



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council

## **Overview of the proposed Docklands Water Sports Centre at Custom House Quay**



The following is a brief overview of what the new Docklands Water Sports Centre at Custom House Quay will look like from an operational perspective. The new Centre will help the City Council to animate a significant element of the River Liffey at a location that is

1. within walking distance of Dublin city centre (less than a kilometre from O'Connell Bridge),
2. easily accessible with excellent transport links, (LUAS, Dart, Intercity Bus and Rail)
3. in close proximity to a community with significant links to the water bodies of the Docklands.

It will do this by providing a range of water sport activities targeted at the local community. It will also assist the Council in providing a range of programmes targeted at groups with particular needs. In addition, the proposed Centre has the potential to support the wider visitor and tourism offer in Dublin city centre.

The facility will be operated by the Sports Section of Dublin City Council with appropriate use of part time qualified staff and the use of external contractors for certain services (e.g. security, cleaning etc.) and.

The key activities that will be catered for at the Centre are as follows:

**SUP- Stand-Up Paddle Boarding:** SUP is an outdoor water sports activity where a rider stands up on a large board and uses a paddle to move through the water and is one of the fastest-growing board sports in the world. SUP is a subclass of paddle boarding, a broader concept that also includes the use of arms while kneeling, lying, or standing on a narrow and long paddleboard to move around in the water. A SUP ranges between 12 and 20 feet in length and it is about 20 inches wide. Instructor participant ratios are 1:8 in sheltered or tidal areas.

**ASUP- Adaptive Stand-Up Paddle Boarding:** An ASUP allows a person with reduced mobility to experience all that a person using a SUP can do by adapting the paddleboard and introducing an all-terrain surf chair, a custom ramp which allows the wheelchair user to roll onto the board unaided, and a mechanism to lock it securely in place. Outriggers on either side lend stability as the rider skims across the water's surface. Advanced paddlers can remove these outriggers once they have mastered the balance. ASUP's will have an instructor present on the board with participants.

**WAL - Wheelchair Accessible Launch:** The Centre will have at its disposal a Whaley Boat 500. This is a durable and highly balanced vessel in the style of a rib, but made of polyurethane. It has a drop-leaf bow, with a wheel chair ramp built in, for ready and easy access with ample space for carers/family members, or other members of the public, as well as space for ancillary safety equipment. This boat is also highly versatile, and will be suitable for doing excursions with much younger children whom the more strenuous water sports on offer from the Centre would not be suitable.

**Rowing:** The rowing being offered at the Centre will be inland Olympic style. The boats being used will be touring vessels, that while being very buoyant and balanced, particularly for younger users, are also still light and manoeuvrable, and allow for the one instructor to take four participants per boat, a 1:4 instructor participant ratio. The boats set up also allows the instructor to adapt the outing easily, dependent on the needs and ability of the users, as well as adapt to the weather.

**Kayaking:** Sit on kayaking will be offered from the Centre. These kayaks are easily accessible to novice users, and do not require special participant training and technique for capsizing and recovery. There are various instructor/participant ratios to be aware of when providing kayaking programming for groups, having regard to boat type, group age, ability and qualification. For the basis of the Water-Sport Centre initial offerings however, the instructor/participant ratio for minors will be 1:6. As the

Centre is offering parallel activities, ensuring safe supervision on the water is the main concern. Adult participant ratios may be greater, depending on ability and conditions, however they will always be capped at the ratios prescribed by safe governance for the sport in Ireland.

**Activities between Islandbridge and the Docklands:** Dublin City Council is carrying out a substantial development project to upgrade the access over the Islandbridge Weir. This will be of significant benefit to boat users on the lower Liffey, especially to Rowing Clubs situated in Islandbridge, who only have access a short stretch of the river Liffey. It will also be a huge boom to Dublin City Council water sport provision, due to the Dublin Municipal Rowing Centre being located in Islandbridge, and having a long established community and school programming that will now not only be able to easily access the lower Liffey, but can work in tandem with another City Council facility on the river.

Rowing, kayaking, stand up paddle boarding will all be viable activities to carry out from Islandbridge to the Docklands, and vice versa, utilising one centre as a launch site and the other as terminus. Generally the Municipal Rowing Centre would be ideal launch point as the flow of the river will offer assistance, however correct utilisation of tidal movements would also make it viable to travel upstream from the Docklands to Islandbridge. The Centres will be able to work in concert to provide safety launch and Instructor cover. The City Council will then be in the advantageous position to offer upper and lower river user facilities, which can offer a more attractive excursion on the river for those groups for whom it is appropriate

A typical 90-minute session at Docklands Water-Sports Centre will consist of the following:

Upon Arrival to the Docklands Water-Sports Centre, groups will be welcomed and briefed by their instructor. There will be a Health and Safety briefing on the safe use of the building and grounds, before a brief on the specifics of the activity and its health and Safety aspects. During these periods participants will be encouraged to ask questions, and discuss concerns, to which it is often common, for participating in water-sports. Groups will then be directed to changing facilities to prepare for the activity. (Time Approx. 10-15minutes)

Participants will then be equipped with the safety apparatus specific to their activity, while instructors carry out relevant checks and offer explanation for the correct use and roll of all safety apparatus. (Time Approx. 10-15minutes)

Participants will then proceed to their given activity where they will receive initial instruction on the activity on the slip way, before departing the Centre to open water, where they will continue to be instructed during the course of their activity (45minutes)

Participants will return to the Water Sports Centre, to safely dock and secure their equipment before returning to changing the facilities and finish their session with a debrief/ Q+A with staff (10-15 minutes)

The charging structure to be applied will be consistent with the charges applied in other City Council Sports Centres.