

Summary of Republic of Ireland Public Consultation

Greenore to Greencastle Ferry Proposal

Frazer Ferries Limited (trading as “Carlingford Ferries”) has been working since 2007 on the entirely private sector funded cross border car ferry proposal from Greenore, Co. Louth to Greencastle, Co. Down. From 2007 through 2011 Carlingford Ferries primarily engaged in a review of previous attempts to begin the Carlingford Lough ferry, including the Blackwell Report (1993), Ferguson McIlveen Scoping Study (1997), PWC Report (1998), Falconer Stewart Appraisal (2000) and Campbell Conway Business Case Analysis (2005). Carlingford Ferries also undertook engineering, financial and navigational due diligence exercises and worked on securing suitable and navigable landing sites on both sides of the Lough. During this time Carlingford Ferries also socialised the prospect with local interested parties. This initial work served the purpose of rationalising why Carlingford Ferries was pursuing the ferry project and the background to previous attempts at moving the project forward.

In September 2009 Carlingford Ferries agreed a legal contract to acquire a prospective landing site at Greencastle, Co. Down. Shortly after securing this they began investigating options at Greenore, Co. Louth. In October 2009 Carlingford Ferries briefed the county manager of Louth County Council on their early stage intentions in relation to establishing a ferry service across Carlingford Lough. Carlingford Ferries undertook to keep the council executive, councillors, residents and other stakeholders updated if and as matters progressed.

Carlingford Ferries noted that previous studies suggested “the Cuttings” area at Greenore would be the most obvious location for a ferry terminal on the southern shore. It was soon obvious from conversations with local knowledgeable members of the community and senior staff at Greenore Port Ltd that both residents of Greenore and Greenore Port Ltd would be particularly important consultees if it was intended to pursue the Cuttings. In early 2010 Carlingford Ferries solicitors confirmed this after an investigation of title to the Cuttings. Their report was that, according to land registry searches, the Cuttings ownership comprised both registered land and unregistered land. The registered ownerships included both Greenore Port Ltd and the Minister for Finance. Carlingford Ferries solicitors were not immediately able to establish who or how many people owned the unregistered land however it was noted following interaction with local knowledgeable parties that the residents of Greenore and the general public had been walking through, camping at and generally enjoying free access through the Cuttings for decades. As such it was clear that the potential existed of a right of way and / or some ownership interest in favour of the general public. Carlingford Ferries were aware at this time also of the plans that Greenore Port Ltd had for an expansion of their Port facilities in the vicinity of the Cuttings area. Public consultation in this regard was on-going at that stage and the proposal was also subject to An Bord Pleanála review and decision.

While the decision was made by Frazer Ferries Ltd to pursue the Cuttings as a potential ferry terminal location it was however considered prudent to consider an alternative location as well in case the Cuttings did not work out.

It was obvious that Greenore Port controlled a considerable part of the lands in Greenore. Three alternatives landing sites were investigated. The first of these was Greenore Point within the confines of Greenore Port, second was another location further inside the confines of the Port and third was an area behind the Panpak factory. Greenore Port Ltd told Carlingford Ferries that a location within the confines of the Port would not be possible for security reasons. The area behind the Panpak factory would not be viable either because of the lack of water at low tide. This just left Greenore Point as a potential location. Carlingford Ferries engineers and maritime advisors advised that Greenore Point would be viable from navigational and engineering perspectives. It was outlined that Greenore Port Ltd's interest in Greenore Point was by way of a long leasehold interest from the Minister for the Marine & Natural Resources. Greenore Port Ltd agreed to rent the area to Frazer Ferries Ltd subject to the proviso that ferry traffic would enter Greenore Point via the existing public car park adjacent to the Point and for security reasons no traffic would enter through the existing gates of the Port. In January 2011 Frazer Ferries Ltd and Greenore Port Ltd signed a legal option agreement in respect of Greenore Point.

While the foregoing agreement was being negotiated in respect of Greenore Point, Carlingford Ferries and their solicitors continued to investigate the possibility of locating at the Cuttings. RPS, Carlingford Ferries engineers produced drawings of the potential terminal at the Cuttings and various potential access routes that would not compromise safety. It was the considered view of Frazer Ferries' solicitors that the Cuttings would prove a difficult area to secure. It was agreed however to leave this option open and to engage constructively with interested parties but at the same time the other aspects of the ferry project should be moved forward in the knowledge that a potentially suitable location at Greenore Point was secured.

In May 2011 Michael Curran, Director of Services at Louth Local Authorities was briefed. Michael explained that the Memorandum of Understanding between Louth Co Co and Newry & Mourne District Council had recently been signed in Brussels and increased collaboration was hoped for as a result. The positive impact on the Cooley / Mournes region in terms of tourism and jobs was discussed if the ferry materialised copperfastened by the many letters of support Frazer Ferries had received from local businesses. Michael in turn arranged a meeting with Sinead Mullen, Senior Executive Planner and Gerry Kelly, Senior Engineer at Louth Co Co. This meeting happened on 1st June 2011 on-site at Greenore Point. Following subsequent correspondences with residents of Greenore, local Councillors and employees of Louth Co Co it was established that there could be a major problem with Greenore Point. This problem was the proposal that traffic for the ferry would enter and exit through the existing public car park adjacent to Greenore Point. Serious concerns were raised about this. It was noted that the public car park was an extremely important resource that the public use and it could not be interfered with. Carlingford Ferries subsequently spoke with Terry King of Greenore Port Ltd and inquired on the prospect of the Port allowing ferry traffic enter the Point via the existing gates of the Port. Again, for security reasons this proposal was not considered viable. As other aspects of the ferry project moved forward, this matter remained outstanding.

