

To the Chairperson and Members  
of the South East Area Committee

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**Addition of: Former Central Bank including restaurant annexe, Public Plaza including *Crann an Óir* sculpture, Dame Street, Dublin 2** to the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

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Photo of Structure



### **Introduction**

It is proposed to initiate procedures under Section 54 and Section 55 of the Planning & Development Act to add the **former Central Bank including restaurant annexe, Public Plaza including *Crann an Óir* sculpture, Dame Street, Dublin 2** to the Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

### **Request for Addition**

Councillor Mannix Flynn, Dublin City

### **Summary of Applicants Reasons for Seeking Addition**

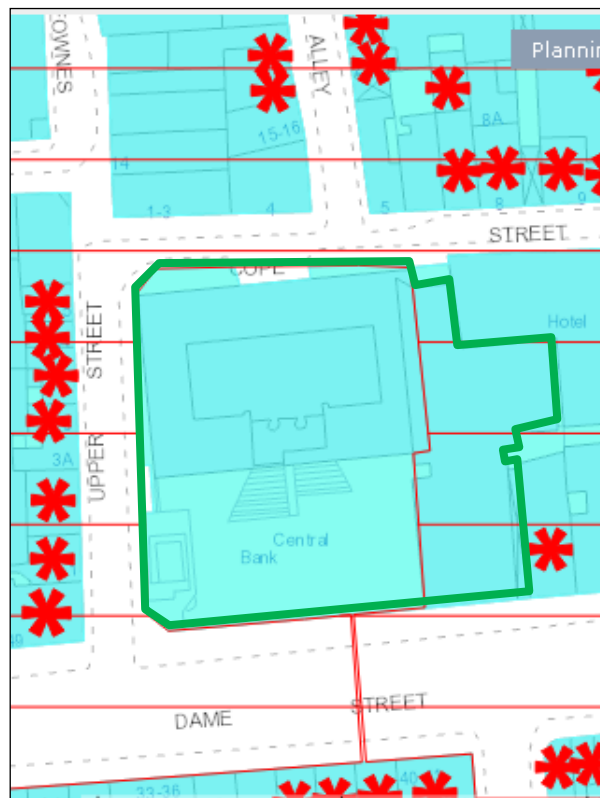
Councillor Mannix Flynn presented the following argument for initiating an order of Protected Structure on the Central Bank and Plaza:

*'This iconic building and plaza has won the hearts of many Dubliners and deserves its position and place in the record of protected structures. It forms part of the legacy of the late architect Sam Stephenson who also designed the iconic Civic Offices. We have a duty and a responsibility to modern architecture and here is a prime example and a well deserving one at that.'*

**2011-2017 Development Plan Zoning & location map:**

The Central Bank is situated on a public plaza bound by Dame Street, Fownes Street Upper and Cope Street. The eight-storey tower building is set back from Dame Street, to the north of the plaza. A restaurant annexe is located to the east of the building, accessed directly from the plaza or via a bridge at first floor level. A reproduction of the Commercial Buildings, previously located on the Central Bank plaza site, sits on the southeast corner of the plaza. Steps are provided along the northern and western perimeters of the plaza to accommodate the drop in level from Dame Street to Cope Street. Two floors of car parking are located underneath the building and plaza.

The location of the Central Bank, Plaza and associated buildings is shown in green. The zoning objective for the site is Z5: To consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area, and to identify, reinforce and strengthen and protect its civic design character and dignity. The restaurant annexe and Commercial Buildings are contained within the red hatched Conservation Areas.



**Recent Planning History:**

Planning Ref: 1279/06

The development will consist of the introduction of directional signage to the main building and the refurbishment and replacement of existing signage. Included in the signage programme is the introduction master brand identity, which takes the form of a back lit sign to the face of the building adjacent to the lobby.

Planning Ref: 2609/01

To erect a temporary display sign measuring 10 mt. x 3 mt. on the Central Bank Plaza.

