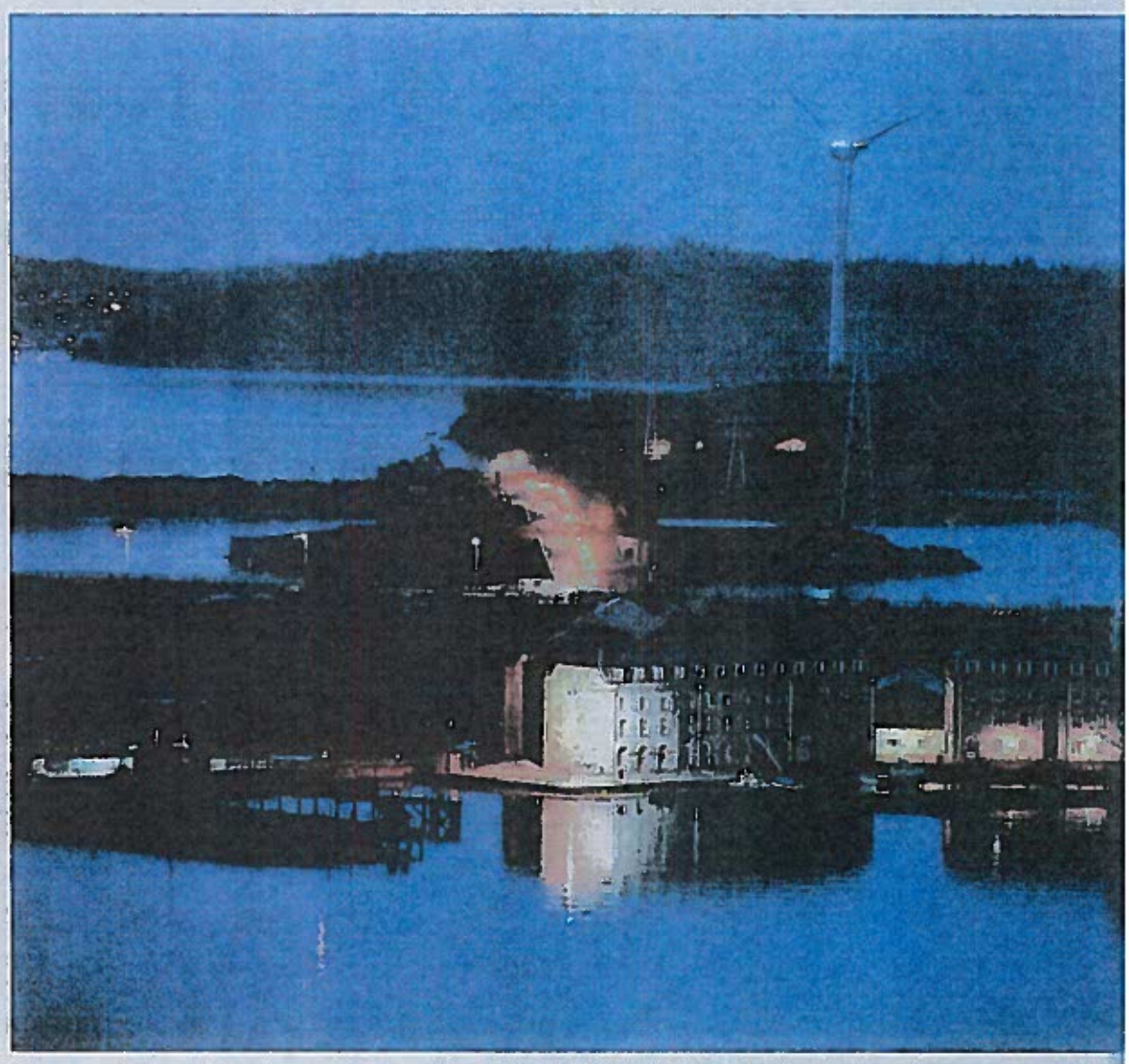
CORK HARBOUR: TURNING THE TIDE

Harbouring ambitious plans for the future



€200m in investments and up to 4,000 marine-centred jobs and new tourism attractions are in Cork Harbour's pipeline, reports Tommy Barker

A TIDE is turning for Cork's harbour, and for the better. After decades of neglect, and dirty industry, then thousands of job losses in heavy industries such as Irish Steel, IFI and Verolme, it's cleaning up its act, finally.

There's a surge of people renewing its waterways, wildlife, walks and linkages, and amenities. It's being reclaimed by its residents, and offered up to visitors.

To replace many of those harbour jobs lost in the 1980s and 1990s, there is up to €200m in development projects [illegible] planned [illegible] Port of Cork to Ringaskiddy) in the next few years. The harbour is poised to take on a more democratic, embracing role in the life of Cork's residents and to play an increasing role in Irish tourism, via cruise ships, waterfront walks, cycle-ways and multi-targeted visitor attractions in Spike Island, Camden Fort, Haulbowline and Cobh, along with investment in marine transport, safety training, and maritime and energy research.

An emerging research cluster at Ringaskiddy, around the National Maritime College and dynamic research centre, IMERC, will become a nucleus for employment of 3,000 to 4,000 next to Haulbowline, where the Irish Naval Service employs 1,050 personnel, while the traditional pharma sector in the greater harbour still employs 4,000, and is more again indirectly.

The potential of Cork Harbour was strongly signalled in this year's uplift Chamber of Commerce address by its president Gillian Keating. Fifteen minutes of her 40-minute delivery to 1,000 dinner guests extolled the positive ripples spreading out from Ringaskiddy, driven by local research and entrepreneurial enterprise, into renewable energy.

The wind comes into the sails of renewal in the year when a €40m clean-up of the heavily contaminated old steel plant and waste tip on Haulbowline, finally gets underway, too — more than a decade after the closure of the ISPAT Irish Steel plant.

Adding to simple as cleaning up River Lee's water quality, which was only legally uplifted in 2008 (there's still treatment work to do in the lower harbour) was the catalyst in returning the waterways to as citizenry as a place to enjoy, to float on, and even to bathe in, or jump out around,

€200m

The amount of money (not including the planned €100m relocation of Port of Cork to Ringaskiddy) being invested in Cork Habour over the next few years.

with calls now for many more access points, such as slipways, pontoons and marinas.

The outcome now is that Cork no longer turns its back to the water. Increasingly, with the benefit of hindsight, it's only in the past decade that the city and surrounds stopped using the harbour as a giant toilet bowl — flushing 60m litres of untreated sewage daily into the water, where foul waste was neither out of sight nor out of mind, nor even out of smell.

The River Lee, Lough Mahon and the harbour beyond bobbed with waste, and their waters ran green, brown and foul from the few remaining slaughterhouses, and, as the 'Boys of Fairhill' song rightly judged, "the smell from Patrick's Bridge is wicked."

It took an EU wastewater directive, back in 1991, and a subsequent €100m investment, plus majority centre disruption, spread over seven-plus years of digging and 22 engineering contracts, to reverse two centuries of reckless plunder and daily despoliation.

In the end, by the start of the 21st century, Cork got at least 20th-century pumping stations and treatment plants to cater for an anticipated greater city and harbour population of 300,000 people.

It meant 13 kilometres of new city sewers and 11kms of new culverts, in place of rudimentary sewers from the time the old water channels were built over in the 18th century.

Most importantly, it got a cleaner harbour, one that's increasingly home to diverse sports and amenity pastimes, and kinder to people, birds, fish, fauna and flora, too.

The main drainage was finished in 2004/05, just in time for Cork's European City of Culture year, 2005, and that year's cultural celebrations were kick-started with a fireworks display from the river, marking a point when the tide began to flow in favour of river enjoyment, promenading once more, new walks now linking up from the Lee Fields, Marlyke to the Marina, to Rochestown and Passage West) and proper sanitation. In a sense, it was when the river was given back to the people.

An eloquent 2009 submission to have Cork harbour nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (see www.corkharbour.ie) notes the port's centuries-long history of provisioning ships, from the late 18th century, and also picked up on its emergence as a place for pleasure activities, with the world's oldest yacht club, founded in 1720, on Haulbowline, with a direct lineage today to the Royal Cork Yacht Club (RCYC) in Crosshaven.

