Report of the Mayor’s trip to Passchendaele, London and Paris
10 – 25 October, 2017

Summary

I visited Paris from 21 – 24 October to attend a CityLab and Mayors’ Innovation Studio, organised by Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Atlantic and the Aspen Institute. I was accompanied by my Chief of Staff. The invitation to Auckland to attend a gathering of Mayors and senior officials from key cities around the world is an indication of the positive regard in which our city is held. The cost of both of our airfares to Europe, and our accommodation in France, were met by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

At the CityLab conference I presented on housing affordability, and spoke at an international media conference alongside six other Mayors (Los Angeles, Paris, Milan, Barcelona, Cape Town and Quito), the Governor of Tokyo and Michael Bloomberg, on why decisive action was needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our transport networks.

Before CityLab I attended, as part of New Zealand’s Official delegation, the centenary commemorations of the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). During this part of my visit I presented the mayor of the town of Zonnebeke a scale model of the statue of 1905 All Blacks captain, Dave Gallaher that stands outside of Eden Park. Gallaher – along with 491 other Aucklanders – was killed at the battle of Broodseinde 100 years ago.

Between the centenary commemorations and the CityLab conference, I undertook a week-long programme in London, primarily focused on transport and housing infrastructure issues. This programme included discussions with City Hall and Transport for London (TFL); and meetings with the incoming Lord Mayor, Deputy Mayors responsible for housing and infrastructure, and the Chair of Cross Rail. Through the New Zealand High Commission, I had discussions with members of the UK Department of International Trade, and with a former colleague, Crawford Falconer, who is now the UK’s Chief negotiator on trade, promoting investment opportunities for the UK in New Zealand.

In addition, I met with a range of businesses to discuss a range of transport and housing issues. These included meeting a major New Zealand expatriate investor, who is interested in investing in large-scale build-to-rent developments to help alleviate Auckland’s housing shortage.

For two days in London, I was a guest of the Prince’s Foundation on Building Communities, whose work is focused on affordable and mixed-use housing, urban design and urban regeneration.

I want to thank the Council’s Global Partnerships and Strategy team, and particularly Louella Pitt, as well as the British High Commission and Consulate in Auckland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and New Zealand High Commission in London and Embassies in Brussels and Paris, and the Prince’s Foundation for organising a full, demanding and informative programme.

This report provides an overview of the programme and the lessons learned. More detailed information on individual facets of the programme will be distributed by my office to relevant Council Officers for follow-up as appropriate.
Ypres/Passchendaele Centenary Commemorations

New Zealand troops were involved in major battles in the Third Battle for Ypres in the first fortnight of October, 1917, at Broodseinde and Passchendaele. Broodseinde was a military success, but at an enormous cost in lives. Passchendaele was New Zealand’s worst-ever military disaster. With other councillors I attend the commemorations of Passchendaele each year at Auckland’s War Memorial Museum, so being able to participate in the centenary commemoration in Passchendaele itself was a sombre and moving experience.

One of those buried near Ypres is Sergeant Dave Gallaher, the captain of the first All Black team to tour the UK in 1905. The “Originals” won 34 of their 35 games, losing only to Wales, 3-0 at Cardiff Arms Park. Gallaher was one of 13 All Blacks to give their lives on the Western Front during the First World War. The battle in which he died saw 492 members of the Auckland battalion killed in action. I visited Dave Gallaher’s grave at the Nine Elms cemetery and presented the Mayor and City Council of Zonnebeke a bronze statue of Gallaher sculpted and donated by Malcolm Evans. This statue, a miniature of the one that stands outside of Eden Park, will be exhibited in the Council Buildings. The presentation ceremony was covered by the local media.

On behalf of Auckland, I laid a wreath at the evening remembrance ceremony at Menin Gate in Ypres, where close to a thousand people, many of them Kiwis, gathered to reflect on the battles 100 years ago. The waiata and karanga by the New Zealand Defence Force cultural group, echoing up to the vaulted ceiling of the gate, and a haunting rendition of “Welcome Home” by Dave Dobbyn were deeply emotional for all those in attendance.

