

**THE RELOCATION OF
NEWLANDS VOLUNTEER FIRE STATION**

**SUBMISSION
TO
FIRE AND EMERGENCY NEW ZEALAND**

Compiled by
Grenada Village Community Association Incorporated
and presented in partnership with
Newlands Paparangi Progressive Association Incorporated

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RELOCATION OF NEWLANDS VOLUNTEER FIRE STATION

This submission has been compiled by the Grenada Village Community Association Incorporated and is presented in partnership with the Newlands Paparangi Progressive Association Incorporated.

Purpose of Submission

The purpose of this submission is to ensure that the Newlands Volunteer Fire Station is retained in the Newlands catchment area to serve and protect the area and communities it was formed to do so.

Secondly, this submission is to ensure that Fire and Emergency New Zealand is fully aware of the background as to why previous endeavours to close the Newlands Fire Station, or relocate its service provision to the Johnsonville Fire Station, were previously rejected by both the communities of Newlands, Woodridge, Paparangi and Grenada Village area and the NZ Government. The Government considered that should the Newlands Fire Station be closed, the impact and repercussions on the involved communities would be unacceptable and excessively detrimental to them. In 2004 a Parliamentary Select Committee hearing was convened with the outcome supporting the decision to retain the Newlands Fire Station.

Thirdly, this submission is to ensure that the affected communities have input into the decision-making process by providing their experienced local knowledge. The decisions to be taken by Fire and Emergency New Zealand could have a massive impact on this area and it is imperative that this submission is seriously considered in the process.

Situation

The Wellington City Council is proposing to upgrade Newlands Park, and the land at 214 Newlands Road (at which the Newlands Volunteer Fire Station is currently sited) will be required by Wellington City Council as part of that upgrade. As a result, it will be necessary for the Newlands Volunteer Fire Station to be relocated to another site which is yet to be determined.

The Newlands Volunteer Fire Station is this area's front-line emergency response service and it is extremely important and essential that it remains for the eastern section of northern Wellington (which currently covers approximately 16,000 people residing in the suburbs of Newlands, Woodridge, Paparangi and Grenada Village). This is a rapidly growing area with the population expected to substantially increase within the next five years. Furthermore, the Wellington City Council has designated the area around the Newlands town centre a medium-density housing development area with a number of sites being developed. Medium-density housing can be stand-alone, semi-detached, terraced houses or apartment buildings, all up to three storeys high.

The communities, who are major stakeholders in this issue, consider that the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade must be retained in the existing Newlands catchment area to serve and protect the area and communities it was formed to do so. It must not be relocated to the Johnsonville Fire Station either on an interim or permanent basis. Until a permanent new site is established, Fire and Emergency New Zealand must provide an alternative temporary fire station within the current coverage area. It is understood that this could be problematic for Fire and Emergency New Zealand, but any other situation is unacceptable to the people of this area. This is an extremely serious matter with far-reaching consequences.

Background

In October 1993 the NZ Fire Service, as it was at that time, advised that it was their intention that within the next 12-18 months, they proposed closing the Newlands Fire Station. By February 1994, the public had vehemently stated that this was not acceptable along with the potential implications that would be imposed on the various communities. As a result, in March 1994 the NZ Fire Service reviewed their position and decided not to proceed.

In 2001/2002 the NZ Fire Service again advised that they intended closing this station and would centralise its operations to Johnsonville. This decision was not sound and there was immense public pressure again against the proposal. The decision had to be challenged and in 2003, a group acting on behalf of the various communities made

direct representation to the Minister of Internal Affairs (George Hawkins) and the Prime Minister (Rt Hon Helen Clark) to prevent the New Zealand Fire Service from proceeding. Our local MP, Peter Dunne, presented the submission along with his own viewpoint on the situation. After examining all the facts and conducting their own investigation, the Government instructed the NZ Fire Service to reverse their decision and the station remained. The Government considered that should the Newlands Fire Station be closed, the impact and repercussions on the involved communities would be unacceptable and excessively detrimental to them. In 2004 a Parliamentary Select Committee hearing was convened with the outcome supporting the decision to retain the Newlands Fire Station.

This was, and still is, a highly contentious issue that cannot be dismissed. Permanent closure of this Fire Station, or the interim removal of it, would have huge ramifications on the public residing in the current coverage area and is totally ill-conceived. Since 2003 the population has considerably increased and is now approximately 16,000 people with a number of large commercial businesses having since been established. The argument to retain a fire station in Newlands not only remains the same, but now even more so.

