



**Kilmainham Mill – Project Update  
to Arts and Culture SPC  
*September 2023***

## 1.0 Who will be presenting:

- Donncha Ó Dúlaing, Head of Sport and Recreation, DCC – Donncha is the project lead for Kilmainham Mill and sits on the project steering group.
- Catherine Heaney, Lorne Consultancy has been contracted to lead on the development of a master vision for Kilmainham Mill. Catherine recently stepped down as chair of the National Museum of Ireland and she previously chaired the Liberties Business Forum. She has an academic background in public history and is a strategic communications consultant by profession.

## 2.0 Background:

The Kilmainham Mill complex, located by the river Camac at Kilmainham Lane in Dublin 8, is the last remaining, largely unaltered, early 19<sup>th</sup> century flour mill in Dublin. It is probably the last remaining fulling (cloth shrinking) mill in Ireland. It is a protected structure on the Record of Protected Structures. It is now in the ownership of Dublin City Council.

### *Brief history:*

- Kilmainham Mill was built circa 1820 and functioned as a flour mill.
- In the mid-late 1800s, the mill was significantly expanded to include additional buildings; a 30-horsepower steam engine; rerouting of the headrace to serve a new water wheel; a cast iron sectional aqueduct; and reworking of interior with cast-iron columns.<sup>1</sup>
- Circa 1903/4, the mill changed ownership and it was converted from flour and corn-processing to cloth finishing.<sup>2</sup>
- Through the 1900s, the mill changed ownership, but retained its focus on textiles. It was used as a location for several significant films, including “In the Name of the Father”; “Michael Collins” and “Frankie Starlight”.
- In 2000, all industrial activity at Kilmainham Mill ceased.
- Following its closure, the mill complex fell into disrepair and dereliction.
- The Mill remained in private ownership until Dec 2018 when it was purchased by Dublin City Council.

## 3.0 Preparing for the future of Kilmainham Mill:

- Following the purchase of the mill, DCC commissioned detailed surveys of the building, resulting in a programme of essential repairs and stabilisation works, which are now nearing completion. These works, completed this year, included repairs to roofs, removal of asbestos and protection of machinery. Costing €2 million, these works have stabilised and made the buildings safe. There is limited accessibility and facilities for widespread use.
- DCC also commissioned a Conservation Management Plan which will inform the potential and limitations on the mill’s future use. This is due for completion shortly. Additionally, DCC’s Culture Company has initiated research on the social and industrial history of the mill. This research will also inform the narrative and potential uses of the mill.
- A project steering group, comprising relevant executive and staff at DCC, has been established to oversee a strategy for the sustainable development of Kilmainham Mill.
- A limited public engagement programme of events and talks has been developed by DCC, aimed primarily at the local community and those interested in the mill’s history. These free events will take place in September and October at the site.

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<sup>1</sup> National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (50080060) 15/05/2013

<sup>2</sup> According to Sara Donaldson (Quoted in Irish Times article 7/4/23)

#### 4.0 Master vision:

- Dublin City Council's project boards has put in place a process to establish a master vision that will inform the ultimate reuse of Kilmainham Mill. This will involve community and stakeholder engagement. The master vision will determine the scope for the long-term use of the mill, as well as establishing interim potential uses, such as markets, exhibitions, and events.
- The master vision will:
  - Consider the rich industrial, architectural, and social heritage of the mill.
  - Consider the needs of the community, including the existing broader business and cultural infrastructure.
  - Consider sustainability, as this relates to climate, biodiversity, and reuse potential of the mill.
  - Consider a funding and income-generation model to enable the mill to become self-sustaining.
- A consultant has been appointed by DCC to develop the master vision through a process of consultation and research, especially as this relates to similar industrial heritage sites in Ireland and the UK.

#### 5.0 Next Steps:

- Research has commenced to enable DCC learn and benchmark from a range of industrial heritage sites in Ireland and the UK. Areas such as funding, visitor engagement, community engagement and sustainability are being examined in this context.
- Focus group workshops, including community consultation, have been established for early October. From these, the themes, and approaches to the future operation of the mill will be considered against sustainability and funding potential.
- Key question for DCC members: how would you like to input to the consultation, e.g., through a specific focus group; in writing; other?
- Initiatives for broader public engagement, including specific activities to engage with younger cohorts, are in train.
- A governance and management model for the mill is being developed.
- Both the conservation management plan and the social / industrial history report will be consulted in advance of arriving at a master vision. This will ensure that the history and fabric of the mill are considered in everything that will encompass the future of the mill.
- All work will be completed by the end of 2023, and it is envisaged that the 'meanwhile' uses of the Mill will expand and become embedded on the site in 2024.