**Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection – 21st October, 2015**

**Oliver Cussen, Chairperson Designate, Grangegorman Development Agency**

Good afternoon, Chairperson and Members of the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection. I am very pleased to come before you as Chairperson Designate of the Grangegorman Development Agency.

Tá an-áthas orm bheith libh agus deis agam gnó na Gníomhaireachta a phlé idir an obair atá curtha i gcrích go dtí seo agus an clár oibre atá amach romhainn

The Agency is charged with developing the St Brendan’s Hospital grounds, a 73 acre site, at Grangegorman in Dublin’s North Inner City. It is an important and exciting development which centres on creating a major education, health and public resource. Accordingly the key stakeholders are the Health Service Executive, Dublin Institute of Technology and the local community. When completed, the project will transform this strategic site to a new urban quarter for the city and in the process will contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the country.

The significance of this development is reflected in its inclusion as a strategic objective in both the current and previous Development Plans for Dublin City, its inclusion in the National Development Plan as a key objective for Higher Education, its inclusion in Transport 21 as a key enabler to support the construction of LUAS Cross City and its inclusion as “the flagship project” in the National Stimulus Programme announced by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in July 2012.

To date, many significant milestones have been reached and a number of others are coming up.

* In May 2013 patients and staff from St. Brendan’s Hospital relocated to a new state-of-the-art replacement building, The Phoenix Care Centre. There is already feedback that this facility, with its modern design and layout, is having a positive effect on patients.
* Recently the first phase of the Site Infrastructure and Public Realm (SIPR) was completed. This consists of the laying of all critical utility services, major earthworks and development of the public realm including paths, roads, green areas, lighting, seating and bike parking. A new surface water pipe connection to Smithfield has also been provided, as required by Dublin City Council.
* This contract also delivered the initial public realm which facilitated the first 1,000 DIT students to come onsite in September 2014. As of September 2015 all of the outdoor sports facilities are complete, the all-weather pitch, tennis courts and informal play area are all in use, while the GAA and Soccer grass pitches will be ready for use next season. A new playground and jogging/walking track have also recently opened and are proving popular with the local community.
* As mentioned, the first 1,000 DIT students came to Grangegorman in September 2014. They are located in five of the protected structures around the site, which were refurbished to the highest standards and some of which now form “An Croi”, the cultural heart of the site.
* The first new DIT building is nearing completion. The new Greenway Hub will create specialist research facilities for the Environmental Sustainability and Health Institute (ESHI) as well as incubation space for new companies. It is due to be handed over to DIT shortly.
* A new Primary Care Centre is also currently being constructed for the HSE. This facility will deliver a range of health services including GP, occupational therapy, community nursing and counselling amongst others. It is due for completion in mid-2016 and will provide a significant new health service for the community around Grangegorman.
* The next phase of the delivery of DIT services is through the construction of two major quads, the Central and the East Quads. The Central Quad will be home to ten schools from the College of Sciences & Health, College of Engineering & Built Environment and the College of Arts & Tourism. The East Quad will accommodate the majority of academic activities and facilities required for the College of Creative & Cultural Industries. Both buildings were granted planning permission in July 2015. These buildings will bring 10,000 students, over half of DITs student population, to Grangegorman.
* Other projects include the new primary school which is at early design stage, a community nursing unit which is at feasibility study stage, the academic hub including a co-located DIT/public library which is at very early stages and the student accommodation which is at early design stage.

As the Development has taken shape there has been widespread recognition of the quality of the planning and design being undertaken in the course of this project.

* The Site Infrastructure and Public Realm (SIPR) Project won the award for Excellence in Construction Project Management at the annual International Construction Project Management Association (ICPMA) awards in Madrid in June 2015
* In May 2012 the campus masterplan received a major award from the American Institute of Architects in Washington.
* In July the campus masterplan received an honour award from the Society of Campus and University Planners (SCUP) in Chicago.
* Three other international awards were received between 2009 and 2010.

Because of the strategic importance of the Grangegorman site to Dublin City the Government designated the site as a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) in 2010. The SDZ is a holistic process for developments provided for in the planning system “….*where, in the opinion of the Government, specified development is of economic or social importance to the State*”. The masterplan provided the basis for the Planning Scheme, which was adopted by Dublin City Council in 2011 and subsequently approved by An Bord Pleanála.