Termination of Current Site Lease

The Newlands Fire Station has occupied the current site at 214 Newlands Road since October 1958. At that time, a piece of land belonging to the Newlands Recreation Club adjacent to the Recreation Hall in Newlands Road was offered to the Wellington Fire Police for their use subject to its being transferred to the Wellington City Council. In the event the land was no longer required for Fire Brigade purposes it would revert to its former use. The land was transferred to the Wellington City Council in 1962. In 1965, the Newlands Unit of the Fire Police became the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade and registered with the United Fire Brigades Association and the Fire Service Council. This remains the Fire Station today. The Fire Station was expanded over the years to include a watch-room, toilet facilities, kitchen and a recreation room at no cost to the Fire Service/Board except for some of the materials supplied. For more than 40 years the station members, who are all volunteers, carried out minor maintenance and painting until 2005 when a more substantial upgrade was undertaken.

In early 2009 the Wellington City Council advised the NZ Fire Service of its plans to create a 'Newlands Centre Plan' that would shape the future of Newlands Centre and provide a long-term vision for the area. This plan was finalised and adopted in April 2010. Included in the Plan, the Newlands Fire Station was noted as being in a "poor state of repair and too small for fire service needs". It is also stated that the Council were to explore the redevelopment of the community park and build a community playground. Funding for this was to be allocated in the 2018/2019 financial year. The

Council would work with the Newlands Brigade/NZ Fire Service “to explore the relocation of the Newlands Fire Station to a larger more fit-for-purpose site, to enable clearer and easier access to Newlands Park, the skate park and the potential community park”.

During the period 2010 to 2015 there were a number of discussions between the NZ Fire Service and Wellington City Council regarding the Fire Station’s licence.

In 2015, Wellington City Council was advised by the NZ Fire Service that the Newlands Fire Station was not required for operational reasons. The area would be covered from Johnsonville. However, the removal/relocation was low on the priority list for any action. The building was not fit for purpose but there were quite a few others that are in the same category so it would not be closed simply because it does not meet the specification. The idea was at that time, that the Wellington City Council and the Fire Service would work together when the park development started in a couple of years time. It was noted that it would take around three years minimum to plan for and build a new station. It was stated by the NZ Fire Service that relying on just the Johnsonville station for the provision of their service was not an option. It was also noted that the local community and the volunteers at the station have had a significant interest in the station in the past as well as there was also political interest history to the site.

On 18 July 2019 the Wellington City Council publicly announced their plans for a \$3.6m upgrade development of Newlands Park. This was one of only two large park developments planned in the city over the next ten years. The site of the fire station at 214 Newlands Road was to be incorporated into the development and the station would need to be relocated to a different site.

On 28 July 2019 the Wellington City Council held a brief two hour drop-in session at the Newlands Community Centre that enabled a very limited number of the public to have an input into the upgrade of Newlands Park. Less than 100 people out of the approximate 16,000 residents in the Newlands fire coverage area attended that drop-in session and this was the first time most people became aware that the Fire Station was involved in the project. Some representatives from Fire and Emergency New Zealand were in attendance. The response the public received when questioning the relocation of the station, was simply that “The Wellington City Council and Fire and Emergency New Zealand were in discussion and were working together to look for the best long-term outcomes for the Community around both the park provision and fire and emergency response”. It was also stated that “Fire and Emergency New Zealand were actively looking for alternative sites – both short-term and long-term sites”.

On 16 September 2019, Wellington City Council served formal notification to Fire and Emergency New Zealand that Wellington City Council required the fire station building to be vacant no later than 30 September 2020.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand - Options

Fire and Emergency New Zealand have advised that three options are now to be considered.

1. Close Newlands Fire Station permanently
2. Rebuild Newlands Fire Station on a different site within the community
3. Relocate Newlands Fire Truck and members to Johnsonville Fire Station

Option 1 - is not acceptable to the people on the eastern side of the motorway.

Option 2 - being a new build within the community is the only option acceptable.

Option 3 - is the preferred option for Fire and Emergency New Zealand however the communities involved have clearly stated that this option is not acceptable. This option would lead to the demise and disestablishment of the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade given the travel distances for volunteers to Johnsonville as it is unlikely they would be able to make the appliance in time to attend incidents. While Johnsonville station is exactly two kilometres from the Johnsonville station, the Newlands Brigade are volunteers and it would take seven to eight minutes for them to arrive at Johnsonville station, gear up, then having to respond back to the Newlands area. This could result in a 15-20 minute delay which could be life-threatening as well as being well outside the national requirements that regulate response times for volunteer fire stations.

