

North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock SDZ  
The Water Animation Strategy Area  
2018

WORKING DRAFT





## VISION STATEMENT

To promote the use of the waterways as an integral part of the vitality and experience of Dublin Docklands, that enhances the area as a world class destination for living, doing business, tourism, leisure and cultural activities.



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## 1. Introduction and Context.

A Water Animation Strategy for the Docklands area is sought by the City Development Plan 2016-2022 and The North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock SDZ Planning Scheme 2014. The Strategy is a non-statutory supplementary document to these plans and companion document to the Public Realm Masterplan for the North Lotts & Grand Canal Dock. The Strategy has been prepared in consultation with Waterways Ireland (WI) and Dublin Port Company (DPC). The purpose of this document is to provide clarity regarding the vision by Dublin City Council (DCC), WI and DPC. It is a non-statutory document and may be reviewed and updated as necessary. This document will also inform more detailed plans that may be prepared for smaller sections of the rivers or docks in this area.

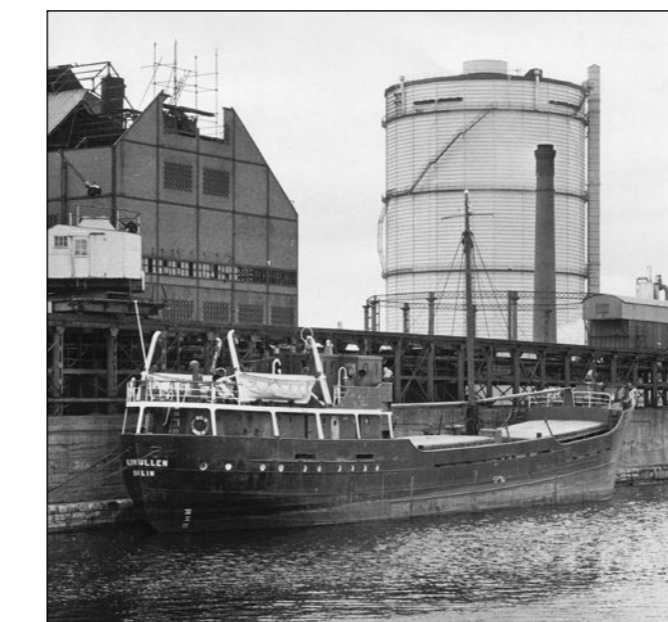
The Strategy area includes the five major water bodies within the SDZ, namely the Liffey River, Dodder River, Grand Canal Dock and Spencer Dock, as well as George's Dock and the section of the Liffey River to the west of the SDZ (up to the Talbot Memorial Bridge) so as to include all water bodies covered by the DCC Docklands Office and accessible via raising bridges or locks (see Figure 1.1).

The Strategy area once formed part of a broader estuary where the Liffey and Dodder Rivers converged at the entrance to Dublin Bay. This area was reclaimed in the 18th Century and rapidly industrialised. The waterways were later expanded with Grand Canal Dock, Spencer Dock (as part of the construction of the Grand and Royal canals, respectively). and Georges Dock soon after. By the 1990s shipping activity had ceased and many industries had moved on, leaving behind a legacy of vacant/underutilised sites, and buildings that had fallen into disrepair. The development of the International Financial Services Centre in the 1990s started a process of regeneration. This continued for the next two decades with development of large scale apartments, offices (consisting mainly of financial, legal and digital services), hotels and retail. Major new civic facilities such as the Grand Canal Theatre and Square followed. The Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008 and the subsequent collapse of the Irish banking system stalled this process. However the recovery of the Irish economy in recent years has seen development activities recommence.

The development of the Docklands has been plan-led, overseen by the Dublin Docklands Authority (1997-2014) and Dublin City Council. Subsequent City Development Plans, Masterplans and the SDZ Planning Scheme have ensured an integrated approach to the areas development and the establishment of vibrant city quarter. The Water Animation Strategy seeks to build on the successes of previous plans further promoting the area as a world class destination for living, doing business, tourism, leisure, wellness and cultural activities.



Figure 1.1 SDZ Boundary, Water Animation Strategy Boundary and Character Areas



The former Hanover Quay Gasworks (right -Image Source turtlebury.com) and the distinctive red poles of Grand Canal Square, projecting out into the upper Grand Canal Dock.

## 2. Role of Key Agencies and Stakeholders

**Dublin City Council (DCC)** is leading the preparation of the Water Animation Strategy, working in partnership with other stakeholders and has a wide ranging role in promoting and managing the use of the waterways. DCC is committed to raising the profile of, and use of, the waterways for international events, leisure, recreational and cultural activities, as well as economic activity. As the Planning Authority for the area, DCC is also responsible for upholding the provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and determining any applications.

**Waterways Ireland (WI)** manages, maintains, develops and promotes over 1000km inland navigable waterways (including the Grand Canal) within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is primarily focused on promoting the use of the waterways for recreational purposes and unlocking opportunities for recreational growth, and economic and social development. Waterways Ireland is also responsible for the management and maintenance of the Grand and Royal Canals and issuing permits for their use.

**The Dublin Port Company (DPC)** is a State-owned commercial company responsible for operating and developing Dublin Port. The activities and responsibilities of DPC are mostly to the east of the SDZ area, however it plays a vital role in tourism (cruise ships and ferry arrivals) and managing the movement or berthage of craft along the River Liffey as far west as Memorial Bridge.

The stakeholders who will work with the three agencies to implement the Strategy and have a role in promoting on-water activities include:

### *Docklands Business Forum*

The Docklands Business Forum (DFB) is a voluntary association of business people and organisations that promote the docklands as place to do business, live and visit. The DFB will play an important role by supporting and promoting events within the waterways.

### *Fáilte Ireland*

Fáilte Ireland's role is to support the tourism industry, nationally and internationally, and work to sustain Ireland as a quality and competitive tourism destination.