The Grangegormam Planning Scheme is now a Dublin City Council planning document and all planning applications made in relation to the project will be assessed by the Council. This gives great certainty that the project can proceed without further appeals. Since the Scheme was adopted in May 2012 there have been twenty three successful planning decisions delivered under it. These have been for a wide variety of contracts, both large and small.

The site is being developed on principles of sustainability, in terms of water, energy, building design and accessibility. Protected structures dating back to the late 19th century and early 20th century are being brought back into use, alongside new buildings.

On completion, the project will underpin local Community, National and European economic, social and educational policy by supporting the creation of knowledge, research, technology transfer, innovation, business incubation, education, training, upskilling, continued professional development and health care; it will build and enhance the intellectual and social capital of the Nation; it will yield significant operational efficiencies for organisations such as DIT; and in the process of construction create significant employment opportunities. It will also be a major driver for urban regeneration in Dublin’s north inner city.

A very important initiative has been the implementation of the Grangegorman Local Employment Charter, which was adopted by the Agency in 2012. The Charter aims for 20% of new construction jobs to be filled by local people. At the height of construction so far there were 350 construction workers onsite, 50 of those were from the local area. Employment has been created and more will be created in areas such as direct labour in construction as well as in indirect supporting professions such as architects, engineers, and conservation specialists. There is also a multiplier effect in areas such as concrete manufacturing and in providers of equipment, fixtures and fittings.

The Employment Charter was developed under the guidance of the Labour and Learning Forum (LLF), a group set up to implement key recommendations outlined in a 2009 report examining the effect of the Grangegorman project on the local area. Other areas of focus for this group, which is chaired by former Secretary General of the Department and Education and Skills Ms. Brigid McManus, include local education opportunities and exploring opportunities for co-operation and synergies between the project and local businesses.

The LLF in collaboration with DIT and local community groups have been awarded a grant of just over €940,000 from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Atlantic Philanthropies. This Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme will fund an exciting series of activities from 2015 to 2017 to help improve outcomes for 0-6 year old children and families living in the Grangegorman area in Dublin 7. This programme will make a significant difference to children, families, and service providers in the Grangegorman area, where some children have not realised their full potential due to socio-economic disadvantage and gaps in services.

Another positive outcome of the project so far is the recent launch of “…*the lives we live”,* the Grangegorman Public Art Programme. This programme, which features 5 exciting pathways aimed at realising a variety of public art opportunities, is to be rolled out over the coming years and will encourage relationship building between the art community and the local community. It has already raised the profile of the project since its launch on 18th September last.

Throughout the life of the Grangegorman project communication and consultation have played key roles. From the early development of the Masterplan right up to the Planning Scheme, stakeholders were not only informed about what was happening but had input into the plans. Workshops were initially run to give everyone a voice and as the plans developed feedback was given and changes were made. 13 new objectives were added to the final Strategic Plan based on consultation alone. There are two formal stakeholder groups for the project, the Consultative Group and the Community Liaison Committee. The Consultative Group is made up of all stakeholders on the project and meets once a quarter. The community liaison committee is made up of all community representatives who are involved with the project and is more locally focused. It also includes representatives from HSE, DIT, local Gardai and the City Council. It meets once a month to discuss any current issues.

The newly-appointed board has a strong, wide range of competencies as well as a deep knowledge of the key stakeholders. As Chairperson, I will seek to facilitate the Board, to the greatest extent possible, to deploy this expertise and experience to progress the project over the next three years.

The Agency has a highly qualified and motivated staff. An important role for the Chairperson and the Board will be to keep the strategy under review as appropriate, maintain the direction of the project, support the executive in implementing the strategy and ensure accountability for the overall effectiveness and efficiency of Agency.

I approach the job with an openness to learn from the experience and expertise of all those involved in the project. This is combined with a firm purpose to maintain the momentum of the project, building on the robust physical and strategic planning framework, the strong relationships with the key stakeholders and the expertise and experience at board and executive level. As Chairperson, I will call on my experience of the education sector during my time as an Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education and Skills coupled with subsequent experience in a number of senior positions in the Dublin Airport Authority, during a time of major infrastructural transformation, and service on boards in Ireland and overseas.

This is a wonderful project that will provide 73 acres of integrated public facilities, a major educational, health and community resource that will serve Ireland for decades to come. It is now at a critical juncture with a lot of major construction yet to commence. It is important that, as we approach the 10 year anniversary of the Agency, the vision set out at the beginning continues to be realised and it would be my goal as Chairperson to ensure that this vision is progressed significantly over the next three years.

+Thank you.