Planning Ref: 3193/98

Demolition of existing staircase/fountain block on the corner of Dame Street and Fownes Street, the provision of two disabled ramps onto Cope Street, the erection of railings, lamp standards and additional public seating at various locations on the existing Central Bank Plaza at Dame Street.

**Summary Description:**

Freestanding multiple-bay eight-storey bank and office building (45m x 30m) over concealed two-storey basement; two-storey restaurant annexe over concealed two-storey basement; reproduction of the Commercial Buildings to west over basement; and public plaza to north side of Dame Street; built c.1971-8. Hipped, copper-clad roof with overhanging granite-clad parapet. Granite-faced precast concrete fascia to floor structure, expressed as deep horizontal bands, suspended on paired vertical steel hangers or *Macalloy* bars. Granite-faced precast soffits to perimeter. Recessed continuous full-height glazing to all floors. Granite-clad concrete walls to base plinth. Recessed glazed entrance screen with curved glass enclosures, accessed via two splayed granite-clad staircases, having stainless steel handrails. Coffered soffit overhangs the entrance platform and plaza.

The adjacent Annexe is a two-storey restaurant building over concealed two-storey basement kitchen.

The 'Commercial Buildings' is a multiple-bay three-storey office building over concealed basement. It is a reproduction of the original Commercial Buildings (1799), which were demolished for the construction of the Central Bank and Plaza in 1973. The new 'Commercial Buildings' was relocated on the site, and turned at right angles, and constructed with new materials. It has windows to the side elevations, whereas the original building was terraced. The interior layout does not relate to that of the original building. ????

The Central Bank plaza spans the depth of the former urban block, enclosed by Dame Street, Fownes Street Upper and Cope Street.

Éamonn O'Doherty's *Crann an Óir* (Tree of Gold) sculpture was commissioned by the Central Bank of Ireland to mark Dublin's year as European City of Culture in 1991, and located on the Central Bank Plaza.

Alterations were carried out to the roof in 1993 when a pitched copper-clad roof covering was added, concealing the roof structure internally.

Security railings and gates were a later addition to the base in 1998, enclosing the staircases. During these works, public seating was added to the plaza, and a stair and fountain block was removed from the corner of Dame Street and Fownes Street Upper.

The area of the Tower building is 7750 metres sq over eight levels with two levels of underground car parking (107 car spaces). The area of the Annexe building is 1125 metres sq over four levels, two of which are underground. The area of the Commercial Buildings is 1035 metres sq over three levels with basement storage space.

**Assessment of Significance:**

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) has not been carried out for this area; however, its categories of special interest (architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical & social) and its rating system has been used to assess the structure in question. The NIAH identifies five categories of rating in seeking to rank buildings. The NIAH rating values are International, National, Regional, Local and Record Only (I, N, R, L, O). Structures which are considered of **International**, **National**, and **Regional** significance are recommended by the Minister to the relevant planning authority for inclusion in their RPS. Using the NIAH System of rating it is found that the Central Bank is worthy of a National Rating.

The design and construction methods for the Central Bank displayed pioneering technical innovation. The Central Bank tower is the only suspended building in Ireland, and was the first Irish office building to employ the continuous slip-forming technique in the construction of the concrete cores. The structural system is a highly-sophisticated piece of engineering, which is designed to minimise movement in tall buildings and allow increased flexibility spatially.

### **References**

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- Casey, Christine, *The Buildings of Ireland: Dublin* (Yale, 2005)
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- McSweeney & Gough, *Central Bank Offices, Dame Street* (Arups Report presented to Institution of Engineers of Ireland, 1977)
- O'Toole, Shane, *Central Bank of Ireland* (20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture Survey, Dublin City Council & Heritage Council, 2011)
- Sisk Group, *Building a business* (Dublin, 2010)
- Pearson, Peter, *The Heart of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000)

