

CORK, IRELAND

# Cork North Docks

## Public Realm & Transport Infrastructure Project





# Introduction

## Executive Summary

With a population of over 210,000 and ambitious growth targets set for the next 20 years, Cork City is emerging as an international city of scale and a national leader in economic and population growth. The city's Strategic Vision aims to position Cork as a world-class city—driving local and regional development, embracing diversity and inclusion, and growing as a resilient, healthy, age-friendly, and sustainable compact city, with place-making, strong communities, and quality of life at its core.

The North Docks proposal, part of the broader Docklands vision, represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to re-imagine the River Lee—not as a barrier, but as a vibrant open space that reconnects northern communities with the river and bridges the divide between east and west. It envisions a welcoming, inclusive waterfront where people can meet, connect with nature, move freely, and experience enhanced well-being in the heart of the city.

The overall scheme aims to deliver an integrated public realm design along the riverfront by relocating the road away from the water's edge. This will

transform the North Docks' quayside from a traffic-dominated zone into a high-quality, accessible, and connected public space—an active and engaging waterfront for all.

The vision for the North Docks is centred around three core pillars:

**Creating Resilience (Resilient and Sustainable Docks)** The North Docks will implement cutting-edge sustainable and resilient principles, prioritizing the environment, people, and community well-being.

**Liveable and Accessible to All** The North Docks will be a livable, inclusive, and accessible destination—a place to stay, play, and engage in recreation and sport for people of all ages and abilities.

**A Distinct 'Cork Feel': Cultural and Industrial Heritage** The North Docks will celebrate its regional and national significance with a distinct 'Cork Feel', honouring the area's maritime and industrial heritage through design and public space.

