



Kilcatherine, Eyeries, County Cork  
<http://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org>

*The Secretary,  
An Bord Pleanála  
Marlborough Street,  
Dublin  
31 December, 2009*

### **Appeal against to Planning Permission**

Planning Ref No.: 09/752

Applicant: Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Date of decision: 03/12/2009

Development: Construction of stand-alone building for Castletownbere lifeboat station comprising crew and lifeboat facilities, souvenir outlet and siting of fuel storage tank for the afloat lifeboat and RNLI standard building signage

Location: on new reclaimed land between the Ferry Slipway and Barrack Point Castletownbere Harbour Co. Cork

Dear Sirs;

While in no way objecting to the nature of this development or questioning the need for a Castletownbere Lifeboat Station, the location of this development is totally at variance with all principles of good planning, with the Cork County Development Plan 2009 and the Bantry Local Area Development Plan 2005, and with the evidence in the Local Authority reports.

### **Summary**

It is intended to locate a lifeboat station and 'souvenir outlet' on reclaimed land at the center of the most congested traffic pattern on the Bearhaven peninsula.

The proposed site is on recently reclaimed land that forms a natural extension of the ill-ordered and unmonitored parking, turning, and transit area that extends from the SuperValue corner across the parking area to the quay edge.

Tel & Fax: 353 (0)27 74771

[admin@friendsoftheirishenvironment.org](mailto:admin@friendsoftheirishenvironment.org)

Friends of the Irish Environment is a company limited by guarantee registered in Ireland.

Registered Office: Allihies Co Cork

Company No. 326985. Directors: Caroline Lewis, Tony Lowes.

This corner is the intersection of the route which brings all traffic from the Cork direction into the town with the route which brings all traffic from Kenmare down from the north. While much of the traffic continues on through the town to the west, many cars from three directions turn into the area proposed for this development which offers the main off-street parking in the town. To do so, they must cross the paths of shoppers with their bags and trollies.

International lorries servicing the fishing industry on the adjacent Mainland Quay vie with children, tourist, shopping trolleys, wheelchairs accessing disable parking, local mini-bus services and those waiting for (or at) the telephone boxes at this notorious location. Local residents – including school buses serving the secondary school - turn up to the quays to avoid the main street, where one side parking continues in spite of intermittent unenforced legal restrictions. Uncontrolled traffic jams are frequent. Right of way lies with the boldest.

There is not even a pedestrian crossing at this location. As the Planner noted [see below] 'There are no safe pedestrian accesses to the proposed facility'.

The car ferry for Bere Island is located directly adjacent to the proposed site. On the other side of the proposed site is quay ladder access for the many small boats servicing the tourist industry's marine activities, the Bere Islanders' own boats, and other mariners calling to the town for provisions.

As the Bantry Area Plan states:

The Mainland Quay is some 304 metres long with a water depth of 4 metres MLWS. The Quay accommodates fish landing berths, an old auction hall (currently leased to private industry), Harbour Offices, BIM Training College, net repair area, harbour roads, open spaces (parking) and services. [Bantry Area Plan. 2005]

It is inexplicable that any development relating to emergency services could even be considered at this location. This is particularly so given the long standing primary goal of relocating all port-based activities on the adjacent Deenish Island, an infill island developed by the State for the marine sector with excellent access for emergency vehicles and no traffic congestion. The state is currently completing a €25 million redevelopment project to further upgrade this large facility.

### **Foreshore License**

We have been unable to document the recent extension of the land into the sea at this location.

It would appear that this infill of the harbor was undertaken by the State. In these circumstances, current legislation appears not to require a Foreshore License.

We have not been able to document any relationship between the developer and the State. Our request for information under the Access to Information on the Environment legislation have not elicited any response, in spite of numerous telephone calls before and after the issue of our formal request. [Attached]

Thus, it appears that no assessment of the proper planning and development of this foreshore infill was undertaken at the appropriate stage. The reclaimed land, if development consent was refused could, however, provide much need additional parking spaces.

## **Development Plan considerations**

### **Views and amenity**

2.1.6. The town is also set in a dramatic and largely unspoilt landscape that is an important asset for the development of secondary, tourist based, economic activity. [Cork Development Plan 2009]

3.3.50. Castletownbere is located on the Beara Peninsula and has a unique landscape setting with an important harbour where fishing and marine related activities are central to its employment function. The town's dramatic and unspoilt landscape is an important asset for the development of its tourism activity. [Cork Development Plan 2009]

The proposal would entirely obscure the marine views of the Harbor and Bere Island from the SuperValue corner and the main off-street parking area available to tourist visiting the town. At the rare quiet times this area, with its stately line of palm trees, offers passive open space and park-like marine views seldom equaled in the seaside towns of West Cork.

