

Statement by Mayor John Biggs

Thank you for inviting me to this meeting of the Isle of Dogs Forum. I'm sorry that I am unable to be here in person this evening but I have another commitment which I'm afraid I was unable to reschedule. With this being the case, Richard has asked me to provide a statement which he can read to this evening's meeting.

I considered the application made by the Forum for me to approve your application to designate the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Forum and Area, together with similar applications from Limehouse and Spitalfields, at my Cabinet meeting on the 1st December last year. As I said then and I'm happy to reinforce this evening, I welcome your proposal, but at that time I was aware that there were some concerns about the exact boundaries of the Forum. I therefore felt unable to agree the boundaries at that stage but I did agree to recognise the application in principle.

Since December there have been discussions with various stakeholders, a balanced consideration has been given to both the Area and Forum applications by officers. I had a lengthy conversation with and presentation from Andrew Wood, and also spoke at some length with you by telephone. I spoke also with Howard Dawber of Canary Wharf and was copied into their formal position in a letter further to the Cabinet discussion and I think conversations with you too. I have been advised that both the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Forum and Area applications will be presented to the Cabinet on Tuesday 5th April for decisions at its quickest. The Cabinet agenda is scheduled to be published on 24th March.

There are two options for me to consider, the first is to accept the Forum's proposal for an area including the Isle of Dogs in its entirety. The second is for me to designate some of the area. Where the area applied for is not deemed appropriate, there are multiple options for designating an alternative area. The designation of a smaller area, south of south dock has been presented to me by officers. This option addresses concerns about the Forum's boundary and would comprise the area many see as the Isle of Dogs.

The proposed decision and report may be 'called-in' which could lead to a further delay in its confirmation. Again, as a technical point, the approval of an 'area' and a 'forum' are two different matters and, if the decision were to propose boundaries for the Area which differed from those requested, then I am advised officers would like to inform the forum of the recommendations prior to Cabinet and outline the rationale for it.

Finally, two things. First I am very much committed to your having a forum and Area. May I pay my respect for the work you have done. I look forward to having a fruitful relationship with your group and if possible to attending a meeting soon. And I am well aware of the anxieties about development and infrastructure on the Island. Second, I

am as annoyed as I imagine you are that these things seem to take such a time. The forum is however a potentially powerful body, relating to land use and interests and it is important that we get this 'right'.

I trust the above provides you with useful information for your meeting this evening. I am genuinely interested in hearing your views and reflecting upon them, and my mind remains open to further representations and the more detailed analysis that I believe the report will contain. While this is of course the most important matter currently in your minds, there are many other matters that we could usefully discuss including of course the emerging Local Plan, the OAPF, the highways issues and other challenges of infrastructure and I would be happy to talk to you about these and be challenged on them.

As regards transport, and particularly the recent highways problems I want to convene a meeting with officers and all local island Councillors in the near future, in order to understand local thinking about solutions, including longer term capacity solutions, and I imagine your members would be interested in hearing more about this matter too.

I trust you have a productive evening.

John Biggs
Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets