

Wellington Cable Car Museum

Striking extension to celebrate museum's fifth birthday

December 2005

Described as “a truly unique part of Wellington’s history as well as part of its future” by Minister of Tourism Hon. Damien O’Connor, the Wellington Cable Car Museum has expanded its horizons with the opening of a striking new building extension and with the restoration and display of a 100-year-old grip cable car.

The Minister was speaking at the official opening on December 5 (the museum’s fifth birthday), as the Ministry of Tourism provided some of the funding for the project under its Tourism Facilities Grants Programme. The extension was officially opened by Wellington Mayor Kerry Prendergast and houses the restored cable car, Grip Car 3, as well as providing additional interpretation of the cable car system and surrounding area.

The Wellington Cable Car Museum is located at the top of the cable car route and upper entrance to the Wellington Botanic Garden. It is the second busiest in the city after Te Papa and attracts more than 200,000 visitors a year.

The building extension was designed by architects Bevin & Slessor and has almost doubled the size of the original museum, which is housed in the original winding house for the cable car system (classified Category Two by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust).

“This extension not only accommodates our heritage requirements but also recognises the museum’s location in a key tourist precinct and its role as a “signpost” for the surrounding area, including the Botanic Garden,” says John Gilberthorpe, Chief Executive of the Wellington Museums Trust.

“The new part of the building moves away from the traditional museum design by employing a lot of glass. This means museum visitors can enjoy views of the city, harbour and surrounding gardens, while passers-by can look in to see Grip Car 3 on display.”

The extension is to the north of the existing museum building and is on the approximate site of the old boiler room, which was demolished in the 1930s when the cable car system changed over from steam to electrical power.

Grip Car 3 was one of the original cable cars on the Kelburn line and has been restored to c1905 by The Wheelwright Shop, Gladstone, under the supervision of heritage transport expert Colin Perfect. The conservation project took over nine months and involved the complete dismantling of the car and meticulous restoration and repair.

The conservation and building extension projects were the initiative of the Wellington Museums Trust, which manages the Wellington Cable Car Museum as well as the

Museum of Wellington City & Sea, City Gallery Wellington, Capital E, the Colonial Cottage Museum and the New Zealand Cricket Museum (jointly with the New Zealand Cricket Museum Trust).

The Wellington City Council contributed up to \$740,000 to the project, spread over last year and this year. Funding also came from the New Zealand Community Trust, the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board Environment and Heritage Committee, the Minister of Tourism's Facilities Grants Programme plus the Wellington Museums Trust's own capital expenditure programme.

For more information: www.cablecarmuseum.co.nz