

Part One

CONTEXT



Chapter 1: Introduction

Cork County Council has been aware for some time of the need for a more integrated approach to the planning of Cork Harbour. The 1996 County Development Plan included a chapter on *The Amenity and Tourism Role of Cork Harbour*. The 2003 Plan (para. 8.2.8) suggested a coastal zone management study, based on that chapter, as a step in the preparation of Local Area Plans for the three electoral areas adjoining Cork Harbour.

From late 2004, the Council and the Coastal and Marine Research Centre (CMRC), University College Cork were the (local) partners in COREPOINT. This project aimed to apply best practice in coastal management across NW Europe, and was funded by the EU Interreg IIIB Programme. In Cork, COREPOINT led to an Integrated Management Strategy for Cork Harbour. As the aim was an integrated approach, there was a wide range of inputs from stakeholders, via a Harbour Forum, and Strategic Advisory Group.

Following the launch of the Integrated Management Strategy by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in May 2008, a Cork Harbour Management Focus Group was set up under the EU IMCORE project, to implement the strategy. It includes representation from the CMRC, the City and County Councils, the Port of Cork, the Naval Service, the National Maritime College (NMCI), Passage West Town Council, Cobh and Harbour Chamber, the Departments of Agriculture and the Environment (NPWS), the EPA, Fáilte Ireland, Cork

Docklands, Cork County Development Board, South & East Cork Area Development (SECAD) and the SW River Basin District.

The background to this Study is thus widespread awareness of the need for an integrated approach to the Harbour, which has been promoted and developed by these EU projects. Preparation of this Study, as a means of informing forthcoming Local Area Plans, is an aim of the 2009 County Development Plan (para. 4.17.3):

“the full potential of the harbour could be best realised through a more integrated approach to its planning and development. In this regard, the Council will seek to prepare an overall study for the development of the harbour. This study will build on work currently underway in the COREPOINT and IMCORE Projects and will inform future reviews of the Middleton, Blarney and Carrigaline Local Area Plans”

For reasons outlined in section (3) of this chapter, this Study uses a long time horizon, reaching to the middle of this century, and some of its suggestions may be more suitable for inclusion in future Local Area Plans, rather than the ones currently in Draft form, and due for adoption in 2011.

The Study also reflects the process of recreational planning for coastal areas of County Cork. A Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy for West Cork was published in 2008, and a similar