The Newlands Volunteer Fire Station must be retained in the Newlands catchment area to serve and protect the area and communities it was formed to do so and to complement the Johnsonville Brigade when necessary. If retained, the Station would not only continue to provide the required service delivery into the Newlands, Woodridge, Paparangi and Grenada Village communities, but it would continue providing the additional level of resilience and surge capacity within the greater Wellington area through providing additional cover. If Newlands Fire Station was to close, there would be a reduction in fire resources from three appliances to two in the northern suburbs – one manned by career fire fighters and the other by Johnsonville volunteers. This 33% decrease in the fire fighting capability in the overall Northern Suburbs (with a population exceeding 50,000) would be highly contentious and not acceptable.

It has been stated that “Fire and Emergency New Zealand were actively looking for alternative sites – both short-term and long-term sites”. It is extremely concerning that Fire and Emergency New Zealand have known since 2009 that this situation was to occur and yet very little has been undertaken to investigate and secure the purchase of suitable land until recently. Now a suitable site is difficult to find, if at all.

Furthermore, back in 2003 the NZ Fire Service stated that by 2006 they would examine whether the current location provided the best situation or at some point in time whether the station should be removed to a more advantageous operational site (but still remain within current coverage area on the eastern side of the motorway). Land would be purchased even if it was not to be physically required for a number of years. This did not occur. This lack of foresight has again created a community lack of faith towards Fire and Emergency New Zealand and has affected its long- standing reputation.

In 2014 the Wellington City Council advised there were three possible sites available within the central Newlands area. These sites were deemed not suitable by the Area Commander Wellington as they were still too close to the Johnsonville station. It is very easy for the community to perceive that this is simply a continuation of the well-known prolonged desire of Fire and Emergency New Zealand to close the Newlands Volunteer Fire Station and to centralise all the operations to Johnsonville Station. Any professional body, particularly one that is publicly funded, that allows its core purpose and value to intentionally decline, does not deserve total trust. It is even more disturbing when that body is a vital emergency service that is supposed to save lives and protect property.

Interim Fire Station

Fire and Emergency New Zealand must provide an alternative interim fire station in the Newlands coverage area until a permanent new site is established.

We are aware that in 2019 the Wellington City Council conducted some Site Option Evaluations on Council reserves land but none of the assessments have been identified as being suitable sites viable for further investigation. We also understand that there was no support from Council to rezone public green space to accommodate a new fire station.

This however, does not preclude yet further sites from being investigated to accommodate a temporary station after August 2020. For example, has anyone approached the 'Nga Hau e Wha o Papaarangi' Marae in Ladbrook Drive, Newlands? They have an abundance of open space at the site and could be receptive to a discussion. While this land may not be available, it could be ideal site, not only for Newlands, but even for the future growth the area will undertake. Has there been any discussions with the landowners of the Woodridge area? It is understood that the existing fire station facilities are less than desirable and the building is not fit for purpose and/or resilience so in reality would be difficult to relocate – but this should also be investigated to provide interim coverage after August/September 2020.

Relocation to Johnsonville Fire Station

Johnsonville fire station may only be two kilometres away but the response service is one where minutes, even seconds count in saving lives – you cannot put a political spin on the price of a life. It may be that someone's house will burn down, or an accident victim will die because the fire appliance had to travel that extra distance – just because some computer modelling says so.

Furthermore, after a major disaster the terrain may prove it impossible to traverse equipment for an extended period of time. The only two direct routes of travel from Johnsonville to the existing Newlands station coverage area have been identified as being in danger of being impassable after a major disaster. This could prevent the movement of emergency equipment into the area leaving the area isolated from emergency services and the people extremely vulnerable.

A relocation of the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade to the Johnsonville Fire Station would likely see the demise and disestablishment of the Newlands Brigade. This has been clearly stated by Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Area Manager Wellington). Given the travel distances for volunteers to Johnsonville, it is unlikely they would be able to make the appliance in time to attend incidents. The national requirements are that a response to fire and non-fire emergencies are within eight minutes for career fire stations and eleven minutes for volunteer fire stations 90% of the time. As such, it is vital that stations are appropriately located. For Newlands, it would be difficult for a Newlands based volunteer firefighter to receive a call-out, travel to Johnsonville, gear-up, man the engine, and travel back to the Newlands area within the eleven minute required timeframe.

Should the Newlands Fire Station close, it would remove a level of service delivery within the area particularly when large or multiple incidents took place as there would be a reduction in fire resources from three appliances to two in the Northern Suburbs (from Churton Park/Stebbing/Glenside/Grenada Village in the north, Khandallah in the south and Newlands/Woodridge in the east) which now bear more than 26/27 percent of the population of Wellington City. Should both the Johnsonville appliances be engaged at the same time or at different incidents, back up would be required from other stations which immediately depletes their availability to respond to an emergency within their area as well as taking additional time that could be life-threatening.

