

RT Hon John Key
Office of the Prime Minister
Private Bag 18 888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

2 December 2014

Dear Prime Minister

Giant panda for Wellington

This letter is to confirm our conversation from Tuesday November 25 regarding the acquisition of Giant panda in partnership with the Chinese government.

I would like to again express Wellington's excitement and enthusiasm for this project. Wellington, as New Zealand's capital city, is the most appropriate partner city in this endeavour and we are ready to act as soon as possible to ensure this venture is successful for New Zealand.

Wellington has a first class zoo that has been the recipient of many prestigious awards accolades over the last seven years, with staff expertise that has been acknowledged internationally and outstanding resources. For Wellington, our zoo is a key player in delivering our strategic objectives in tourism, science, conservation and community engagement. To achieve this goal, the Council has invested in a capital redevelopment programme over the last ten years that has enabled the Zoo's Chief Executive, Karen Fifield, and her team to transform the facility into a world-class attraction that lives up to its moniker as 'the best little Zoo in the world'. We believe that hosting the world's most iconic animal fits with this reputation. Kevin Lavery and I have discussed this Panda proposal with Ross Martin, Chair of Wellington Zoo Trust and Karen Fifield, Chief Executive of Wellington Zoo (and also President of the Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia). They have both shown enthusiasm and commitment previously for the acquisition of Giant Panda and echo our sentiment that this is an exciting proposal that they are very keen to progress. I was a long serving member of the Wellington Zoo Trust Board from 2001 to 2010 and have the utmost faith that the team at Wellington Zoo can successfully deliver this project.

All the major capital city zoos have had Giant Panda over the last three decades (e.g. London, Paris, Berlin, Washington DC and Tokyo). Given New Zealand's relationship with China, Wellington is well positioned to join these other capital cities in hosting Giant Panda. Wellington has good relations with China and recent decisions to bring the Cultural Centre and a new Chinese Garden to the Capital confirm this.

We share your desire to bring NZ school children to the Capital, as they do in the USA and Australia, because so many national institutions are here – Parliament, the National Library, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, New Zealand Ballet and Te Papa. Our next step is to bring the regional year 7 and 8 students here in 2015 as part of the Capital's 150th celebrations. The Giant Panda would add to our undeniable attractions as we work to encourage all New Zealand schools to participate in our Nationhood initiative.

I am aware that we will be guided by central government especially in regard to engaging with the Chinese Government and key interests in Wellington to ensure the success of this project. Given New Zealand's current relationship with China, Wellington is well positioned to join other capital city zoos around the world in hosting Giant panda which play a large, symbolic part in on-going diplomatic relations between the two countries. We believe that housing Giant panda is consistent with Wellington Zoo's overall strategy and goals of being the 'best little Zoo in the world'.

Wellington Zoo has won a number of prestigious awards over the last seven years for sustainability and environmental and business leadership and our new capital projects have also won architectural and construction awards at the highest level.

Some of these awards are listed in the attachment.

In conclusion I would like to confirm my enthusiasm for the Giant panda project and we look forward to discussing this exciting project further with you. I have included more detail about the Wellington Zoo, its staff and capabilities below. If you require any further information before the next phase of discussions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Celia Wade-Brown', written in a cursive style.

Celia Wade-Brown
Mayor of Wellington

2008	Winner DOC Conservation Education & Advocacy Award, Wellington Region
2009	Winner of the Central & Southern Sustainable Business Network Awards - Sustainable Business of the Year Award and Not for Profit Award
2009	Winner of the NZI National Sustainable Business Network People's Choice Award
2009	Karen Fifield, Winner HER Regional Wellington Businesswoman of the Year Awards - Sustainability Award and Outstanding Corporate Leadership Award
2010	Zoo and Aquarium Association Best Large Exhibit Award - The Nest Te Kōhanga (a first for a NZ zoo)
2010	Winner Green Gold, Wellington Gold Awards – Positive Sustainability Practices
2010	Karen Fifield, Winner Bloom HER Business Awards – Outstanding Business Leader
2010	Winner Business Environmental Leadership Award, Encore Awards
2011	NZ Zoo and Aquarium Association Conservation Award - The Nest Te Kōhanga
2010	Finalist Ministry for the Environment Green Ribbon Awards for <i>Small businesses making a difference</i>
2011	Dr Lisa Argilla, Veterinary Science Manager, Wellingtonian of the Year, Environment
2009-2013	Construction and Architecture awards for The Nest Te Kōhanga, Wild Theatre, Kamala's Function Centre
2013	Winner Vibrant Gold (events, hospitality & visitor activities), Wellington Gold Awards
2013	Sustainable 60 Winner - Marketplace
2013	First carbonZero certified Zoo in the world
2014	Amy Hughes, GM Community Engagement, finalist in the Wellingtonian of the Year Awards- Education
2014	Zoo and Aquarium Association Best Small Exhibit Award from a Large Institution — Hero HQ.
2014	Oli du Bern, Visitor Experience Manager, finalist in the NZIM Eagle Technology young Executive of the Year

Wellington Zoo prides itself on delivering consistent quality experiences, developing healthy and resilient partnerships and providing excellent animal care.