846 New Zealanders were killed, and around 2700 were killed, wounded or missing at the end of the first day of the Passchendaele battle. On the anniversary of this day, a New Zealand national service was held at Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves cemetery, where many of New Zealand’s fallen are buried. The Speaker of the House, Chief of Defence Force, Prince William and Princess Astrid of Belgium, spoke at the ceremony. I met Prince William during the event, and he expressed the UK’s gratitude for the sacrifice made by New Zealanders on the Western Front.

I also attended further ceremonies, including the opening of a centennial poppy garden in Zonnebeke, a ceremony marking the creation of a forest memorial to New Zealanders and others at Polygon Wood, and a sunset New Zealand service at Buttes New British Cemetery. It was a privilege to represent Aucklanders at these moving events.

London programme of visits

My London visit was in two parts. The first focused on transport, and how London was coping with rapid growth in population and tourism; and tackling the problem of congestion. The second part of my visit focused on housing and urban regeneration, and involved a programme organised by Prince Charles’ Prince’s Foundation for Building Communities. The programme involved a wide range of meetings with local government agencies and politicians, central government officials, major private sector design and construction consultancies, and experts in investment in housing.
Transport for London's integrated principles for housing and transport growth

Meetings

- We met with New London Architecture, an independent forum for discussion, debate and information about architecture, planning, development and construction in London. Using 3D printing technology, New London Architecture has built a 12.5 metre long scale model of London covering a full 85 square kilometres, which is regularly updated to reflect planned or actual development. The Auckland Design Office is working with AUT on a similar model for Auckland.
- We met with ARUP Group, an independent firm of planners, engineers, consultants and technical specialists working across all sectors of the built environment. ARUP has been involved with projects in Auckland, including the North Harbour Stadium and the ASB Building in the Wynyard Quarter.

- We met for four and a half hours with the Chief Executive of Transport for London (TFL), Mike Brown, and a number of his senior officials. TFL is the strategic authority responsible for most of London’s transportation network.

- I met the incoming Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Charles Bowman. The Lord Mayor represents the City’s financial district. Bowman is prioritising building trade and economic relationships with partner cities. With this in mind he is planning to lead a business delegation to Auckland in February to explore potential opportunities for collaboration.

- At City Hall, I met with James Murray and Jules Pike, London’s two deputy mayors responsible for housing and infrastructure.

- I met with Tony Danaher at the Department for Trade and Industry. Danaher is responsible for attracting large scale investment into London, with a particular focus on build-to-rent housing investment initiatives.

- Through the New Zealand High Commission, we also met with a New Zealand expatriate, Kent Gardner, of Evans Randall, a company responsible for multi-billion investments, including in build-to-rent developments. Gardner is returning to New Zealand with an interest in investing in similar projects here. His goal is to build good-quality long-term rentals with secure tenure, including some social housing. This could represent a major opportunity to increase housing stock to address Auckland’s housing shortage.

- We met with the Chairman of Cross Rail (soon to be renamed the “Elizabeth” Line), Sir Terry Morgan, and undertook a site visit to see the soon-to-be completed 100km line – presently the largest single infrastructure project in Europe. Cross Rail was established in 2001, and the new Elizabeth line is due to open fully in 2018. It will run from Reading and Heathrow in the West, to Abbey Wood and Shenfield in the East. The line will carry an estimated 200 million passengers a year, and bring an extra 1.5 million people within 45 minutes of Central London. The journey time from Heathrow Airport to the city of London will fall from 55 to 34 minutes.
The massive project has been funded jointly by TFL and the Department of Transport, at a cost of NZD27.4 billion. London meets NZD13.2 billion and Government NZD8.7 billion. London businesses will contribute NZD7.6 billion of London’s share through a Business Rate Supplement, reflecting the value uplift the project brings to them.

The City of London Corporation and business contributions are contributing over NZD650 million; Heathrow Airport Limited, NZD130 million; and Canary Wharf Group, NZD278 million – a total of over NZD1 billion.

- Other corporate meetings included Mott MacDonald, Grimshaw Architects, the Hinduja Group and Turner and Townsend.

  - Mott MacDonald is a multi-billion dollar global engineering, management and development consultancy. The firm is involved in Auckland’s City Rail Link (CRL), the Auckland International Airport terminal expansion, and digitising the management system of Auckland’s storm-water assets. This meeting provided a useful opportunity to discuss Auckland’s future infrastructure challenges.

