



# **Cork Harbour Study**

**Public Draft**

**April 2011**

**Cork Harbour Study  
Public Consultation Draft**

All submissions and observations should be made in writing to:

The Senior Planner,  
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Cork

Cork County Council  
**Forward Planning and Strategic Development**

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## Preface

Cork Harbour is one of the Region's major assets.

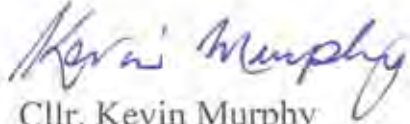
In Cork Harbour, you can trace the history and development of Cork itself. Incremental change over the years has given us what we have today. It is important in our planning horizons that we are mindful of the long term impacts of incremental change on a unique and irreplaceable natural asset such as Cork Harbour.

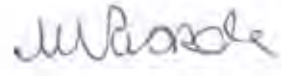
This comprehensive study which has been undertaken by Cork County Council's Forward Planning Section, and led by Dr. Nicholas Mansergh, provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to consider historical trends in development and long term future planning for the Harbour.

It has been clearly recognised by all stakeholders that an integrated approach to managing Cork Harbour is required.

It is hoped that this Study will promote and enable a better integrated view of the challenges and opportunity our Harbour presents.

As Mayor and County Manager, we look forward to the engagement of the public and the many stakeholders in the Harbour in planning how we will manage and promote this unique asset for the Region in future years.

  
Cllr. Kevin Murphy  
Mayor of the County of Cork

  
Martin Riordan  
Cork County Manager



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### **Recurrent Themes:**

1. *Geology and Steep Linear Coastal Settlements (p.21)*
2. *Coastal Transport Corridors (p.23)*
3. *Transport/Spatial Competition in the Coastal Zone (p.45)*
4. *Stations and Clockface Timetables (p.59)*
5. *'Virtual Hills' on Large Urban Sites (p.113)*
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## Outline of Study

The idea behind Coastal Zone Management (CZM) is that land and sea areas close to the shoreline have numerous roles, are subject to a range of different demands and expectations, and are managed by a variety of public agencies. This view has more than usual relevance in Cork Harbour, due to the exceptional strength and variety of roles there. The Port, Cork City, most of its satellite towns, many of the main roads and railways that serve them, and the largest concentrations of pharmaceutical and energy industries in the State are on its shores. It is a major centre for leisure boating and angling, has long, well used shoreline footpaths, and internationally important mudflats used by over-wintering wildfowl. It is surrounded by historic coastal fortifications, and is still the base for the Irish Navy. At present, the majority of land within 0.5 km of its shores is used for agriculture or forestry, though this has been changing quite rapidly. These activities are managed and developed by various public agencies – on a sectoral, functional, heritage or environmental basis – and by the City, County and Town Councils, on an area basis.

The purpose of CZM is to move towards a more integrated approach. This Study is part of a wider process designed to achieve this, and reflects:

- proposals for a Harbour Study and support for a CZM approach in the 2003 and 2009 County Development Plans
- the aims of the 2008 COREPOINT Integrated Management Strategy for Cork Harbour (which involved the main

organisations involved in management of the Harbour) namely:

- (1) *a framework for integrated planning and management*
- (2) *protection of its unique natural environment*
- (3) *protection of its social and cultural assets and identity*
- (4) *promotion of its sustainable economic development*
- (5) *promotion of water based sport and leisure*

- the need to look in more detail at the recreational and tourism role of different parts of the Harbour, within a broader context set by the parallel Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy for South Cork

## The Need for an Integrated Approach

An integrated approach is needed because, in its absence, the various demands for new development around the Harbour will simply be added to each other, and the balance between developed and natural/recreational areas on the Harbour will be lost. Around one-ninth of the land adjoining the Harbour was developed in 1934, and one-third in 2005. Trend projections suggest around two-thirds may be developed by 2055.

The need for an integrated approach is also increased by the physical form of the landscape around Cork Harbour, which makes conflict between activities more likely. The geology of the area produces steep slopes where sandstone ridges meet limestone valleys or Harbour channels. This results in the characteristic steep linear coastal settlements which overlook the Harbour and slope down to it (eg Cobh, Passage, Monkstown, Rochestown, Crosshaven, Aghada, Glounthaune).