### *Recreational, Sporting and Tourism Operators*

The SDZ waterways are also use by a number of commercial and community based operators for recreational, sporting and tourism activities (see also Section 5 below).

## 3. Relevant Plans and Policies

### *Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022*

Animation of the waterways is a key objective of several Dublin City Council policy documents, including the City Development Plan (CDP) 2016-2022. Section 15.1.1.7 of the CDP specifically references the need for an animation strategy:

*'To develop strategies to animate the waterbodies and the campshires, in partnership with Dublin Port Company and Waterways Ireland'*

As well as seeking to:

*'To promote Docklands for international events, in particular water-based leisure, recreational and cultural activities, as well as corporate economic activity'*

### *The North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme 2014.*

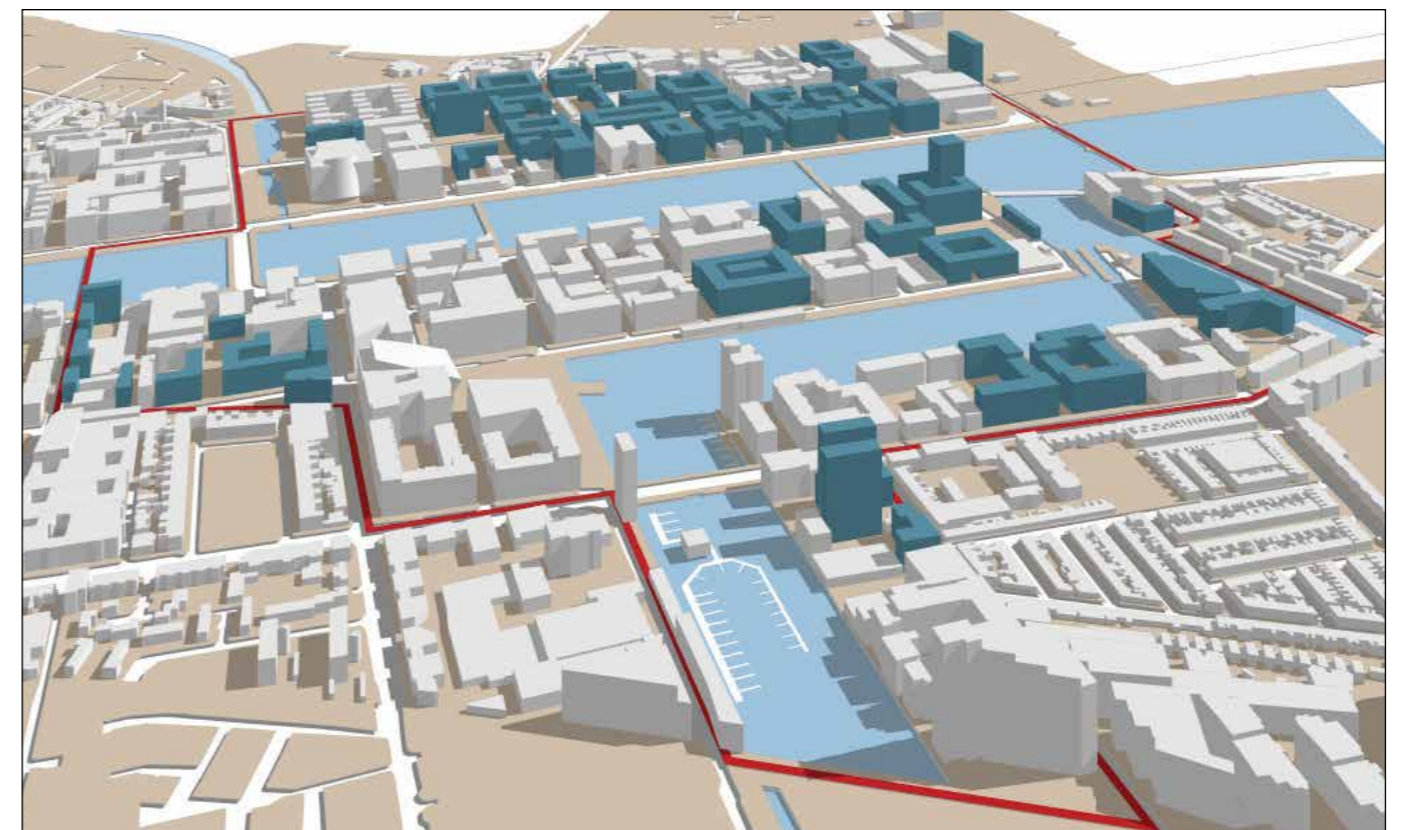
The Planning Scheme, which will oversee the continued regeneration of the SDZ, contains further objectives relating to the preparation of a water animation strategy. Objective US9 states that:

*'To ensure that the extensive footprint of water bodies functions as a valuable part of the public realm, and that a water animation strategy is prepared to drive this'*

And Section 5.5.21 states that it is a specific objective to:

*'To prepare a water animation framework in partnership with the Port Company and Waterways Ireland'*

Further objectives throughout the Planning Scheme seek to promote leisure, business, tourist and sporting activities within the Waterways. Several such references are contained within Chapters relating to Community Development, Tourism and Leisure, Urban Structure and Design and Public Realm.



Indicative 3D model of the SDZ, extracted from the North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme 2014. Extract from the



Public Realm Masterplan for the North Lotts & Grand Canal Dock SDZ Planning Scheme 2014.

Further detail in regard to water based activities is contained within Public Realm Masterplan for the North Lotts & Grand Canal Dock. The Masterplan also refers to an 'Action Plan' for Grand Canal Dock and Spencer Dock to animate the 'Water Basin'. The Masterplan provides a comprehensive range of strategies and design measures for enhancing the public domain within the SDZ, including the edges of and the waterways themselves. Proposed initiatives include:

- Pontoons and floating parks which provide access to the water
- Facilities for water sports (such as changing rooms, boat storage etc)

- Outdoor pools
- Greening of the waterways (on walls, terraces, floating gardens and via aquatic plant life).
- Pontoons for breeding and roosting birds.
- New bridges and boardwalks (for pedestrians and cyclists).
- Passive areas enclosed by buildings and occupied by barges
- Berths for ships, in particular those which provide a cultural or tourist function
- Improved transport including an interim ferry crossing (Sir John Rogerson's Quay with North Wall Quay) and regular boat services (such as water taxis and tour boats) etc
- An annual calendar of events

The Water Animation Strategy is guided by these documents and in doing so seeks to ensure that integration occurs between the built and natural environments and on-water and off-water activities.