Geographical Divide

The geographical divide between the Johnsonville area in the west and the Newlands area in the east is of significant importance to this submission.

The northern motorway runs between these two areas bisecting them into two divisions.

The area to the west of the motorway includes the suburbs of Johnsonville, Churton Park, Stebbings, Glenside, Broadmeadows and Khandallah in the southern section.

The area to the east of the motorway includes the suburbs of Newlands, Woodridge, Paparangi and Grenada Village. Also included on the eastern side of the motorway is a sizable portion of Johnsonville. Including the approximate 2,000 people who live in this particular area, coupled with the approximate 16,000 people who live in the other suburbs, gives an approximate total of 18,000 people residing on the eastern side of the motorway.

The roading connection between the west and east has only two direct routes of travel through two main access points. Both of these two access points have been identified as being in danger of being impassable after a major natural disaster.

The direct route of travel from Johnsonville Fire Station to the existing Newlands Fire Station catchment area is either via Helston Road (traversing two bridges spanning the northern motorway), or by travelling south and through a tunnel under the motorway to the top of Ngauranga Gorge then up Newlands Road.

If the event was due to a natural disaster, the narrow gorge entrance to Newlands Road could very likely be blocked by debris from the high surrounding cliff face. The area from the tunnel south along the motorway on-ramp, and up Newlands Road is identified as a 'Red Zone' under the Greater Wellington Regional Council's Hazard maps.

Likewise, access via Helston Road could have either or both of the two bridges spanning the motorway blocked or not traversable at any time for any reason (earthquake, vehicle accident, spillage etc.)

A further possible access to the eastern area may be possible from travelling up Grenada Drive in Grenada Village but would require travel through the 'Mark Avenue dip' between Grenada Village and Paparangi. This section is a filled embankment that was constructed in the early 1950's as part of the northern motorway. If the disaster was reasonably severe, this area could be impassable also.

In a natural disaster situation, all of these access routes could be closed at any, or the same time.

This situation would place the approximate 18,000 people residing on the eastern side of the motorway in an extremely dangerous and untenable position. The area would be isolated from emergency services. Johnsonville station may only be two kilometres away but the terrain may prove it impossible to traverse equipment for an extended period of time after such a disaster.

Fire Hazards and Emergency Risks

The catchment area of the Newlands Brigade has the typical fire hazards and emergency risks that other residential suburbs have. Not taking into account the future development of the area, some of these hazards and risks include:

- Approximately 6,000 homes from stand-alone to medium/high density
- High commuter traffic volumes particularly during peak travelling hours
- Four Primary Schools – Newlands, Bellevue, Rewa Rewa, Paparangi
- One Intermediate – Newlands Intermediate
- One College – Newlands College
- Three Kindergartens – Newlands, Bellevue, Paparangi
- One Early Childhood Centre – Active Explorers
- Four Playcentres/Crèche's – Newlands, Brightstar, Grenada Village, Barnardos
- One Service Station – BP Newlands Road
- Various light industrial/manufacturing plants
- Several retail shopping centres covering a variety of outlets
- Supermarket – Newlands New World
- Tavern – The Innkeeper
- Medical Centre
- Community Centre
- Pharmacy
- Several Community Halls/Recreation Centres
- Multiple churches and temples/mosques
- Three motels – Newlands Court, Gateway Motel, Glen Alton
- Two Retirement/Rest Homes
- One large gymnasium complex – Elevate with City Fitness operating soon
- Transit Bus Depot - operating 24 hours day, parking for 130 buses, service facility, bus wash, workshops, grooming area, offices and a 42,000 litre diesel storage tank
- Newlands Coach Services Bus Depot and Workshop
- Kiwi Storage Depot – Personal lock-up storage facility
- Distribution Centres – Plumblin and Prestons/Ken Wilson Meat
- Car Storage Depot – Car Haulways Distribution yard – 4,000 vehicles
- Commercial Development/Offices in Hurring Place
- Personal Storage Depot – Kiwi Storage
- Several other miscellaneous businesses/commercial premises

The Newlands coverage area also has several other risks:

- A section of S.H.1 including Ngauranga Gorge which carries high volumes of traffic including hazardous goods and heavily laden transporters and livestock carriers,
- A rural interface with farmlands and conservation areas.
- Numerous areas of gorse and scrub intermingling with houses

The above list only covers the more main risk assessments. There are many others to numerous to detail.

Newlands Volunteer Fire Station - Performance

During the past five year period (2014/2015 to 2018/2019) the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade has attended 813 call-outs.

Approximately 6,500 hours of training has been completed on Monday nights plus extra training days, first-aid courses or specialised training courses.

