

**MINUTES OF THE CITY HALL – NEWCOMEN BANK SUB-COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023**

**UPDATE ON NEWCOMEN BANK**

**1.) Presentation**

Donncha introduced Lucy O'Connor from Howley Hayes Cooney Architects who are the Design Team Consultants appointed to oversee the project.

Lucy gave a brief overview detailing the consultation that had taken place with stakeholders to date and the history and significance of Newcomen Bank. One of the most interesting aspects of the building was that architect James Hoban who was involved in its design later went on to design the White House in Washington and the use of an oval office can be seen in both buildings.

With regard to the condition of the building it is fortunate that a significant amount of the original interior fabric had been retained and that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century adaptations had caused little permanent damage. Consequently it would be possible return the building to a high standard with minimal cost implications. The main challenges centre around the necessary modern interventions such as fire safety, installation of WC's and ensuring accessibility.

The existing fire escape which adjoins Castle Gate Apartments will be demolished and replaced by a new structure that will service both buildings.

Due to the structural capacity of the building it is not possible to have all 4 floors occupied at the same time. As a result Dublin City Council would be required to implement building management to regulate access. Although floors 1-3 will be accessible to the public, the 4<sup>th</sup> floor would not be and would be better suited for office accommodation.

With regard to accessibility the installation of a new lift would make all floors of the building accessible. In addition a new ramp will be installed on the Castle Street entrance providing access for wheelchair users and others with mobility issues. The ramped access will incorporate paving lights which will allow ventilation and natural light into the basement level.

The Councillors thanked Lucy for the presentation which they found very informative. The following is a summary of the issues raised:

- Concerns that the building will be diminished by the public realm in terms of the traffic flow and surrounding footpaths.
- Water ingress in to the basement levels.
- Timeline and funding for the project
- The level of public access and cultural usage
- The provision of information technology within the building
- Environmental concerns in relation to heating the building
- Will the building be a commercial entity

- Is there is a dedicated space for items from the Civic Exhibition
- Will the reinstatement of the interiors be traditional or modern in approach
- Will there be an opportunity to tell the story and history of the building
- Will there be catering facilities in the building?

The following is a summary of the responses from Donncha and Lucy to the issues raised;

- The setting of the building will be improved by increasing the width of the footpaths on Castle Street. There is also an existing Part 8 that addresses the wider issues of the public realm in relation to Dublin Castle, Newcomen Bank and City Hall and the OPW also are investigating a Master Plan for Dublin Castle in light of the EU Presidency. It is hoped that these factors will act as a catalyst for further improvements to the public realm in the vicinity of Newcomen Bank.
- The use of robust stone flooring, ventilation and managed drainage will address any concerns regarding water ingress into the basement level.
- The usage of the building has always been defined in terms of a public-cultural space. However, due to the structural limitations & fire safety compliance access will have to be controlled. The spaces within the building are seen as flexible and can adapt to a number of cultural uses which will develop as the building itself is utilised.
- The most significant artefacts from the City Hall exhibition will be put on display in the lower ground floor of City Hall. Donncha will follow up with the Arts Officer in relation to the storage and display of the paintings from the exhibition.
- As part of the pre-Part 8 consultation phase there has been significant discussions with the various stakeholders including An Taisce, the Georgian Society, the OPW and the City Council's own Departments. The response in general has been very positive towards the project. There will also be online public consultation and hoarding with QR code links to allow for public input into the process.
- The next step is the Area Committee will be notified in June of the intention to proceed with the planning application which will BE launched in July. It will go back to the Area Committee in September and then to full Council in November/December. Once approved there will be a tender process to appoint contractors with construction envisaged to start in late 2024.
- Current estimation of costs is €10-12 million. However, final costs will not be possible until the design has been finalised. Dublin City Council will be the primary source of funding for the project.
- The building will have a degree of flexibility in terms of usage and although primarily a public-cultural space it is envisaged that it will be capable of raising revenue to cover its running costs.
- Unfortunately the building is not suitable for the installation of an air or ground source heat pump system therefore a new gas boiler will be installed. However,

there will be an opportunity to install high performing glazing and extensive cavity insulation.

- City Hall is the primary location for Councillor facilities.
- There are a variety of options for telling the story of the building which could include audio and guided tours. There is great potential to develop the linkage between James Hoban and the White House Oval Office.
- A sensitive approach would be adopted when restoring the interiors. Paint analysis and the reinstatement of historic schemes would be appropriate in certain rooms but not everywhere. A contemporary approach would be more suited to the new additions such as the WC's, office spaces, etc.
- The provision of a permanent catering element such as a café had been investigated but was not deemed to viable due the limited allocation of space. Access for outside catering would be provided and coffee docks would be installed on several of the floors although not all.
- The building will have a maximum occupancy of 290 people and the ground floor will accommodate 180 people standing.

The Members thanked the Manager for the update and wished the design team well for the next stage of the project.

**Cllr. Dermot Lacey**  
**Chairperson**  
**17<sup>TH</sup> May 2023**

**Attendance:**

**Cllr. Dermot Lacey**  
**Cllr. Anne Feeney**  
**Cllr. Micheal MacDonncha**  
**Cllr. Donna Cooney**  
**Cllr. Anne Feeney**  
**Cllr. Cat O'Driscoll**

**Ruth Dowling**  
**Donncha Ó Dúlaing**  
**Fanchea Gibson**  
**Alice Boardman**  
**Michael Gallagher**  
**Ciara O hAodha**  
**Mary MacSweeney**

**Lucy O'Connor**  
**Anne-Lise Olivier**