Not too far off a 300th anniversary, "the harbour's still the lifeblood of Cork," says RCYC manager, Gavin Deane, who adds that long ink has attracted thousands of visitors to the harbour during decades.

Water-borne activities in and out of the harbour, inlets and along the Lee, are enjoying a renaissance today, from RIB visits and dolphin watching to kayaks and cruisers doing circumnavigation of the city's central island, the Methcal Marapude to bridges, portage, and weirs to navigate is jauntily called (Turkunnaya tion.

The river's water-quality clean up saw the first Rás Mór, or Ocean to City race, on the Lee getting afloat in 2005, rowing from the mouth of the harbour to the city centre by City Hall, some 15 nautical miles of arm muscle-tapping

TOMORROW

HIGH SEAS: As the government announces a new programme of navy recruitment, Tommy Barker looks at recent additions to the fleet and ambitious plans for the future

marathon rowing, paddling and kayaking.

It was modelled along the lines of London's Great River Race, a 21-mile river marathon for traditional boats organised by the inspirational and inclusive Methcal Mara and Naomhóga Chorcaí.

By the Rás's tenth anniversary last year, it had hundreds on participants and smidgy craft and crews in the day's civic event with thousands of spectators lin-

Green giants blowing the winds of change

by Tommy Barker

Twice as tall as Ireland's tallest building – Cork's 17-storey Elysian tower – and now also set to be taller than Dublin's needle like Spire, are each of Cork's Harbour's not emerging, elevated wind turbine hubs and spinning vanes all in the vicinity of Ringaskiddy.

Costing €40m for four, and with three set to be operational by May of this year, they are quickly making a mark on Cork harbour's skyline and scenic panoramas, with site works only having started last September.

These wind turbines are being built to serve vital harbour industry, and will save the four spoilboring pharma healthcare companies an estimated 30% of their energy bills each year as well as cutting damaging CO2 emissions.

The giant turbines measure 99m to the hubs; from those hub heights, the radius of the enormous whirring blades or vanes will add a further 49.5m to bring them at full stretch to a height of 149m, or 490ft above the ground.

That considerable height is just shy of the 150ft Aghada chimney stack eastward across Cork harbour, and which is itself a landmark at 152m. By contrast, Dublin's Spire thought terms to soar into infinity given its slender profile — is a 'mere' 121m, or 396ft.

Ireland's tallest building, the Elysian in Cork city centre, is 71m, with a further 10m added in a decorative pinnacle, so the 149m harbour vanes will top out at twice the height of the Elysian tower itself.

Also tall in Cork harbour terms is the spire of St Colman's Cathedral, Cobh: it soars to 91m, and the cathedral is built about 25m above sea level. Thus, the wind turbines' vanes will reach far higher to the skies than the tip of the cathedral, a neo-Gothic beacon in the harbour, completed in 1915, the year Lusitania's victims and survivors forged a fatal link with Cork and Queenstown.

Yet, in national height terms, the four vanes being built by DePuy Synthes, GSK, Janssen Biologics and Novartis (Novartis has put its own turbine on temporary hold are themselves overshadowed by the chimneys at Moneypoint in Clare, at 218m, or 714ft, and by Dublin's twin Poolbeg chimneys at 207m, or 682ft. Ireland's tallest structure is a radio mast in Tullamore, at 298m or 998ft, only marginally outclassed by a 1,000ft high transmission mast in Strabane, Northern Ireland.

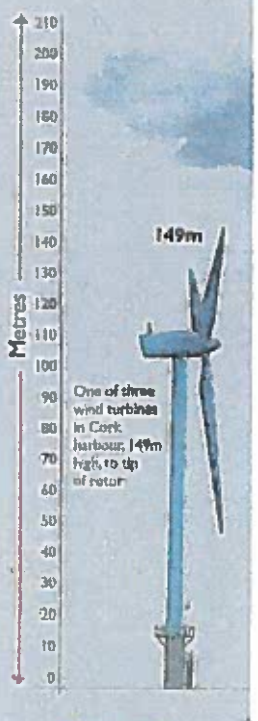
One of the new wind turbines in Cork harbour towers over Currabinny, Ringaskiddy and Haulbowline in the early morning light.

Picture: Denis Scannell

The Cork harbour companies' investment in the four 3mw turbines was put at €30m at the time of the planning grant, and while permission was sought for six, just four got permission via An Bord Pleanála, and three will be commissioned by early May. Broadly similar in height to the wind turbines erected in the pioneering Arklow Bank power farm in the Irish Sea a decade ago, their installation means removing 22,000 tonnes of CO2 from the atmosphere each year. Combating CO2 emissions which contribute to climate change and to rising sea levels is a topic close to the hearts and drenched soles of recently flooded harbour and city residents.

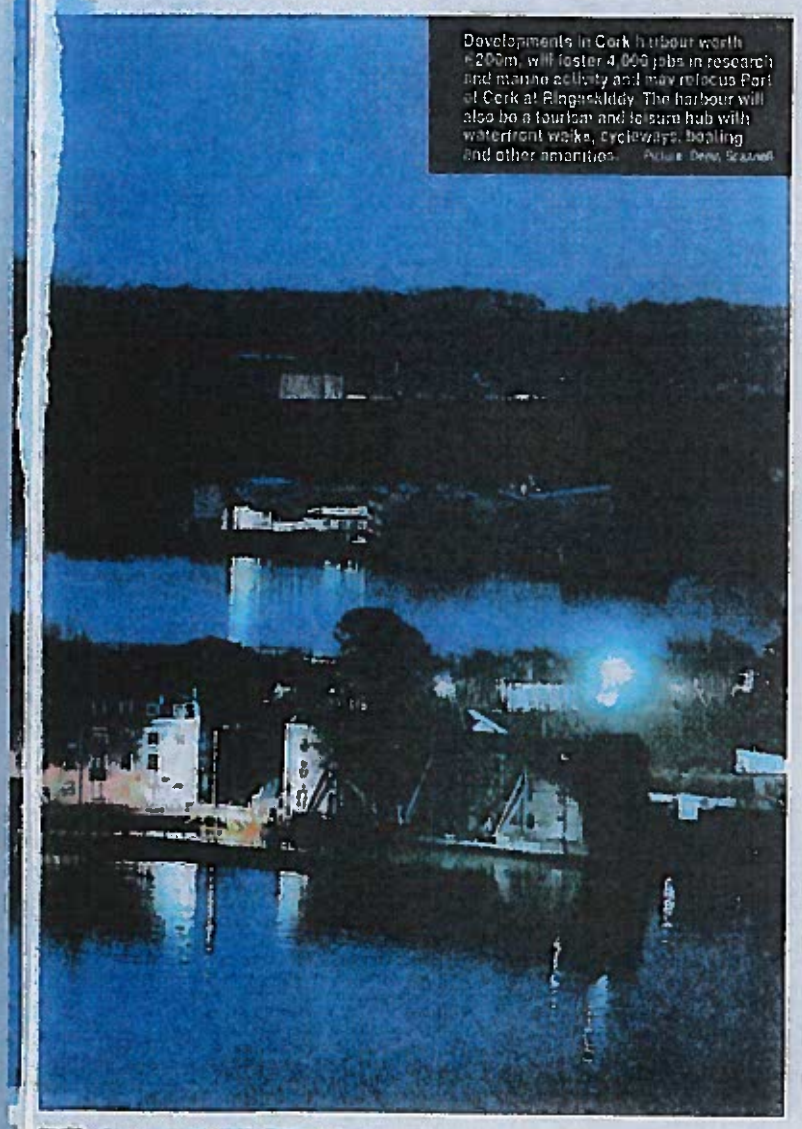
While the turbines' lofty size and visual impact is divisive for some, their imminent arrival was welcomed by environmental lobby group CHASH, who noted "any move towards clean sustainable energy which does not add to the pollution in Cork harbour has to been seen in a positive light."

