the team a new perspective. Their wastage was

calculated at 130g per cover, 41g below the industry average, and although operations manager Ciaran Molloy is pleased that kingi's waste compared well to the baseline, he was keen to explore opportunities to reduce it further.

"I am genuinely surprised that we threw out 150kg of food waste during the course of the week," says Ciaran. "But a massive thing for us is fish, which have a lot of bones that have heavy calcium in them. We recycle fish bones or fish heads three or four times, for example, to make fish stock, but that wasn't within the scope of the pilot, and neither was whether the restaurant's waste goes to landfill or composting."

The hotel's waste management system is robust, says Ciaran, with cameras in the bin room to ensure waste streams are separated properly. "We get a report daily on our recycling, our composting, our landfill," he says. "If I notice a sudden drop in composting and an increase in landfill on the tracker, I can review the footage and take action, whether it's following up or retraining the team. But we very rarely have issues with the waste and tracking. They're pretty standard numbers."



David Maucor from Edge Impact says the Kai Keepers pilot chose to focus on preventing waste reaching the bin, rather than what happens to food waste after that point. "Overwhelmingly the feedback from restaurants was, 'What can help us improve our margins?' And I think that's why reducing food waste upfront is really what interests people. You can be smart about how you deal with food waste once you generate it, through composting it, repurposing, etc, but reducing it upfront helps reduce costs."

The next phase of the programme, which kicked off in November 2024

and extends through the summer, involves testing interventions for reducing waste. At the end of this phase, the success of each of the four interventions will be reported on, so restaurants can choose to implement the ones that will be most effective for them.

The next phase of the Kai Keepers programme is under way. Photos above left by Jinki Cambroner. kingi interior photo by Patrick Reynolds.

INTERVIEW

“People are so appreciative that we’ve got something so beautiful in Auckland”

Keeping Britomart’s iconic street planters and flowerbeds lush and blooming is a relentless job. Head gardener Sayburn Miller joined the operations team in 2023 to bring new life to the precinct’s planting. A year and a half on, his colourful approach is working.

MELINDA WILLIAMS How long have you been managing the gardens at Britomart?

SAYBURN MILLER It’s been 18 months. I work part-time, Mondays and Fridays, and a few extra days during planting season and over the summer to water and ensure everything’s kept alive, which is the biggest part of the job. But I’ve got Junior from the operations team, who helps out a lot with watering. I’ve trained him up for this job and he is amazing!

MELINDA WILLIAMS What’s your background in gardening and what made you interested in working here?

SAYBURN MILLER Well, when I was four years old, I sowed my first seed, which was lettuce, and I sold it to the neighbours. And I’ve been in the garden ever since. I’ve been doing residential landscapes for 30 years, self-taught and learned through work. The thing that connected me to Britomart was I really love this part of the city and I thought I could make a difference. Britomart really has architecture at the top of its calibre and I just wanted to make the gardens match that. I thought Auckland needed me [laughs].

MELINDA WILLIAMS There’s been a noticeable change in Britomart’s gardens since you’ve arrived. What’s your approach to the gardens here?

SAYBURN MILLER Tim Ellis [director of operations at Britomart] was the direct point of contact I had with Britomart, and he is all for flowers. Britomart has a scale that excited me and I thought we could really live it up. We’ve got about 400 pots and thousands of plants, up to



4,000 flowering plants at any one time. It’s scaled back for summer because the geraniums and other summer flowers are bigger, so you don’t need so many plants per pot.

MELINDA WILLIAMS What kind of planting plan or approach do you take when you’re deciding which species to put in?

SAYBURN MILLER We do it season by season. And it’s like fashion really, isn’t it? You get the summer wardrobe and you get the winter wardrobe, and that’s what’s exciting, to really have that direct change. So last summer, my first summer job was really successful and we noticed that the public really love the petunias, so we’ve doubled up on them this year.

We’ve gone with more pastel tones this year – last summer was louder. From the onset, I really went with mixed colours. We have to do mixed colour because of the vandalism, basically.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Is that a big problem?

SAYBURN MILLER We do get young guys who come through on a Thursday night and pull our planters to bits or sit on them, which isn’t very good for them, so then we have to replace them. Showing off to each other. I don’t know. Sometimes we put roses in when the plants keep getting nicked. A grandma might come along, steal a plant and put it in her bag.

