

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

On behalf of the Council of the Docklands Authority, I am delighted to introduce the 2008 Master Plan, which lays the foundations for the next five to ten years of the Docklands project. Building on the success of both the 1997 and 2003 Master Plans, it will provide the reference point for the roll-out of projects, programmes and policies for the sustainable regeneration of the Docklands.

The preparation of the Master Plan over the past years has involved extensive stakeholder consultation and wide public engagement. We received a record number of submissions in response to the draft Master Plan and we would like to thank everyone who made a submission, as your views are a key element in the development of the final Plan for the Docklands Area. Each submission has been carefully considered and the final document has been enriched as a result of your input.

There are many new initiatives in this Master Plan and I thought it would be helpful to highlight some of them for you.

Community Facilities and Community Gain

The Authority has in its 2008 Master Plan committed to provide community facilities in tandem with development and community gain.

We have listened to the community's concerns that facilities should be delivered in parallel with commercial and residential development, and a key objective of this plan is ensuring that this will occur. Throughout the drafting of this plan, the Authority has consulted with members of the community and public representatives to identify the priority community gain needs for the area in the future.

The Authority intends securing these through the introduction of a new type of community gain scheme. Through this scheme, developers will be required to deliver from a list of priority community gain projects in the area at each phase of development. The details of the community gain scheme applicable to developers will be contained in each planning scheme as it comes forward and all stakeholders will have every opportunity to provide their input into the final version to be submitted to the Minister for the Environment. In addition to the above community gain, the Authority will also be ensuring the continued provision of 20% social and affordable housing, which it first introduced in 1997.

In particular, I can confirm the Board's support for the development of the Plot 8 site, in conjunction with Waterways Ireland, to deliver the agreed community facility over the life of the current Master Plan. Specifically, the Board has approved the project's designation in the Master Plan as the highest priority community project.

Local Employment Charter

Another important objective as set out in the Dublin Docklands Development Authority Act, 1997, is to promote and develop employment opportunity in the Docklands Area.

One of the major changes to this new Master Plan is the inclusion of the Local Employment Charter as a provision of the Section 25 certification process. Through this initiative, the Authority hopes to be in a position to encourage and support training and employment initiatives that will see more local people benefiting from employment, both on the building sites and in the businesses that are to be located there subsequently. We will, therefore, be working with local employment services, FÁS, second and third-level educational institutions, and builders and employers to maximise access, particularly for our young people, to both further education and employment.

Housing

As noted above, we will of course be continuing one of the Authority's most important community initiatives i.e., the provision of 20% social and affordable housing. This Master Plan further enhances housing delivery by including the concept of integrated housing management, which provides for the management of social, affordable and private housing in a more sustainable way.

Environmental Sustainability

For the first time in our Planning Schemes, we are introducing policies promoting energy-efficient, environmentally sustainable developments. This means that we will be certifying developments which meet the best environmental standards and encouraging the best international practices in urban living. Relevant measures will include: reuse of rainwater, district heating, high-quality low-energy buildings, well managed open spaces, well designed play spaces for children, cycle lanes, and a specific emphasis on recycling and waste management.

Arts and Culture

It is long recognised that both the development of community arts and the encouragement of world-class arts and cultural initiatives are of an enormous benefit to those living and working in an area. This Master Plan provides a number of policies to make this a reality. For example, it promotes new cultural facilities, provides for a broad range of public artworks, events and activities, and envisages the development of live-work accommodation/studios for artists. It also seeks to develop and promote arts in schools and communities through dance, drama and events. The local communities in Docklands already have these qualities in abundance and this Master Plan will encourage and support their continued development.

New Planning Schemes

This Master Plan recognises that direct benefits to communities can be achieved when Section 25 Planning Schemes are implemented in their area. In particular, it encourages the preparation of the Poolbeg Planning Scheme and an amendment to the North Lotts Planning Scheme. I will deal with the particular issues relevant to Poolbeg in my introduction to the draft Planning Scheme for Poolbeg, which is shortly to go on public display. In the context of North Lotts, the proposed amendment to the Planning Scheme will consider creative and innovative development proposals for the campshire and river, provided they are consistent with the amenity and conservation of the area, and enhance the use of these amenities by members of the public.

To ensure that there is widespread support for whatever proposal may emerge, it has been agreed that any intervention into the campshire or the Liffey would require not only Board approval but also specifically the approval of the Council.

Land Ownership

Some people have questioned our being able to certify development on our own lands. However, in each of the planning scheme areas within Docklands, the Authority has owned land on which it has awarded itself Section 25 certification. Indeed, as a development authority, this has enabled us to achieve greater control over the successful development of land to deliver on community development, education, employment, civic infrastructure, social and affordable housing, private housing, commercial buildings and cultural facilities and to achieve an architectural legacy which ensures that the long-term sustainability of Docklands is secured. This is the main reason why the power to purchase land and to certify appropriate development on lands owned by the Authority was specifically included in our founding legislation.

The Master Plan includes the power to draft a planning scheme for the Poolbeg area.

It is most relevant that the Authority's purchase of 26% of the former Irish Glass Bottle site, situated in the Draft Poolbeg Planning Scheme area, was at the specific request of the Council. We have done so in conjunction with private partners in a consortium known as Becbay. On purchasing this site, the Authority insisted that its primary focus was the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the provision of community gain and the implementation of good infrastructure, and the Authority is committed to delivering this. The Authority has decided to introduce a practical step to avoid any apprehension of bias involving Section 25 applications where the Authority has a property interest in the land. Where applications are made for certification in respect of such lands, the Authority will obtain an opinion from an external planner which the Authority will have regard to in coming to a decision on such applications.

Transport

The 2003 Master Plan provided for specific transport measures. I am pleased to say that, since then, the Authority, together with CIE, the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA), private developers and others, has delivered an extension of the Luas to the O₂ (to be completed in 2009), as well as a new main line railway station, known as "Docklands Station", in North Wall. The new Master Plan continues the ambition to provide a world-class transport system for Docklands. We are also proposing a Docklands Rapid Transit (DRT) bus system, which is essentially a high-quality/high-frequency bus route running in dedicated bus lanes. In addition, the long-term development of the Poolbeg Peninsula will require a Luas or similar high-quality public transport system. During the lifetime of this Master Plan, it is intended that new bridges will be constructed over the Liffey and that Docklands will play its part in the delivery of the Sutton-to-Sandy Cove (S2S) cycle and pedestrian route, which will make a superb contribution to the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in Docklands.

Conclusion

In summary, I would like to thank all of you, the stakeholders, for your role in the production of this exciting and ambitious plan. It will bring enormous benefits to all stakeholders including the city of Dublin, the local community and newcomers to the area, and play an important part in delivering on jobs and economic prosperity for our city. The current unfavourable economic climate will present many challenges for all of us as we pursue our ambitions on behalf of Docklands. However, I am confident that Docklands will continue to be a vibrant and positive regeneration project for the city of Dublin.

We look forward to working hand-in-hand with local community leaders, residents and all stakeholders to continue delivering on our mission and the imperatives of the project to ensure that Docklands is a great place to live, a great place to work and a great place to visit.



Donal O'Connor
Chairman