### **Online Sources**

- Archiseek: <http://archiseek.com/2010/1980-central-bank-of-ireland-dame-street-dublin/>
- Public Art - Eamonn O'Doherty, Crann an Óir sculpture (1991): <http://www.publicart.ie/main/directory/directory/view/crann-an-oir/35b4198993522d6af90f6a77bb2e634c/>
- RTE Archives: <http://www.rte.ie/archives/>
- Irish Times: <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/visual-art/artist-patrick-scott-dies-a-day-before-retrospective-exhibition-1.1691930>
- Irish Arts Review: [https://www.irishartsreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Scott\\_Lamb2002.pdf](https://www.irishartsreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Scott_Lamb2002.pdf)

### **Assessment of Special Interest Under the Planning & Development Act 2000**

The structure is considered to be of special interest under the following headings:

#### **Architectural:**

In an article in the Architectural Review in 1980, the writer Lance Wright presents Stephenson's Central Bank, and Scott Tallon Walker's Bank of Ireland Headquarters on Baggot Street, as the only two distinguished head office banks to be built in Ireland or Britain in the previous thirty years. Wright claims that the Central Bank 'is more assertive, and presents a more genial image. When you turn the corner in Dame Street and come upon it, it metaphorically lends you £50,000 without your asking.'

*'It is a contained explosion and it is possible to feel grateful, at one and the same time, both for the explosion and for its containment. Had the bank been taller, or its theatre of operation wider, it would have torn a hole in Dublin which we would have been all sorry for.'* (Irish Times, 16 January 1980)

The building is designed on a 1500mm modular grid. The granite-clad bands conceal services allowing uninterrupted floor and ceiling surfaces. The internal floor level is designed to align with the external surface, which projects 1500mm out from the glazed façade, obscuring the boundary between interior and exterior. The suspended structure liberates the floor plans, allowing

unobstructed views over the surrounding streets, and city. The offices were organised at the centre allowing the perimeter to be accessed as a corridor by all staff.

*'Assertive in both scale and modelling, the nine-storey Central bank is an astonishing and ambitious work with floor-to-ceiling glazing set between granite-faced precast concrete floor slabs. Perimeter corridors on the office floors afford panoramic views to which everybody has access; unusually, workstations are located centrally, rather than at the perimeter, eliminating the typical corporate hierarchy where corner offices denote the occupant's status within the organisation.'* (Shane O'Toole, 2011)

The scale of the ground floor relates to surrounding buildings and plots, with the oversailing floors above providing a canopy over the public space.

*'The completed building wears design decisions that would be more suited to the skyscraper that many appeared to think it was. The thin base it stands on helps to give the building a human scale at street level – being the size of a house.'* (Sisk Group, 2010)

Constituting a fundamental part of the design composition, the public plaza and associated low-rise annexe, anchor and balance the verticality of the tower. The restaurant annexe serves as an extension of the tower base, allowing circulation at first floor level and below ground floor. Though the scale of the plaza relates to that of the tower, the reduced tower base and restaurant annexe respond to the local urban grain. The plaza and its annexe are integral to the 'tower and plaza' typology on which this arrangement is based, exemplars of which are Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building in New York (1958), and Alison & Peter Smithson's Economist Buildings in London (1964). The Central Bank plaza has become part of the urban fabric, serving as a vibrant public space within the city centre. In her Pevsner guide, Christine Casey refers to the plaza as a particularly successful component of the overall design, and laments the later addition of railings.

*'More intrusively, the stepped ascent to the entrance has recently been clumsily railed in, reclaiming much of the public plaza, the most effective element in this controversial design.'* (Casey, 2005)

The Central Bank design team comprised architects Sam Stephenson, Brian Traynor, Gerry Flynn, Paul Richardson and Bronagh Moriarty of Stephenson Gibney Associates. The structural consultants were Frank Lydon, Brian Waldock, John Gaughran and Jerry Dunne of Ove Arup & Partners, the mechanical consultants were JA Kenny & Partners, and the main contractor was John Sisk & Sons Ltd.

#### Historical:

The Central Bank (founded in 1943) was established as the banker of the Government of Ireland in January 1972, following the Central Bank Act in 1971. The construction of the landmark Central Bank headquarters on Dame Street in the 1970s was symbolic of this significant development.