Pharma plants and energy-hungry industries, the Port of Cork and Marine Minister Simon Coveney have all welcomed the turbines as tangible evidence Cork Harbour is progressive and open to alternative energy options. They will also serve as a calling card for IMERC, the Irish Maritime and Energy Resource Cluster, based in Ringaskiddy and aiming to bring 3,000-4,000 marine and energy-related research and innovation jobs to Cork harbour.



One of three wind turbines in Cork harbour, 149m high, to tip of rotor

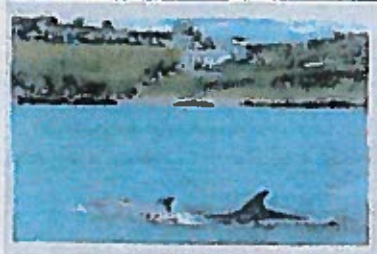
Submission 62 - Appendix 01



Developments in Cork harbour worth €200m will foster 4,000 jobs in research and marine activity and may refocus Port of Cork at Ringaskiddy. The harbour will also be a tourism and leisure hub with waterfront walks, cycleways, boating and other amenities. Picture: Denis Scannell

A raft of ideas to capitalise on the 'blue economy'

As a Harbour resident and a boating enthusiast, the Marine Minister Simon Coveney is well-placed to oversee the progress in plans being made for his maritime backdoor, he tells Tommy Barker



From left, the Novartis Ringaskiddy Ltd Dragon Boat team participating in the Ocean to City boat race; yachts racing past Cobh; dolphins swimming off Church Bay in the harbour; and swimmers approaching St Vincent's Bridge (with Shandon in background) during the Lee Swim.

ON a single square kilometre of Cork, €150m to €200m will be expended over the next five years, as its harbour is poised for one of its biggest investments in 100 years, says Agriculture Minister, Simon Coveney.

Facilities are being put in place for thousands of private sector marine, research and energy-related jobs and tourism attractions. The critical mass of investment will include the cleaning up of an embarrassing blot on the landscape on Haulbowline Island, at a cost of €40m, in the midst of one of the world's largest natural harbours.

"2013 is the 'move year' for Cork and 2015 will be the 'move year' for Cobh and Haulbowline, with projects worth tens of millions already coming out of the ground," says Minister Coveney, who is a Cork harbour resident, a sailor, and a passionate believer in the maritime. He is enthusiastic about the 'blue economy,' with its vast potential, of up to €6bn a year nationally by 2020, from €2.6bn today, as well as the scope in Cork harbour.

"Cork's harbour is going to be transformed in the next five years, and we'll see a lot of that happening in the next two years," he says. But has come about thanks to a "a broad group of like-minded people all with a shared vision, one that will be delivered, about making Cork the maritime hub of Ireland and, arguably, of Europe."

There is a raft of initiatives in the public and private sectors, including the 1,056-person naval service, as it broadens its remit into education and maritime, energy and telecoms research; the maritime college, MTC, which trains 1,500 people a year; the catalyst of emerging research clusters like IMERC, the Irish Marine Energy Research Centre, involving UCC, the Navy and CIT.

Plus, there's the €15m, 50,000 sq ft Beaufort Research laboratory, now under construction which will hold the world's largest ocean energy research tank, along with cluster incubation units at Ringaskiddy planned and seed-funded via IMERC, which can support thousands of jobs. "Confirmation of significant, new private sector investment and jobs is imminent, with marine companies wanting to locate onto that site and it will become a big employer in my view," he says.

Many institutions and fledgling companies are clustering in the Ringaskiddy area and Minister Coveney compares the potential to the jobs already in situ at the likes of the IT and financial clipper in Cork's City Gate and Mahon industrial where thousands of jobs have come from the likes of EMC, Dell, SolarWinds, etc.

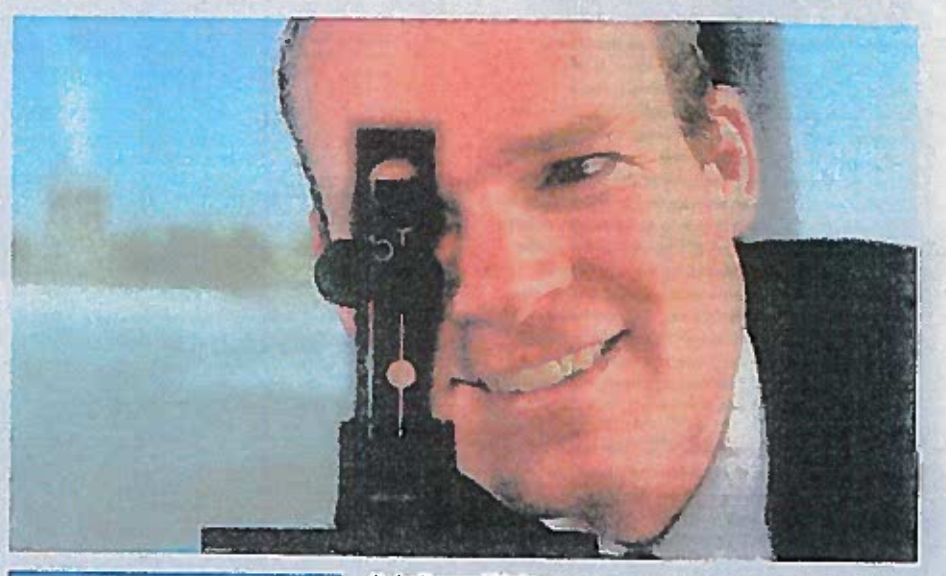
"We'll see that sort of cluster emerge around IMERC in maritime research and innovation, in marine engineering, in ocean energy," says Coveney. A research collaboration, called MaREI, between six Irish colleges, has been funded to the tune of €30m by Science Foundation Ireland. It will involve 88 private companies, with significant State investment. It's designed to attract top PhD students and researchers from Europe and further afield, and "just as Cork is seen as a centre for pharmaand biopharma, the top companies in the world in these marine sectors will want to come here, too."

There are implications as to how open Cork harbour is to progress. Minister Coveney says such as the three enormous wind turbines being built at a cost of €30m to help existing pharma firms cut energy costs. "Some people don't like them, others love them and I think they're fantastic. It's a dramatic change, it says 'here you see a place that's modern and open to progress' where you can build significant infrastructure and where planning can be facilitated and which people will accept it if done properly," he says.

The pre-Christmas planning application for Haulbowline's transformation, and for an EPA licence, hasn't had a single objection. "Before, we had thousands signing petitions and on marches to demand change and investment. That now is an extraordinary endorsement of what people want done."

> "I'm interested in a three-year vision [for Cork Harbour] ... I've a short window here as Minister and I'm happy to be judged on this in a few years' time. In the past, people have over-promised. But this is all do-able."

The €40m spend, once given the green light and the EPA licence will tackle the unsightly — and contaminated — eat up in what's basically a porous landfill site, the Minister says, as well as the south tip the grave cliffs to environmental campaigner Tom Hawes for pushing the hail island remediation agenda and remnants of the IMAT steel plant, with trials also going on repairing the existing short dockyard from Ringaskiddy to Haulbowline. It's the Rocky Island consortium. "It's hoped work will start later this year, but it will be this time next year before we will witness the heavy work and the physical transformation of that site," he says.