Community promotions have included station visits, community events and displays, attendance at school galas, school fire safety advice to pupils, fire safety promotional material distributed, installation and checking of smoke alarms in private residences.

Out of the current complement of the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade, ten fire fighters have provided more than 250 years of service between them – an extraordinary display of dedication and commitment to serve the community. As of May 2019, Fire and Emergency New Zealand consisted of 11,713 volunteer fire fighters, 1,694 career fire fighters and 1,456 in management/support.

The Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade provides an essential emergency response service and is an integral and central component of the community. Removal of the Newlands Brigade could result in increased response times leading to destruction of property along with loss of life during structure fires, accidents, medical events, or natural disasters.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand consider the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade to be a good, well-performing Brigade.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand should now acknowledge this strong community involvement and a new fire station should remain in the Newlands area. Tens of millions of dollars have been paid to Fire and Emergency New Zealand over the years by the residents and businesses of this catchment area through the Fire Service Levy that is collect as part of insurance premiums.

Fire Service Levy

Fire and Emergency New Zealand is a community-based organisation that is currently publicly funded primarily by a levy paid on all insurance policies that cover property against the risk of fire. Insurance companies are required to pay the levy calculated on all property insured against fire under a fire contract made in New Zealand. Insurance companies benefit indirectly because the protection provided by the Fire Service helps reduce damage to the properties they insure.

The levy applies to all residential buildings, domestic contents, motor vehicles, commercial buildings and marine cargo.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand's primary funding sources during the 2020/2021 year are anticipated to be \$624m. Their expenditure over the same period is anticipated to be \$617m. Of the income of \$624m, 34% is expected to be from residential, 52% from commercial, 8% from motor vehicle and 6% from other.

The Government is currently reviewing the way that Fire and Emergency New Zealand is funded and a number of funding options are being investigated. The amount of funding via the levy could even be increased.

Based on the approximate 6,000 residential properties in the eastern section of northern Wellington covering the suburbs of Newlands, Woodridge, Paparangi and Grenada Village, coupled with the number of commercial premises plus the approximate 9,000/10,000 motor vehicles, it is estimated that Fire and Emergency New Zealand could receive approximately \$1M per year from this area. If this is taken over the many years of funding, the amount becomes very large. However for the last 50 years the Fire Service have only provided a volunteer service at very little cost with most of it (with exception of the fire appliance) basically provided by the community it serves.

Insurance Premiums

Back in 2003, one of New Zealand's major insurers of private dwellings confirmed that should the Newlands Fire Station be closed, the question of new risk factors and the greater financial exposure they could now incur, may have to be investigated and taken into consideration when they next review and assess the insurance rating for this area.

With much greater awareness of risk factors in more recent times, primarily due to the Christchurch and Kaikoura earthquakes, insurers are now using a new risk-based pricing model and are apportioning premium costs to locations where the chance of natural disaster and/or high weather related events are more likely.

Furthermore, as property insurance in New Zealand has now changed from unlimited liability basis to a maximum sum insured basis, it is estimated by the insurance companies that up to 75% of residential and commercial properties may actually be under-insured by between 25 and 50 percent.

Removing an established emergency service from an area, particularly one that could become isolated from such services in a disaster, could result in further risk factors and exposure leading to even more increases in premiums on both dwellings and contents.

Community Resilience

Since the Christchurch and Kaikoura earthquakes, which are inherent to this country, a far greater public awareness has taken place towards the need for community resilience. This has also been strongly promoted by the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office (WREMO). As a result 37 Community Emergency Hubs have been established over Wellington City area. In this area, the Newlands Hub is at the Newlands School on Newlands Road and the Grenada Village Hub is at the Community Hall in Mandeville Crescent. The 'Nga Hau e Wha o Papaarangi' Marae in Ladbrooke Drive, Newlands also has a resilience facility.

Community Emergency Hubs will be opened by people within their community (not official staff) when there is a need for the community to help itself, such as when there has been widespread infrastructural damage to buildings and roads, loss of lifelines (power, water, gas) or communication networks are down for extended periods. Communities now must take responsibility for themselves, come together and coordinate their efforts to help each other during and after a disaster. This is people helping people with what they have available.

WREMO have provided the hubs with an Emergency Hub Kit that includes a radio to communicate with the official Emergency Operations Centre along with other necessary items including basic first-aid equipment, maps etc. There are no caches of emergency supplies at Community Emergency Hubs. Included in the Hub Kit is a copy of the Emergency Hub Guide which describes the most efficient way to run the Hub.

As a community, resilience is not only the best tool to get through an event, but also to recover from it.

The Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade has not only been involved in the setting up of these hubs, but are regarded by the various communities as being a critical and far-reaching part of hubs, not only for their physical service, but also for their extensive knowledge and experience in emergency events. At the Fire Station there are 21 fire fighters fully trained in emergency situations with a considerable amount of specialist

equipment and a fire appliance. This is unequivocally invaluable to the local communities. The Newlands firefighters have more than 300 years of experience between them with ten firefighters providing more than 250 years of this service.

The Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade must remain in Newlands to serve and protect the area and communities it was formed to do so. The negative impact on the well-being of the entire community would be enormous.

Future Growth

Northern Wellington is the fastest growing area in Wellington with the growth of population to continue. It is well accepted that the house building rate has not kept up with current population growth for many years and now Wellington must expand. This has however become more difficult for extensive development to occur due to the geographical nature of the Region.

Northern Wellington has been identified as where growth will take place. The scenario will be split between the existing Lincolnshire Farm and Takapau Valley on the eastern side of the motorway and Churton Park and Stebbings Valley on the western side of the motorway.

This is Wellington City's largest opportunity for residential development. Stebbings Valley can (depending on density) accommodate up to 2,500 homes. Lincolnshire Farm is also one of the largest and most strategically located development sites in the whole of the Wellington Region. The Petone to Grenada Link Road (should it proceed) is a strategic roading component making this area an extremely important location for future housing development. Good transport links that provide access to employment are vital. Lincolnshire Farm is within 10-12 minutes from Wellington and Porirua and would also only be 10-12 minutes from the central Hutt Valley if the Petone to Grenada Link Road road is completed. It is estimated that the population for the area on the eastern side of the motorway could increase from the current 16,000 residents to approximately 20,000 within the next five years, growing to 25,000/30,000 within the next ten plus years.

The Future – A New Fire Station for Newlands

A new volunteer station, once constructed and established, would exist for 40 to 50 years with very little continued outgoings other than depreciation costs and standard general maintenance.

If this station was based on the current volunteer structure, the annual operating/running costs should remain less than \$50,000/\$60,000 per year.

It is now doubtful however, if this could ever be a volunteer station as unless it was based with a few kilometres of the current Newlands station, the current complement of Newlands firefighters would either be out of the required volunteer response-time area, or they would have been already disbanded as a group. It could be expected that it could be up to three years before a new permanent station became operational unless suitable land could very quickly be located close to the centre of Newlands. With the future predicted growth of the area (Woodridge and further north) we understand that Fire and Emergency New Zealand are looking at these areas for a permanent station to serve the community in the future. With the Petone to Grenada Link Road being deferred to 2028/2029, it could be a very long time before major development of Lincolnshire Farm and its proposed business precinct takes place.

This scenario plays directly into Fire and Emergency's long-established and well-known determination to get rid of a volunteer station in Newlands and to centralise it to Johnsonville.

Volunteer fire stations are an essential and a particularly cheap way for Fire and Emergency New Zealand to meet their responsibilities. Volunteer firefighters save the public purse \$650/\$700 million per year in wages alone. As of May 2019, Fire and Emergency New Zealand consisted of 11,713 volunteer fire fighters, 1,694 career fire fighters and 1,456 in management/support.

Public Consultation

The lack of public consultation in this relocation and/or possible closure of the Newlands Fire Station is extremely disappointing. This relocation/possible closure is an extremely serious matter for all the communities the Newlands Fire Brigade serves and the decision to be taken by Fire and Emergency New Zealand has far-reaching consequences for all parties.

The only public input has been when the Wellington City Council held a brief two hour drop-in session at the Newlands Community Centre on 28 July 2019 that enabled a very limited number of the public to have an input into the upgrade of Newlands Park. Less than 100 people out of the approximate 16,000 residents in the Newlands fire coverage area attended that drop-in session and this was the first time most people became aware that the fire station was involved in the project. It simply did not appear on the redesign site maps. Some representatives from Fire and Emergency New Zealand were in attendance however the response the public received when questioning the whereabouts of the station, were simply that "The Wellington City Council and Fire and Emergency New Zealand were in discussion and were working together to look for the best long term outcomes for the community around both the park provision and fire and emergency response".

This lack of community involvement was totally unacceptable and as a result on 20 September 2019, the Grenada Village Community Association Incorporated lodged an OIA request to Fire and Emergency New Zealand dated 18 September 2019 to gain further information. Included in the OIA was our request for confirmation that Fire and Emergency New Zealand would now commence dialogue with the Newlands Paparangi Progressive Association and the Grenada Village Community Association Inc. as community representatives for the affected communities. The response to the OIA request was due no later than 20 working days after the date our request was received.

