

# Development Committee

Wednesday, 21st February, 2007

## SPECIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor P. Maskey (Deputy Chairman)(in the Chair);  
the High Sheriff (Councillor Kirkpatrick); and  
Councillors Crozier, Hartley, Maginness and Stoker.

Also attended: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor  
(Councillor McCarthy).

In attendance: Ms. M.T. McGivern, Director of Development;  
Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services;  
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;  
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor McCausland) and Councillors D. Dodds, Humphrey, Newton and Ní Chuilín.

### Arts Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Arts Sub-Committee of 19th February were approved and adopted.

### Land Use – North Foreshore

The Committee considered the contents of the undernoted report regarding the allocation of land on the North Foreshore:

#### “Relevant Background Information

**Members are requested to make a decision on the allocation of an additional 25 acres at the North Foreshore and to also consider whether 7 acres should be set aside for a Park and Ride facility.**

**Following the Council’s decision in August 2006 to allocate 25 acres towards the Environmental Business Park, Waste Management has subsequently released a further 25 acres for development. This is due to the cessation of tipping on the northern part of the site at a time earlier than anticipated.**

It is imperative that Belfast City Council agree a final masterplan for the 'employment' zone of the site so that an outline planning application can be submitted as soon as possible. An environmental statement must accompany the planning application and should be on the basis on firm land use allocations to avoid incurring additional and unbudgeted costs at a later stage as well as planning delays.

Members should be aware of the 31 May 2007 deadline imposed by the BIG Lottery for the submission of the final stage application for a £25 million grant under the Living Landmarks Project. Whilst the Environmental Business Park/warehousing site does not form part of this application, the Planning Service take an holistic approach and insist on a single outline planning application and Environmental Statement for the whole of the North Foreshore site. Any delay in the planning process as a consequence of indecision on land use may compromise the success of the grant application.

Similarly, the Department of Environment, Environmental and Heritage Service, will require a Land Contamination Report and Risk Assessment in accordance with current contaminated land legislation. This assesses the level of land contamination on the site and its impact on the proposed development but unless and until the nature and extent of the proposed development is known, the report cannot proceed. Any delay in the commissioning of the report may compromise the BIG Lottery grant application.

Members should be aware that the Committee decision on land use allocation is subject to; satisfactory planning consent, suitable ground conditions, a risk assessment report and technical feasibility.

#### Key Issues

There are 5 options for Members consideration.

1. To allocate 25 acres for port related warehousing.
2. To allocate 10 acres for a commercial waste facility and 15 acres for port-related warehousing.
3. To allocate 10 acres for a commercial waste facility and 15 acres for an expansion of the environmental business park.

4. To allocate 25 acres for an expansion of the Environmental Business Park.
5. To allocate 10/15 acres for port related warehousing and 10/15 acres for an expansion of the Environmental Business Park.

Concept plans are attached as Appendix 1 to assist Members' consideration.

#### Port Related Warehousing

Belfast Harbour Commissioners, who will be present at Committee to make a presentation, are seeking the allocation of the maximum acreage of land for port-related warehousing. They made an initial submission for 7 acres in their response to the North Foreshore Masterplan Consultation in 2005. Numerous meetings have taken place with Belfast Harbour Commissioners over the last 12 months to identify possible options which would suit their need.

Please note Belfast Harbour Commissioners do not wish to purchase the land nor develop it but are asking Council to make the land available for port-related warehousing.

On a 25 acre site, 250,000 sq ft of warehousing would be possible which Belfast Harbour Commissioners state would create 325 jobs, generate 0.9million per annum as rates income and generate £1.5million per annum as rental income.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners state that there is no land available within its estate for warehousing.

#### Commercial Waste Facility

There is an identified need for a facility at North Foreshore to deal with commercial and industrial waste material. Council's Health and Environmental Services Department and ARC21 support this need.

This could contain facilities such as:

- Waste oil recovery
- Waste electrical and electronic recovery
- Waste material shredding bailing
- Tyre reprocessing
- Waste acid recovery and others

### Environmental Business Park Expansion

To date 3 companies have expressed an interest in the North Foreshore site which would occupy all available land (25 acres) in total. Job creation is estimated at 300 and site rental income of £900,000 over a 25 acre site. The rateable income would potentially equate to that produced by warehousing (0.9 million pa) and could exceed this figure depending upon the nature and extent of the buildings constructed.