Agriculture and Marine Minister Simon Coveney in the simulation room at the National Maritime College, Ringaskiddy, Co Cork; the Annie Moore emigration sculpture in Cobh; right, Minister Coveney with his daughter, Beth, at Fort Camden, in Crosshaven, following a charity cycle.
Pictures: Dan Linehan and Denis Scannell

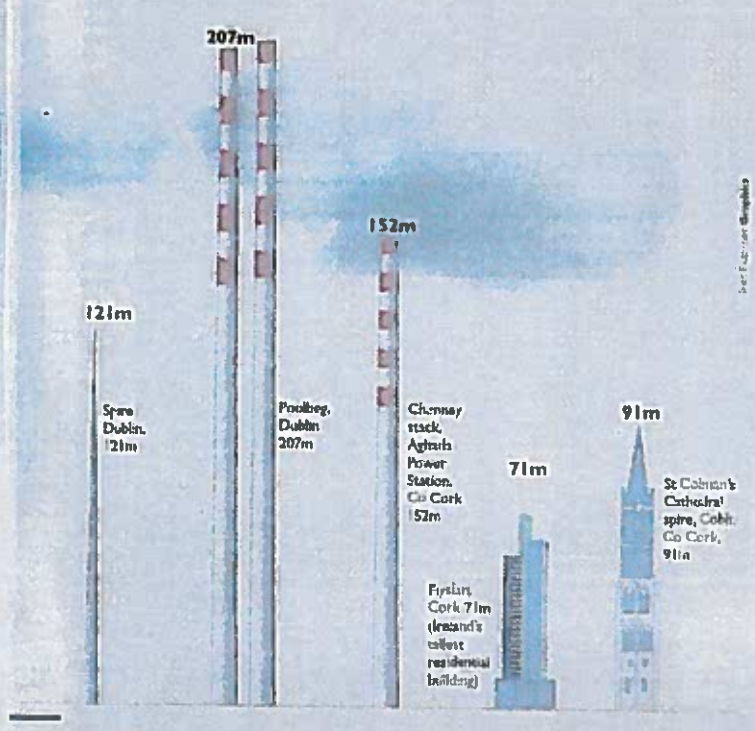
Once membranes are in place and dangerous material removed from the Haulbowline site, it will be sealed with another membrane, grassed and landscaped. "When you consider what people in Cobh have had to put up with, the least we can do is landscape it properly," Minister Coveney says. It's due to have a public plaza, walks, planting and a cross-country running track. A number of navy facilities will be opened to the public and tourists, as well as docks. There's already a basic naval museum there, plus a Martello tower — still the 3rd degree news from the island's Navy signal station are all-encompassing — a whole new vista. Then, Spike comes into view.

Spike, an island with as many past as a crook has aliases, from monastic pieties to military fort, an involuntary emigration holding point and harbour of an Empire, has opened up to tourism on a small scale. It has €4m investment, from Failte Ireland and from Cork County Council.

It's hoped to ultimately have a pedestrian bridge linking it to Haulbowline, but the real visit experience will be by boat, says Coveney, paying tribute to the retired county manager Maurice Riordan for taking Failte Ireland, Fort Camden, Fort in Crosshaven and Spike into local authority ownership. Selling Cork, for tourism and jobs, means creating an identity and brand, and Failte Ireland has recently positioned Cork's 'story' as that of a city rich in food history, on a river, linking to the harbour and sea and bee ports.

Part of the Minister's marine brief and personal vision is to also connect the city to the sea, via the harbour, by creating nodes for easy boat access, from the city centre and Blackrock village. "one of the great underdeveloped parts of the city." The nodes should include Passage West, Monkstown, Spike, Cobh and Aghada, where a new pontoon has recently been installed as counterbalance to well serviced Crosshaven — a town close to Coveney's heart "I was on boats long before I could walk," says the minister, who, aged 29, was on a round-the-world sailing fundraiser for Chernobyl Ireland when he came back to Cork, on the death of his father, Hugh, and entered politics in 1998.

Now that he's a father himself, of three young daughters, what transformation would he like them to witness in Cork harbour, in, say, ten years' time? "Well, I hope they won't have to wait for ten years, that's the first thing. It's easy to talk about a ten- or even 20-year vision. I'm interested in a three-year vision in order to make that real, you need momentum and now there's a group of people able to deliver. I've a short window here as Minister, and I'm happy to be judged on this in a few years' time. In the past, people have over-promised. But this is all real, all do-able."



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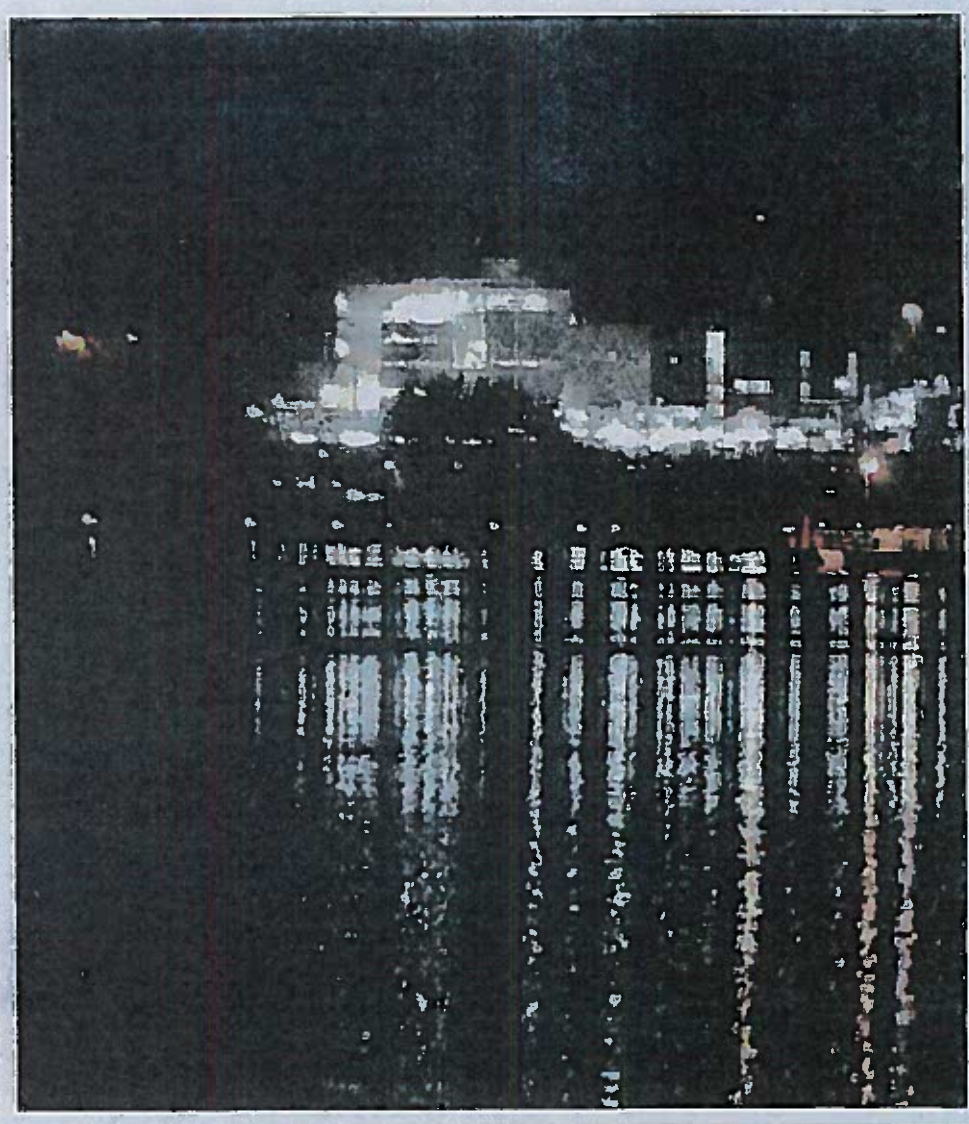
CORK HARBOUR: TURNING THE TIDE

A bustling axis where hope and history ebb and swell



The centuries-old port today accounts for 20pc of all Irish imports and exports. It is also a major employment hub, reports Tommy Barker

INDUSTRY

CORK harbour is on the cusp of change again. There's a more diverse range of uses than ever before beckoning in the harbour with major tourism, leisure, research, employment and port projects for Ringaskiddy, along with Haulbowline and Spike Islands, set to alter the harbour's axis of activity and employment modes for decades and generations to come.

Major harbour presence, the Port of Cork, is currently looking at making the case for an €80m phase port activity, relocation and consolidation at Ringaskiddy, in the lower harbour.

The plans, after 2013's non-statutory public consultations and three February 2014 harbour public information meetings and 11 demonstrations, go to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) once more, next month, to allow for its envisaged strategic growth and evolution. There are set to be much global shipping changes and to be phased in over the next 20 years.

It is the Port's second, and smaller, bite at the cherry of relocating downstream from its current constrained city docks and Tivoli bases, with a major Ro-Ro and container facility at the heart of its Ringaskiddy plans, to be served by a 14m-metre deep water berth extension, and a second new 200-metre berth. Previously, the Port of Cork had far more ambitious and costly plans, up to €300m, rejected by the planning body back in 2008.

