

## **UPDATE ON THE DUBLIN BAY UNESCO BIOSPHERE DISCOVERY CENTRE**

A design team, led by Howley Hayes Architects are continuing the process for developing the design for the proposed Discovery Centre and in parallel Brady Shipman Martin Planning Consultants are preparing an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and a Stage Two Appropriate Assessment for the proposed scheme. Both teams are working closely together to avoid impacts on this sensitive landscape, species and habitats.

On-going consultation with the residents associations, NGO's, businesses, elected representatives and other interest groups in the form of workshops, presentations and meetings which began in March 2019, have continued with further engagement planned before the end of the Year involving a brochure, an 'open day' and public display in the Red Stables, an online questionnaire as well as use of social media. As with previous phases of consultation the information and feedback garnered will be incorporated as appropriate into the ongoing design development.

It is the intention to lodge the Environmental Impact Assessment Report to an Bórd Pleanála in early 2020.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE DISCOVERY CENTRE?**

North Bull Island Nature Reserve already has an 'interpretive centre' which opened in 1986. This building however does not have universal access, nor the space or facilities to achieve the educational and conservation objectives for which it was constructed.

The Nature Reserve since 2015 is at the heart of the UNESCO Biosphere designation for Dublin Bay and it is the ambition of Dublin City Council that the Discovery Centre will be the genesis for the resolution of the management issues in the Nature Reserve and Dublin Bay as well as inspiring the values of UNESCO in promoting global citizenship.

The Discovery Centre will create a powerful place for learning, discovery and understanding the choices each of us will have to make to address global climate issues. The Centre will illustrate and interpret the natural, cultural and built heritage of the North Bull Island Nature Reserve and Dublin Bay, as well as the context of Dublin Bay Biosphere in the world network of Biosphere reserves.

Uniquely, the Discovery Centre will provide opportunity to people of all abilities in society who heretofore could not access the dunes and beach to visit the Nature Reserve and gain an understanding of the intricate terrestrial and marine ecosystems that make the Bull Island and Dublin Bay such a special place.

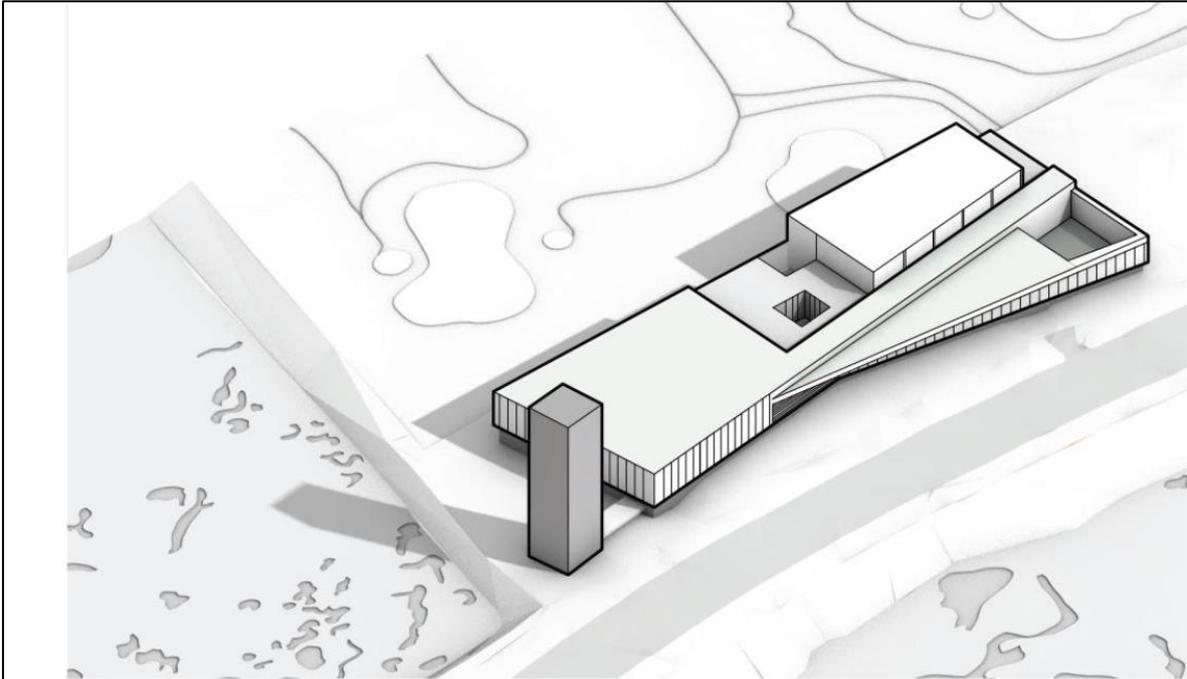
The Discovery Centre will also act as a 'gateway' to the Nature Reserve and clearly signify the importance of the Nature reserve as a wilderness that must be respected.