The proposed development would be there at ALL times, used and unused, blocking off a quadrant of these marine views. It is particularly reprehensible to propose such an intrusive development on the back of a 'souvenir outlet' when an increasing number of suitable buildings in the town are current available for this class of activity and will continue the economic decline of the area without the support of the local authority planners.

## **Traffic considerations**

2.1.11. There is only one principal road running east-west through the town, giving rise to certain traffic circulation and parking problems. A preliminary indicative route for a future relief road to the north of the town centre has been identified. There is also a need to identify a new car park location and to provide public lighting and footpaths in a number of locations. [Bantry Area Plan. 2005]

### 6.3.3 Other Development Matters

There is a lot of congestion outside of the SuperValu shop; the Council is looking at introducing one-way traffic there and in the town generally. The Department and the Council are working in co-operation on traffic management options. [Cork Development Plan 2009]

### 6.7 Key Matters Raised

There are major infrastructure deficits in the town environs; principally, there are no sewerage treatment facilities, inadequate parking facilities and unacceptable congestion caused by traffic volumes through the town. A submission has proposed the extension of parking facilities at the east end of Castletownbere; a full traffic survey for the town; a re-alignment of the road opposite the supermarket and the installation of a zebra crossing, and the implementation of a one-way system around Castletownbere extending the road along the quay up to the West End. [Cork Development Plan 2009]

More specifically:

The Department has prepared draft Terms of Reference for a Land Use Study of the area which would include waste management, traffic management, security, parking, marina siting, managing the interfaces between the town and harbour etc. [6.3.3 Other Development Matters, Cork Development Plan 2009]

The development would be premature until such time as this Land Use Study is completed to ensure no further congestion at the SuperValu corner and until one-way traffic or other traffic management options have addressed this continually deteriorating and 'unsafe' pedestrian status.

The emergency response time could be substantially lowered if the time of the day coincided with peat traffic congestion. The access by the emergency service could be greatly prolonged due to the inchoate nature of vehicular and pedestrian movements in the immediate area of the development.

This location could not be more poorly chosen to support an emergency service which relies on a saving of minutes for the saving of lives. Multiple ambulances and other emergency vehicles as well as large media presences are routinely part of the maritime disasters of our island nation. It is almost unthinkable to allow such a spectacle at this location, especially when recently redeveloped facilities on adjacent Deenish Island have been provided by the state.

## **Shore side berth on pontoons**

### 6.4.9 Lifeboat

Grant-aid of €1 million was also announced in October 2007 for the provision of a lifeboat shore facility for the RNLI which is due to be constructed on reclaimed foreshore within Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre. The project will provide a shore side berth on pontoons for the Severn class lifeboat currently based at Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre. The vessel will remain afloat on all stages of the tide and enable faster emergency response times. [Cork Development Plan 2009]

The additional of a 'shore side berth on pontoons' to enable the vessel to remain afloat at all tides will further impact on the established activities of the Ferry operating directly adjacent to this proposed development. It will also reduce considerably if not entirely eliminate the traditional access to Castletown from the adjacent pier and steps traditionally (and currently) used for this purpose by residents and visitors alike.

No where in the planning application description is there mention of the 'shore side berth pontoons' in spite of their impact on the traditional activities of the residents and visitors to the area. It is not sufficient to suggest that activities below the HWM are outside the jurisdiction of the local authority if their impact is as significant as the operation of an emergency service – a lesson which should have been hard learned by all parties after the 'Tribunal of Enquiry into the Disaster at Whiddy Island'.

Thus, the Planning Authority failed to consider the impact of the proposed pontoons on the established use of this area by private boats which use this harbour extensively for small landing craft as the ladder at this quay side location is the main mariner access to the town and there is no marina serving Castletownbere.

### **Local Authority Assessment**

The Local Authority in the planning process correctly identified the key issues.

- Whether the proposed site can accommodate the proposal adequately
- Whether adequate parking proposals have been provided to cater for the proposed development.
- Whether the proposed development will compromise the amenities of this town centre focal location.
- Whether the proposed new building having regard to its scale and design fits appropriately into the townscape and its surroundings at this core town centre location.
- Whether the proposed development will compromise the amenities of this town centre focal location.

The Executive Planner noted in her report of 27/08/09 that 'There are no safe pedestrian accesses to the proposed facility'.