An Bord Pleanála cited infrastructure shortcomings at the single line N28 main route to Ringaskiddy, at pinchpoints like Shanbally and Shannon Park Roundabout by Carrigaline, as well as at the Dunkettle interchange. Jack Lynch tunnel, along with the lack of a rail link for cargo distribution.

Since that 2008 planning rejection shock, bodies such as the Port, IDA, Chamber of Commerce, calling it "a catalyst project that deserves priority status", and lobbyists have been steadily lobbying for an upgrade to dual-line standard of the N28, from Ringaskiddy to the south ring road at Bloomfield interchange by Rochestown. It's likely to cost several hundred million euro, a precise route is not yet finalised and CPO and EIS activities have been put "on hold" by the NRA, pending funding. Sources say it could be 2020 before it is ready, around the time the Port of Cork's first phase new berth could be in operation. In the interim Cork County Council has come up with adjustments to junctions on the N28. As a cost comparison, the two N40 Cork flyovers at Wilton and Dunkin Road were completed July last year, at a cost of €66m.

9 million

Despite the straitened economy, port activity in Cork is on the rise again, with more than nine million tonnes trafficked last year, and with turnover for 2012 of about €22 million.

Behind the scenes and albeit at a glacial pace, Port of Cork has been addressing the rail access issue raised by the Bord by negotiating a joint industry purchase of the 46-acre strategic site of the former NET IFI plant at Marino Point, on the Cork-Cobh rail line, likely to sell for around €8m.

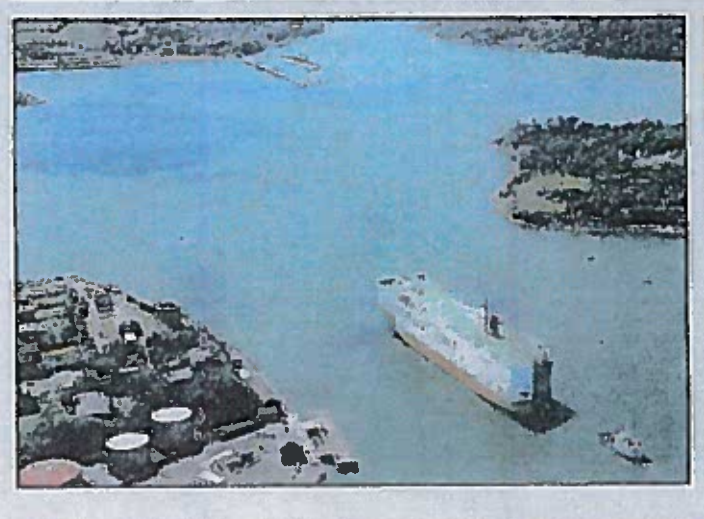
Last month's three public meetings once more raised Ringaskiddy residents and other harbour communities' concerns of such further harbour development, citing increased noise, dirt, light pollution, ecological impact and other factors, while campaigners like Monkstown resident Don Teegan of the Cork Harbour Environmental Protection Association claims "Ringaskiddy was the wrong location in 2008 and it remains the wrong location in 2014." CHEPA argues that the right location for a container terminal is on the north side of the River Lee, nearer M8 and N25 routes and the North Ring, and with proximity to freight and rail lines.

For its part, Port of Cork's Commercial Manager Michael McCarthy says the increasing size and draught of ships dictates the necessity to move to its land bank at Ringaskiddy, and adds their move will free up their current sites in the city and at Tivoli which had a rail link for higher end uses.

However, the economic downturn has dashed dockland redevelopment site values near the city and Tivoli, dampened Celtic Tiger era and planners' enthusiasm for thousands of apartments on the quays. It has also witnessed Port of Cork's own business activity slacken, although it can be argued the Port's levels of import export activity will pick up again faster than appetite for grandiose docks regeneration schemes like the ill-fated Howard Holdings' €1bn, 'Atlantic Quarter' project.

In fact, despite the straitened economy in the past seven years, port activity in Cork is on the rise again, with over nine million tonnes trafficked last year, and with turnover for 2012 about €22m, down from a record of €25m in 2007, when it handled over 10m tonnes of goods. The Government's Food Harvest 2020 plan, seeking to boost Irish food exports by 42% by the end of the decade, will see a rise in exports through ports, as well as imports of raw materials like animal feed and fertilisers.

Traditionally, Cork is Ireland's second busiest port, after Dublin, handling almost 20% of Irish imports and exports, 90% of such Irish trade (by volume) comes by ship via ports like Cork, Dublin, Waterford, Foynes and Galway. Cork's a Tier 1 Irish port, and secured European TEN-T recognition and funding. In submission to An Bord Pleanála next month for strategic development comes just as Dublin Port Company applies to the Bord for its own €200m expansion at Alexandra Basin. ABP rejected Dublin Port's plans to infill 21 hectares in Dublin Bay in 2009; ironically Dublin now looks back upriver to its city quays, as Cork Port looks downriver to its harbour.



On the broader front, Cork has been a working port and harbour, and a strategic defensive hub, for centuries, and it has been one of Ireland's major employment hubs since the early 1800s. Traditional, heavy, and sometimes dirty industries have waned in recent years, with the likes of the closure of Irish Steel in Haulbowline, ship-building at Verolme – and IFI in Marino Point, now thanks to Port of Cork's sight.

It still has major and strategic significance in energy generation, shipping, refining and, more importantly, pharmaceuticals.

It is now building to old

The twinkling lights at night on calm waters belie the intense, non-stop activity of Cork Harbour, with its big pharma cluster, new energy hub and deep harbour berth. Picture: Denis Scannell

Harbour view: from left: a huge Grimaldi Lines car transporter in the inner harbour as she makes her way towards the Ringaskiddy Ferry Terminal. The former NET/IFI site opposite Passage West at Marino Point which may play a crucial role in the relocation of the Port of Cork to Ringaskiddy; an architect's model for the jettisoned €1bn docklands development named 'Atlantic Quarter'; pipes leading down to the jetty at Whitegate Oil Refinery.

Vibrancy of port makes good TV

Previously unseen perspectives and views of Cork harbour's life will feature in a fly-on-the-wall TV3 series, the directors tell Tommy Barker

A fly-on-the-wall TV series, as well as the scent-ability of a drug-sniffer dog called Max, will bring fresh eyes and previously unseen vantage points of a day in the life of Cork harbour to Irish television screens next month, in a series called *Cork–Mega Port*.

Day-to-day activities in and around Cork harbour are to feature in four, one-hour-long episodes filmed for TV3 since Christmas. The footage includes time-lapse CCTV footage of the city centre's gauge under water as floods repeatedly arrived, waves lashing Cobh and attempts to rescue a slipping container blown into the Lee by 120kph winds.

There's also navel excitement on the harbour, as well as a Customs dog called Max going skip-board with tiny GoPro camera strapped to his back — as he follows his nose in a search for contraband. It could well be titled 'every dog has his day'.

Up to four film crews moved around the harbour's 100-mile inland shoreline, and stepped further beyond with the Irish Naval Service, while dozens of people working in the port's many layers are shadowed and interviewed.

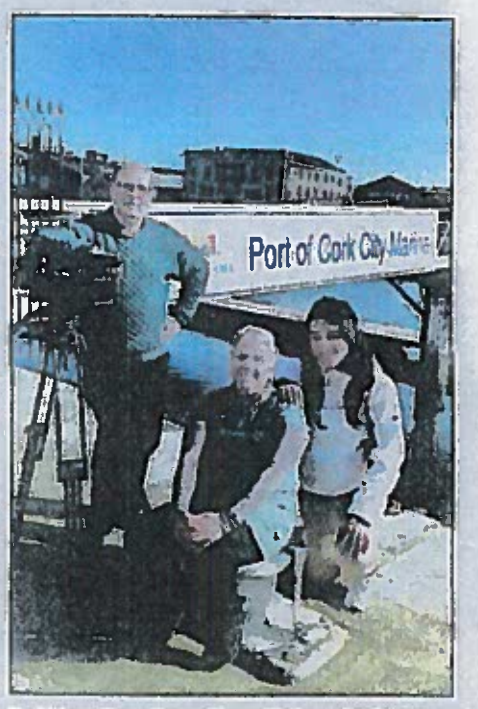
Separately, mini GoPro cameras were mounted on flying drones, on the backs of cranes digging out tonnes of animal feeds from ship holds. And, amongst cargoes from cars to corn flakes, there's a whole bunch of bananas to be discovered. About four million bananas, to be precise, along with other exotic fruits, pass through Cork port en route to European destinations each week from Central America, rekindling the legendary 'banana boat' trade via Cork of the 1960s.