### **WHAT WILL THE DISCOVERY CENTRE LOOK LIKE?**

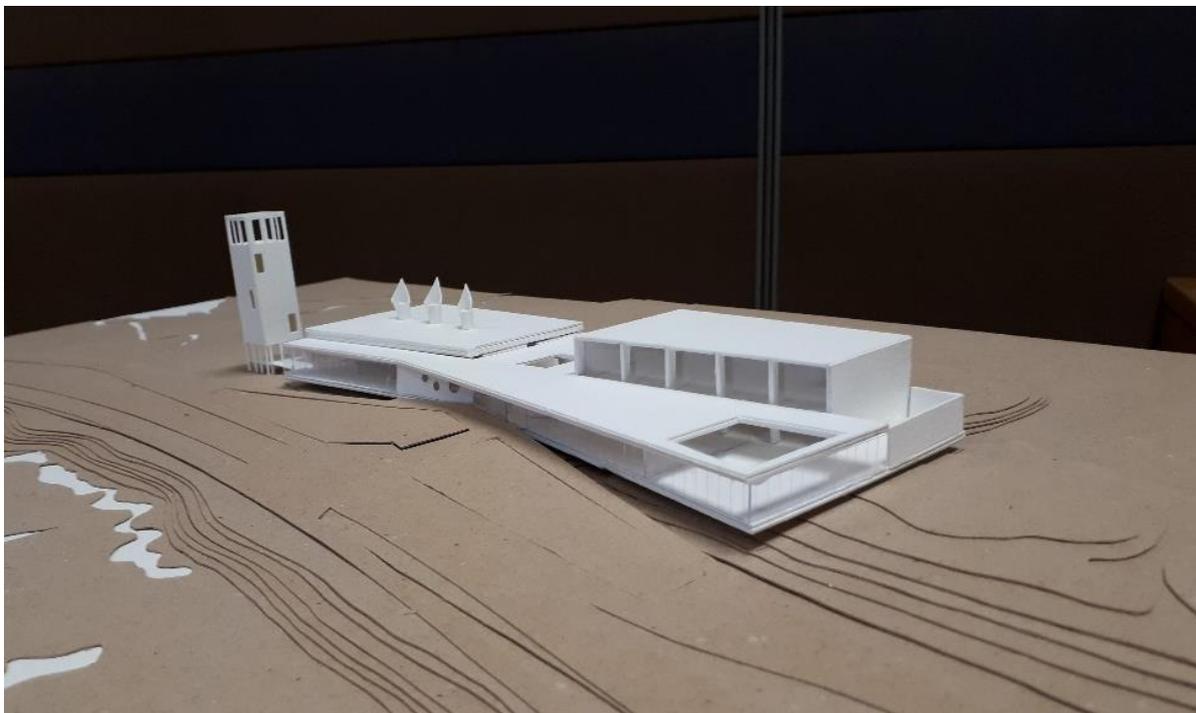
A sensitive design has been developed for the Discovery Centre. The horizontal landscape of the island has influenced the design of a predominately single storey ground hugging building with a smaller first floor area and a contrasting prospect 'look-out'. The 'look-out' links the entirety of the UNESCO Biosphere back to the Discovery Centre providing unique access and views to Bull Island and the wider



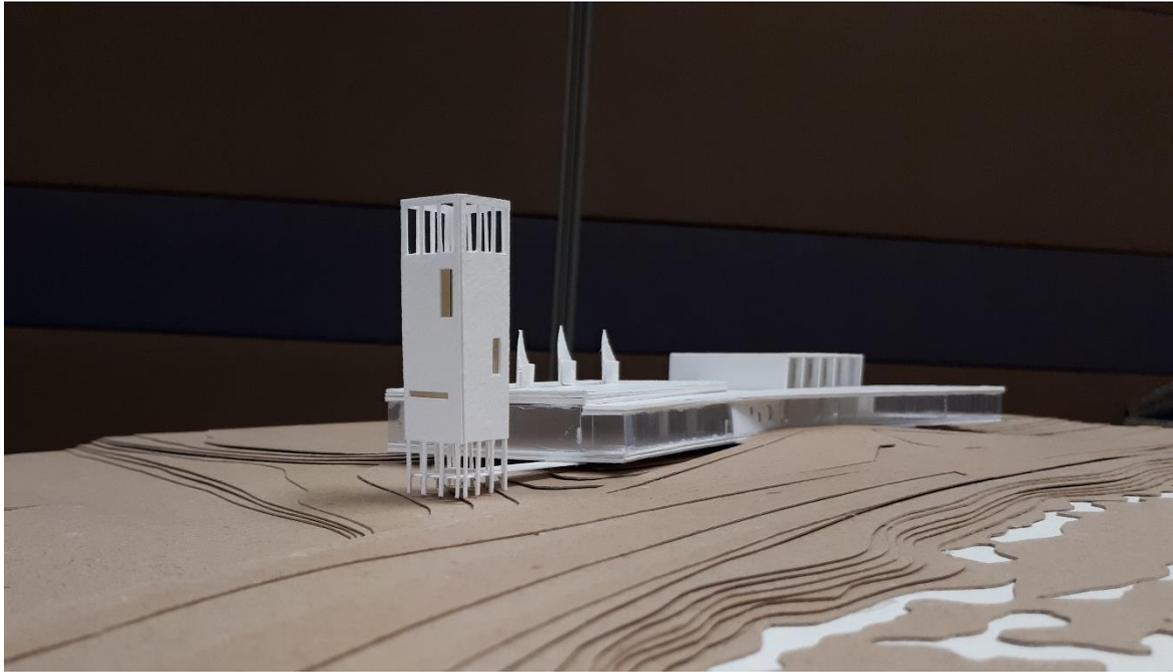
biosphere. The building is approx. 2,400 msq with space allocated to interpretation, exhibition, education, research, administration and a café.