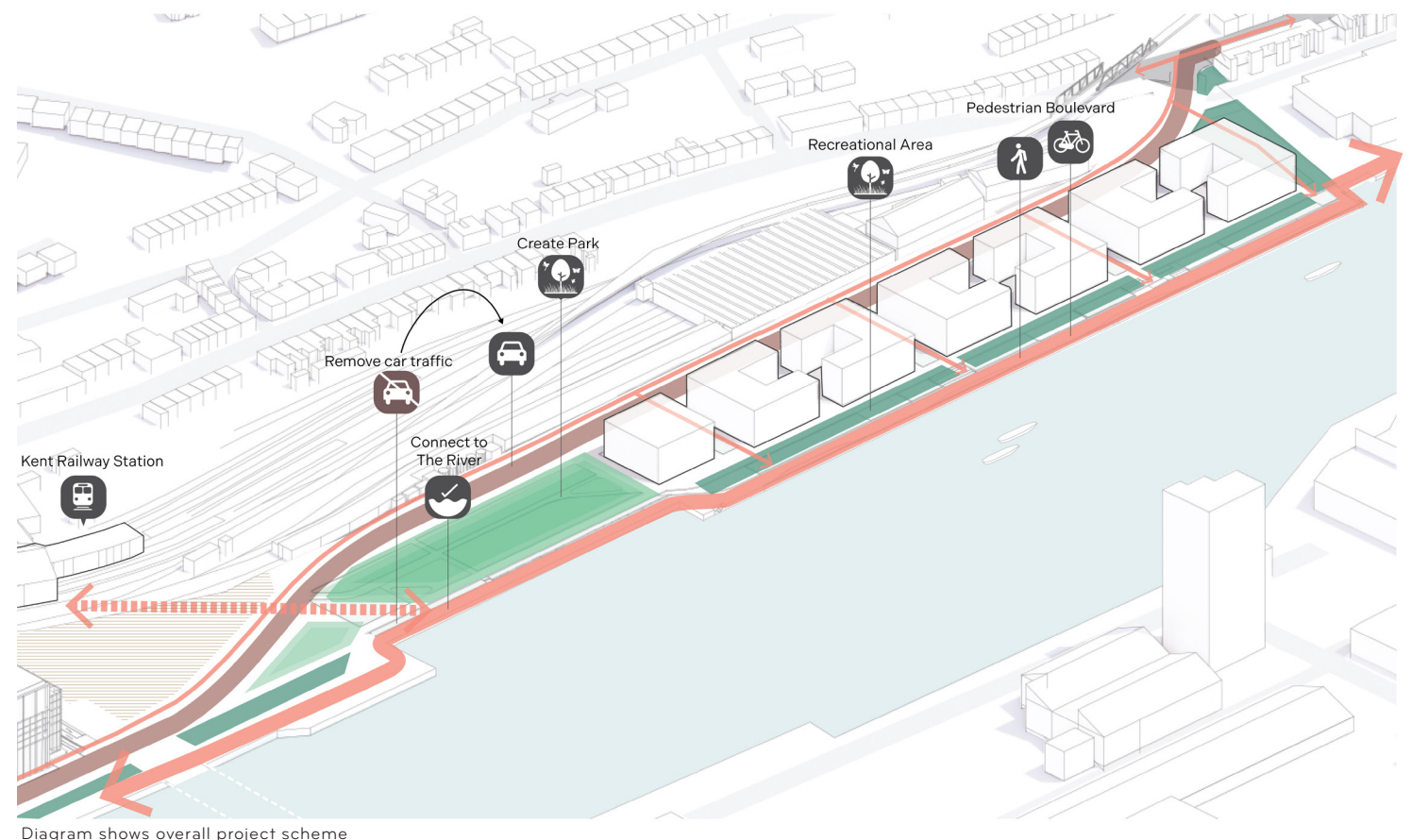


Diagram shows overall project scheme



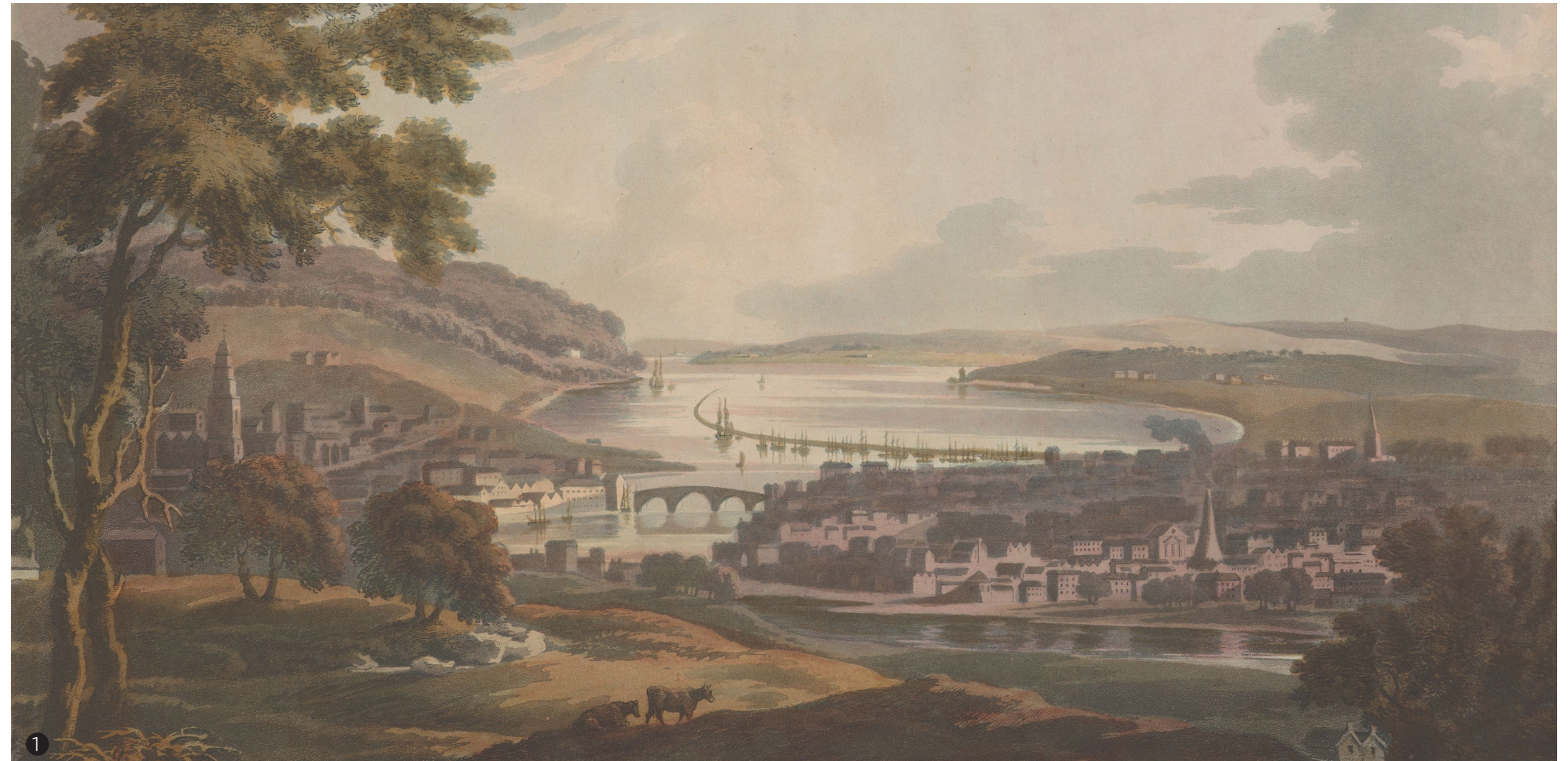
# Introduction

## Landscape and Industrial Heritage

The North Docks area was originally low-lying land, reclaimed from estuarine marshes in the early 18th century. Over time, this natural landscape was transformed to accommodate a growing need for shipping canals and commuter routes by the late 18th century.