It has also encouraged creation of major coastal transport corridors running along the (original) Harbour shoreline, and reclamation of land on the seaward side of these transport corridors, as a means of providing sufficiently large level sites for port related industrial areas (eg Tivoli, Marino Point, Rushbrooke and Passage Docks).

All of this leads to a concentration of transport, access, land use and other demands in tightly defined areas close to the shoreline, increasing the tension between them, and creating a need for coordinated planning or design of such areas.

#### **Survey of Component Areas (Part 2):**

Because of the diversity of the Harbour, and the special importance of some small areas within it, the main part of this Study consists in a survey of it, at a local level. The coastline of the Harbour is 195 km long, and can be seen as a succession of areas, distinguished from each other by differences in character and dominant uses. Part 2 of the Study therefore looks at issues and prospects for some 60 areas of different types around the Harbour, grouped by the individual bodies of water they overlook.

This bottom up, area by area survey, contributes to a broader overall view, as a number of recurrent themes emerge from it, including the connection between geology, landscape, steep linear coastal settlements and coastal transport corridors noted above. In turn, recognition of such common themes can be helpful in suggesting solutions or identifying options for particular places. For example:

**Passage West:** As in most steep linear settlements on the Harbour, most buildings in Passage face in a particular direction, in this case NE. This orientation, and high ground to the SW, limit sunlight reaching buildings in the town centre. The Dockyard, on reclaimed land on the seaward side of the R610, is a barrier between the town centre and the sea. Redevelopment of the Dockyard site could ease both problems, if they were fully recognised. The main street runs NW-SE, and any new streets created at right angles to it will run NE-SW. However, streets and open spaces at an oblique angle to the main street and running approximately E-W, would do more to visually reconnect the main street with the sea. New buildings with south or SW facing elevations and extensive glazed surfaces on them would also reflect sunlight back towards existing buildings facing NE.

**Dunkettle** is where the coastal transport corridors on the west and north sides of the Harbour converge, and resulting tensions between national roads, rail, and access to adjoining development have been evident in a series of planning appeals. More integrated design of works (eg joint rather than separate planning of road improvements and a park and ride station) is suggested, with the needs of pedestrians, public transport and existing or planned land uses being given weight as constraints at the start of the design process, rather than being retrofitted into a layout shaped by roads considerations. If pedestrian facilities are designed in as an integral part of the layout, this would allow the proposed station serve both park and ride users and adjoining development. This is worth achieving, as the number of possible rail stations is limited by timetable considerations.

The area by area survey in Part 2 also identifies numerous local issues and options. These cannot easily be covered in a brief summary such as this one, but a few examples of options and suggestions may illustrate the types of issue which arise:

***Movement along/across the River Lee:*** Historically, the lowest bridge on the Lee has marked a transition, with shipping needs and parallel movements on land dominant downstream, and cross river ones upstream. New bridges in City Docklands will extend the 'upstream' area, and facilitate vehicle, pedestrian and cycle movement there, but may constrain possible city centre–Harbour connections. For instance, bridge clearances may affect attempts to restore Harbour boat services, and reorientation of Kent station towards the quay may close the loop line and prevent restoring rail freight to the Port. In principle, several different balances between movements along and across the river could be struck

***Marino Point:*** This is one of several brownfield waterfront sites with deepwater access. It has bulk handling equipment on site, and the Port of Cork's 2010 Strategic Review saw it as the best site for liquid bulk, as a secondary site (to Ringaskiddy) for dry bulk and general cargo, and as capable of taking on these functions at low initial cost. Alternatively, it - and the area NE of it back to Belvelly - might be developed as a new twin settlement, to be served by a new rail station. This is a long term option, not compatible with the existing SEVESO use on site, and not needed under planning strategies up to 2020.