  - Grimshaw Architects are a global architecture practice. Among their major projects is a new London Bridge rail and underground station, which has redeveloped and totally transformed the station and surrounding neighbourhood. Some of its concepts will be paralleled in the design of CRL’s four stations in Auckland, which I believe will be world class show-cases of design and public art.
Through the High Commission, I met G.P. Hinduja, whose companies have a combined turnover of USD200 billion. I travelled in one of his company’s (Ashok Leyland) 15 fully electric battery-powered buses being trialled in London. The batteries last around 130 miles, but next year that increases to over 160 miles. Buses cost around GBP300,000. The batteries are the major additionality of cost over diesel equivalents but new battery technology means that the range they are capable of is extending significantly, while their cost coming down.

Later in the trip, in Paris, I met with other automotive companies, including BMW and Volvo who are also developing electric, battery-powered buses. The market should be competitive, with cities in Europe and the US moving rapidly towards low-emission buses, and phasing out diesel vehicles. This is a trend that Auckland needs to be part of, with 40 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions resulting from transport. We have made the commitment to purchase electric buses for our replacement fleet from 2025, along with other major cities at the Paris Conference (see below).

Turner and Townsend are a world-leading professional services company. I discussed two projects that they are involved in. The first was a guided-bus system in Leeds, where buses run on a separate roadway using guide wheels. The system has some benefits – such as saving space, but it also has limitations, which mean that it is not immediately persuasive as an option we should explore for Auckland.

We also discussed a tram-train project Turner and Townsend is presently involved with in Sheffield, in South Yorkshire. This form of light-rail can run on both tramlines on roads, and also on heavy rail lines. While this is the first such system in the UK, similar tram-train networks operate in parts of Europe. The Sheffield project is a pilot for the UK, which should be fully up-and-running by 2019. We should follow the progress of this pilot, which has some obvious advantages of extending the utilisation of heavy rail corridors, with the flexibility of providing a service beyond these into wider areas serviced by tram-lines.

Transport for London (TFL) - I held discussions with TFL about rubber-wheeled trains, which could run along roads without the cost of tram-tracks, and with additional flexibility of routes. TFL’s advice was that savings were not actually what might have been anticipated because the weight of rubber-wheeled trams required road-strengthening, and they also require a source of electric power. In addition the rides were not as comfortable.

We also raised with TFL the relative costs of grade-level light rail, elevated light rail and underground light rail. Elevation costs roughly four times the cost of grade-level light rail, and underground light rail ten-times the cost. These costs largely rule out these options for Auckland.
TFL’s view was that autonomous vehicles were highly unlikely to displace the need for rapid transit. Autonomous vehicles could in fact potentially increase road congestion. The more likely role of autonomous vehicles is not to provide a full trip, but to facilitate movement between light rail and home, or destinations where light rail stations were more than half-a-kilometre from either end of a trip.

TFL acknowledged the support in-principle for value-uplift capture from new transport infrastructure, whereby those receiving windfall profits from the rate-payers investment contribute some of that profit back. However, they warned that it would be tough to implement this across the board, as some of the residential beneficiaries were likely to be income poor, and there would be resistance to taking a share of profit – even when the land was sold, or came from a deceased estate.

Congestion tax - As applied in London from 2003 London’s congestion tax, was regarded as a significant success (one of the few examples of this in Europe). The total number of vehicles entering the zone reduced by 60,000 per day, or 15 percent after the tax was introduced. There was an 11 percent shift from car use to public transport, walking and cycling. Traffic emissions and road accident rates had declined. The scheme generated GBP1.4 billion in its first 14 years, which was re-invested in transport projects in London. The daily charge has increased from GBP5.00 on introduction, progressively, to GBP11.50 per day (or about NZD21).
TFL noted that the success of the congestion tax was significantly contributed to by complementary transport measures, such as a massive increase in bus capacity, improvements in train and underground services, and better information for public transport users.

Low emission and public transport vehicles (e.g. taxis and Uber vehicles) are exempted and a 90% discount operates for residents within the zone.