Waterways Ireland Action Plan 2014

This document sets out a series of objectives and actions by WI to implement its vision for promoting and developing the canal network in Dublin. It identifies character areas in the network suitable uses and steps to promote the Docks for events and activities.

Dublin Port Company Masterplan 2012-2040

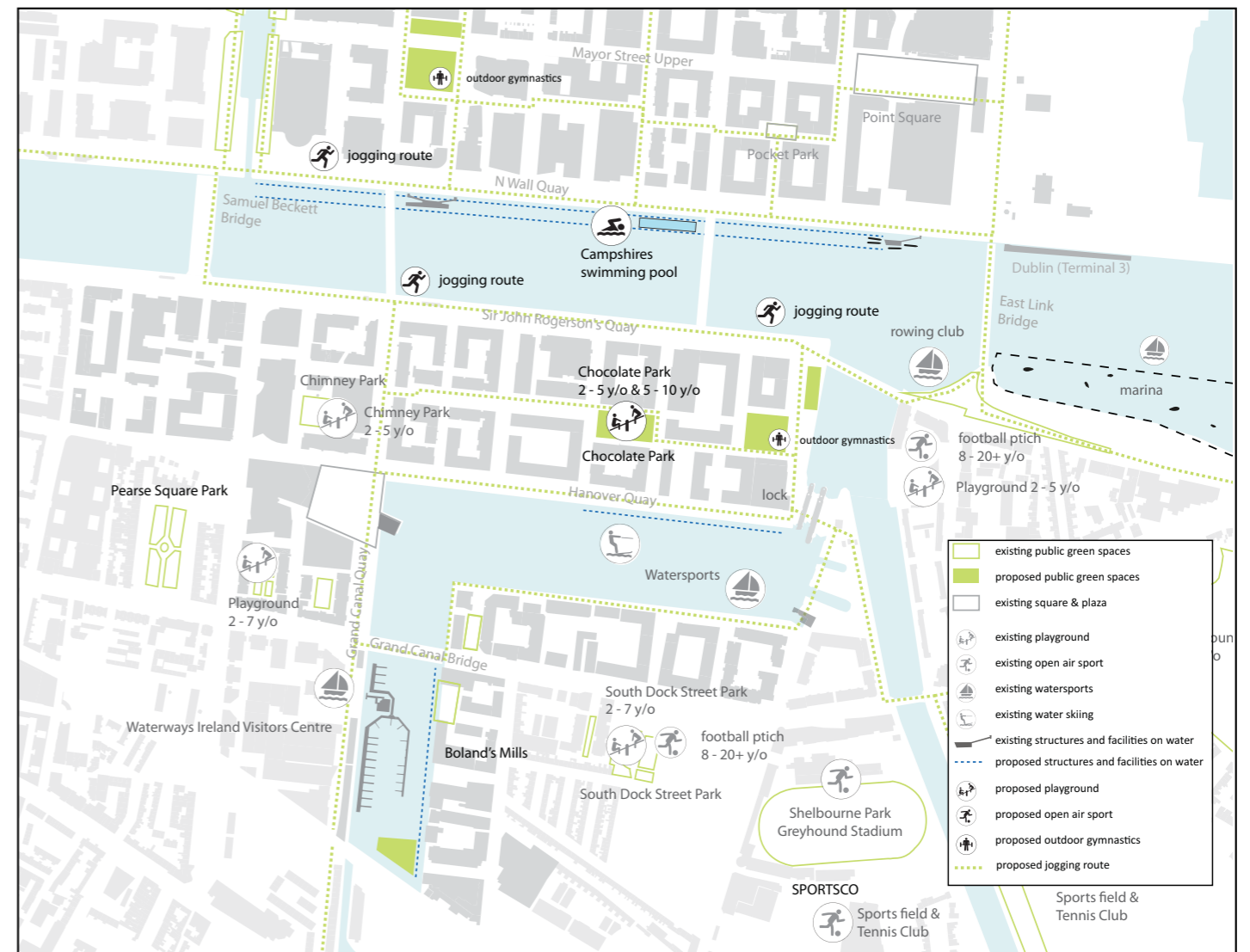
The Dublin Port Masterplan 2012-2040 sets out a vision for the operations of the port and land utilisation. It covers lands to the east of the East-Link Bridge and includes facilities to cater for the emerging cruise liner tourism and potential of the natural amenities of Dublin Bay. The Plan is currently under review due to significant levels of trade through Dublin Port.

Waters Edge

This initiative led by CHQ in partnership with DCC, WI and Failte Ireland sets out a framework of projects to aid the promotion of the Docklands for tourism, with a particular emphasis on promoting use of the heritage and water as a defining characteristic.



The planned Dublin Port Heritage Trail will lead from the Strategy area (by the Diving Bell), through the Port area, to the Tolka Estuary.



Extract from the Public Realm Master plan for the North Lotts & Grand Canal Dock illustrating a range of land and water based activities.

#### 4. Characteristics of the Waterways

This section contains an analysis of current activities adjacent in and adjacent to the waterways. This includes surrounding land uses (Figure 4.1), the environment along the quays and Campshires (Figure 4.2) and on-water activities (Figure 4.3).














