

'Rus in Urbe'

Park design for the Royal Canal (Financial district), Dublin, Ireland



Client: Docklands Development Authority
Project: 2005 in collaboration with Karen de Groot
Budget: 15 Million
Status: design competition (round 1)

Together with the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal forms an inner city ring. This ring not only forms an important ecological corridor but has the potential to form a landscape park of major significance for the city of Dublin. However to reach this potential the Royal Canal must readdress its current position as a backwater discharge canal to an attractive and active waterfront. Even in this former industrial area, the Royal Canal retains a distinctly rural character. It is after all the corridor to the outer landscape, a green line that slashes through the urban red. This poetic quality is viewed as a highly positive starting point for the Spencer dock, a 'Rus in Urbe' or country in the city; especially in a district with so much hard detailing and in a quarter of the city where kids mainly have to play on concrete streets. 'Rus in Urbe' offers the ideal foil to badly needed relaxation and recreation, a green setting where office workers can chill, and enjoy lunch at the intimacy of the water's edge and where residents new and old can enjoy a walk and some fresh air along the Royal Canal.



Bridges and Traces

The park is full of traces of its former industrial past. The task is to reinvigorate and accentuate these traces to become prominent pieces in the new design. The bridges play a large role in defining the 'new' identity of the park. There are seven bridges in total. All existing iron bridges are to be restored and painted in the same dark grey/blue colour. All stone details; quays, steps, walls as existing will be renovated. The smaller traces of rope burns, rail lines, old ramps and other smaller details will be reintegrated with the new design by careful selection of materials and detailing.

New Proposals and profiles

The park (area) runs from the North strand road to the Liffey. A progression from rural to more urban is characterised along its length as it approaches the Liffey. The movement from soft to more hard detailing (while still remaining Rus in Urbe) is documented by a series of profiles. These profiles describe the basic proposals for the park's design and the strategy applied to achieve a green setting in this otherwise concrete jungle. They demonstrate how the area can undergo a 'quality impulse' that can reinvent the Royal Canal as an attractive, desirable and safe place for relaxation and recreation for a wide variety of users.

