

The Inchicore Railway Estate

The Inchicore Railway Estate is a residential estate of approximately 240 homes, and is along with the Inchicore Railway Works, a remarkable set piece of nineteenth century industrial planning and vernacular architecture, which has survived largely intact, giving a strong sense of community and belonging to the residents of the area. This area is of national importance in heritage and conservation terms and in relation to the history of modern transport infrastructure in Ireland.



CIE Residents Association and Inchicore on Track

The CIE Residents Association is a long established organisation that represents the residents of the Inchicore Railway Estate (also known as the CIE Estate).

On April 20th 2009 at the Hilton Hotel, Kilmainham, Irish Rail hosted a 'public consultation' as part of its Dart Underground project. It was in this forum that it announced for the first time that it intended to apply for a Railway Order in September, for a radical plan to tunnel from Heuston to Inchicore that would surface in a construction site in the middle of the Inchicore Railway Estate. In effect giving just over four months notice on a project of national significance.

In response, the CIE Residents Association held a public meeting one week later on Monday April 27th that was attended by in excess of 200 people and all the public representatives of the area. There was a sense of outrage and shock at the extent, hastiness and impact of Irish Rail's proposals. At this meeting a call was made for volunteers to form a group to respond to the plan. Over 30 people came forward and the first meeting was held on Thursday April 30th at which "Inchicore on Track" was adopted as the name of the group and John Beck of North Terrace was elected as chairperson. Residents from nearby areas affected by the alignment of the proposed tunnel have also joined the group, including residents from Inchicore Road, Sarsfield Road, Woodfield and Murrays Cottages.

Inchicore on Track - Mission Statement

To campaign and lobby to ensure that the route alignment and portal position for the Dart Underground chosen by An Bord Pleanála west of Heuston Station has the absolute minimum impact on residents and their homes while maintaining and preserving local communities, heritage and the environment.

Inchicore on Track requires that Irish Rail conduct an open and transparent consultation process that engages in a meaningful way with local communities.

Inchicore on Track Position Statement

The Inchicore Railway Estate

1. Inchicore on Track seeks the conservation, protection and enhancement of this unique place, recognising it as a model of nineteenth century, sustainable development and urban planning which has nourished a vibrant and close knit community. We support only those developments and proposals that seek to sustain this into the future.

Integrated Public Transport

2. In recognition of the importance of integrated public transport, Inchicore on Track wants to see the very best option chosen, one that promotes the greatest benefit and the least harm, an option in which the construction and operation of the Dart Underground would have the absolute minimum impact on heritage and the environment and the health, homes and lives of residents.

The decision to consider the 'Inchicore option' was taken as recently as December 2008, presented to the board of CIE in February 2009 and announced publicly in April 2009. We do not believe that the period of time from late 2008 to April 2009 is sufficient for ALL the alternatives to Heuston to have been examined. It appears that the only options examined were those involving the use of land currently in the ownership of CIE. A project of such importance should not be planned in such a hasty way.

Consultation Process

3. We require a serious and meaningful consultation process that is designed in conjunction with local communities. We demand that Irish Rail recognises local communities and their representative organisations, as stakeholders and partners in the environmental decision making process and in any future developments in the area. We are dissatisfied with the partial, drip feed of information and the burden put on residents to find out details of this project in a painstaking and piecemeal fashion.

We demand that CIE and Irish Rail postpone their current target for a Railway Order application until a real consultation process is established and all the options examined.

Alignment and Vent (Emergency Intervention Shaft)

4. The current proposed alignment is unacceptable because of the risk that is posed to people's homes, by tunnel boring works that are substantially closer to the ground level of properties than is the case in any other part of the city. Most of these properties were built in the nineteenth century and many have insubstantial foundations.

The position of the Emergency Intervention Shaft at Inchicore Road as part of this alignment is unacceptable because of the risk to homes and the disruption it would cause to people's lives, both during the construction and operational phases. We question the feasibility and appropriateness of this location in a back garden, in the event of an emergency or disaster which may involve up to 2000 plus people. We request that Irish Rail give serious consideration to other alternatives.

Portal and Construction Site

5. The current proposed location of the portal construction site in the heart of a residential area is unacceptable because we think it would have an invasive, disruptive and detrimental impact on the Inchicore Estate and the lives and health of its people during the construction and operational phases. A residential area is simply not suitable to host work of this scale and duration. This is compounded by the loss of amenities and green areas for local residents, sports clubs and school. The quality of life of the residents would be severely compromised for a period in excess of 5 years.

Station

6. The current proposed position of the station in the middle of an industrial complex is highly questionable and would appear to be based on expedience and opportunism, rather than on any audited or verifiable local transport requirements. It would be disconnected from Inchicore village, would not provide sufficient public access and would most probably become a haven for anti-social behaviour. We question whether it complies with internationally recognised best practice for the provision of public transport.

We would support a station location in Inchicore that was chosen on the basis of local transport needs and situated in such a way that it would not adversely affect the lives of local residents or the existing dynamics of local communities.

Environmental Impact and Independent Advice

7. The environmental impact of this project is not known. We require that information relating to the environmental impact assessment that is relevant to or touches upon our areas of concern is passed on to Inchicore on Track as it becomes available.

We expect independent expert advice on technical aspects of the proposals such as the alignment, the position of the portal and construction site, geology, tunnelling, railway engineering, the Heuston option, traffic management and other issues that might arise. The environmental impact statement should not issue until such time as we have received this advice and had the opportunity to participate in the assessment.

Funding for the Project/PPP and Future Development

8. We have grave concerns about the proposed funding for the project. The track record of the use of public private partnerships to deliver major infrastructural projects in Ireland is mixed. The current economic climate compounds the community's anxiety around the deliverability of such a project. Furthermore it is recognised that the failure of PPPs has left real communities in untenable situations for extended periods of time.

We are aware that a successful Railway Order application would give Irish Rail a ten year window in which to commence the project. We are concerned, given the current national economic and budgetary situation, that the community may have to live with an extended period of uncertainty and distress while awaiting the commencement of the project, should the Railway Order be granted.

There is growing recognition that the position and viability of the station only makes sense in the context of the rezoning and development of the industrially zoned Works complex. That the provision of a station would be linked to a new PPP scheme to develop large portions of the Inchicore Railway Works or other lands in the ownership of CIE is extremely worrying. We require assurance that this is not on CIE's agenda.

Immediate and Ongoing Impact.

9. The current proposal for the construction of the DART underground is already having a detrimental impact on residents. In attempting to come to terms with the enormous impact of this project, the huge information deficit and the urgent timeframe, very considerable time and effort is being put in by residents in discussions, meetings and committees. Residents are experiencing anxiety, stress, insecurity, invasion of their privacy and a negative impact on the present value of their homes.

This situation could be significantly relieved by the immediate establishment of a formal and effective consultation and participation process.