**Change in the transport focus over the last 15 years in London** – There has been a decisive mode shift from cars to public transport, walking and cycling. Transport capacity and connectivity has been expanded to unlock growth. Investment has been expanded in public transport, cycling and walkways, while car access has been restricted.

Cycling has been encouraged by grade-separated “super highways” for biking, such as along the Embankment. Additional taxes have been enforced on high emission vehicles such as diesel, while electric cars are exempted from the congestion tax. Crossrail 1, and the future Crossrail 2, will reduce congestion on the Underground, and allow the city to cope with the forecast growth in both residents and tourists.

Transport and land use has become better integrated. Mayor Sadiq Khan has adopted a “healthy-streets” approach in the latest Mayor’s Transport Strategy. This focuses on decisions which prioritise human health and quality of life. By 2041, the aim is for 80% of Londoners’ trips to be on foot, by cycle or via public transport – up from 64% in 2015.
Docklands Light Rail – Light rail operates in certain area of London with considerable success. Originally constructed in the 1980s, the Docklands Light Rail has been extended in subsequent decades. It has facilitated the massive increase in jobs and population in the Docklands area. Historically a deprived socio-economic area of London, employment in the area has increased from 3,000 in the early 1980s, to an expected 200,000 in the upcoming decade.

Housing – The immediate noticeable difference in approach by UK local authorities from New Zealand and elsewhere is the requirement for a percentage of new housing to be affordable. This is defined as being 80% of the area’s market value - which of course in high-income areas does not constitute affordability in reality. In London, the target for new houses is 35% of affordability, with the incentive of projects committing to this target having their consent applications fast-tracked. In November 2016, Central Government provided funding to London of GBP3.15 billion to enable 90,000 affordable housing starts by 2024. The money goes mainly to Housing Associations and Local Borough Councils.

Prince’s Trust for Building Communities

My programme with the Prince’s Trust consisted of briefing sessions on engaging communities, place-making, designing housing for affordable homes, and knowledge exchange. Building compatibility with existing communities and historic neighbourhoods and sympathetic infill were also strong focuses of the Trust’s approach to urban regeneration.

As part of the programme I undertook a site visit to Kings Cross, where a rundown area close to the station has been extensively rebuilt, while retaining the aspects of the historical legacy of the area. Around 50 new buildings have been constructed, including high-rise. 20 historic buildings have been refurbished and 2,000 homes created with 10 new major public spaces. Structures such as the old gasometer tank’s external frames have been retained with new buildings inside them; the old granary and coal stores converted to modern use, including housing the prestigious London
University of the Arts; and great new public spaces like Granary Square. The project represents a triumph of Master Planning and the once deprived area is now becoming one of the most attractive places in London to live, work and visit.

Another site visit was to Highbury Gardens in Islington. An infill site, it was largely constructed as one building, but with a number of façades, complementing the historic buildings in the area. The site has created 130 mixed-tenure homes – ownership, shared ownership and social housing. Highbury Gardens incorporates key energy efficiency principles, and has its own enclosed garden area within the development, creating a great and secure open space for residents.
I also visited Spitalfields, a regeneration project which has been designed to be consistent with the history of the area, unlike surrounding tower blocks.

We were also briefed on the Packington Estate, where a post-war tower block has been ripped down and replaced with housing modelled on the Georgian style of one-down and three-up terraced housing. It houses more residents, but on a human-scale, and its design is hugely preferred by the former tower-block residents. We were briefed and shown on screen other developments on Duchy of Cornwall (Prince of Wales) land, where the design of new estates in Cornwall and Dorset replicates existing historic architecture, preserving the sense of place and history of the area.

One of the themes of the Foundation is to promote qualitative place-making, best use of streets and public open spaces which are attractive, memorable and good places to live in. On estate regeneration, the Foundation builds around what people want. This includes the rights of prior residents to remain in the area, well-defined quality green space, a sense of place and neighbourhood, and integration with transport links.

The Trust has determined through its projects and research that what people disliked was big, high-rise developments. Instead, they wanted connectivity and pedestrian-focused streets, and the retention of strong local identity and local landmarks. What also works is integration of new housing with local employment opportunities, where enterprises can be integrated with residential development and are accessible by walking or cycling.