***Tourism options on the Lower Harbour:*** Increasing the variety of tourist attractions in centres which have some critical mass, like Cobh or (to a lesser extent) Crosshaven, would make it easier to develop a secondary infrastructure of ancillary tourist services. Both could benefit from coordinated promotion of coastal fortifications, based on the historical sequence in which they were built in their current form - Cove Fort (c.1740), Spike (c.1810), Camden (c.1870) - plus forts already open (eg in Kinsale). In the short term, it may only be possible to open part of Spike and Camden, for limited periods, but joint promotion could ensure there was always something open.

**Part 3** brings together overall projections from Part 1 and local perspectives on change from Part 2, to generate grouped options, based on key issues. One such issue is **the protection and fuller use of natural resources and heritage**. These are mostly associated with undeveloped parts of the Harbour, and threatened by rapid further development of greenfield land. The dominant type of new development has been conventional suburban housing, with limited need to be on the Harbour, though industrial and commercial development have also been significant. If this continues, it will affect level, low lying land preferred by such uses disproportionately. This is in short supply, particularly if less suitable areas (eg between Middleton and Carrigwohill, Fota, and Rostellan Wood) are excluded.

However, a trend is not a prediction, and can be modified by appropriate policies, though they need support from market forces and users to succeed. Wider access to the Harbour's amenities will result in more support for their protection, and help balance development pressures. A policy of improving access to the shoreline through coastal footpath/cycle routes could contribute to this, using opportunities on the

1. eastern (Rathcoursey-Saleen-Rostellan),
2. northern (Ashgrove-Belvelly-Fota) and
3. western (City centre-Passage, Monkstown-Ringaskiddy/Carrigaline-Crosshaven)

sides of the Harbour. (c) would fulfil one of the aims of the 2007 Irish Cycle Tourism Strategy, by providing a cycle link between Ringaskiddy Ferryport and the City centre.

Scenic sections of coastline through which these routes pass could be given longer term protection by a Special Area Amenity Order. These can be made for areas of outstanding natural beauty or special recreational value. Several have been made in the Dublin area.

Another set of grouped options explored in Part 3 relates to **promotion of Cork Harbour's competitive advantage**. Cork has potential competitive advantage in production or servicing of marine energy devices, and substantial investment in the research infrastructure for this is taking place. The oil refinery, gas pipeline, generation capacity and converging trunk electricity lines at Whitegate, with associated skills, provide a critical mass of facilities which help attract further activity (eg the recently completed Bord Gais power station). There may also be opportunities for carbon sequestration and (on the plateau to the east) wind power serving individual industries.

The primary source of existing competitive advantage on the Harbour, however, is in the pharmachem/biopharm sectors. While their presence on the Harbour reflects an original expectation of direct linkage to port facilities, at this stage they benefit more from 'soft' competitive advantages: an attractive environment and image, and specialised infrastructure, services and skills available because of the clustering of such industries.

### **Conclusions**

This document is a Study, not a plan. It recognises the variety of organisations involved in the development of the Harbour, and is an exploratory stage, which suggests options and seeks

reactions, which hopefully may lead to a broader consensus. Even in relation to the County Council's own statutory plans, there is a difference in timescale (the Study's horizon is the middle of this century) and focus (on the Harbour area itself, not the wider Cork area). However, with a few exceptions, the options considered are mutually compatible with each other, and not interdependent. This allows individual ideas to be pursued, without necessarily adopting broader packages.

One more definite conclusion is that there is a risk that much of the land around the Harbour could be developed by 2050, and the natural context for development which now exists will be lost. To avoid this, a shift in approach is needed. Up till now, land adjoining the Harbour has been zoned on similar criteria as in other parts of the County. But Harbour-side land is a much more finite resource. The onus of demonstrating a strong need or community benefit should be very much on those proposing development of greenfield land beside the Harbour.

There is wide acceptance of the principle of an integrated approach to coastal management in the Harbour area. To find out what this is going to mean in particular sub areas, it is necessary to go beyond general statements of principle, put some more specific ideas on the table, and seek reactions. In the short term, this may sharpen latent differences of views. In the medium term, it is hoped realistic discussion of specific options and alternatives will create the conditions for a more effective consensus. The purpose of circulating this Draft Study initially to stakeholders represented on the IMCORE Harbour Focus Management Group, and now putting it on public display, is to stimulate the necessary discussion.