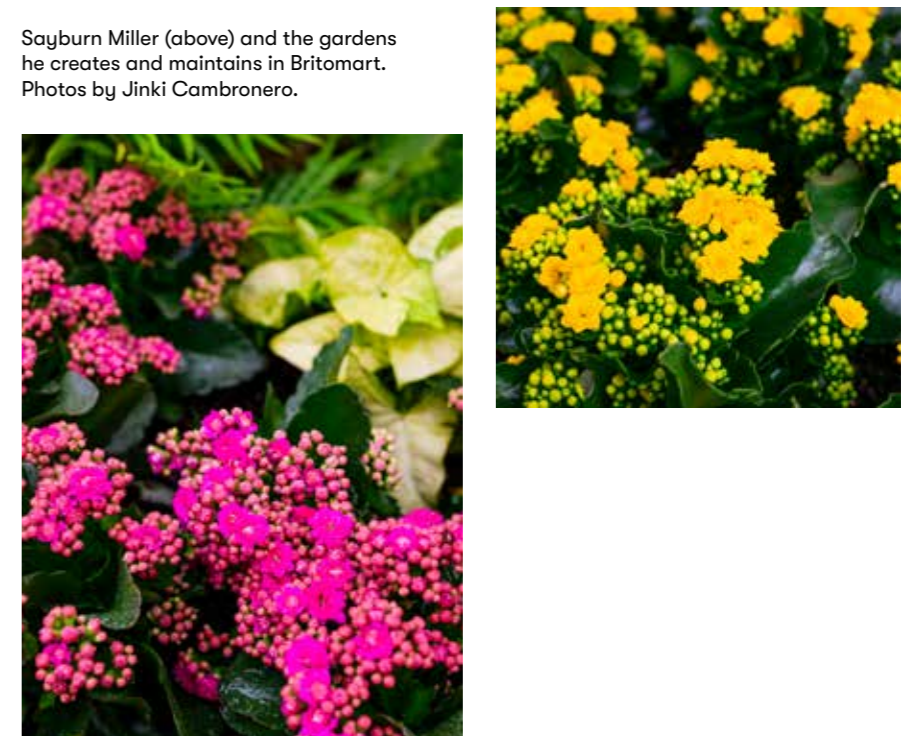


MELINDA WILLIAMS No! Is nothing sacred?! I suppose all those beautiful geraniums are quite tempting.

SAYBURN MILLER It’s true. We’ve caught them on camera. Anyway, when that sort of thing happens, it’s a lot easier to replace something in a mixed colour line than in a block of colour. I think 99.9 percent of people are respectful and I don’t buy into the minority that do vandalise, I just get on and fix it. I thought if we brought the gardens up a level that the vandalism would drop off and people would be more respectful. And I think that’s working.

MELINDA WILLIAMS There’s quite a mix of native and introduced species around the precinct. What are some of the main native species we find around here?

SAYBURN MILLER I’ve simplified the native palette to mainly standard blue totara, Matapouri Blue, because we want to be



Sayburn Miller (above) and the gardens he creates and maintains in Britomart. Photos by Jinki Cambronero.



seen as a New Zealand identity with a bit of exotic around the edge to give us the colour and city life sort of vibrance. The natives are a great base. A lot of natives fall over pretty quickly, so to speak, when they're put into a working garden.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Oh, really? Why is that?

SAYBURN MILLER They don't like being tampered with and touched so much. They're bit sensitive. They don't want to be overfed and over-pruned.

MELINDA WILLIAMS They just like to be left alone.

SAYBURN MILLER That's right.

MELINDA WILLIAMS There may be an analogy with the traditional New Zealand character there.

SAYBURN MILLER Yeah, absolutely.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Do you adapt your plantings to work with what the retailers

and food businesses like to see near them?

SAYBURN MILLER Yeah, we do try to. This season the maitre d' at Ortolana wasn't keen on the flowers we chose so we replanted them, and now they look cool. Or the team at Chanel might say, "We've got someone coming in from overseas this week so we'd like flowers." So we try and make it work. Over at Alma, they wanted grasses instead of flowers, and it can be quite harsh on the corner with that wind, so it worked out well.

MELINDA WILLIAMS How often would you change plants out significantly? Every season?

SAYBURN MILLER Predominantly our big changeover seasons are April and September through to October. And then in summertime we try and create a bit of a top-up. In winter this year, we went with standard cyclamens. Last year I used the mini-cyclamens but the bigger



Sculptor Chris Bailey's work Pou Tū Te Rangi (right) is the centre of the courtyard outside The Hotel Britomart, and surrounded by planting by Sayburn Miller. Photos by David St George.

ones just had so much more pop in their appearance. Last summer, I was really successful with the dahlias. They put on a good show and I get really excited when I see bees on the flowers. I mean, to be right in heart of Auckland city and with all the stress of the world, to actually see bees foraging is very exciting.

MELINDA WILLIAMS It's lovely to see, isn't it? I think they come from the hives that Westpac keeps on the top of the East Building. With the watering system, is the water rainfall-collected?

SAYBURN MILLER Yes. The water's harvested off the roof of the Britomart Carpark and the East Building above EY, and it's kept in tanks. We've got a little mini tanker that we pump the water out of the sump and drive it around to water the plants.

MELINDA WILLIAMS Do you get feedback when you're out working?

SAYBURN MILLER People are so appreciative that we've got something so beautiful in Auckland, and it's really kicked in just with the length of time. The effort doesn't go unnoticed. So it's a reward just to have the confirmation from the public that they're happy with the way that we have presented. But it's not just the garden, it's the whole team. The cleaning team are amazing, just polishing and minting and cleaning up constantly.