On 17 October 2019, Fire and Emergency New Zealand invoked an extension of time as permitted until 18 November 2019.

On 18 November 2019, Fire and Emergency New Zealand provided a part response to our request but all the information required to our Question 1 was not included as Fire and Emergency New Zealand needed yet further time to finish preparing the documents. This information would be provided as soon as it was able to be. The information was finally provided on 10 December 2019 – 389 pages and 57 working days after the request was received by Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

Also on 10 December 2019 Fire and Emergency New Zealand released a media statement stating that following the Wellington City Council's decision to redevelop the land which the fire station sits, the land would not be available after August 2020. In view of this, they would be consulting with the Newlands Brigade, the Johnsonville Brigade, the United Fire Brigades Association, and the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union on the future of the Newlands Fire Station.

The community, who are major stakeholders in this issue, were side-lined and completely out of the consultation process. It was appalling that such an important community issue was not open to the ones it directly affects. The timing of the announcement was also questionable being basically mid December because of the Christmas period.

Following this announcement, the Newlands Brigade also placed a statement on social media. It covered what had been put forward by Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

On 12 December 2019 Fire and Emergency New Zealand requested a meeting with the two residents' associations and suggested 17 or 18 December 2019. This was rejected as to require this meeting at such short notice was impossible. It was totally unreasonable as it allowed no time for study of the information provided, the necessary consultation required, and the subsequent preparation of a submission on behalf of the communities affected by the relocation of the fire station. We requested they provide a range of realistic alternative available dates to be held at the end of January or early February 2020. We have undertaken to advise when our submission is complete but no later than 3 February 2020.

This lack of communication with the affected communities is absolutely at odds to the key communication strategy components' identified in the 62 page NZ Fire Service Commission Research Report No. 140 titled 'The Value of Fire Stations and the Management of Relocations from a Community Perspective' that the New Zealand Fire Service commissioned in 2014.

We strongly believe that Fire and Emergency New Zealand's handling of the relocation/possible closure of the Newlands Fire Station has been poor and this attitude and lack of consultation with the community about the decision has created a lot of public hostility. Some of the comments over several social media sites have understandably been highly emotive, voracious, speculative, and misinformed. There are now approximately 2,500/3,000 comments posted on social media.

NZ Fire Service Commission Research Report No. 140

In 2014, the New Zealand Fire Service commissioned Kaitiaki Research and Evaluation to carry out community engagement research to understand community concerns arising from past station relocations.

The 62 page Report was titled 'The Value of Fire Stations and the Management of Relocations from a Community Perspective'

Fire stations were unanimously valued as providing a sense of safety in emergency situations, albeit fires, road accidents or as a first responder to health-related emergencies. Fire stations/brigades were primarily valued as a central component of the community or alternatively valued as an emergency first responder.

It was shown that community concerns concentrated on the impact of relocation on response times and concerns that the new location would negatively impact volunteer firefighters.

The purpose of this report and the components and recommendations it makes, particularly in respect of communication with the community, appear to have been basically ignored by Fire and Emergency New Zealand in respect of the Newlands Fire Station.

History of the Newlands Volunteer Fire Station

Up till the 1950's, the Johnsonville Volunteer Brigade assisted by the Khandallah and Thorndon Brigades provided the coverage of the Newlands and Paparangi area but travelling times were of great concern. As a result of the need for quicker fire

protection for the area, members of the Wellington Volunteer Fire Police who resided in the Newlands area started the Newlands Brigade.

In October 1958, a piece of land belonging to the Newlands Recreation Club adjacent to the Recreation Hall in Newlands Road was offered to the Wellington Fire Police for their use subject to its being transferred to the Wellington City Council. In the event the land was no longer required for Fire Brigade purposes it would revert to its former use. A house-to-house collection to raise funds from the residents of Newlands was undertaken and gathered \$201 towards the cost of a building to house fire fighting equipment. The Newlands Papanangi Progressive Association purchased an ex army workshop from Fort Dorset Army Camp in Wellington and with the assistance of residents, the building was transported to the site and erected by the community. Through community 'working bees' the original building was converted to comprise an appliance bay with an asphalt floor and an equipment room at the rear. This remains the fire station today. The land was transferred to the Wellington City Council in 1962.

In 1965, the Newlands Unit of the Fire Police became the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade and registered with the United Fire Brigades Association and the Fire Service Council.

The Fire Station was expanded over the years to include a watch-room, toilet facilities, kitchen and a recreation room at no cost to the Fire Service/Board except for some of the materials supplied. For more than 40 years the station members, who are all volunteers, carried out minor maintenance and painting until 2005 when a more substantial upgrade was undertaken. The local communities have made a substantial investment in the Newlands Brigade over the time, not only in the station, but also in providing funds for the supply of much needed additional equipment to supplement that supplied by the Fire Service. Some of this has included pumps, chainsaws, VHF radios, pager systems etc. For training purposes, the community have provided projectors, televisions and video systems.