The programme's unseen views and perspectives come courtesy of fresh pairs of eyes that spotted the series' potential in one of Ireland's busiest, and most diverse, ports. After a successful pitch to TV3, it's being made and currently edited in UK-based Goldhawk Media, an award-winning focus-team for British and global audiences and channels such as Discovery and National Geographic, and which also filmed 'Inside The Port', a hit back in 1997.

"Cork knocks Dover for six," reckon Goldhawk director Paul Cleary and Bernadette Byrne. Yes. They visited Cork back in March on location, and even though back home Irish people who hop on and off ships, from pilot boats in waves of 4.5m, to clamber up flimsy ladders to bring ships to a safe berth, products to shop shelves, and Irish exports to markets abroad.

Paul Cleary: some of the ships and their journeys are "epic", and feels viewers will be as engrossed as they've become by the port characters whose work they follow, and by the web of ocean travel the ships and their voyages around the globe knit, weaving in and out of one of the world's great harbours.

Cork Mega Port starts on TV3 on Monday, April 28.



Paul Cleary, Barny Bee and Laura McGann of Goldhawk Media who were "blown away" by the vibrancy of Cork's working port. Below: Max, the customs dog, who is seen on TV following his nose in a search for contraband.
Picture: Denis Scannell

4 million

The number of bananas, as well as other exotic fruits, which pass through Cork port on route to Irish and European destinations each week.

> **"Cork knocks Dover for six ... People in Ireland probably take it for granted, but we found the people who work in the port are so knowledgeable, have a real civic pride and love it."**

pletion of a €360m new gas-fired plant for the ESB resulted in just 80 full time jobs. There's around 180 jobs in the Whitegate refinery, which processes three million tonnes of oil a year and where, despite plans for a sell-off by owners Phillips 66, commitments are in place until 2016.

The harbour's bulwarking pharma industry started off in Cork in the 1970s with the arrival of pharma giant Pfizer who've since invested €7bn in its Irish plants. It set the seeds for decades of chemical, pharma bio-pharm and life-sciences companies to follow in Pfizer's wake, creating one of Ireland's most successful 'clusters' of associated industries and employers – about 4,000 directly employed in the sector in Cork harbour at current levels.

Clustering like this has worked in Ireland's favour in terms of attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Dublin is a leading global hub in IT and financial services sectors, with many tens of thousands of jobs attracted by this sort of grouping. Cork and Galway have acknowledged medical device clusters. Cork was a forerunner in developing a pharma cluster, over an impressive 45-year time span, with nine very significant firms alone in the harbour, and other outliers like Eli Lilly near Kinsale, where a €330m expansion spend is coming to a conclusion.

A 2013 Forfas annual employment survey shows 5,800 jobs in permanent and temporary IDA client companies in Cork's harbour catchment, and where the IDA continues to market its land bank of 143 hectares. The figure is up from just over 4,000 in 2009 – but, while extremely significant, it now eclipsed in recent years by the employment strength of other major Cork-based tech firms like Apple and EMC who between them employ over 7,000 in Cork.

Major employers in the harbour basin here include GSK, Howmet, Biomarin, Pfizer, Eli Lilly, Janssen Biologics, Merck, Novartis and Ricondati, supported by third level institutes like UCC and CIT. And the IDA also estimates that for every ten jobs in IDE-backed firms, a further seven jobs follow on in the wider-and service-economy, education sectors, etc.

While traditional pharma models are showing signs of age, with long-successful products coming off patent, the sector is evolving, with on-going investment especially in life-sciences and biopharma in recent months, and after several tranches of job losses and retrenchments. Pfizer confirmed a 95m Irish pharma investment, with the bulk of this going to Grange Castle in Dublin and €22m to its main Cork, Ringaskiddy site. In January, US biopharma company Biomarin confirmed a jobs' boost from 100 to 140 at a Shanbally site it bought three years ago from Pfizer. Biomarin said its decision was due to infrastructure, routes to market, expansion possibilities and availability of skilled personnel amid a scientific community.

The new Navy boat, the €80m LE Samuel Beckett; new recruits (top left) celebrate during their 'passing out' parade at the Naval base in Haulbowline; armed Naval Service personnel in a boarding exercise.

vessels at sea," says a senior officer. The Navy has been based at the 80-acre Haulbowline Island, in the defensive core of Cork harbour, since 1938, when key Irish ports were handed back to the Irish government by Britain. From this base, it continues a naval tradition stretching back to the 1600s in the last century, the base was used by British and US navy destroyers and sloops during WWI, making vital U-boat interceptions in the North East Atlantic. The sinking of the Lusitania off Kinsale, 100 years ago next year, was one that wasn't intercepted.

Ten years ago, the Navy became a partner with CIT, in setting up the National Maritime College of Ireland at Ringaskiddy. In 2012 the service had 1,600 applicants for training places, and "at least" 120 in what was seen as an exceptional intake. That fell to 42 in 2013. Navy recruitment was promised just last week by the Government, for future Defence and Navy posts.

Recently too, the Irish Naval Service has partnered with CIT and UCC in the neighbouring Irish Marine and Energy Research Cluster, IMERC, on the expanding Ringaskiddy campus, itself becoming a post-modern naval service and 'knowledge institution' with an emerging culture of innovation.

Through NMCI and IMERC, the Navy says "we're increasingly engaging with civil society, the IMERC is a perfect platform for this and helping to grow the maritime economy as well."

It is leveraging its human capital and vast expertise in marine, telecommunications and surveillance matters, and, for some personnel, it also leaves open doors for shore-based jobs after years spent gaining broad experience at sea.

One of the research projects it is engaging with at IMERC is in the possible use of large kites, above ships crossing oceans, to help reduce energy costs. The Navy sees a win-win in integrating this with survival-at-sea technology, literally helping it to see over the horizon — and that's no kite-flying.

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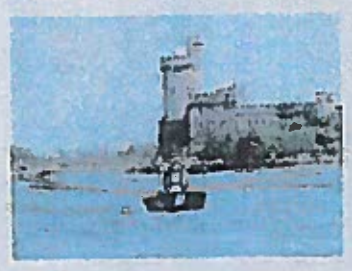
CORK HARBOUR: TURNING THE TIDE

Unlocking an 'ocean' of untapped leisure opportunities



It might not be the world's second largest harbour, as Cork's locals claim, but its potential is still huge, and it is too rarely used for water sports and other activities, says **Tommy Barker**

RECREATION

SHOULD it be every Cork resident's right to get out on the abundant waters of the harbour, or the River Lee?

It's big enough to share, with 100 miles of tidemark shoreline within its harbour embrace, if you include all the windy bits.

Yet, in terms of water activities, Cork's only dipping its toes in the water.

Cork people boast that theirs is the second-largest harbour in the world. It's in good company, then, because others also lay claim to that title.

Those others include Poole in the UK, coming after Sydney, Australia, and Kāpiti in New Zealand. And San Francisco, too, with which Cork is twinned — and both embrace infamous and historic prisons in their waters, Alcatraz and Spike Island.

It's possible to go afloat in Cork City on a raft (not so advisable), in a sleek rowing club boat or kayak, a more sturdy coastal yawl, or a chubby currach or a corracle, in a punt, a dramatic dragon boat, dinghy or yacht.

Despite expectations, even yachts are a cheap enough option if you act as crew for someone else: join the Royal Cork Yacht Club on a €180 introductory membership offer, and they'll set you crewing, or visit the legendary Eddie English's Sail Cork facilities in Kat Derry.