Frazer Ferries Ltd felt it was important to brief the main tourism agencies on the ferry project as their views may have an impact on local opinion as regards the purpose and benefits of the ferry. In June 2011 Frazer Ferries briefed Mark Henry, Director of Central Marketing at Tourism Ireland. Mark

enthusiastically welcomed the proposed ferry and reflected in writing on the opportunities it would offer in terms of employment and for tourism development and that it would enhance accessibility into the Mourne / Cooley. Also in June 2011 Kevin Moriarty, Head of Operations at Failte Ireland was briefed and Kevin stated in writing that in his view a ferry crossing across the mouth of Carlingford Lough would enhance and improve the destination area of Carlingford, Cooley and the Mourne for a range of tourists from walking, hiking, sightseeing and heritage interest.

In September 2011 following direction from Louth Co Co and NI Planning Service a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment began, to investigate the impact the ferry may have from the point of view of ecology, water, air, heritage, human beings, seals, birds, bats etc.

On 25th January 2012 Frazer Ferries updated local TD's, Senators and Secretarial representatives from the Departments of Finance, Tourism and Transport at an Oireachtas briefing in Leinster House.

On 23rd February 2012 Frazer Ferries met the residents of Greenore at an open evening in the Greenore Co-Op. This was a very well attended meeting that started at 7pm. The then current drawings were presented to the meeting and numerous questions were answered. The drawings of Greenore Point were presented. Significant un-resolved issues still remained over access via the public car park. Also in February 2012 Frazer Ferries briefed the local councillors within Louth County Council.

On 24th February 2012 Frazer Ferries launched the "Visit Carlingford-Mourne" iPhone App at Bagnaels Castle, Newry. The function was attended by locals, business people and political representatives from both sides of Carlingford Lough and attracted significant interest from local newspapers. It was outlined that Frazer Ferries had commissioned the development of the App as an important tool for the tourism promotion of both sides of Carlingford Lough from the Boyne Valley to Newcastle, Co. Down.

The months that followed primarily consisted of continued Environmental Impact Assessment work. Engagement with stakeholders continued but was more sporadic as Frazer Ferries had no material updates until the EIA came towards conclusion.

On 5th Oct 2012 Frazer Ferries met with Greenore Residents & Tidy Towns Committee and explained the project's then current status. At that meeting it was confirmed that Frazer Ferries would investigate the Cuttings further. The problem of disparate ownership interests, claimed ownership interests and / or other rights to that area was outlined but Frazer Ferries indicated it was willing to engage on a one to one basis with particular individuals who claimed rights over parts of the Cuttings. At that meeting names were given of people who should be particularly contacted and who may have specific rights over parts of the Cuttings.

Carlingford Ferries met with the Greenore – Greencastle Community Development Ltd on 15th Oct 2012 in Greenore. The project was again discussed and up to date drawings and elevations shared. Also in attendance were members of the Greencastle Boat Club who had questions and concerns about their moorings if the ferry materialised. Frazer Ferries has since taken on board these concerns and agreed a ferry route that would be east of Green Island thus avoiding most moorings.

On 10th January 2013 Frazer Ferries met a number of individuals collectively who wished to discuss certain rights that they may have over parts of the Cuttings. The individuals did not assert specific rights at that meeting but did request that Carlingford Ferries meet with them individually to further discuss each individual's position. Following this meeting Carlingford Ferries formed the strong view that finding a solution to the potential issues raised, in addition to agreeing access and rights at the Cuttings with both the Minister for Finance, Greenore Port Ltd and the general public would be onerous and would take considerable time as multiple issues would have to be resolved. On 20th February 2013 the board of Frazer Ferries decided reluctantly to drop the Cuttings as a potential landing site for the ferry. The Greenore Residents and Tidy Town Committee and the Greenore-Greencastle Community Development were advised of the decision.

Frazer Ferries held a further open evening on May 25th, 2013 in the Greenore Co-Op. Final planning submission drawings and elevations were on display. The history of the project was again outlined as was the work done in terms of deciding on Greenore Point as the most achievable landing site. Specifically outlined at that meeting was that agreement had been reached with Greenore Port Ltd to move the main gates of the Port back by 15 meters in order to allow ferry traffic enter and exit Greenore Point without traversing the public car park and without compromising the Port's security in anyway. There was a general approval of the efforts made to find an alternative means of entering and exiting Greenore Point. Subsequent to this Carlingford Ferries shared with the Greenore Residents and Tidy Towns Committee and Greenore-Greencastle Community Development the photomontages that it had developed to show from particular vantage points how the ferry terminal development would look if and when completed.

Frazer Ferries engaged in an open and productive manner with all interested parties throughout the process in an effort to keep interested parties up dated. It made best efforts at all times to engage constructively. All views expressed were taken into account. Frazer Ferries hopes that the Greenore and wider Cooley communities will support and benefit from the Carlingford Lough ferry.

Paul O'Sullivan
Director, Carlingford Ferries
8th June 2013