



Chapter 9 Conclusions

This study should be seen as a first attempt to apply an integrated coastal zone management approach to Cork Harbour. It is an exploratory study which puts forward suggestions and alternatives on where this approach might lead us, not a plan which puts forward prescriptive recommendations requiring that one particular course of action be followed. It should promote discussion amongst the various organisations with a role in the Harbour area, and amongst users of the Harbour and in settlements and industrial areas facing onto it. It may in time contribute to definite decisions and choices, but this is not its immediate purpose.

The majority of options and suggestions discussed have emerged through survey of some 60 sub-areas adjoining the Harbour, and the bodies of water they face. This predominantly bottom up approach has been productive, in the sense it has prompted that a large number of suggestions, and it has also allowed themes which are common to a number of sub-areas to become apparent.

In most cases, the options which have been forward affect particular sub-areas, or a group of sub-areas in a particular part of the Harbour. They are not in general mutually interdependent to the point where local actions only make sense as part of a Harbour wide programme, which is being implemented as a whole.

One practical consequence is that many of the 'local' suggestions in Chapters 4-6 can be incorporated into future plans, if so desired. This Study has been carried out in parallel with preparation of the County Council's 2010 Draft Local Area Plans, and some proposals are thus common to both. As the Study has a more distant planning horizon than other plans for the Cork area, consideration of other proposals may be more a matter for future plans. Other local authorities and public bodies responsible for spatial or sectoral plans and projects affecting the Harbour area may also find some of the options discussed in the Study relevant from their own points of view, now or in the future.

Because of the intended role of this Study as a source of ideas and proposals, for possible use in a variety of circumstances, it does not have a conventional set of conclusions, in the form of a programme of recommended actions. Its layout is however designed to make it easy for readers to find suggestions relevant to particular areas in Chapters 4-6, and major themes and options which may have a wider relevance are listed after the contents page.

Rate of Development and Balance between Uses

However, there is a Harbour-wide dimension to the Study, which involves considering the interaction and balance between the main categories of use adjoining it. This focuses on

- the rate of development in the Harbour area, which determines the extent to which its natural environment and landscape context is retained
- the balance between:
 - undeveloped land still in agriculture, forestry or other 'green' uses, and (below the HWM) the Harbour itself, including undeveloped foreshore and inter-tidal areas
 - uses which have a functional need to be beside the Harbour, involving 'hard' connections such as transfer of goods from water to land and pipeline connections
 - uses which derive a substantial 'soft' benefit from being beside water, including Dockland type redevelopment, and employment uses of types specially sensitive to image and immediate environment
 - other land uses, for which the advantages of a Harbour side location are minor, relative to development of the same type located inland

While any longer term projection is subject to considerable uncertainty, there does appear to be a real danger that much of the remaining undeveloped land around the Harbour could be developed in a few decades. In the absence of intervention, the current situation, in which developed areas are set in a predominantly natural context, seems likely to be replaced by one in which remaining natural landscape, farmland and forestry are set in a predominantly developed context.

If we wish to avoid this, one necessary step will be to shift the onus of proof in relation to development of Harbour side land. At present, land beside the Harbour is zoned – or not zoned – on much the same criteria as apply in the rest of County Cork. The main existing forms of protection are scenic landscape and routes (on land) and SPA, SAC, NHA and Shellfish designation (mainly on water or in inter-tidal areas). The prospect of development trends resulting in depletion of unprotected areas and putting protected ones under increasing pressure, has not so far been explicitly addressed.

This needs to change. Where development is proposed on Harbour side land, in addition to the normal issues which would arise, and existing protective designations, we also need to ask the question of whether the land use in question has any particular need to be beside the Harbour, or creates any substantial benefit for the community from being there, relative to an alternative location inland. If the answer is no, we should be reluctant to agree to it.

Stimulating Debate and Developing Consensus

A coastal zone management approach is subject to some practical constraints. While the logic of an integrated, inter-agency approach in coastal areas is widely accepted, consensus does not necessarily survive the transition from broad statements of principle to detailed consideration of what choices should be made in particular places. While apparent consensus can be achieved at the level of generalities, identifying more specific potential points of disagreement and

working through them, is usually a precondition of real consensus.

To generate real debate, it is usually necessary to put specific options on the table, from which others can select, or agree or disagree with, and in the latter case perhaps be stimulated to propose improvements, compromises or counter-proposals. This type of exercise is more easily undertaken in a draft of an informal Study, than in a draft statutory plan, on which agreement needs to be reached in a relatively short time.

The County Council is a partner in the IMCORE project, was also a partner in COREPOINT, and is represented on the Harbour Management Focus Group. Our participation provides a channel for discussion of the issues raised in this Draft Study, with other bodies involved in developing the Harbour, and in promoting and managing its environmental and recreational functions. While we have sought to take as broad a view as possible, the functions of an organisation inevitably influence its viewpoint, and the response of other organisations with a different functional relation to the Harbour will hopefully correct and balance any institutional bias we may be subject to.

It is also intended that this Draft Study be put on general public display, so that those living, working or regularly visiting the Harbour have an opportunity to express their views and contribute to emerging policies on the future of the Harbour.

While it is accepted that a variety of views will emerge from this process of consultation, not all of them mutually compatible, in the medium term it is hoped that this will create

the conditions for an agreed approach to development of the Harbour, and enjoyment of its environment, amenities and recreational potential.

Next Steps

The next steps will be influenced by feedback, from other public bodies and community organisations, and from businesses and residents in the Harbour area, during the period of public display. We will document this response, and it may become an additional chapter in the final version of this Study.

The response should help identify options for which there is worthwhile support, both generally and from the bodies most likely to have a role in their implementation. The path to implementation will vary from option to option, as regards:

- *sponsorship* – is the option best pursued by a single agency that has the necessary powers, or co-operatively, by several public/private/voluntary bodies working together?
- *research* – does the option require further investigation?
- *formulation* - does it require more precise definition and design?
- *assessment and approval* – many actions would require the relevant form(s) of approval under the Planning Acts, and (given the sensitivity of much of the harbour area) some form(s) of environmental assessment

- *funding* – is significant finance required, is it likely to be available, and if so, from whom?

Where there is a positive response on particular options, particularly ones on which action is possible in the shorter term, this will raise the above questions, and there will be a need to outline what the path to implementation would involve in those cases.

Key to CMRC (Coastal Marine Resources Centre)

Coastal Inventory Data

CMRC_Coastal_Inventory

- Slipway
 - good condition
 - requires repair work
- Shipping
 - docks
 - ferry
 - lifeboat
 - shipyard
- Piers
 - good condition
 - other
 - requires repair work
- Lithology
 - beach/sand shore
 - exposed rocky shore
 - mixed sediment shore
 - other
 - sea cliff_loose<10m
 - sea cliff_loose>10m
 - sea cliff_rock<10m
 - semi expo_rocky shor
 - sheltered rocky shor
- Jetty
 - good condition
 - requires repair work
- Human Access Points
 - good condition
 - requires repair work
- Hard Engineering
 - dump
 - other
 - rock revetments
 - sea wall
 - wall-other



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