To improve navigation and allow larger ships to access the city, the river was dredged and a navigation system was constructed. In the 19th century, the development of railway infrastructure along the river further changed the character of the harbour. The area above what is now Kent Station once housed the old Summer Hill Station, which was decommissioned when the railway line was rerouted across a bridge into Kent Station in the late 19th century.

Historical images of the area highlight Cork's identity as a harbour city, emphasizing its distinct topography and the crucial connection between the river and the elevated land beyond. The river landscape is a fundamental part of Cork's character, flanked by steep escarpments of sandstone and limestone. As a purpose-built port city, Cork developed on a series of marshy estuarine islands in low-lying waters—making ship access a defining feature of its urban and industrial evolution.



- 1 Historical Painting of Cork City in 1799 (T.S. Robert, 1799)
- 2 Merchants Quay, Harbour Ferries (Source: National Library of Ireland)
- 3 City Quays and City Hall (Source: National Library of Ireland)



# Introduction

## Existing Water Front



Existing Condition Image, Taken by CCC (April 8, 2025)



# Transformation of the North Docks

## Illustrative Site Layout



### LEGEND

- 1 Horgan's Park
- 2 New N8 Road Alignment
- 3 Waterfront Promenade
- 4 N8 Gateway & Biodiverse Pocket Park
- 5 Indicative Future Development
- 6 Indicative Feature Water Element
- 7 Western Green Link
- 8 Indicative Future Light Rail Bridge
- 9 Kent Station





## Sustainable North Docks

**Greening the North Docks** lays the foundation for a new urban biotope where people and nature can thrive together. The Green Spine will support recreation, connect the east and west areas of the masterplan, and serve as a hub for culture and community. The project presents a valuable opportunity to embed nature-inclusive design and boost biodiversity across the Docklands.

**Water-Sensitive Design;** The North Docks' water-sensitive strategy uses a layered approach with four key components: flood prevention and SUDS (using nature-based solutions), rainwater buffering and reuse; temporary water storage facilities reduce runoff and support reuse during dry periods, delayed discharge, and enhancing the water experience.





## Livable and Accessible to All

Creating a new balance between motorized vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians opens the door to a vibrant, sustainable public realm. The design aim to reduce reliance on cars and make walking, cycling, and public transport the natural, easy choice. A carefully planned network of public spaces will enhance connectivity and

permeability, prioritizing safe, enjoyable movement for pedestrians and cyclists. This movement strategy supports place-making by encouraging active streetscapes, vibrant social spaces, and a stronger sense of community—where movement is not just about getting from point A to B, but about experiencing the public space.





# Cultural and Maritime Heritage, A Distinct ‘Cork Feel’

The North Docks’ unique character is shaped by its maritime and industrial heritage, with historic features retained or creatively reused in the public realm. Encouraging engagement with the river through accessible water-based activities is essential to revitalizing public connection with the Docklands. By creating inviting access points

and promoting recreational opportunities on the River Lee, we can foster a deeper appreciation for Cork’s maritime heritage while celebrating the unique character of the waterfront. Our initiative aims to establish public access to the river, ensuring that residents and visitors alike can immerse themselves in its rich history and vibrant environment.





## A Green Entrance to the City

The new road entrance will be re-imagined as a green boulevard, offering a welcoming gateway to Cork with framed views of the city's northern green hills, and the River Lee. This transformation will improve both the aesthetic and functional qualities of the space. Enhancing the pedestrian experience with wide footpaths, shade from tree planting and improved crossings.

A generous green verge will separate pedestrians from vehicle traffic, creating a safer, more pleasant walking environment. This landscaped buffer will not only improve comfort and air quality but also serve as a key element in stormwater management—collecting, filtering, and slowing runoff through integrated Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) such as bioswales and rain gardens.





## Livable and Vibrant North Docks

The North Docks will be a livable, inclusive, and accessible destination—a place to stay, play and meet for people of all ages and abilities 24/7. The network of public spaces is designed to provide a coherent character across the North Docks as a whole, signified by high, quality, multi-functional and contextual spaces that are open and accessible for people from all walks of life and provide a varied and

vibrant range of activities. A diverse range of programs will be provided along the whole project area, creating an inviting environment and a place to stay for residents and daily visitors. Moreover, each area is intentionally oriented toward the river Lee, emphasizing the area's unique character.