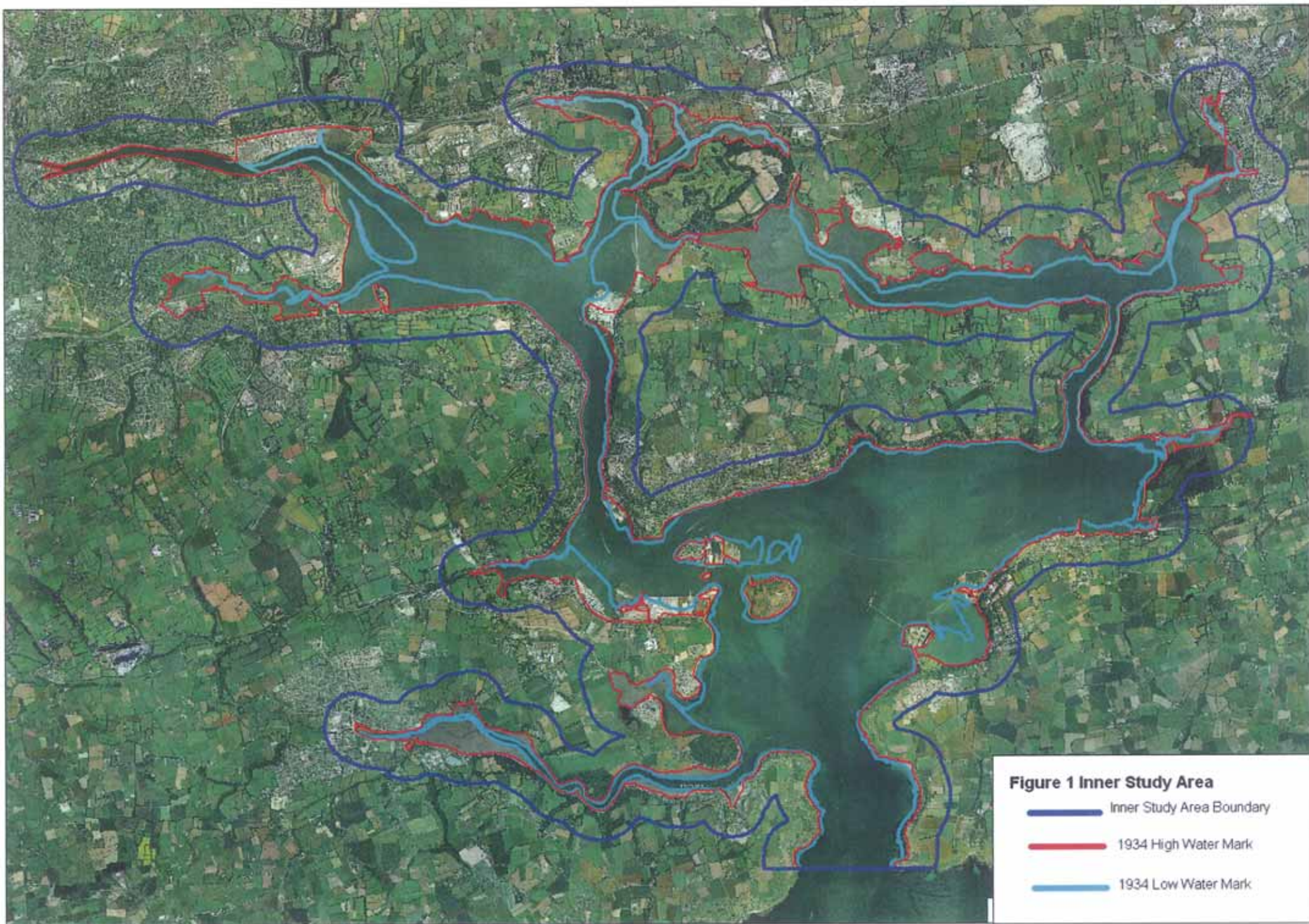



Figure 1 Inner Study Area

-  Inner Study Area Boundary
-  1934 High Water Mark
-  1934 Low Water Mark

Strategy for South Cork is due for publication shortly. This Study may be seen as a more detailed look at how some of the needs and issues identified in the South Cork Strategy as relevant to Cork Harbour in general, might be more specifically addressed in particular parts of the Harbour.

Parallel Studies

There are a number of other studies and plans relevant to Cork Harbour, which have either overlapped with this one in timing, or are due to be undertaken in the next few years:

The studies in Table 1 are more detailed and specific than this study of Cork Harbour, and relate to particular aspects, uses, functions or areas of the Harbour. In so far as their timing allows, this study takes account of them, but it does not attempt to duplicate them. Instead, it focuses primarily on the way in which the various aspects of the Harbour and their evolution and development interact with each other. This Study includes an area by area examination of the Harbour in Chapters 3-6, because key interactions are sometimes most evident at a relatively local level, but the options and suggestions put forward are more at a strategic level, and do not try to provide an exhaustive list of detailed proposals