Want to row a bit? Naomhóga Chéacaí will take you out on the Marina in a currach any Saturday morning at 10.30am, for €10, and, if you blister, at least you're not Blanket-bound.

It's a heritage blast — and you might inveigle your fellow oary people to stop at the city boardwalk, or Blackrock village, for a cappuccino.

Short, less-taxing, but exhilarating trips can be had by the RIB, or lower boats, for view-taking, and common and bottle-nose dolphin watching.

It's a new, eye-opening tourism product for Cork that, by now, has brought themselves to see and do as yet, like the open-top bus tours as another way of revisiting the familiar, it's something most Cork people seem to leave to the tourists.

1,000

The number of registered boat-owners who keep a mooring in Cork Harbour. There are also 600 marina berths shared by the main marinas. The Shannon hosts 9,000 boats.

And while Cork can claim to host the world's oldest yacht club — it started in Haulbowline in 1720, then moved to Cove (Cobh) and, more recently, Crosshaven, the RCYC is now a leading club and event organiser, and it has a 300-year anniversary coming up in 2020 — it's only now that the harbour is becoming more and more demotratic and broad-based for all classes of leisure use, abetted by the cleanest waters in decades. This week's EPA report is duly noted, however, with more long-overdue treatment plant work to do in the lower harbour at Ringaskiddy, Cobh and Passage West.

Started in 2005, and open to all sorts of non-powered boats, the Ocean to City annual race now has nearly 400 participants, and 12,000 spectators, and rowing races have a 150-year tradition, laugh up who remembers pulley-boat racing on the Marina in the 1960s?).

There's belatedly been growth in marina berths for boats of all speeds, with about 600 berths shared by the main marinas in Crosshaven, Monkstown, and at the latest, Monkstown, while there's an additional 1,000 or so of registered moorings in key points, and out-of-the-way navigation channels.

Three years ago, Port of Cork put some money where its revenue streams start and where the city's river channels recombine, with a small marina by Custom House Quay.

Since that visionary, yet quite plainly obvious calling card, the city centre's got in on the act, too, with racing dinghies, yachts, and the super-yachts of the rich and famous now making a way to the city centre.

They tie up just down-river of City Hall and the game-changing Lapps Quay boardwalk, (another river connection only recently forged), reminding citizens of the waterways connecting them to their past, and to the far wider world, by sea.

Yet, there's scope for multiples of these berths and those figures quoted are just a "drop in the ocean" compared to the amount of boat users along the length of the River Shannon (9,000 boats there, according to some estimates).

What does the harbour need to progress this growth? "More access points, such as slipways and pontoons," says Donal Lynch of Meitheal Mara, the community-based innovative and registered charity which has introduced a huge cross-section of southern Hiberno-Celts to the watery since 1996, including school, youth and socially marginalised groups.

And "marinas, marinas, marinas", says Crosshaven yacht broker and seasoned salt, Donal McClement.

"Most existing slips dotted around the harbour are either decrepit, too old for full-time use, or not able to take cars and trailers, says Lynch.

Meitheal Mara are actively campaigning for improved access as "the number of launching slips and destinations is small, and launching of boats and berthing and going ashore are beset with difficulty."

They also would love to see heritage buildings on the quays for more public visibility: there's an irony in the fact their quite inaccessible Grosses Green base flooded earlier this year.

A bright, exemplar beacon is a new pontoon at Aghada pier, in the eastern harbour fringe, where there's a coastal rowing fraternity, and other points suggested to follow suit could be from the end of Dunmarket Street, through the Lower Glanmire Road Marina, onwards resurgent Blackrock village, Passage West, Ringaskiddy, Spike, Cobh and even out towards Fountainstown, beyond the harbour mouth. Some 34 destinations are rated by Meitheal Mara as having limited facilities, and considerable further potential.

Marine Minister and harbour habitué, Simon Coveney notes aptly that, looking at pictures of Cork Harbour in the '20s, facilities were far better then than now.

Perhaps that's because, back then, such access was vital to livelihoods, and for fishermen and small ferries. Now, it's a vital way forward for harbour tourism and recreational enjoyment, Coveney says.

Key to attractiveness for the greatest numbers is 'dry dock' access and activities, says Lynch — ie, the ability to get in and out of a boat without wading and getting feet too wet.

Meitheal Mara is now

CASE STUDY: POWER BY THE RIVER LEE

Paddler peddles Cork as a Venice of the north

A CITY without a river is a city without a soul, declares kayaker, tour man Jim Kennedy who leads tours in Venice, Croatia and Mexico. But Cork's his favourite.

A former world champion, the fit 59-year-old is closing up on 50 years afloat along the length of the Lee.

Last weekend, the Ballintemple-born paddler par excellence was on Cork's elegant Marina for the city's long-established annual 'Head of the River' club rowing races.

Jim's young granddaughter Lauren (10) was racing, as were his sons Adam and Naoise, members of Skibbereen's ace rowing club on the Ilen. On Saturday, they found an inscribed Lee Rowing Club tankard, won in a famous 1976 eights race by Jim and granddaddy Jim.

Kennedy was one of Ireland's most competitive clubrowers in the 1970s when he took to kayaking a decade later as a super-fit athlete, he cleaned up in world championships, as well as in the gruelling London-Devizes, 126-mile marathon, winning on his first attempt.

Along the way, he trained hard on the Lee.

Jim recalls living on a boat in Blackrock in his early 20s, kayaking down to Cobh and then racing the Cill Airne ships' tender or the 'Shandon' tug back to the city, in all tides. Now, the pace might have slowed a tad, but the routes, and the passion for the harbour, are the same.

As the owner and leader of the niche 'flotilla' business, Atlantic Sea Kayaking, which is acclaimed by Tripadvisor, Jim has had visitors and journalists from all over the world paddle with him on the wild Atlantic waves, and on the safer, but no less interesting ones of Cork harbour.

He has taken myriad tours, from the boardwalk by City Hall, up-channel and down-river, under the city's many bridges, by day and by night. He also does longer harbour hauls, on dropping tides, down as far as Cobh and Spike Island, "and people are blown away by the place, and by stories of emigration."

He knows its every nook and cranny, and says, "believe it or not I've been closer to wildlife in the

Cruising into the big time with new routes, larger ships and more visitors

CRUISE SHIPS

Cruising is in the ascendant and down south, we're already ahead of the pack, says **Tommy Barker**

In their wildest dreams, Ireland's inland counties could hardly imagine what an influx of up to 8,000 visitors in one single day would look like. If they really wanted to know, a visit to Cobh could show them, on a day when cruise liners come to call.

Such ships are getting bigger; now 5,000 passenger vessels are regular callers to Cobh and several overlaps this summer, (such as June 2, will see two ships visiting at the same time, bringing over 8,000 passengers and crew between them, to the harbour at Cobh in one day. That's equivalent to the discharge of passengers from over a dozen 747 'jumbo' jets or Airbus A380s.

Fairly universally, passengers and crews have high standards, quite a bit of discretionary cash, spending an average of €75 each on a day visit, and they're an increasing tourism force to be reckoned with, to cater for and to court. Currently worth about €20m a year in direct spend nationally and the same again indirectly, cruise traffic to Ireland has doubled in the past decade. It's up to about 250,000 visitors this year, with one third from the UK, and another one third from North America. Cork and Cobh get above a fair share of that tally. In 2013, (its busiest year ever), Cobh hosted 123,000 cruise passengers and crew from 62 ships and more are booked in for Cobh and Ringaskiddy for this year's season, from end-April to October.

Port of Cork plans to grow the trade to about 80 ships a season. Dublin had 100 ship visits last year, over the next four to five years, says its commercial manager Michael McCarthy, noting that "Cork harbour and Cobh is the only Irish port to have a dedicated cruise ship berth, and we'd like to add a second one, costing €5m in the next few years."

123,000

The amount of cruise passengers and crew who visited Cobh from 62 cruise ships last year. More ships are booked in for Cobh and Ringaskiddy for this year's season.

