

At the meeting of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council on Monday 9th December variation Number 7 of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development plan was passed by a margin of 5 votes. The current zoning of Carlisle Pier provides for harbour related activities only.

In supporting the variation Councillor Eoin Costello (FG) stated that the Carlisle Pier is of major strategic importance to the county and it is for this reason that the variation should be supported. Almost every promotional photo of the county features Dun Laoghaire harbour and what is on the Carlisle pier at the moment is not something that would inspire a potential visitor.

Councillor Costello stated that he had sat civil service entrance exams in County Hall when at school. On leaving the exam he was shocked by the filthy condition of the old derelict Pavilion site located in a highly strategic site opposite County Hall in the heart of Dun Laoghaire. It had remained in this condition for almost twenty years. The County now has a fantastic facility in the form of the development in place at the site of the former Pavilion site. Carlisle Pier is now similarly lying fallow and may do so for a substantial length of time unless positive action is encouraged.

Submissions in respect of the variation were overwhelming in favour and included positive recommendations from Bray Town Council (submission offered encouragement and support in "Realising a landmark building on Carlisle pier"), Dun Laoghaire Business Association, ("positive impact on tourism"), Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Tourism Company and the Harbour Board.

Councillor Costello stated that he was aware of the sensitivities and concerns that surround the site. He stated that there were a number of safeguards in place as part of the variation. The variation sets out clearly the type of uses that must be included on this site. The variation which was passed states that the landmark building must incorporate uses that will bring significant cultural, social, recreational and economic benefits to the nation and to Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. It must provide for significant public accessibility. It should also be remembered that the Harbour Board own the site and will be responsible in what they propose for their site.

The proposed objective requires that the mix of uses bring significant social, cultural, economic and recreational uses to what is currently a derelict site. The reality is that to achieve this the overall proposal has to be economically sustainable. Any plan brought before the council should provide for hotel space,

recreational space, possibly an art gallery and access for the public to all main parts of the site.

In addressing the Council meeting councillor Costello stated that any iconic development draws considerable protest at the initial proposal stage however the Eiffel Tower or Sydney Opera House, both of which have considerable opposition, would never have got off the drawing board if people were not prepared to persevere with the vision.

When asked why Councillor Costello had voted in favor of the variation he stated that for him it was purely a matter of principle. Although he was aware that some people would strongly disagree with his position, he stated that he could not let this stand in the way of his personal obligation to progressive elements in the county who wish to see Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County move ahead in a positive way and provide facilities that will enrich the lives of those using the harbour.