For mid-rise development in London, the Foundation promotes intensification along key routes and dedicated infill strategies for smaller brownfield sites, consistent with the area where they are located. It also supports master-planned, large-scale sites where land is available with the goal of creating liveable streets, good urban form and strong communities. In estate regeneration, social housing should be replaced on a one-for-one basis, affordable housing should be promoted and stress placed on urban design and quality housing, which reconnects these sites with their surrounding neighbourhoods.
I would like to acknowledge the Prince of Wales for his dedicated support and commitment to making cities better places to live, and his promotion of urban design and environmental principles, in which when he began, he was well ahead of his time in terms of foresight.

I also want to thank Jeremy Cross from the Foundation, Ben Bolgar, Andy Cameron, Dr Demetri Porphyrios, Hugh Petter, Tim Gray, Dominic Richards, Laura Hattrup, Harriet Wennberg, Lucy Slack, Andy van Bradsky for their time, and extensive briefings during my programme.

Paris, City Lab and Mayors’ Innovation Studio

The main purpose of my visit to Paris was to participate in the CityLab event, and an associated Mayors’ Innovation Studio. Hosted by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Aspen Institute and The Atlantic, CityLab brings together a group of invited mayors from cities around the world, with urban experts, business leaders, artists, academics and activists, to engage on the most pressing issues facing city leaders and their citizens. Around 35 mayors participated in CityLab this year, and the three day event offered an excellent opportunity for me to meet with Mayors from around the world – through one-on-one discussions and panel events, as well as plenary sessions. The event allowed us to engage on some of the common challenges we are facing, and exchange information on lessons-learned, and best-practice in addressing them. Mayor Justin Lester from Wellington also participated in the CityLab programme in Paris this year.

Mayors’ Innovation Studio

The first day of the three day CityLab programme, Sunday 22 October, was focused on a Mayors’ Innovation Studio. The impact of disruptive technologies on cities was a key theme of the Innovation Studio. Michael Bloomberg, the former New York mayor and founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies led the day off with a session on lessons he had learned on dealing with the introduction of disruptive technologies during his time as Mayor in New York.

One of his key reflections in this context was that city governments were increasingly at the forefront of, and having to respond more quickly to community and infrastructure issues than the Federal Government. This meant that cities – both in the US and more broadly – were increasingly leading on the implementation of policy changes to address rapid changes facing communities, as the Federal Government increasingly lacked the nimbleness and/or inclination to do so. He gave the example of the Trump Administration’s decision to withdraw from the Paris Accord. After, that decision, Bloomberg reflected that a large number of city governments in the US - around 382 cities in 44 states, representing 70 million people – have committed to meet the targets that the US had originally agreed to in the Paris Accords.

Climate Change was a key focus of the Innovation Studio, with Paris Mayor, Anne Hidalgo, announcing the formation of the C40 programme on Together4Climate, which will bring together C40 members and private sector leaders. Together4Climate will focus on initiatives in three key policy areas: mobility, energy and urban planning, with the objective of making communities cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable - while growing the green economy and promoting innovation.
Two other sessions dealt with the impact of new disruptive technologies (such as Uber or AirBnB) on cities, and approaches that different cities were dealing with them. Based on analysis of a survey that had been taken from participating mayors, the organisers had identified certain key issues that were considered key to helping ensure cities were able to manage the introduction of new disruptive technologies effectively. These included:

- Setting clear goals and a shared vision, and establishing clear intentions;
- Bringing residents and other stakeholders into the process early;
- Taking a performance-driven approach, but one which also allows innovation from within Government;
- Embracing data and data-sharing standards, and using data to try and solve problems.
- Demonstrating a willingness to experiment with new technologies
- Prioritising environmental, community and worker impacts as key factors in decision-making;
- Channelling necessary resources, while ensuring that public finances were spent efficiently and without unnecessary waste;
- Negotiating smartly (e.g. with new technology companies) and setting clear and achievable priorities for negotiations.

CityLab

CityLab was run as a combination of plenary sessions, panel discussions, presentations and breakout groups. The CityLab agenda covered a range of issues including a number of relevance to Auckland, including: creating more sustainable cities; working together as cities to address climate change challenges; developing solutions to growing housing affordability and accessibility; tackling transportation infrastructure issues; improving equality of, and access to, opportunities; tackling the incorporation of disruptive technologies, and their impact on cities in the future.