“We hope this report helps people understand the value nature provides in an economic sense and that it’s worth protecting and restoring.”

A new report by Britomart-based EY, produced in collaboration with WWF, looks at the importance of biodiversity in the economy – and how taking care of nature could result in financial benefits, too. Gina Morrissey, EY’s senior manager for Climate and Sustainability Services, talks about the report’s findings.

JEREMY HANSEN Gina, you and the team at EY have written this report with WWF entitled *A Nature Positive Aotearoa*, which looks at the country’s opportunities in natural capital. How did the report come about?

GINA MORRISSEY The report is a first attempt at valuing the financial opportunity of taking action to protect and restore nature in Aotearoa New Zealand. New Zealand’s economy is heavily reliant on nature, from the tourism sector to our primary industries. Yet we also have the highest proportion of threatened native species in the world, with over a third of indigenous species now at risk of extinction. We teamed up with WWF to analyse the economic impacts of Aotearoa New Zealand meeting key targets under the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which is kind of like the Paris Agreement of the nature world. New Zealand signed up to the targets along with 196 other nations last year. Those targets include the restoration of 30 percent of degraded ecosystems, conserving 30 percent of land, forests and seas, and halting species extinction.

JEREMY HANSEN Biodiversity is usually considered something that is worthy of sustaining on its own, without linking it to economic outcomes. But one of the interesting things about this report is that you do link biodiversity to economic outcomes. What did you discover?

GINA MORRISSEY The monetisation

of nature can seem a bit distasteful, but it’s important if we want action to be taken. And our key findings show that there is an economic imperative to protecting and restoring nature in this country: we found that there would be a net positive economic impact of \$270 billion over a 50-year period if we took significant action towards meeting the Global Biodiversity Framework targets. Our modelling included upfront costs associated with nature action such as the costs associated with the planting and restoration of wetlands, and the avoided costs that might impact, say, our tourism industry if New Zealand didn’t take action and was perceived as environmentally degraded. We also identified benefits of taking action, such as the additional carbon sequestration provided by wetland restoration and native planting and found that this could save the government over \$50 billion in avoided international carbon credit purchases.

JEREMY HANSEN The report notes that pursuing these goals will result in some short-term costs for some sectors, notably parts of the country’s primary industries. Do you want to run through an example of what those short-term costs might be, but how the longer term plays out more favorably?

GINA MORRISSEY One of the actions that we identified as a possibility was putting in place water conservation orders to conserve 30 percent of our waterways. In the short term, we see that impacting



on the agricultural sector’s productivity. But in the longer term, if they’re planting trees and protecting wetlands, for example, we see rewards coming through an emerging biodiversity credit market or carbon markets. Our analysis showed that within 16 years of taking actions, the monetary benefits from these actions outweigh the short-term impacts on output.

JEREMY HANSEN We’re seeing markets like the EU create more and more stringent requirements for emissions reporting of imported products. Are primary industries going to have to improve their standing in this area anyway?

GINA MORRISSEY Yes. At the moment, 80 percent of our exports by value are going into markets that have mandatory sustainability reporting requirements enforced or proposed. For example, the EU’s Corporate Sustainability Reporting and Due Diligence Directive, and the US requiring climate disclosures from the year ending 31 December 2025. The UK New Zealand free trade agreement also has a high level of environmental protection. So there’s definitely pressure on our export sector to take action.



EY’s Gina Morrissey (left). Photo by Jinki Cambroner. The Landing, the Bay of Islands heritage estate under the stewardship of Cooper and Company, has been the focus of an extensive reforestation programme (above). Photo by Joe Hockley.

JEREMY HANSEN The report mentions the concept of “natural capital”, and I wanted to ask how you define that.

GINA MORRISSEY It’s not about saying nature is a resource, but that it provides value that underpins a lot of economic transactions. Currently, nature is not being appropriately valued in a financial sense. We hope this report helps people understand the value nature provides in an economic sense and that it’s worth protecting and restoring.

JEREMY HANSEN Did working on this report make you feel hopeful?

GINA MORRISSEY Yes and no. There’s a massive gap in financing: to meet the targets noted in the report, investment in these areas needs to increase six-and-a-half times. But the fact that we were able to say that there is benefit in taking action – economic and otherwise – has the potential to drive change. The report is not an answer, but a conversation starter and there are heaps of neat initiatives and work being done to incentivise action. So I’m hopeful, but we do need to move quickly.

The Britomart neighbourhood

Britomart is founded on a 2004 agreement between Britomart Group and Auckland Council. Cooper and Company is the asset and development manager for Britomart Group, which holds a contract for the long-term ownership and development of the Britomart precinct.

Britomart is a nine-block precinct in central Auckland, above and around the Britomart Transport Centre, the city's busiest public transport hub. It is an area that combines heritage warehouses with new architecture, buildings that host a thriving business community of over 5,000 workers as well some of the city's best food, beverage and retail offerings.



BRITOMART PRECINCT





Students from Te Kapunga, the kapa haka group at James Cook High School, performing in Takutai Square for Matariki 2024.



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