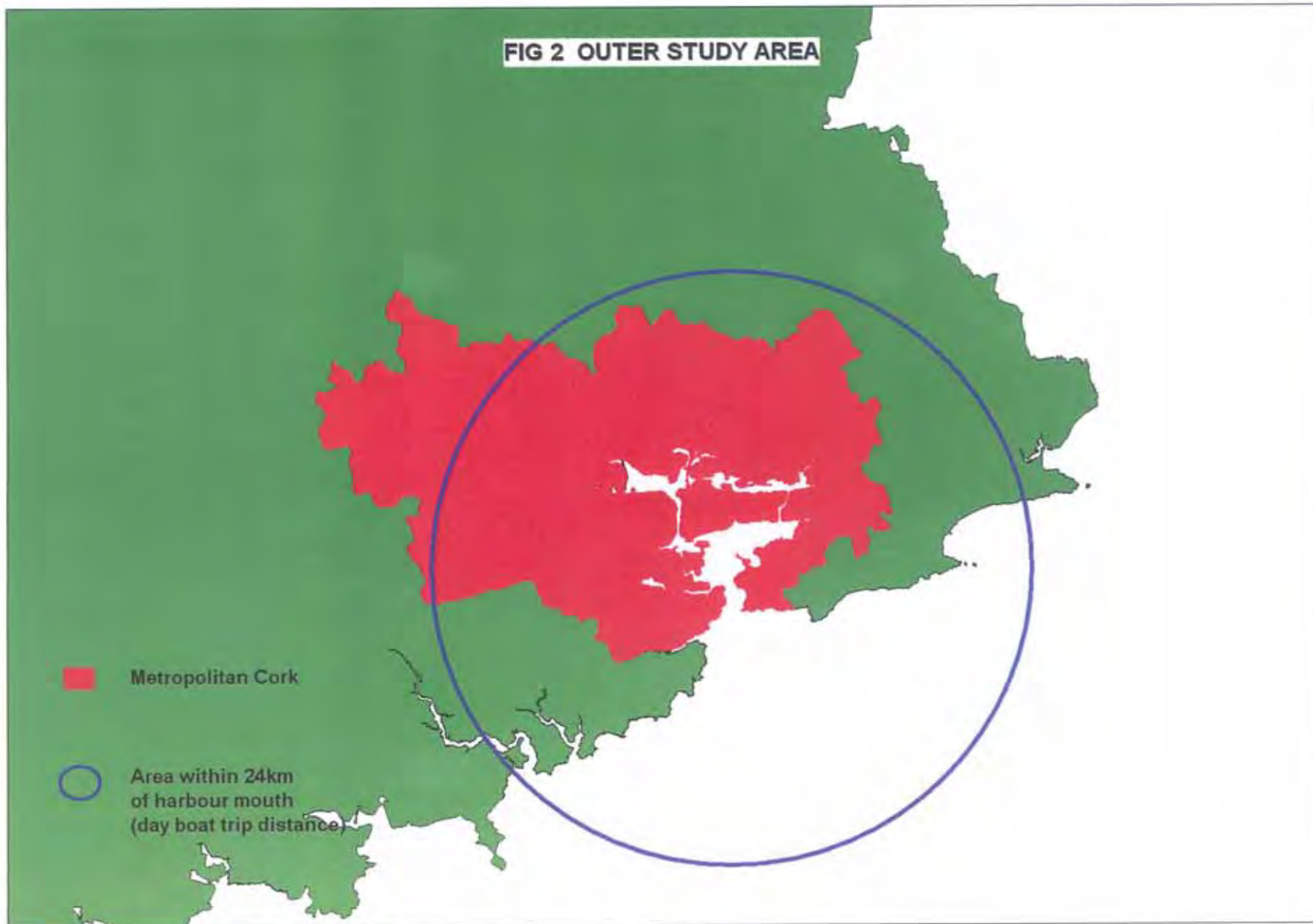
Table 1: Parallel Studies of Aspects of Cork Harbour

Lead Agency	Study Name/Focus	Completion Date
Port of Cork	Leisure and Recreation Study	July 2010
Port of Cork	Strategic Development Plan Review	July 2010
CMRC/Cork Co. Co./NMCI	IMCORE/Adaptation to Climate Change	2011
Office of Public Works	LeeCFrams/Flood Prevention	(Draft) Feb. 2010
Cork Co. Co.	SW River Basin Management Plan/Water Quality	July 2010
Cork Co. Co.	Great Island Study	(Draft) Feb. 2010
Cork Co. Co (S.)	Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy	Jan. 2011
Cork Co.Co.	Outline Strategies, Local Area Plan Reviews (Blarney, Middleton and Carrigaline Electoral Areas)	Nov. 2010
Cork City Council	River Use Management Study	2011-12
Cork City Council	Tivoli Local Area Plan	2014
Cobh Town Council	Cobh Urban Design Feasibility Study	Feb. 2009
Cork City Council and partners	Cork Area Transit System Study	2009