##### River Liffey

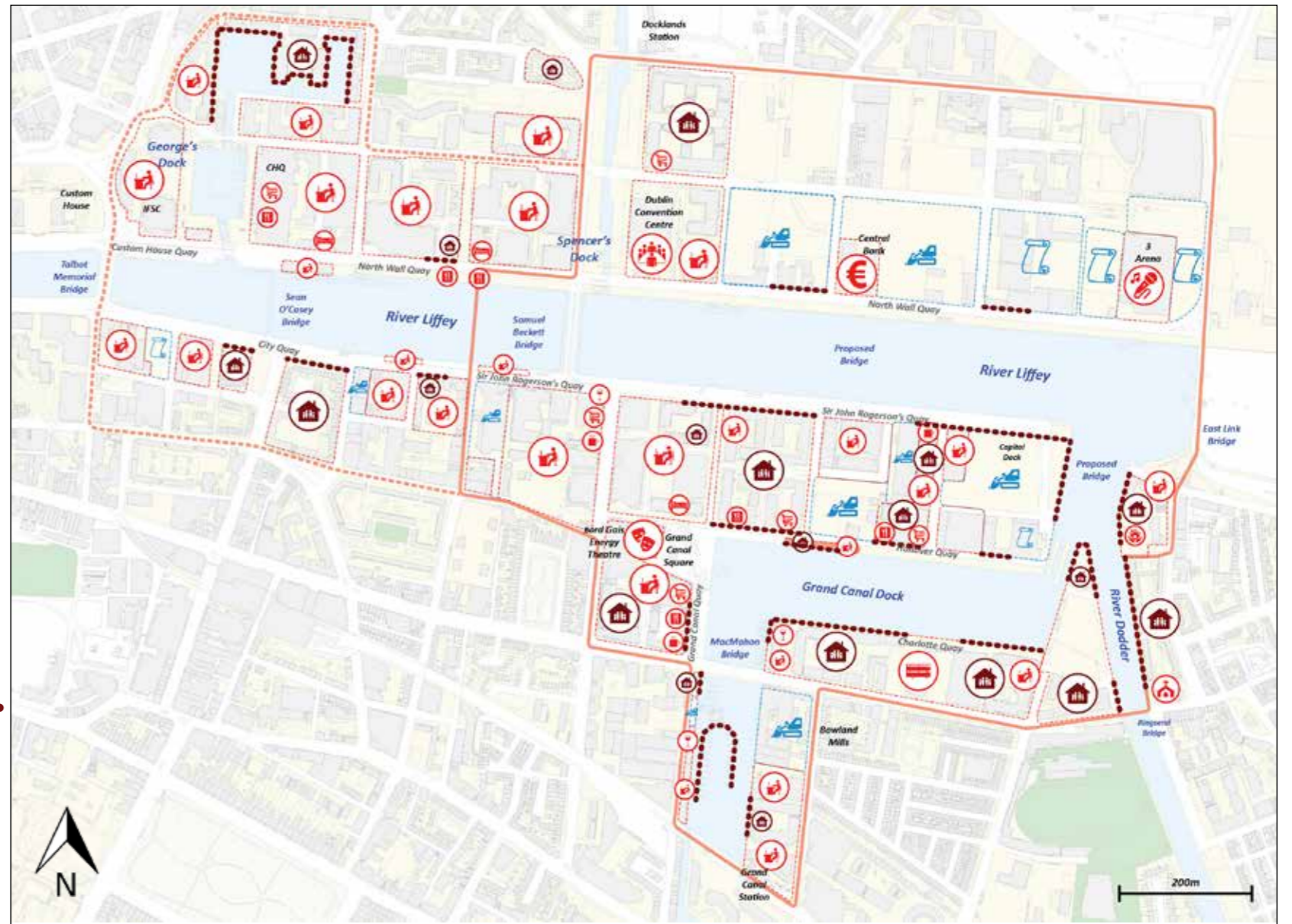
The southern side and western ends of the river is near fully developed with a mix of commercial and residential development, with remaining sites (such as Capital Dock) well into the construction phases. Development along the eastern end of the northern side has been slightly slower, although a number of significant developments are complete (such as the Central Bank) and a number of large developments are now in the construction phases.

All edges along the river (the Campshires) are highly accessible from land. River access is more restricted with a rail along much of the northern side restricting direct ramp access by boat (a long pontoon is however in place near the Point Depot). The quay areas to the east are relatively quiet in part due to their exposed nature and the number of sites yet to be developed. Established areas to the west are much busier and more sheltered. There are significant views from along the quay walls and bridges to the city centre, including landmarks such as Custom House and to the south toward several local landmarks and Dublin Mountains.

The waterway provides an important movement function from the Dublin Port to the city centre. It is utilised by a number of tourist and leisure operators and private individuals, however it rarely seems busy. City Kayaking is also operates off a pontoon next to the DCC Docklands Office. Riverfest, an annual event very June Bank Holiday brings in a range of activities/craft such as race boats and tall ships. There are few permanent/regular boats that dock or moor along this section of the Liffey, such as small cruise ships, the MV Cill Airne and navy vessels and the Jeanie Johnston Tall Ship, which operates as a visitor center. Individuals and boat clubs also use the river for leisure. Dublin Fire Brigade also frequently use the river for training purposes. The Liffey Swim (a one hundred year old event) also takes place on the river. The Swim course is historically located upstream (from the Rosey O'More Bridge to the Loopline Bridge), however diverged through the Strategy areas in 2012-2013.

**Figure 4.1 Waterside Land Uses**

- 3Arena (The Point) 
- Bar 
- Bus Depot 
- Cafe 
- Central Bank 
- Church 
- Community Centre/School 
- Convention Centre 
- Grand Canal Theatre 
- Hotel 
- Office 
- Residential 
- Shop 
- Restaurant 
- Under Construction 
- Planning Permission 
- Sensitive Area 



Some of the high profile developments adjacent to the Waterways include the Central Bank (left) Grand Canal Theatre (middle), and Bolland Mills (right, under construction).