Addressing climate change at the city-level was a key CityLab theme. The biggest event in this regard was an announcement by the Mayors of Auckland, Barcelona, Cape Town, Los Angeles, Milan, Paris and Quito, and the Governor of Tokyo, to sign-up to the C40 Fossil Free Streets Declaration. The non-binding Declaration is designed to create momentum for a shift towards zero emission mobility, which will result in less congestion and less pollution, while making city roads quieter and cleaner. The Declaration also reflects a shared desire for ambitious climate action at the city-level to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. Among the objectives of the C40 Fossil-Fuel-Free Streets Declaration, signatories pledge to work towards the goals of procuring only zero-emission buses from 2025, and ensuring that a major area of our city is zero-emission by 2030.

The Declaration reflects the fact that climate change is the most serious environmental threat the world faces; and that the economic consequences of climate change, and its human impacts are huge. In my comments at a major media conference announcing the initial cities that were joining the declaration, I noted that Auckland – with 36% of New Zealand’s population - was committed to playing its role in combatting climate change. Forty percent of our greenhouse gas emissions are from transport and by joining the Declaration we were signalling a clear intention to bring those emissions down.
ELA Mayor Eric Garcetti tweets our Fossil Free Streets Declaration

Though non-binding, the targets set by the Declaration will provide impetus for achieving them, both locally and globally. I stated that this would not be easy. Auckland followed the Los Angeles model of sprawling suburbs, reliant on private vehicles and motorways. With rapid population growth, we are still adding 800 extra cars a week to our roads, creating growing congestion. But we were changing our culture. For example, we had re-zoned the city to allow for intensive housing, especially around public transport hubs and arterial routes. With rail electrification, double-tracking and an underground city rail loop now under construction rail usage was already increasing by over 20 percent a year. We would soon begin the reconstruction of electric light rail in the city, sixty years after we pulled up the tracks that trams used to run on; we were looking actively to promote car sharing and electric cars, and starting in the next year trialling battery-powered electric buses. Interestingly, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti backed up my comments, pointing out that Los Angeles is now spending USD120 billion on building rapid transit lines, mainly light rail but also bus rapid transit as well as cycle-lanes.

I also presented at a panel discussion on housing affordability and outlined some of the issues that Auckland was facing addressing our challenges to create enough social and affordable housing to meet our unprecedented growth. This was a useful opportunity to exchange views with other mayors – many of whom were facing similar challenges to Auckland, in terms of boosting housing supply and affordability in an environment of growing process, and demand.

It is clear from my participation in this and other sessions that we are not alone in facing the dual challenges of needing to urgently ramp up home building to improve residents’ quality of life; and ensuring that housing shortages do not become a drag on economic growth. Worldwide, McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) has estimated that some 330 million urban households currently live in substandard housing or stretch to pay housing costs that exceed 30 percent of their incomes. This number could rise to 440 million households by 2025 if current trends are not reversed.
Beyond the human toll, this issue can constrain economic growth. For example, households with a disproportionate share of monthly income going toward rent or mortgage payments must limit other forms of consumption. In California, MGI estimates that the housing shortage causes the state to lose $140 billion in annual output, or 6 percent of state GDP.

There is much we can learn from other cities dealing with similar challenges as Auckland’s. Initiatives such as CityLab provide an important forum for engagement with a wide range of relevant players in the private, public and academic sectors, and an opportunity to learn about the challenges other cities face and how they have, or are, addressing them. I would like to acknowledge, and thank, Michael Bloomberg and Bloomberg Philanthropies for extending the invitation to Auckland to participate in this event, including by paying for our flights to and accommodation in Paris for the CityLab event.

In addition to the CityLab programme, the French Embassy in Wellington helped facilitate some joint meetings for myself and Mayor Lester. This included a guided tour of Paris’ ambitious new EcoDistrict in Clichy-Batignolles. This massive development project is designed to maximise environmental sustainability through a master-planned development in a former industrial area, which will ultimately bring together 7,500 residents in mixed-use housing, and create an estimated 12,700 new jobs.

We also met with the Deputy Mayor of Paris, Jean-Louis Missika, who is responsible for leading the expansion of Paris’s underground network.