Definition of the Coastal Zone

Cork Harbour's broad coastal zone can be defined in various, more or less extensive ways, depending on the types of influence over adjoining land and waters one is primarily interested in. However, an area with a definite boundary is

FIG 2 OUTER STUDY AREA



■ Metropolitan Cork

○ Area within 24km
of harbour mouth
(day boat trip distance)

useful for statistical purposes, and as a means of providing a primary focus for the Study. After some experiment, an area which included the waters of the Harbour, inter-tidal areas, reclaimed land, and land within 0.5 kilometres of the shoreline as it existed in 1934 was found to include most of the more intensive and characteristic coastal interactions, and was adopted as an inner study area. This is shown as Figure 1.

The outer coastal zone cannot be defined so precisely, as different criteria lead to widely different boundaries (eg visual envelopes, river or different types of user catchment etc), and even if a single criteria is used, interactions with the harbour may decline gradually with distance, making boundaries arbitrary. The best approximation on the landward side may be the Cork Metropolitan Area (CMA)¹, as defined in the CASP Study, and on the seaward side, the area reachable by boat from the Harbour mouth on a day trip² (see Figure 2). For water quality and ecological purposes, the catchments of the main rivers flowing into Cork Harbour extend further inland than the CMA boundary, while the 2008 EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive treats 'the Celtic Seas' as the relevant sub-region, for the preparation of marine strategies.

¹ The CMA has a relatively long planning history, having been known as the LUTS Study Area or Greater Cork Area for the period 1976-2000, and was first defined as the City and Harbour Area in the early 1970s. Its original title accurately summarises its significance from the point of view of this Study.

² This area was added to areas within the Harbour in the calculation of recreational boat carrying capacity in *Assessment of Coastal Recreational Activity and Capacity for Increased Boating in Cork Harbour*, Kopke, K., O'Mahony, C., Cummins, V., and Gault, J., CMRC, UCC, p.34

Realistically, the concept of an outer study area is more a reminder that the coastal zone is an interface, particularly if it is also a harbour, and one that interacts with activities a long way inland, and also a long way out to sea. In practice, where a defined outer area has been needed in this study, the one used has been determined by the issue under discussion, and the units for which there is good data.

Corepoint Strategy Objectives

The Cork Harbour Integrated Management Strategy produced under COREPOINT in 2008 included five strategy objectives (para. 5.2):

- (1) *Develop a policy framework to facilitate integration for planning and management of Cork Harbour*
- (2) *Protect the unique natural environment of the Harbour*
- (3) *Protect the social and cultural assets of the Harbour to protect the unique identity of the area*
- (4) *Promote the economic development of the Harbour in line with the principles of sustainable development*
- (5) *Promote and develop the Harbour as a facility for water based sport and leisure activity*

These are sensible but broadly defined aims, from which this Study needs to progress by stages to develop more specific policy options on the future of the Harbour. Initial steps in this

process are suggested, in relation to each of these aims, as follows:

- (1) An integrated approach should involve, inter alia
 - (a) Some common means of assessing the relative importance of the various demands on the limited capacity of the Harbour
 - (b) Recognition of situations in which interaction between adjoining land/water uses or activities increase or diminish their (joint) benefits, relative to environmental capacity used
 - (c) Ongoing consultation with the other stakeholders involved in COREPOINT
- (2) Protection of the natural environment of the Harbour requires, inter alia,
 - (a) quantification of the areas which are largely undeveloped at present
 - (b) assessment of their (varying) quality and significance for the Harbour, having regard inter alia to statutory and Development Plan designations
- (3) The social and cultural assets of the Harbour should be regarded as including the established settlements/communities with a distinctive character adjoining it, as well as more formally identified monuments and landscapes
- (4) Promotion of the economic development of the Harbour requires a sense of where opportunities for it to attract suitable new employment uses will arise, or where such uses which have a specific functional need to locate there. For

such development to be sustainable, it will need to be accommodated within a reasonably stable balance between development and other uses (having regard to the potential for reuse or intensification on previously developed land).

- (5) Fuller use of the potential for water sports will require matching of facilities which the Harbour is well placed to supply, with effective demand for such facilities in a relatively urbanised location.