Summary

The Newlands Volunteer Fire Station must be retained in the current coverage area and remain a fully operational urban volunteer fire station that continues to serve and protect the surrounding communities of Newlands, Woodridge, Papanangi and Grenada Village as it was formed to do so. It must continue to operate as a front-line emergency response service the same as it has in the past and it must continue to complement the Johnsonville Brigade when necessary.

The Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade must continue to be operational from within the Newlands area at a site yet to be determined. This valuable community asset must be retained within the eastern area of Northern Wellington. If this does not occur, the

impact and ramifications on the 18,000 people and businesses on the eastern side of the Northern motorway could be enormous. Should this Brigade be disbanded, our view is that the decision would be illogical, unjustifiable, misguided, and unsound. It would place people's lives and welfare unnecessarily in danger and would remove a vital community resource. This is not acceptable.

Increased growth and development within the Newlands, Woodridge and Grenada Village areas will increase the demand for the Newlands Brigade and their presence will be of utmost importance into the future.

The geographical divide between the eastern and western sides of the Northern motorway is critical in the decision process. In a major disaster, the eastern area could become completely inaccessible and isolated from emergency resources. Without an emergency response service located in the eastern area, the 18,000 residents and various commercial operations could be placed in great danger with potential high loss of life.

A relocation of the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade to the Johnsonville Fire Station would likely see the demise and disestablishment of the Newlands Brigade. This has been clearly stated by Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Area Manager Wellington). Given the travel distances for volunteers to Johnsonville, it is unlikely they would be able to make the appliance in time to attend incidents. It would be difficult for a Newlands based volunteer firefighter to receive a call-out, travel to Johnsonville, gear-up, man the engine, and travel back to the Newlands area within the eleven-minute required timeframe. It would create a 15-20 minute delay which could be life-threatening. Relying on just the Johnsonville station is not an option (Key 11/6/2019).

During the past five year period (2014/2015 to 2018/2019) the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade have attended 813 call-outs. Approximately 6,500 hours of training has been completed on Monday nights plus extra training days, first-aid courses or specialised training courses. The current complement of the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade have more than 300 years of experience between them with ten firefighters providing more than 250 years of this service. This invaluable experience and emergency knowledge must be retained and not just disintegrate.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand must provide an alternative interim fire station in the Newlands coverage area until a permanent new site is established.

A 33% decrease in the fire fighting capability in the overall Northern Suburbs (with a population exceeding 50,000) would be highly contentious and not acceptable. No recognition has been given to the facts that if the Johnsonville crews are already engaged at an incident, appliances from either Thorndon or Tawa have to cover the whole overall area thus depleting their own areas. This would not occur if the Newlands Fire Station was retained.

Volunteer Fire Stations operate with extremely low cost structures. In this case, it is recognised that a new interim building would need to be created but it would only be a temporary situation needing to meet the basic requirements for both building and operations until a permanent site was established. Instead of trying to promote that the Newlands Fire Brigade be relocated to the Johnsonville Station, that will ultimately disestablish them, Fire and Emergency New Zealand should be supporting them and reinforcing the need for them to continue serving the overall public interest.

In 2001/2002 the NZ Fire Service advised that they intended closing the Newlands Fire Station and would centralise its operations to Johnsonville. This decision was not sound and there was immense public pressure against the proposal. The decision had to be challenged and in 2003, a group acting on behalf of the various communities made direct representation to the Government. After examining all the facts and conducting their own investigation, the Government instructed the NZ Fire Service to reverse their decision and the station remained. The Government considered that should the Newlands Fire Station be closed, the impact and repercussions on the involved communities would be unacceptable and excessively detrimental to them. In 2004 a Parliamentary Select Committee hearing was convened with the outcome supporting the decision to retain the Newlands Fire Station. This vindicated our position. What has changed? Other than the fact that the Newlands coverage area has substantially grown in size over the last 19 years, and along with it the subsequent increase in population, what is different now that invalidates the previous controversy to retain the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade in the Newlands area? The rationale and justification back in 2001 remain the same – but now, 19 years later, even more so than then.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand must acknowledge the huge community concern in this issue. All the content and facts detailed within this submission must be taken into account during the decision-making processes. If not, the integrity and principles of Fire and Emergency New Zealand must be questioned. This submission cannot be dismissed.

Thank you for receiving this submission.

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Distribution of Submission

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