## Grand Canal Dock

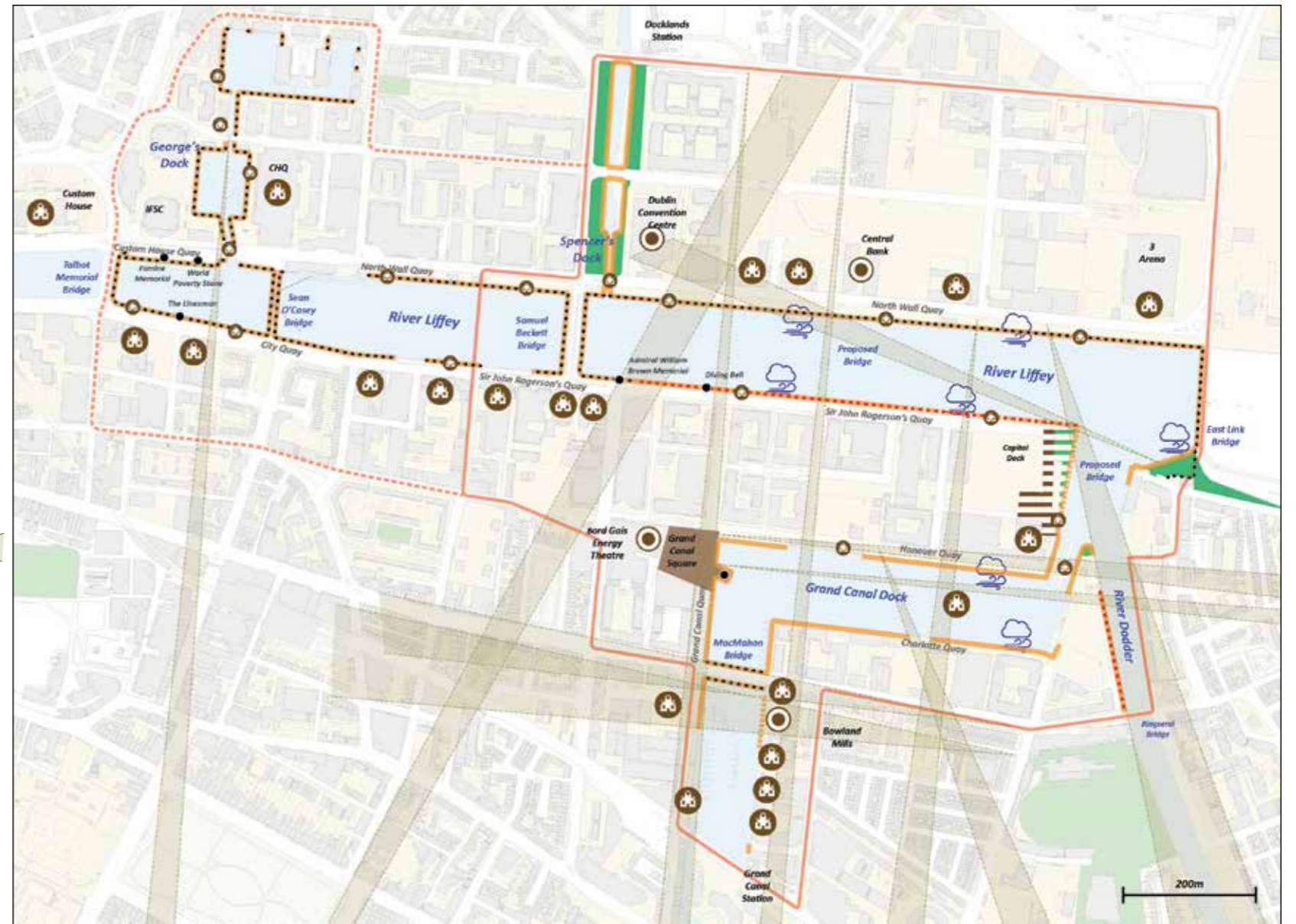
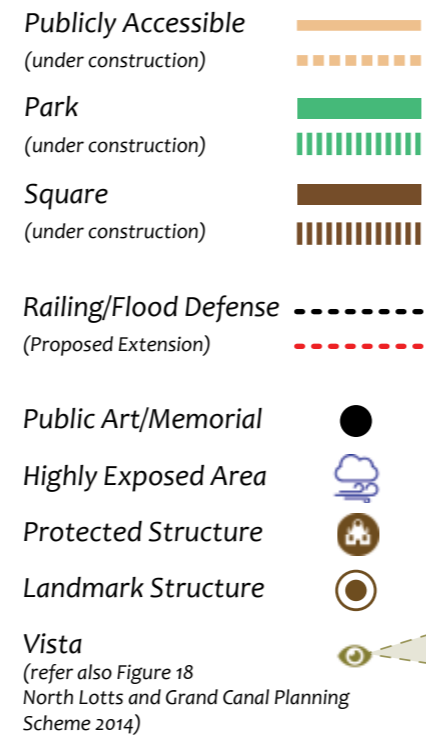
Once the largest Dock in the world, Grand Canal Dock is a gateway into the Grand Canal and ultimately connecting to the Shannon River. The presence of the Grand Canal Theatre, the emergence of numerous restaurants and bars and a substantial working (including the major European headquarters of Google, Facebook and other tech related industries) and living population have resulted in the areas adjacent to the Upper Dock emerging as one of the busiest parts of the city. This is complemented on-water by a range of tourist and leisure craft and water sport activities, such as the distinctive amphibious vehicle of the Viking Splash Tours, paddle boards, kayakers, dragon boats and other small craft (particularly in the warmer months). Due to water quality issues, immersive watersports are not currently permitted but the stakeholders of WI, DCC and IW are working to resolve this with a major capital investment.

The eastern end of the Upper Dock (known as City Block 19) is quieter, containing a number of vacant and underutilised sites (with development potential). A number of canal barges also frequent the dock and moor around its edges, most recently at the serviced jetties adjacent to Charlotte Quay.

