



## **Alexandra Basin Redevelopment Project**

### **Community Gain Proposal**

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## 1. Context

In 2012 Dublin Port Company (DPC) published a Masterplan to guide the development and operation of the Port to 2040. The Masterplan, which was produced following extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, identified a series of projects that could be undertaken at Dublin Port to facilitate the Port serving the economy and the City.

DPC is now advancing its first significant project under the Masterplan. This project involves work in three areas:

- Firstly, there is the re-engineering of infrastructure in and surrounding Alexandra Basin to provide new deeper berths for a range of types of ship including Ro-Ro, Lo-Lo, dry bulk, general cargo and cruise ships.
- Secondly, there is the building of a new river berth for Ro-Ro ships and the removal of two existing Ro-Ro berths to facilitate the long term deployment of larger ships by ferry operators
- Thirdly, there is the deepening of the Port's entrance channel to allow deeper draughted ships of all types to access Dublin Port.

The project, known as the ABR Project, will also see the reconfiguration of nearly one-third of the Port's existing berths. The project is delivering on a commitment contained in the Masterplan to maximise the existing land within the Port and not to seek to reclaim new land outside the footprint of the current Port lands.

In July 2013, An Bord Pleanála designated the project by DPC to redevelop Alexandra Basin at Dublin Port as "strategic infrastructure" under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006.

## 2. DPC Planning Application

DPC will be engaging in an extensive consultation programme when the application is lodged and a full opportunity will be afforded to all interested parties to participate in the planning process.

## 3. Community Gain

Section 37 G (7) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 stipulates in the event that planning permission is granted for a strategic infrastructure development, the Board can make provision for a community gain arising out of the development.

## **4. Existing community initiatives**

DPC has given particular consideration to the type of initiative or project that would represent a real community gain for the people of Dublin in the context of the proposed development. DPC already has a substantial programme of support and engagement for communities living adjacent to the Port in East Wall, Clontarf, the North Inner City, Ringsend, Irishtown and Sandymount. On an annual basis, DPC allocates €300,000 towards community based activities and sponsorships which are aimed at local audiences.

## **5. New community gain proposal**

DPC believes that it has identified a particular community gain proposal which meets the criteria of relevance and appropriateness and would represent a significant community gain, not just in the immediate locality, but to the wider community in Dublin. The proposal will deliver benefits from an environmental, tourism and social inclusion perspectives.

## **6. Dublin City Council Bull Island Interpretative Centre and Visitor Experience**

A proposal is being advanced by Dublin City Council (DCC) to create an international visitor experience at the UNESCO designated Bull Island Biosphere. DPC owns 10.5 hectares of Bull Island closest to the port and adjacent to the Royal Dublin Golf Club. Bull Island is a coastal sand spit located in Dublin Bay. It has a long association with Dublin Port and was originally created following engineering works in the 1800's. Without Dublin Port, there would be no Bull Island and it is now an important amenity for the people of Dublin. At present, Bull Island is owned by the DCC and by DPC.

At present the lands owned by DPC are mainly used for recreational purposes. There are some swimming shelters, a public convenience, informational signage, seating and a Marian Shrine located on the lands. The lands also provide access to Dollymount strand. Given their proximity to the city, Dublin Bay and their integral linkage to the rest of Bull Island the lands present a major amenity for the people of Dublin and the immediate locality.

## **7. DPC Community Gain proposal**

It is proposed by DPC, that in the context of a grant of planning permission by An Bord Pleanála under the Strategic Infrastructure Act for the ABR Project, a community gain initiative would be advanced with the following elements:

- i. DPC will transfer its ownership over a portion of Bull Island to DCC to hold in perpetuity for the people of Dublin. This will secure the preservation of Bull Island

for future generations of Dubliners and encourage the development of the strategic vision for Bull Island being advanced by DCC at present. A unified ownership structure for Bull Island will facilitate proper management of the resource by the City Council. It would be the intention of DPC to maintain rights of access to the North Bull Wall to facilitate maintenance on essential ship navigation assets such as the North Bull Lighthouse.

- ii. In addition as part of the Community Gain proposal, DPC will allocate a sum of €200,000 towards the costs of a feasibility study for a proposed International Visitor Centre and a masterplan for Bull Island following the conclusion of the study. The study and masterplan will be prepared by DCC with participation and support from DPC and other stakeholders. The feasibility study will examine:
  - How any new proposals for Bull Island can take place in a way that protects and supports the UNESCO Biosphere designation and the precious natural resource that Bull Island represents
  - Current and possible future recreational uses on Bull Island
  - An assessment of the potential for an international visitor interpretive centre
  - Examples of similar locations internationally
- iii. DPC will also allocate a further sum to DCC of €1,000,000 towards the provision of any services or facilities identified as a consequence of the study and masterplan. This sum will be paid by DPC on a basis to be agreed with DCC within 10 years of planning for the ABR Project having been secured.
- iv. All of these sums will be in addition to the current community based initiatives and special projects that DPC is undertaking.

## 8. Consultation

An extensive programme of public consultation concerning the ABR project was undertaken between September and November 2013 to seek the views of the wider public on the ABR proposal and particularly on a proposed community gain initiative to be advanced as part of the project.

This consultation process on the community gain initiative involved:

- The publication of a community newsletter on the ABR Project and the Community Gain proposal, which was circulated to over 40,000 homes in areas directly adjacent to the Port.
- Meetings with local community groups in areas directly adjacent to the Port
- Briefings with local public representatives on the ABR Project and the Community Gain proposal. These meetings included one to one briefings with individual public representatives, but also with the Local Area Committees of DCC.
- The development of a dedicated website to explain the proposed initiative and facilitate feedback.

- A dedicated community consultation process to seek views on both the ABR project and the Community Gain proposal. The consultation process sought respondents' views in general but also invited responses around specific questions about the project and the Community Gain proposal.
- The publication of public notices in local newspapers and free sheets on the ABR Project.
- An extensive media campaign to publicise the project which secured wide coverage in all national and local print, electronic and online media outlets.

### ***Issues raised during the public consultation exercise***

The consultation process secured written responses from 34 parties.

There was broad support for the Community Gain proposal being advanced by DPC.

A number of specific issues were raised during the consultation process concerning the community gain proposal and which will be reflected in the implementation of the proposal if approved, including:

- The importance of retaining and safeguarding Bull Island as a unique natural heritage resource.
- Ensuring that any proposals for Bull Island which emerge from the DCC feasibility study are measured, balanced and proportionate, taking account of different users of the area and the sensitive eco-system that applies there.
- A reduction of car traffic on Bull Island, proper traffic management and greater concentration of more sustainable transport modes (bicycles, pedestrian and public transport).
- The sensitive development of an interpretative centre with associated information provision on the Island.
- The protection of Bull Island as a unique and special resource without overdevelopment or intensification of structures/inappropriate uses.
- Programmes are required to tackle anti-social activities on Bull Island and to deal with litter control.
- A desire that any proposals from DCC for Bull Island following on from the implementation of the community gain proposal should be subject to appropriate consultation, best practice and the relevant planning consents and environmental assessment processes.

The feedback from the consultation process indicates broad support for the community gain initiative and outlines some specific concerns and observations which will need to be reflected in the processes being adopted by DCC when bringing forward the feasibility study, the masterplan and specific proposals for Bull Island. DPC has advised DCC of the feedback to the consultation process on the Community Gain initiative and will seek to ensure that the views expressed are captured and influence subsequent engagement with DCC if the community gain proposal is adopted in the context of the current application.