Wellington Zoo previously had discussions and exchanged information with other zoos who house Giant panda, particularly Adelaide Zoo, which is an excellent comparative study in terms of size and visitation levels. Our Board Chair and the Strategic Management Team have visited Adelaide Zoo to see their Giant panda exhibit and Wellington Zoo paid for Dr Chris West, then CEO of Zoos South Australia, to visit Wellington to discuss Adelaide Zoo's Giant panda experience with us and local and central government officials

Wellington Zoo has also had discussions with project management firm, Hassell, in Australia in 2010 who are willing to share the feasibility study they produced for Adelaide Zoo. The international designers, Studio Hanson Roberts, who designed Wellington Zoo's new Asia precinct, have experience designing Giant Panda exhibits- notably at Ocean Park Hong Kong. A member of our Trust Board is a Partner Corporate Finance for Deloitte and she is willing to work with the partner organisations of this project on the feasibility studies.

We are nine years through a major ten year capital redevelopment programme for Wellington Zoo which includes a redeveloped Asian precinct. We believe this area could easily be extended to house Giant panda in context. As a species Giant panda complement Asian animals in our existing collection which includes Malayan sun bears, Nepalese red pandas and Sumatran tigers. Wellington Zoo has already designated an area of the Zoo which could be developed for a Giant panda exhibit. The Asian precinct in Wellington Zoo is located next to the New Zealand precinct which would be an ideal link for this project. We have long term relationships with world renowned zoo exhibit designers and local project and construction firms who would be more than willing to assist us with this project. We have also had ongoing success with fundraising and commercial relationships which would also be key components for this project.

Wellington has a suitable climate for Giant panda, similar to their native mountains of Sichuan Province. Wellington has mild weather thus the Giant panda would not have to be restricted to air-conditioned rooms during the summer as they do in some other zoos.

Wellington also has a suitable climate for growing bamboo, especially two of the giant panda's favourites (*Bambusa oldhami* and *Phyllostachys spp.*). The NZ Bamboo Society is located in Wellington and Wellington Zoo would explore partnering with the Society. We have had advice from them before regarding our red panda diet. We also believe that growing bamboo to assist the Zoo is an excellent way to involve the community, similar to community eucalyptus growing for feeding koala in zoos in Australia. We also have approval from ERMA to import bamboo should that be required in special circumstances.

Wellington Zoo has the staff knowledge to manage Giant panda. Mauritz Basson, the General Manager Animal Care at Wellington Zoo, was previously a curator at Johannesburg Zoo where he worked with several bear species, including polar bears, grizzly bears, sun bears and Asiatic black bears.

Wellington Zoo is one of a handful of zoos that have successfully bred and reared Malayan sun bears, evidence of expertise in bear husbandry. Wellington Zoo is the only zoo in New Zealand that currently holds bears of any kind so has the husbandry expertise necessary to host such precious animals as Giant panda. Wellington Zoo also has a conservation relationship with Free the Bears Asia in regard to sun bears and has provided husbandry and education advice to that organisation in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The Nest Te Kōhanga, the award winning, state of the art animal hospital at Wellington Zoo, is the perfect place for care of Giant panda. Veterinary excellence is one of the conditions required by the Chinese government for panda host zoos. The Nest Te Kōhanga has featured on television's Wild Vets and is staffed by qualified vets and vet nurses. Wellington Zoo also has a three year veterinary

Masters programme in Wildlife and Zoo Medicine for qualified vets in partnership with Massey University - the only one of its kind in New Zealand.

Currently all zoos that have Giant panda on loan from China have a research focus. Wellington Zoo has strong connections to Victoria University and Massey University in biological sciences and veterinary science; a Giant panda research team would convene to select a research angle that is point of difference for Wellington Zoo. China currently loans pandas to countries for 10 years (they arrive as juveniles) and this results in two-way information exchange about Giant panda. Since the new era of loans began at San Diego Zoo in 1998, conservation advances have been significant. Researchers (Chinese and loan countries) have unlocked the breeding mysteries, as Giant panda historically were poor breeders in captivity, and captive births continue to increase each year. Wellington Zoo sees this research as a contribution to conservation of Giant panda.

We believe there is an appetite in the Wellington community to support Wellington Zoo to host Giant panda. Previously Positively Wellington Tourism has expressed their support as have other supporters of the Zoo in the community such as WWF New Zealand, various Probus and Rotary clubs, and of course, the Zoo's own membership.