Grand Canal Square is a major focal point, being visually prominent from several locations. There are also numerous viewing points to take in local landmarks and more distant ones (Lansdowne Road, Poolbeg Chimneys).

The Inner Dock is a quieter space and an important mooring area for barges. The WI Marina has planning permission for 20 residential berths, 20 extended moorings, 5 commercial berths and other berths for visiting vessels. The distinctive 'box' shaped Waterways Ireland Visitor Centre is located within the Marina. The Centre is currently closed, however will reopen following revitalization by WI. Most of its edges are inaccessible thus inhibiting the formation of active edges. This however will change on completion of major construction projects, such as Bolland Mills, with new points of access for the public.

**Figure 4.2 Quays and Campshires**



Grand Canal Square is a popular destination and seating areas.



View from the EastLink Bridge toward the City Centre.



Sections of the foreshore are cut off reducing access and animation of the edges.

## Dodder River

This section of the Dodder is a quieter space in the area. There is little activity on its edges which are generally backed onto by residential development on the eastern side and lined with vacant and underutilised sites on the west. Development such as Capital Dock, and a new park, will help activate the space.

St Patrick's Rowing Club are based at the mouth of the Dodder, but otherwise this section of the Dodder is very quiet in terms of activity levels. The Dodder is noted for its aquatic wildlife with otters, foxes and wild fowl frequent visitors to the area. The river is also a green corridor connecting Dublin Bay to the Wicklow Mountains.


















### Spencer Dock.

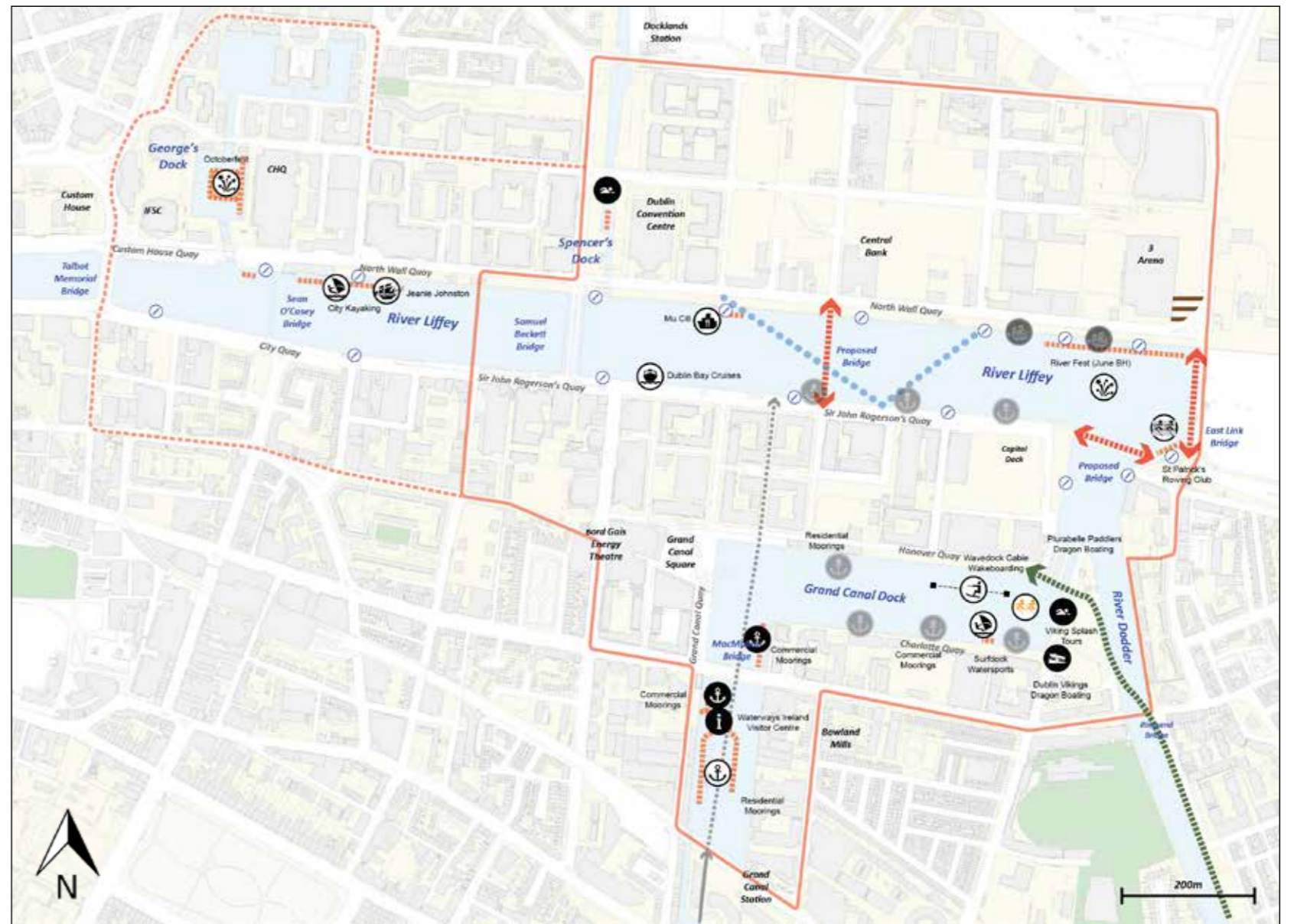
The Royal Canal begins at Spence Dock. Once tow paths (in development) are complete, it will be possible to walk, cycle or boat to the River Shannon from the Dock along the Royal Canal Greenway. The Dock has commercial and residential buildings on either side (including the Conference Centre to the east) and basic parkland. There is a significant amount of movement adjacent to the canal along a number of busy streets. The Dock is a large underutilised space that has potential for a range of activities. There is little activity on-water, however it is a known swimming spot due to the good water quality. WI and DCC are currently exploring plans for the development of the Dock as a Linear Park with water recreation facilities.