It's a fast growing and lucrative market, with ships getting bigger, cheaper to travel on, and the age people of passengers is going down. And, critically, 80% of passengers surveyed in the most recent albeit 2010, Red C poll say that they plan on returning for longer visits in the near future. Some 20% say they'd return within 12 months, over 30% say they'd return within two years, and North Americans are most likely to revisit by ship and Germans are the least likely to come back by boat. Different nationalities enjoy different features and more active pursuits such as harbour cruises, hiking and kayaking are needed for younger passengers and continental Europeans, suggests Mr McCarthy, citing the Red C poll which found younger Europeans "want more novel attractions than whiskey and castles".

Ireland competes to draw cruise ships to its shores, so too do the various ports around here. Cobh competes with Waterford, Gal-

Finding new energy by the sea

Tommy Barker hears from Dr Valerie Cummins about how a perfect alignment of stakeholders is driving the renaissance of the city's harbour

(From top left) A boat catching the evening tide as it enters Cork harbour; a ship laying at anchor as the harbour is bathed in the red sky; an angler fishing from one of the harbour's beaches; three people entering the sea for an evening dip in Fountainstown; boats passing Blackrock Castle in the Meitheal Mara Ocean to City race; crowds line the city quays during dragon racing off Lapps Quay; and the Round the World Clipper yacht, 'Cork', leaving the city marina.

Main picture: Denis Scannell

Total immersion. That's what Dr Valerie Cummins — academic scientist, harbour resident and head of the Irish Marine and Energy Research Cluster (IMERC) — is knowing for.

And, to mark "a significant birthday coming up", she's tells the *Irish Examiner*, during a tour around Ringaskiddy's Maritime college, she is going for total immersion in matters marine. Far from the ivory-towered academic stereotype, she's to be plunged, in a simulated helicopter crash, into pitch darkness and icy water, and left to find her own way out. Bears a special birthday spa experience? Well, only if you're unfortunate enough to be as enthusiastic about your job as she is.

There's no denying Cork harbour's beauty, diversity and potential, Dr Cummins says, asserting that the harbour is on the point of renaissance.

"Today, we are at the dawn of a new era for Cork Harbour, through partnership we can realise a vision for the citizen of this island, overseas investors, visitors and sailors, to truly value the treasure of Cork Harbour as a world-class maritime quarter."

The momentum to grow Ireland's ocean resources, and draw in investment and jobs from overseas, is already there, says Dr Cummins or just 'Val' as she's generally known in this no-nonsense corner of the harbour.

She gestures to the €15m Beaufort Lab being noisily built 100 yards away from her current temporary office at the Maritime College, and along with a further €28m for the inter-college marine renewable energy project MaREI, there's €100m in state funds alone going into Cork harbour over two years, at Haulbowline, Spike Island and at IMERC as "an engine for innovation", she proudly says.

Val Cummins grew up steeped in other parts of the harbour, living in Blackrock, spending hours on the river with Lee Rowing Club "and pottering around Lough Mahon with my father, in one of his many parts.

"I really didn't appreciate the value of the Lower Harbour until I went to work on the Naval Base on Haulbowline Island. It was a privilege to be situated in an office right on the waterfront, to hear the bells of Cobh Cathedral across the way, and to observe the volume of shipping, ferry and boating traffic that enriched the scene." And, living for a while in East Cork, with a boat moored at Aghada, "I began to appreciate the expansive, rural and tranquil value of that part of the harbour, too."

"To truly value Cork harbour, one needs to become familiar with its intricate and diverse geography," endorses the woman whose primary degree was in marine geography, and who's an advocate of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

Joined-up thinking on sustainable marine development.

Up to now, and despite its many claims to history, Cork's harbour "has been under-explored, and inadequately appreciated by its citizens. However, there is a perceptible shift in attitudes towards it now."

Failte Ireland have started to brand Cork City and Harbour as a priority destination, and she approves of the recognition for the first time, of the interplay between the two. Cork's local authorities are headed in the same direction, on tourism and other fronts. The development of Spike Island as a major tourism destination — say 20,000 visitors per year, and this should grow to 70,000 from the thousands of cruise-ship visitors to the harbour, some 123,000 in 2013. To this initiative, Val Cummins name-checks the proposed expansion of the Port of Cork, remediation at Haulbowline, the Lower Harbour Energy Group's €30m turbine project, the wonders of Camden Fort, as well as a vision for much-improved shoreline access, and water-based transport and tourism.

"The public investment into the harbour to deliver these projects is remarkable, given the era of austerity in which we live. This injects the confidence required to stimulate and drive private sector funding. Working at the interface between research and industry, I see first-hand an increasing throughput of companies seeking to invest in the harbour, attracted by what is on offer in this growing maritime innovation hub."

Dr Cummins praises a new, holistic thinking and cooperation from organisations such as the local authorities, academic institutes, Port of Cork and Chamber of Commerce, IDA, Irish Naval Service, Failte Ireland and Meitheal Mara. Their passion for the harbour is uniquely in tune: "It's like a planetary alignment, with a number of stars at the top of a number of organisations, all on the same trajectory."

General view of the outer harbour looking east over Haulbowline Island and Naval Base, with Spike Island and Whitegate in the distance. There are hopes to provide a pedestrian bridge from Haulbowline to Spike in the future.

No, it's not Cobh - Jim Kennedy in his kayak in Venice, and, above right, kayaking in Cork City where he leads harbour trips.

Cobh basks in the glory of visitors like (from left) the Caribbean Princess, Independence of the Seas, and MSC Magnifica, dwarfing sailing boats at the dockside and historic buildings on the promenade

Dr Val Cummins, who spent her childhood and early adulthood rowing in Cork Harbour, now heads up IMERC, the Irish Marine and Energy Research Cluster

city and harbour than in West Cork, from seals and otters to birds, like herons and egrets, wild fish. They all seem tamer and more used to people".

Jim has paddled the waters of many soul blewed cities, and reckons its in terms of ease of engagement with people on land, with its low quay walls and many bridges that "Cork with its unique, accessible river and harbour and geography, and history of as many as 200 islands now covered over, is right up there with Venice for engagement with people on-shore."

After success in sculls, eights, K1 and K2 kayaks, and sea-kayak tourism since 1995, what's next — gondola tours?

spreading to the Shannon, via Limerick city, to the Lagan via Belfast city, building a "new departure" 16-foot dinghy in ply and epoxy, called the City One.

This simple boat design has been pioneered by Limerick City's AK II en school, with a similar social inclusion remit to Meitheal Mara and the bonding/building process is as integral as the eventual use and enjoyment process. There'll be an inter-city race of the new craft for Limerick's City of Culture 2014 year; clearly, it's not just Cork City that is belatedly waking up to river heritage.

There's a palpable excitement about Cork's reappraisal and new-found appreciation of its maritime heritage, leisure amenities and ecology — RTE presenter Derek Mooney's Dawn Chorus is broadcast from Gosking Marsh each May.

You don't even have to go on the water to get in tune with it all. The massively-used cycle and walk paths, along disused rail lines, from the city via Blackrock, Mahon, Rochestown to Glenbrook, or Carrigaline to Crosshaven, are proof of the gains already appreciated by athletes, boat lovers, active citizens and skaters, residents, tourists and sundry passing visitors.

And there's only a dip in an ocean of possibilities.

way, and Shannon Foynes, whilst Belfast and Dublin/Dun Laoghaire are currently investing significantly in cruise facilities. Cobh's boast of having the country's only dedicated cruise berth will go by 2016.

According to the major Red C poll, Cork is the port cited by most as their favourite and 33% of those visiting said Cork/Cobh had exceeded their expectations, the highest rating of any Irish port.

Cobh's strong advantages play well with visitors who appreciate the harbour's long maritime past, with 170 years of Atlantic travel from the days of the Sirius, the Titanic and Lusitania, to its natural beauty, dedicated cruise berth, rail link to Cork city and excursions to places like Blarney Castle, the city centre, Midleton's distillery and Kinsale.

Now that broad appeal is set to have a major new 'Spike'. With only fledgling facilities so far, but 1,400 years of habitation history from monastic sanctuary to military and prison purgatory to rival Alcatraz, the 100-acre Spike Island in the harbour's midst got 20,000 visitors in the past year alone, ever before a €4.2m investment to put it in every passing cruise ship's itinerary.