



# All aboard!



**“Opportunities for houseboats which contribute to life along the water’s edge should be actively encouraged,” according to the Dublin Docklands Development Authority’s Master Plan.**

**W**e’ve been harbouring a prevalent desire for it for years, paying premium prices for any property within a hare’s breath of it, whilst properties commanding an uninterrupted view of it have long been considered the crème de la crème of prime residential dwelling. We’re talking water, and the good news is that the potential to actually live on it, in the shape of a houseboat, may soon become a reality.

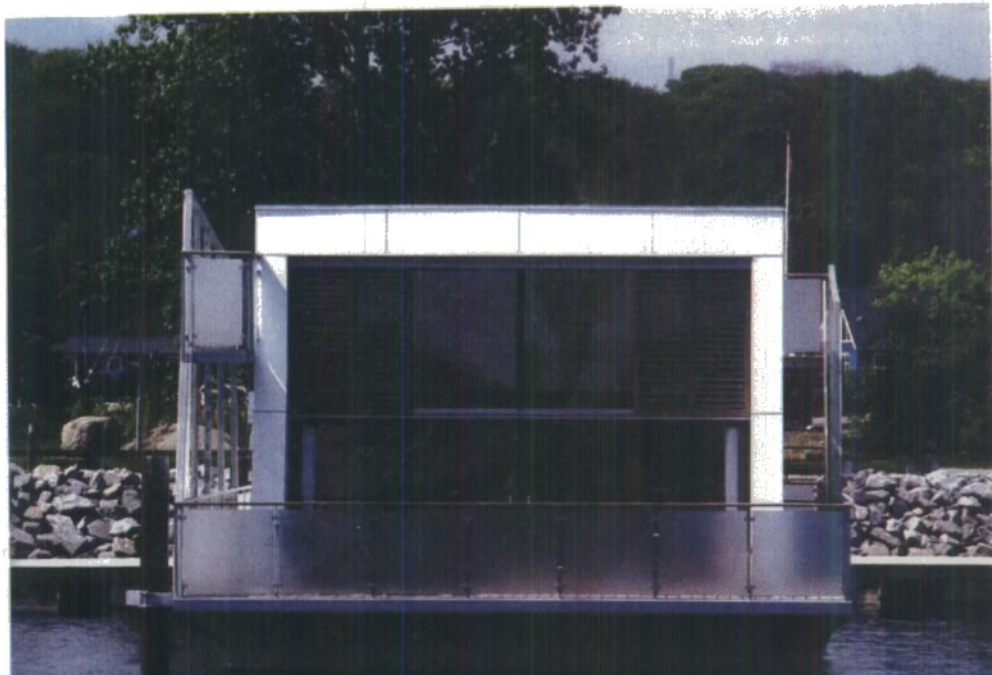
The recently adopted Dublin Docklands Development Authority Master Plan says: “There should be focus on increasingly animating water bodies. Pigeon House Harbour in Poolbeg, Dublin, which is proposed to be developed for recreational and leisure use, could become the embarking point for a public transportation water ferry to O’Connell Bridge. Opportunities for houseboats which contribute to life along the water’s edge should be actively encouraged.” On this recommendation what better time to explore the modern interpretation of houseboats?

The idea of a floating community is one that could bring benefits on a number of levels. While

traditionally houseboats were viewed as an alternative lifestyle option, enjoyed by relatively few people due to current restrictions, modern design has raised the bar considerably and hi-spec designs have replaced the quaint barges and narrow boats of old.

‘Waterliving’ is a Danish based company which provides high quality housing on water and has taken on the challenge of developing floating communities by combining contemporary architecture with an understanding of maritime design. Such a combination means you can live in a completely new atmosphere, set apart from the ordinary, while still enjoying the security and comfort of a fully functioning modern home. This lifestyle is already enjoyed in Denmark, the UK, Canada, Finland and Holland.

David Beard, Managing Director of UK based ‘Floating Concepts’, says interest in the concept of houseboats there has been growing at a phenomenal pace. ‘We hope to have a number of very different developments on stream, later this year, which will raise the bar on public awareness even further.’



Solo



Modo

## Key features of floating buildings

Waterliving considers three key principles: energy efficiency, renewable energy and materials' life cycle, in its new generation of floating buildings. Five key aspects ensure they can be self-sufficient and eco-friendly:

- *Heat recovery ventilation:* a controlled air exchange with a heat recovery feature that provides comfortable, energy efficient ventilation. A low noise unit recovers up to 90% of the interior heat while controlling humidity and expelling dust, pollen and other allergens.
- *Heat pump:* a heat converter provides the energy for all in-floor heating or cooling and also heats water for general use. The heat is taken from the water surrounding the hull via tubes cast into the concrete ballast. The system runs on at least 60% less energy than an equivalent electricity based heating option.
- *Solar cells:* the glass in the railing on the lower deck can be replaced by photovoltaic panels which also take advantage of the light reflected off the surface of the water. 30 sq m of solar cells will generate sufficient power to run the heat pump.
- *Wind turbine:* a wind turbine with a diameter of 1.8m placed conscientiously within a Waterliving project or on a houseboat can provide 1200k Wh/year with an average wind speed of 6m/second.
- *Wastewater treatment:* a biological treatment system located in the WASH service up to five households and cleans sewage a purity level that meets EU CEN standard 12566-3. Houseboats can thus be completely independent of land-based facilities

One of the biggest benefits that people get from being part of a water based community is that of 'neighbourliness', which is a thing of the past in most urban, apartment filled communities, Beard believes. 'Our Canadian partners, International Marine Floatation Systems Inc, took me to look at one of their houseboat developments near Vancouver, where I spoke to many of the residents. They all waxed lyrical about the unique sense of community that occurs.'