### Georges Dock

Development around the Dock is well established. Key developments such as the IFSC and CHQ building, are major activity generators. The Outer Dock is highly accessible and has in recent times contained an event platform for holding markets and festivals. The Inner Dock is quiet space that is residential in character and is an amenity setting for surrounding developments. The Outer Dock contains a large pontoon which is used for events such as Oktoberfest. The Inner Dock is not utilised.

**Figure 4.3 On-Water Uses**

- Boat Ramp 
- Cable Skiing 
- Cruise Berth 
- Moorings (Commercial) 
- Moorings (Residential) 
- Rowing/Small Craft 
- Tall Ships Berth 
- Visitor Centre 
- Watersports 
- Temporary Berths 
- Event Area 
- Stair/Gate Access 
- Pontoon 
- Dodder Greenway (Indicative Route) 
- Proposed Bridge 
- Interim Ferry 
- Overflow Pipe Extension (Indicative Route) 



Liffey River Cruises vessel.



Paddle Boarders and Kyackers in the Upper Dock. In the background is the amphibious Viking Tours vehicle and Wavedock.



Children swimming in Spencer Dock

5. Challenges and Opportunities

Issue	Challenge	Opportunity
Space for Users	Concerns may arise where more vulnerable users (swimmers, paddle boarders etc) share space with motorised craft.	Identification/allocation of areas for different types of users so that all can manoeuvre in safety.
On-water and off-water uses	Concerns may arise where uses that generate higher levels of activity (and in particular noise) are located in close proximity to more sensitive ones.	Spatial and periodical arrangement of uses to facilitate events and active uses whilst protecting the amenities of residents and allowing for quieter areas for reflection and/or aquatic habitats.
Circulation and Access:	Mooring, berths and other connections to the dock/quay walls may potentially impact on pedestrian access around the edge of the waterways.	Improved/additional access points to the water to encourage greater level of engagement.
Demand Management:	Demand for use of and access to the water changes (and therefore the potential for conflict) from day to night and from and from season to season.	Regular events that to bring large numbers of people to the area and raise the profile of the Docklands.
Exposure	Large areas of the waterways (and adjacent quays) are highly exposed to weather conditions, in particular westerly winds.	Providing areas of shelter and/or using vessels as wind breaks.
Protecting Heritage:	The triple sea-locks, swing bridges, Liffey quay walls and Grand Canal dock itself are protected structures.	Improved understanding of the history of the waterways and their role in the development of Dublin.
Visual Impact.	The accumulation of vessels, and in particular the presence of larger vessels, may impact on the visual qualities of the waterways and block significant views.	Protection of significant views and vistas, and regulation of size and scale of vessels approximate to their location.
Water Quality:	Whilst water quality within Waterways is largely influenced by activities that take place outside of the area, localised issues (such as discharge from motorised vehicles and litter) can also impact on amenities and aquatic habitats. This is particularly an issue after medium to heavy rainfall.	Improved water quality to improve user experience and enhance biodiversity. Creation of a 'Blue Playground' within the Grand Canal Dock that allows for the delivery of an all year around local, national and international immersive water based events and animation program.



Open foreshore areas draw people toward the water, however are exposed to the elements.



Major events such as Riverfest bring people to the area and raise the profile of the Docklands.



As activity on the water increases, so to will the competition for space.

## 6. Key Objectives

Taking into account all of the relevant documents, policies and plans and the existing experience and opportunities the Strategy is framed around five key objectives:

1. To ensure that the main waterways within the SDZ (Dodder, George's Dock, Grand Canal Dock, Liffey and Spencer Dock) remain one of the key defining elements of the Docklands DCC will work with all major stakeholders, Waterways Ireland and Dublin Port, local communities and business, to ensure on-water uses are managed in a sustainable manner.
2. To facilitate a range of leisure, cultural and commercial activities that increase the level of engagement with the water.
3. To enable desirable existing uses to continue and where possible expand and promote new uses that enhance the enjoyment of the waterways
4. To ensure that there is a high degree of integration between surrounding land uses, the public domain (including adjacent quay areas and the campshires) and on-water activity.
5. To assist in the integrated implementation of the North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock SDZ Planning Scheme and Public Realm Plan.

## 7. Uses Zones

The analysis of the waterways, its edges and surrounding lands uses illustrate the highly varying nature of activities that take place on-water, along the waters edge and within adjacent buildings. These activities may be complementary, competing or conflicting. In response this Strategy takes a spatially led approach to the management of the waterways with activities divided into four distinct zones.

- **Docking/Mooring Zones:** These areas are primarily focused on providing space to ships and other water craft to reside on a medium to long term basis (subject to licence - see Appendix A)
- **Active Zone.** These are areas primarily focused on providing quayside Campshire space for water sports, cultural uses and regular events. All areas on the river are available to be used for small water craft such as rowing, sailing, canoes etc
- **Passive Zone:** These are areas primarily focused providing quieter spaces for sensitive uses and areas of reflection and ecology.
- **Clear Zone:** These spaces will generally be clear to maintain significant views, for safety reasons or will provide spaces for short term stays to large vessels.

The One Water Use Zones are illustrated on Figure 7.1. There is a degree of overlap between zones to enable flexibility and recognise in some places both uses can be accommodated. It should be noted that this map is for illustrative purposes only and the start and finish of uses are indicative only. It is also acknowledged that as each of the waterways has a different character the opportunities and/or constraints for activities will vary. As such the Figure 4.4 also includes a number of symbols and other annotations that indicate the preferred uses within each zone (see also Table 4.1).











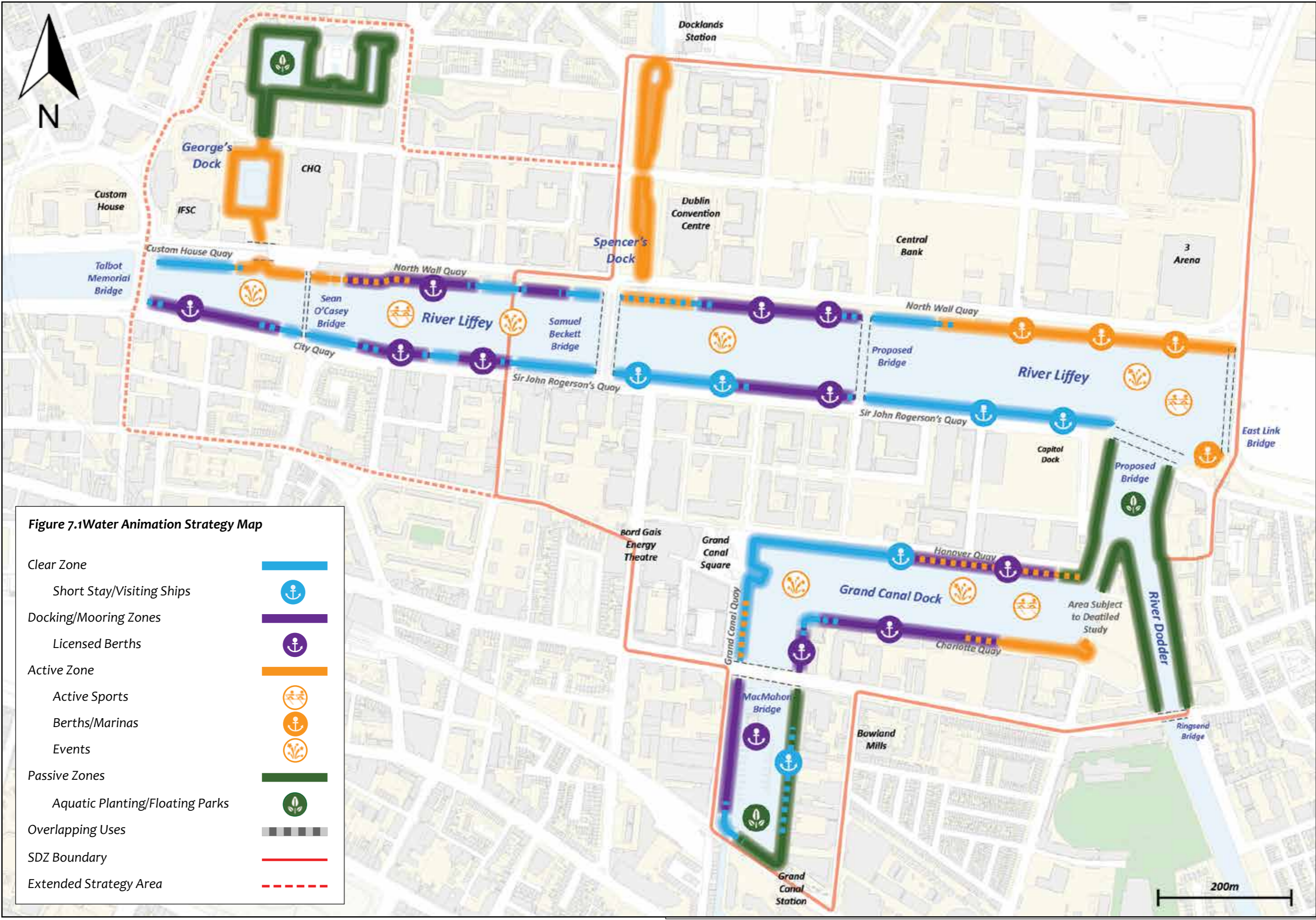
Zone	Use	Operations
Docking/ Mooring Zones 	 Licensed Berths	Areas reserved for licensed berths/moorings. Preference will be given to ships that have a community/arts/cultural, leisure purpose or berth for historic ships. May also include commercial and residential uses that will activate the water edge and bring visitors into the area.
Active Zone 	 Sports	Areas for water craft/sporting activities such as sailing (inc. marinas), water skiing, and team boating activities (such as rowing or dragon boating), kayaking/canoeing and sailboarding. The possibility of swimming will also be explored.
	 Short Term Berths/ Launching Areas	Areas for marinas, launching areas for water sports and for short stay/visiting craft, including that associated with major events.
	 Events	Areas for major annual events such as Riverfest (Liffey River). May also include regular small scale such as performance arts.
Passive Zone 	 Aquatic Planting/ Floating Parks	Areas that will expand the availability of public space/greening within the Docklands area and increase engagement with the waterway. Planted areas may also have a biological function that supports local fauna.
Clear Zone 	 Short Term Berths	Clear areas for short stay/visiting craft, including that associated with major events.

Table 4.1



**Figure 7.1 Water Animation Strategy Map**

- Clear Zone
- Short Stay/Visiting Ships ⚓
- Docking/Mooring Zones
- Licensed Berths ⚓
- Active Zone
- Active Sports 🏊
- Berths/Marinas ⚓
- Events 🌿
- Passive Zones
- Aquatic Planting/Floating Parks 🌿
- Overlapping Uses
- SDZ Boundary
- Extended Strategy Area

## 8. Implementation

The waterways are managed by a combination of authorities, namely:

- Dublin City Council (DCC)
- Waterways Ireland (WI)
- The Dublin Port Company (DPC)

Each agency will work within its own legal remit to implement this Strategy, with DCC playing a key role in the coordination and management of its implementation. A programme of events will be developed or promoted by all to encourage greater activities and visits to the Docklands along side the more permanent water animation features facilitated by this Strategy and the agencies.

DCC will also work with other agencies to put in place a streamlined application process, including safety plans, as part of the Strategy implementation.

For docking/mooring areas DCC and DPC will jointly issue from time to time, when spaces are available, calls for expression of interest for suitable vessels to be licensed to tie up for medium term periods of time. These will be advertised publicly and details can be obtained from the DCC Docklands Office, or interest can be registered for future calls.

Within the canals, berthage spaces for residential or commercial purposes must be addressed directly with Waterways Ireland.