*'...it is ironic that the most aggressive statement of corporate identity in the city was built for a state institution.'* (Casey, 2005)

The proposal for a multi-storey block in an historic quarter of the city, and the ensuing planning controversies and extensive demolition of historic urban fabric represent a particular chapter in Irish history that has remained in the minds of many.

*'Though much maligned by contemporaries, it has gradually made its way into public affection.'* (Casey, 2005)

A number of historic financial developments came about in Ireland in the 1970s, with implications for banking. The pound was decimalised in Ireland and the UK in 1971. Ireland joined the European Monetary System in 1978, and in 1979 an exchanged rate was introduced between the Irish pound and the pound sterling, formally breaking the link between the two. In 1978, the Currency Centre was established in Sandycroft, facilitating the manufacture of banknotes and coinage in Ireland. This coincided with the completion of the Central Bank building.

### Technical:

The Central Bank building design and construction methods displayed pioneering technical innovation. The structural system is a highly-sophisticated piece of engineering, which is designed to minimise movement in tall buildings and allow increased flexibility spatially.

The twin reinforced concrete cores were constructed using an innovative slip-form technique which involved mechanically raised shuttering. Seven floors are suspended from the cantilevered steel roof structure, which is supported on the service cores.

There are sixty-four trusses, and twelve hanger trusses on each floor, with precast concrete panels spanning between them. Each floor is hung from the roof structure by means of paired steel hangers, or *Macalloy* bars, which are visible externally.

*'The overhanging floors above are held up from the roof on cables that plummet down the external walls. External structural supports as part of the overall design had been heralded by the Centre Pompidou in Paris a few years earlier.'* (Sisk Group, 2010)

The floors were constructed at ground level, and hoisted into position in turn. The services and materials for each floor (sanitaryware, ducting, glazing units etc) were placed on the floor before it was jacked up, resulting in loads of 400 tonnes per floor.

*'The structural system of the Central bank is pioneering, innovative and satisfying, measured on a world scale.'* (O'Toole, 2011)

An air conditioning system was in place throughout the office spaces, with air supply and extraction, incorporated into coffered ceiling panels which tie in to the 1500mm modular grid. Lighting fixtures were also set within these panels. Kevin Kelly of Sisk attributes the controversial height increase to the inclusion of air conditioning on each floor (Sisk Group, 2010).

### Artistic:

The ground floor includes an original beaded screen artwork by the respected Irish artist Patrick Scott (24 January 1921 – 14 February 2014). Peter Lamb in his 2002 overview of Scott's tapestry works writes that *Patrick Scott had two complementary careers as an artist: he is most famous for his exquisitely simple abstracts in gold and white on unprimed canvas, yet, as a designer of tapestries, he revels in all the colours of the rainbow* (Irish Arts Review, Summer 2002, 48). The Central Bank beaded screen is unusual as it is a departure from his normal palette of materials: *'Experiments with both form and medium in the early 1970s did not lead to any permanent change of direction, but it did see the creation of a blue and green curtain in the Central Bank in Dublin which was nicknamed the 'largest bead curtain in the world'. It is composed of three-inch lengths of plastic tubing and black beads strung on wire* (IBID., 52).. Scott died a day before a major retrospective on his life was due to open at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA). On his death IMMA issued a statement which stated that 'Patrick Scott has been a defining figure of Irish art for over 70 years and the retrospective exhibition due to open tomorrow is testament to his extraordinary career, life and achievements as an artist' (Irish Times article: <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/visual-art/artist-patrick-scott-dies-a-day-before-retrospective-exhibition-1.1691930>)

### **Conclusion & Recommendation:**

The former Central Bank including restaurant annexe, Public Plaza including *Crann an Óir* sculpture, Dame Street, Dublin 2 are considered to be of National importance having architectural, historical and technical significance.

Dublin City Council's Conservation Section therefore recommends the addition of the **former Central Bank including restaurant annexe, Public Plaza including *Crann an Óir* sculpture,**

**Dame Street, Dublin 2** to the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

The reproduction of the Commercial Buildings is within the curtilage of the proposed protected structure though the building itself does not merit inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures.

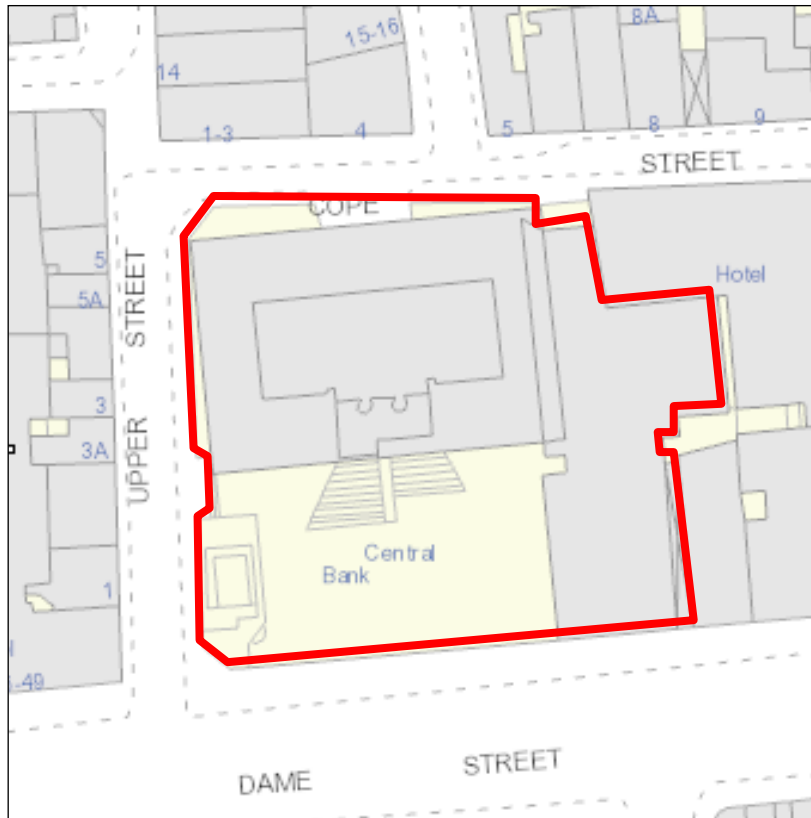
The railings added to the front and rear of the tower base in 1998, enclosing the stairs and planting, significantly detract from the character of the Central Bank and plaza.

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**Paraic Fallon**  
**Senior Planner**

**Extent of Protected Structure Status**

Approximate extent of protected structure curtilage is shown on the map below in red.



**Short Photographic Record (taken 22/12/16)**



*View from Dame Street of Central Bank and Public Plaza with Crann an Óir sculpture in foreground*

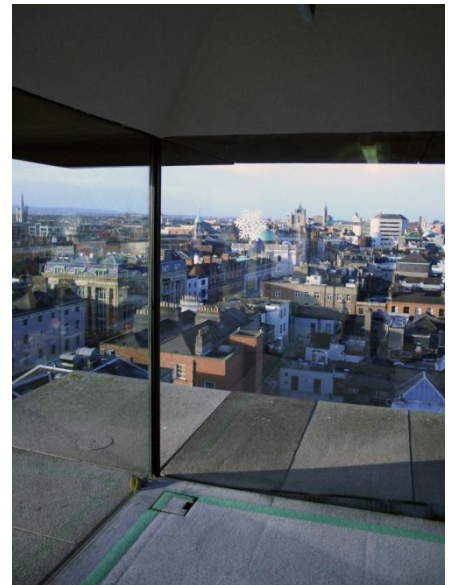




*Central Bank Tower canopy, Restaurant annexe & 'Commercial Buildings'*



*Original beaded screen artwork, ground floor (artist Patrick Scott)*



*Glazing details, upper floors – flush interior & exterior surfaces*



*Restaurant annexe interior*



*Macalloy bars*





*Original roof surface, and later 1993 roof structure*



*Central Bank roof*

**Achival images**



*Sisk Group, 'Building a business', 2010*



2010

*Sisk Group, 'Building a business',*



Archiseek.com



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