'From a practical point of view, houseboat occupiers in the UK only pay council tax on the mooring not on the houseboat itself, which combined with some of our standard eco-features such as heat pumps incorporated in hull, solar panels and rainwater harvesting, produce considerable savings on the annual running costs of a comparable land based property,' says Beard.

In the last 12 months, they have received a number of enquiries from Ireland, primarily from Dublin and Belfast. The majority of units will be manufactured in the UK and transported by road in modular or flat-packed form. Imported models are transported by cargo vessel to the nearest dock and then tugged to a waiting berth.



Swan



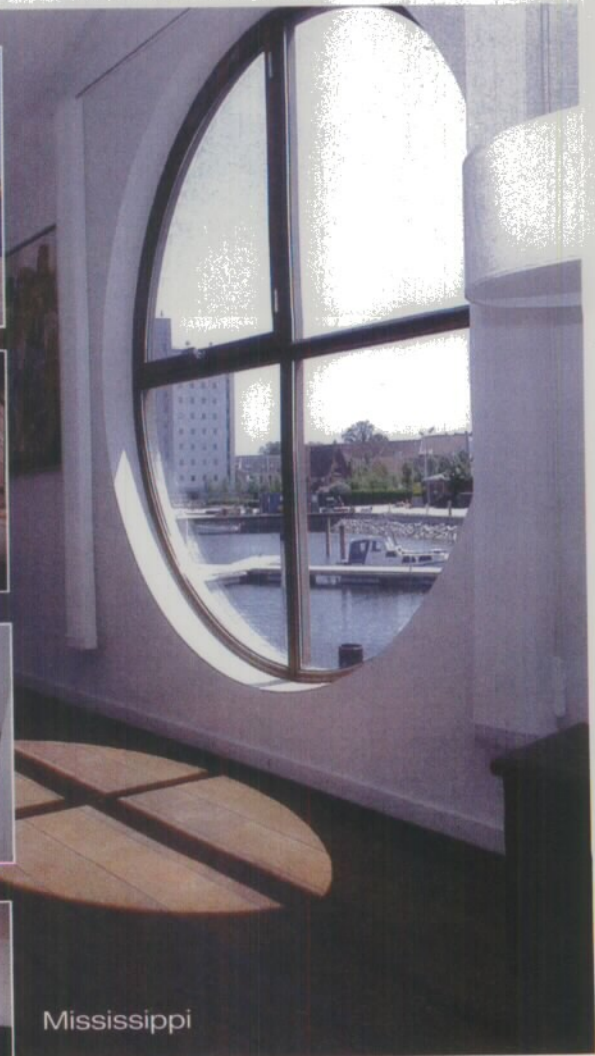
'For the off-the-peg models our supply prices range from around £100k for an 80sq m very basic single bedroom unit through to around £500k for say the luxury, 'Waterliving' Swan which is 165sq m with 86sq m of deck terraces. For bespoke units designed and built to requirements, prices will start at around £2,000 per square metre, but the sky is the limit depending on the specification and quality of finish adopted. However prices on Floating Concept's own developments will vary enormously depending on the location and cost of providing the supporting infrastructure and services,' Beard explains.

'Later this year we will be announcing a new one-off model, which will have approximately 350sq m on two levels with huge decks and every modern gizmo our architects could think of, including hot tub and jacuzzi; party bar console and barbecue; two bedrooms with luxury en-suite bathrooms; a computerised self-stocking wine cellar; and the latest in audio visual, and reactive and remote controlled services and appliances. It will also be very eco-friendly, utilising heat pumps and solar panels for its hot water; air exchange systems; rainwater harvesting; and obviously, sustainable materials'.

Floating Concepts has the exclusive UK distribution rights for the luxury, Danish 'Waterliving' models and has formed partnerships with a number of other manufacturers and designers in Holland, Scandinavia and Canada. 'We have recently agreed to work together with Finland's Marina Housing which is the largest and one of the most experienced manufacturers and designers of floating pontoon structures in Europe, whose primary role will be to provide the marine engineering advice and pontoon structures, whilst Floating Concepts will identify and procure the development opportunities,' says Beard.

As well as helping to regenerate the harbour life, the green credentials of houseboats can't fail to attract favourable attention for future buyers as a homestead of choice.

[www.floatingconcepts.co.uk](http://www.floatingconcepts.co.uk)  
[www.waterliving.com](http://www.waterliving.com)



Mississippi