Stages in the Preparation of the Study

Having regard to the COREPOINT strategic aims and the above ways of applying them, a five stage study process has been followed, as follows:

(1) Land Use/Reclamation Projections: Defining an inner coastal zone makes it possible to quantify aggregate trends affecting it, by comparing the current status of areas within it with that on previous dates for which there was good data. In turn, this establishes rates of change over particular periods. These can then be projected forwards, allowing future possibilities to be viewed in the light of established trends.

(2) Assessment of Component Areas: The character of the Harbour itself, its shoreline, reclaimed areas on it, and coastal land behind it, varies greatly. There is frequent alternation between broad and narrow bodies of water, between development, agricultural and woodland on land facing them, and between large and small scale, traditional and modern, industrial and residential structures on land that is developed. To reflect this, land adjoining Cork Harbour was subdivided

into component areas, and grouped around the bodies of water they faced onto. These areas were then considered from a number of points of view:

- (i) quantitative assessment – eg estimates of population, employment in developed areas, capacity to accommodate more intensive development, or redevelopment/reuse
- (ii) qualitative assessment – eg the visual, ecological or historic importance of landscape or building groups, the benefits development uses derive from their position on the Harbour
- (iii) interactive assessment - ie the benefits or disbenefits they derive from their relationship to adjoining uses in other categories
- (iv) identification of areas which have special potential for particular new uses

(3) Market Assessment:

Market assessments vary according to how far they look ahead. For a product which can be put on the market fairly quickly, they are likely to study current market conditions and consumer preferences, and look for factors which might change them in the interval before the product is sold. Longer term projects which depend on sustained use over a long period for their economic justification, are more likely to be assessed on the basis of market behaviour over quite a long period, and this will tend to even out short term fluctuations. Development in

Cork Harbour is punctuated by large projects which occur at quite long intervals. For this reason, a longer term market assessment is appropriate: one which combines evidence of past market behaviour over time, with realistic assessment of new sources of demand and the obsolescence of existing ones.

Such an assessment requires disaggregation of observed or expected demand into a number of broad categories of land use. These demands are then compared with possible supply, either in the form locations within the Harbour which may be suitable for them, or the supply of suitable locations elsewhere.

(4) Development and Assessment of Strategic Options:

Stages (1)-(3) suggest that there are some important sites and areas on which there are several divergent options. Since the overall balance of uses around the Harbour is at least as important as the use made of individual sites, it is useful to combine specific choices on such sites to create alternative possible 'grouped options' (groups of actions affecting the Harbour which emphasise a particular goal). This is used partly as a way of identifying where this results in tensions or incompatibilities between possible uses, and so where crucial policy choices may arise. It also indicates where different goals for the future of the Harbour are mutually compatible.

(5) Draft Conclusions:

This Study is an advisory and exploratory one, and is not a statutory plan (or part of the hierarchy of mutually consistent plans which extends from the National Spatial Strategy via

Regional Strategies and Development Plans to Local Area Plans) as it has a more specialised, coastal zone perspective, and a longer time horizon. It tries to define what a more sustainable and balanced economic development path for the Harbour could involve, by putting forward suggestions and options, rather than by proposing a specific, prescriptive set of actions. In the middle 3 chapters (ie chapters 4-6), the options put forward area at a local level, while the final 3 chapters deal with the overall balance between uses on the Harbour, and how decisions on some of the major sites adjoining it could affect this. A more integrated approach by the various statutory authorities and stakeholders active in the Harbour area is seen as attainable, partly by greater consensus on the overall balance of uses in the longer term, and partly by a joint approach to specific, physically constrained sections of shoreline which are subject to potentially conflicting claims.

It is being put on informal public display, as a way of eliciting reactions from these stakeholders and the wider public, and to identify how far and where there is agreement or disagreement on the options it outlines. Both the draft study, and the reactions to it, will inform Cork County Council in its role as the planning authority responsible for drafting statutory plans for part of the area around Cork Harbour³.

³ In so far as options are incorporated into statutory plans, they will be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as required by the relevant legislation.