

Briefing note on the proposed Sea Pool Complex on the River Liffey at Custom House Quay, Dublin 1.



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1. Background

During the Design and Planning stage of the George's Dock White Water Rafting project the idea of the project also including an Open Air Public Swimming Pool (or LIDO) was raised by a number of elected members and members of the public. While it was not possible to facilitate such a facility within the scope of the White Water project it was agreed that a feasibility study would be carried out to determine a suitable location within the City Centre and how such a facility could be delivered by the City Council.

2. The project objective

The objective of the study was to identify how the City Council could provide this new public amenity located in a pleasant open air environment for citizens and visitors to swim and relax in and be accessible and suitable for all citizens. The document would facilitate a discussion with the elected members and other stakeholders such as the Dublin Port Company in order to agree if such a project would be worth pursuing.

3. Preferred location

As you will see from the Feasibility Study a number of locations were identified that could potentially provide the space and access to the water required for such a facility. The location of such a public amenity is crucial to its success and this has been seen from the success of similar facilities such as the Allas Spa complex in Helsinki that currently welcomes 800,000 visitors annually. Ultimately, a location on the River Liffey adjacent to the planned reception building for the George's Dock White Water facility was selected as the most suitable location. This location would develop Custom House Quay into a hub for water based recreational activity in the city and will help to achieve the City Councils ambitions for the animation of the water bodies within the Docklands.

4. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Having completed the Preliminary Feasibility review it was decided to assess the potential environmental challenges that could be presented by the installation of such a facility on the River

Liffey. Preliminary EIA and AA screening reports have been produced based on an indicative location along Custom House Quay and the potential methods of construction. While the conclusion of both reports was that it was not possible at this early stage to rule out a significant environmental impact, the reports noted that it would be possible, subject to a careful design approach and an appropriate construction methodology, to construct such a facility on the river without a significant environmental impact.

5. Estimated Cost

The estimated cost of the development of a Sea Pool complex on the River Liffey is approximately €15m. This is a very early preliminary estimate, however, the preferred option of delivery as outlined above would be to have the successful operator from an international competition Design/Build/Operate/Finance the project. In this scenario the City Council and Dublin Port Company would give a long-term lease (circa 30 years) to the successful bidder after which time the ownership of the facility would default to the City or the operator would be instructed to remove the infrastructure at their cost.

6. Next Steps

The next steps in bringing this proposal forward would be to appoint a consultant to develop an architectural and engineering brief that would be used for an international call for “Expressions of Interest” to Design/Build/Operate/Finance the development of such a facility on the River Liffey at Custom House Quay. In tandem with this work, it would be necessary to develop the procurement strategy and the licensing arrangements that would be put in place with the successful bidder. If the Elected members felt that it would be useful to visit the facility in Helsinki or other similar facilities around Europe to see how they operate that could also be arranged once the Public Health advice on non-essential overseas travel is lifted.

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