This report also notes that 'there will be a conflict between cars exiting the facility and vehicle dis-embarking from the ferry it will be necessary to force exiting vehicles to turn left' suggesting that the designers consult with the Local Authority Western Division Road Design with regard to the proposed Castletownbere Lower Relief Road Scheme as 'The proposed entrance/exit will come into conflict with the proposed roundabout.'

Currently the area is open and permits views out towards Bere Island. As the report noted 'The design of the proposed lifeboat station is not at all traditional and uses a mis match of materials for its external finish.'

The Senior Engineers Report notes that

'This is a site situated close to a junction on the regional road and the access onto the Department of Marine at Castltownbere Pier and Eyeries. Cars associated with the Supermarket across the road park in a chaotic fashion close to the area ie on the road over the Dept of Marine approach.

In an effort to tidy up the situation here the Council have held a number of meetings with ther Dept of Marine who have agreed to ceed lands to the Council to fasciltate a new road and roundabout adjacent to this site. The RLNI site is shown on a layout of the road and roundabout on the attached file.

The new layout is not a short term proposition due to the current funding crisis. So the existing layout will have to operate for some years.'

In one of the most remarkable documents on file, the Area Engineer in a Supplementary Report dated 01.12.09 assessing the full range of further information requested by the Local Authority states that 'Whilst agreement has been reached with road design regarding the proposal in context of the overall Lower Relief Road plan, how can the facility proceed safely until the new road layout has been implemented?'

He also states that 'It is worth noting that the area, including surrounding roads where this proposal is situated is on lands owned and controlled by the Department of Marine and Natural Resources and as such the Lower Relief Plan cannot proceed until full agreement has been reached with this Department. Also the Plan would need funding and Planning Permission to proceed. It is not known how long any of theses processes would take.'

In spite of all of this recognition, his conclusion is that 'Given the unknowns associated with the Lower Relief Plan and the need for this facility I consider it appropriate for this development to proceed.'

## **Conclusion**

The lifeboat shore facility for the RNLI is a badly need development.

The service proposed lies at the heart of Castletownbere's (and its wide spread environs') vibrant and caring community. As the RNLI says, 'Volunteer crew members readily exchange leisure, comfort and sleep for cold, wet and fatigue. Their lifesaving work is essential, often difficult and sometimes dangerous'. They deserve the best on-shore support the planning system can provide.

The local authority would not be supporting this valuable lifeboat service, the Irish state's investment in the area, or the better planning and development of the town by approving this development at this location in advance of the work required to ensure safe movement of traffic and access by pedestrians.

The only part of this proposal which would not benefit by this location is the 'souvenir facility', a commercial element that has no impact on the purpose and function of this life boat station.

The question has to be asked why this facility is not being constructed on Deenish Island – the site of the present temporary accommodations - where access by road, sea or by helicopter would be unrestricted and no further congestion would be created in the town.

Yours, etc.,

Tony Lowes

Enc: Map of area, AIE Request, €220 Appeal Fee, Acknowledgement of Local Authority Objection

The Secretary,  
Foreshore Section  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
Clogheen  
Clonakilty  
Co. Cork  
4 August, 2009

By email only [foreshore@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:foreshore@agriculture.gov.ie)

Request under Access to Information on the Environment Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 133 of 2007)

Dear Sirs

We would be grateful for all records relating to the grant of any foreshore leases and licenses or any applications for same for under Foreshore Acts 1933 to 2005 (or any other legislation) at

**the extended pier area on the Castletownbere harbour mainland ferry and adjacent infill**  
and  
**the recently reclaimed adjacent area which is now subject to an application for development consent by RNLI.**

We attach a map of the location for the sake of clarity.

This request applied to all correspondence and records of any kind relating to these two developments. Please provide a list of all records held, the source and author of these records, the date of these records, the decision to release or refuse, and the reasons given.

We note that developments on State-owned foreshore are subject to the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1989 to 1999, requiring an appraisal of the environmental effects of a development below any threshold must be submitted by the applicant to allow the Minister to decide whether it is likely to have significant effects on the environment. Please ensure this appraisal is included.

Please return the attached read receipt as an acknowledgement or we will use valuable resources of our own and your organisation to ensure that this request is acknowledged and are assured that this request will be dealt with under the terms of this legislation.

Please note that the terms (and fees) of the Freedom of Information Act does not apply to this request which is made under S.I. No. 133 of 2007.

Yours, etc,

Tony Lowes

ATT: Map Castletownbere, Co. Cork