Furthermore 3 high profile companies have recently approached Council with a view to leasing 34 acres to fully develop some the elements associated with an Environmental Business Park.

A needs analysis of the Environmental Business Sector was undertaken which indicated that the industry turnover at £145m in 1999, £164m in 2001 and £201m in 2003, indicating a positive trend and the continued growth of the environmental business sector. Waste is not the only growth area in the environmental sector. Legislation is also a key driver in the fields of noise and pollution prevention for example, which require measurement, monitoring and guidance, contributing to further growth of the environmental sector in Northern Ireland. The concept of renewable energy is also gaining in momentum in Northern Ireland. With the implementation of the Renewables Obligation and the limited number of energy companies, there is huge market potential for new companies to help meet the targets set by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. It can therefore be concluded that the environmental business sector in Northern Ireland has a long term future. Increasing legislation from the EU driving up standards in environmental regulation and waste management in particular, are providing businesses with technological and commercial opportunities

### Park and Ride

An economic appraisal carried out by the Department of Regional Development (DRD) confirmed North Foreshore as the preferred location for a Park and Ride facility. The draft BMAP identifies the North Foreshore as a possible location. Council officers have been in discussion with Roads Service over potential site size and location.

It should be noted that the DRD are supportive of a new access to the site from M2 slipway and would obviously contribute significantly to the associated costs. Additionally it must be pointed out that the 7 acre site sought by the DRD would be on non-developable land i.e. land which cannot be used for any other purpose other than a car park therefore by agreeing to this, no compromise with other development uses is required.

### Recommendations

**Members are asked to decide on the preferred option for the additional 25 acres of land identified at North Foreshore.**

**Members are asked to confirm the inclusion of a Park and Ride Site on non-developable land at North Foreshore.”**

The Director of Development advised the Committee that Mr. Roy Adair, Chief Executive, and Mr. Joe O'Neill, Port Commercial Manager, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Deputy Chairman.

Mr. O'Neill informed the Committee that the Commissioners were requesting that land be zoned within the North Foreshore to enable “blue chip” distribution centres to be provided thereon. Since there was demand from major companies to locate their distribution centres adjacent to ports and motorway networks, the site available within the North Foreshore was ideal and would enable the Council to charge premium rents. He indicated that any companies which made enquiries regarding locating such warehousing within the Harbour Estate would be referred to the Council. He assured the Members that the Commissioners did not wish to own or operate the land nor did they wish to incorporate it into the Harbour Estate.

Mr. O'Neill outlined the amount of revenue which could be generated and the number of full-time jobs which would be created. He indicated that, given the improvements which had taken place and those which were planned for the road network between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, it was possible that in the coming years large distribution companies could locate centres close to the Dublin Port to service the island of Ireland, rather than the current situation of one centre each for the North and the South. This would have adverse effects on both the Belfast Port and the City. However, this could be off-set by providing logistical warehousing on the North Foreshore and by ensuring that the companies using them did so through long-term leases.

Messrs. Adair and O'Neill then answered questions which were put to them by the Members. They pointed out that the creation of logistical warehousing at Mallusk, rather than on the North Foreshore, might mean that the distribution companies would use the port of Larne, which would have a detrimental effect on the Belfast Port. In addition, they indicated that, since it did not have any further land available on the County Antrim side of the Harbour Estate which could be developed for distribution warehousing, the Commissioners would have to reclaim land on that side of Belfast Lough for that purpose.

The representatives from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners thanked the Committee for receiving them and retired from the meeting.

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After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Maginness,  
Seconded by Councillor Hartley,

That the additional 25 acres of land at the North Foreshore be allocated for port-related warehousing.

On a vote by show of hands three Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was accordingly declared carried.

The Committee agreed also that 7 acres of land within the North Foreshore be allocated for a Park and Ride facility.

**Laganside – Update Report**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of an Update Report regarding the current situation concerning the Laganside Corporation.

Chairman