Massing Model



Developing Design – view from East



Developing Design – view from West with Look-out

### **WHAT THE DISCOVERY CENTRE WILL TELL**

The interpretation or ‘storytelling’ at the Discovery Centre will encompass the following elements:

**Natural Heritage** – exploring the ever-changing terrestrial and marine habitats of Bull Island and Dublin Bay, encouraging personal connections to nature.

**Human Influence** – looking back at human use and intervention in Dublin Bay, offering an opportunity to reflect on our changing attitudes towards the natural world.

**The Biosphere** – highlighting the importance of Dublin Bay as an invaluable local laboratory for studying global environmental issues in the context of UNESCO’s World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

While nothing can substitute experiencing the natural world first hand, much of the bay, headlands and islands are virtually inaccessible. The inclusion of immersive experiences within the Centre is important for reaching audiences who cannot access the wider environment because of age or incapacity or who visit in inclement weather, or out of season for migrating birds.

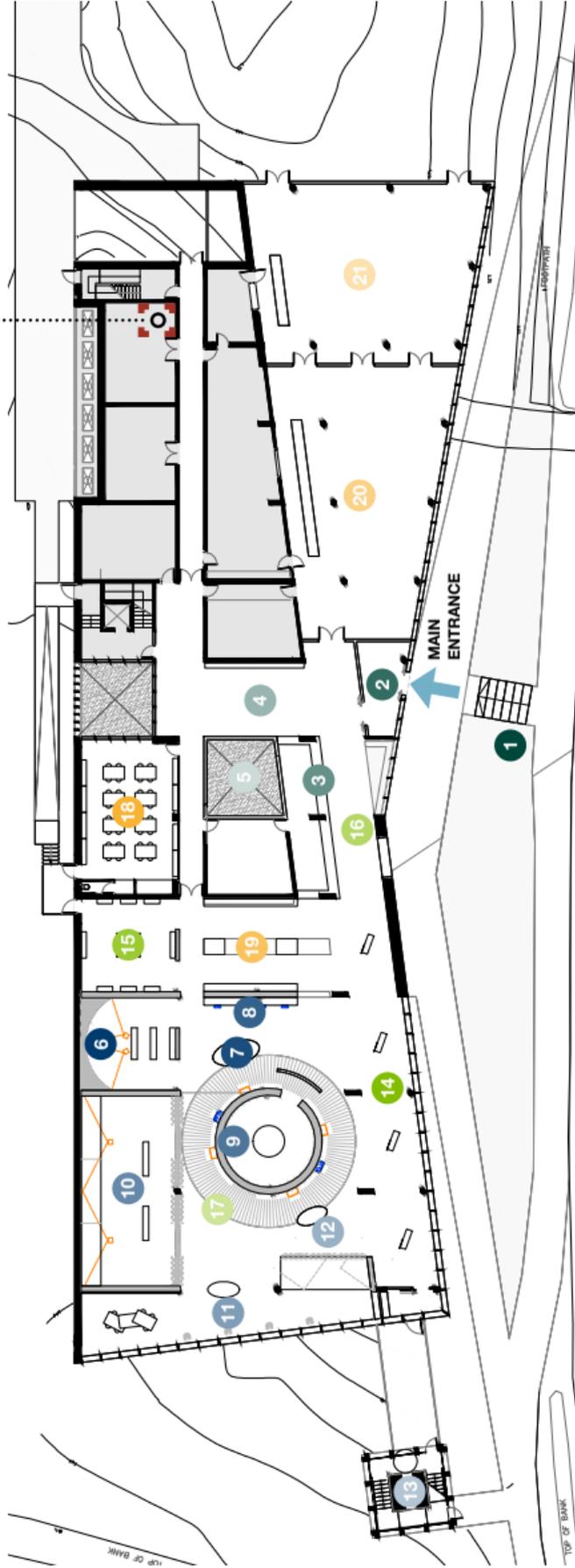
Fundamentally, through the Discovery Centre we want to help people understand and appreciate this special place. We want to inspire them to take care of it.

*“Through interpretation comes understanding; through understanding comes appreciation, through appreciation comes protection.”* Freeman Tilden – Environmental Interpreter

The images below illustrate the proposed internal layout of the Discovery Centre and details just some of the immersive interpretive tools being utilised to provide the understanding of the unique UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere.

# The Discovery Centre

## Schematic Plan



### ENTRANCE

- 1 External welcome signage
- 2 Lobby - possible intro projection on glazing
- 3 Reception - desk brought forward from columns to improve sightlines & staff interaction
- 4 Foyer - bench seating & introduction graphic
- 5 Sculpture courtyard

### PERMANENT EXHIBITION

- 6 AV Theatre - short film
- 7 Bull Island Pod - mixed media interpretation
- 8 Biodiversity Wall - mixed media interpretation
- 9 The Nest - 'Game of Consequences' (guided)
- 10 A Global Network - large scale dynamic projection
- 11 The Hide - direct views of the mudflats & indirect (camera) views of other locations in Dublin Bay
- 12 A Human Landscape - mixed media interpretation
- 13 Lookout Tower - panoramic views

### TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

- 14 Buffer Zone - bench seating & large scale photographic prints updated seasonally
- 15 Temporary Exhibition - hired out regularly
- 16 'What's On?' - digital visitor information updated weekly/monthly (events, wildlife, etc)
- 17 Research updates - digital signage on the outside of 'The Nest'

### EDUCATION / RETAIL / CAFE / RETAIL

- 18 Education room(s) - divided in two
- 19 Retail - visible from Reception with shared desk
- 20 Cafe
- 21 Winter Garden - inc Kiosk

## AV Theatre

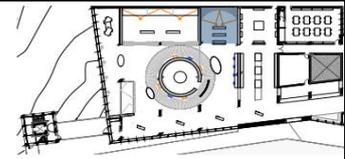
This short audio-visual presentation will introduce visitors of all ages to the concept of a UNESCO biosphere and the unique attributes of Dublin Bay in particular.

It will give a broad overview of the Dublin Bay Biosphere, providing an impressionistic glimpse into its natural biodiversity and human uses.

Like the RBGE film at the John Hope Gateway, it could also place our Biosphere in the context of others around the world.

### Design could include:

- Partially enclosed space with low light levels
- Intro graphic at entrance to space
- Bench seating for approx. 15 people
- Atmospheric lighting
- Large projection screen, possibly curved



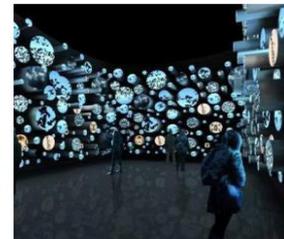
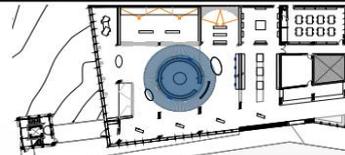
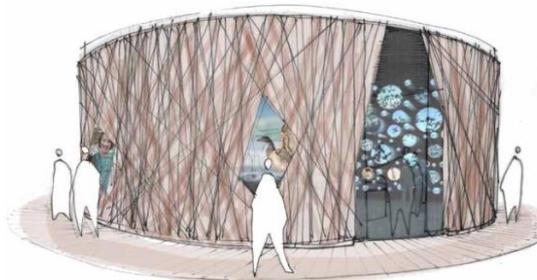
## The Nest

This circular space hosts a fully immersive, audio visual, interactive 'game of consequences' in which a small group of around 10-15 visitors at a time must collaborate.

It is housed in a dedicated, enclosed pod with digital imagery and soundscapes which surround the group. In part, this will allow drone footage (e.g. flying through the sky or swimming under the water) to fully set the game in the context of the Biosphere.

The overarching concept of the game is to save low-lying Bull Island (and its flora and fauna) from rising seas caused by climate change. Visitors will be confronted with a series of scenarios in which they must take collective action to mitigate negative impacts on the island. Scenarios will be drawn from contemporary challenges such as dealing with waste, ensuring clean water or meeting demands for power. To reinforce the real-life message about the urgency of addressing these issues, visitors will be forced to make decisions under pressure within an allotted period of time.

A timber walkway around the Nest provides a queuing area for groups. Temporary, easily updateable displays on the walkway offer a place for the Centre to invite scientists and researchers to showcase their current work taking place in the Biosphere.



Les Moore  
Parks Superintendent  
November 2019

Donncha Ó Dúlaing  
Project Manager

