

PROPOSED PART 8 DEVELOPMENT

**Floating Pontoon System
South Quay, Wicklow**

Introduction:

Wicklow Harbour is situated on the east coast of Ireland about twenty miles south of Dublin Bay and a mile and a half northwest of Wicklow Head. The Harbour is situated at the mouth of the Leitrim River, which is part of the Vartry system. The northern side of the harbour is delimited by two breakwaters running East to North East (New Pier) and North West (Lighthouse Pier). The harbour entrance is between these two breakwaters. The Leitrim River runs almost parallel to the harbour's long axis at the southern end (stone beach) and curves north easterly as it discharges into the south eastern end of the harbour, creating a tongue of land on which the commercial port area is situated. In strong north easterly to easterly winds a heavy swell develops in the outer harbour and vessels can proceed upriver for further protection.

Wicklow Harbour has a long maritime tradition which continues to the present day. On the 30th August 2016 the ownership and management of Wicklow Harbour and Port transferred to Wicklow County Council. There is good transport access including a modern port access road to the port area. Under the National Ports Policy, the harbour is designated as a port of regional significance. There are four main berths, the East Pier, Packet Pier, North Quay and South Quay, between them they provide over 430 metres of quay, with depths varying between 2.2 and 5.2 metres.

Proposed Development:

The purpose of the pontoon is to increase mooring capacity in the harbour / river area as the harbour is currently at capacity. There are congestion issues in the harbour particularly during storms and while ships are in port. The intended users of the pontoon are small vessels and leisure craft including open boats. A number of recent studies have highlighted the opportunity and potential for Wicklow Town to develop its marine tourism i.e. the Wicklow Harbours Baseline Study / Time to Kickstart Wicklow Town / . There is currently a pontoon in each of the other three harbours in Co. Wicklow. The provision of a pontoon would aid accessibility to vessels moored along the river.

Wicklow County Council proposes to install a new pontoon system in Wicklow Harbour. The new pontoon will be supported by steel guides connected to the existing quay wall. The pontoons will be 2.4 metres wide, will be of robust construction and will be equipped with services provisions, mooring cleats, fendering, safety ladders and safety aids. The construction of the pontoons will be steel framed deck on concrete encased polystyrene floats.

The works will include:

- Supply and installation of steel guides fixed to the harbour quay wall.
- Installation of a steel framed pontoon system up to 86 metres long and 2.4 metres wide, complete with mooring points, hardwood fendering, and grp open grid decking

- Provision of ducting for electrical services and lighting to the pontoons, if required in the future
- Safety features including emergency ladders and lifebuoys to the pontoons
- Installation of a gangway complete with hand railing, anti-slip rails and grp open grid decking, live loading 4.0kN/m².
- Installation of a steel framed access platform complete with safety fence and security gate, grp open grid decking, live loading 4.0kN/m².

Wicklow Town - Rathnew Development Plan 2013 -2019

The land aspect of the proposed pontoon is located within an area zoned in the Wicklow Town - Rathnew Development Plan 2013 -2019 as Town Centre. The objective of this zoning is to preserve, improve and provide for town centre uses with the following descriptive narrative

“To develop and consolidate the existing town centre to improve its vibrancy and vitality with the densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, residential uses, and urban streets, while delivering a quality urban environment which will enhance the quality of life of resident, visitor and workers alike. The zone will strengthen retail provision in accordance with the County Retail Strategy, emphasise urban conservation, ensure priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists while minimising the impact of private car based traffic and enhance and develop the existing urban fabric”

Within the Wicklow Town - Rathnew Development Plan 2013 -2019 there is a strong emphasis on the Wicklow Port and Harbour area. The Plan identifies Wicklow Port and Harbour as one of the key areas and notes that “Wicklow Port and Harbour are important physical features, recreational and tourism amenities and an important source of economic activity associated with the town”. It further notes that “pursuing an enhanced role for this area would benefit the town as a whole and that whilst it is important that the port remains commercially competitive there may be opportunities for the enhancement of the area alongside the sustainable regeneration and re-development of the port, harbour and quay areas”.

The strategy for Wicklow Port, Harbour and Quays is therefore “to facilitate the existing and future sustainable economic development of the port and associated activity, whilst allowing for expansion and improvement of amenity and recreational opportunities, for the development of a wider mix of uses including residential, retail / commercial and community uses”.

Objectives of chapter 4 of the Wicklow Town - Rathnew Development Plan 2013 -2019 include

- Port - To support and facilitate maritime activity on the south quay and to encourage new developments that provide for an improved mix of uses including commercial, retail and residential uses and to particularly encourage tourism and leisure related developments.
- Port - To support and facilitate the development of new infrastructure necessary for the continued operation and development of the port.
- Harbour - To facilitate appropriate tourism and leisure development in the harbour area including the provision of new clubhouses, pontoons / marinas, shops, cafes and other leisure and tourism related developments subject to a higher quality of design, having regard to the protection of Natura 2000 sites, as well as the existing environmental, visual and residential amenities in the area.

With regard to tourism and recreation, one of the objectives set out in Chapter 7 is as follows:

“To encourage and facilitate tourism and leisure related uses in the harbour area including hotel / accommodation facilities and leisure uses to complement the marina and associated boating uses and activities”.

Chapter 8 on social and community infrastructure notes the potential of the harbour as a recreation and amenity hub and that as the town develops there may be greater demand for water based sports activities. Water based sports activities, such as sailing, also have the potential to attract more visitors to the town. There are two objectives identified regarding harbour leisure uses and these are

- PL1 - To encourage any recreational use of the harbour, waterside or landside, where appropriate, which does not compromise the commercial operation of the port, the environmental quality of the surrounding area, or the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites.
- PL2 - To support the provision of a pontoon to facilitate recreational or pleasure craft, where this is also compatible with the commercial operation of the Port.

County Development Plan:

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2016 – 2022

Chapter 11 of the Wicklow County Development Plan notes the following objectives under Cell 7 Wicklow Town and Environs:

Objective CZ7

“To facilitate the development and enhancement of visitor and recreational facilities along the coastal area, particularly walking routes, car parking areas, signage, changing / toilet facilities and water based clubs”

Local Economic and Community Plan

The economic element of the Local Economic and Community Plan was developed by the Economic Strategic Policy Committee and the Enterprise Directorate of the Council. The LECP sets out 10 overarching goals for economic and community development within County Wicklow including goal 8 which states:

“Capitalise on Wicklow’s unique attributes and proximity to the Dublin market, excellent quality of life, human capital, tourism, landscape, marine, agricultural and forestry resources”

Environmental Issues

There are eight Natura 200 sites within 15 kilometres of the proposed site including the Murrrough SPA, the Murrrough Wetlands SAC and Wicklow Head SPA.

The proposed project was screened for Appropriate Assessment by Gavin & Doherty Geosultions Ltd. The Screening report concludes that there would be no significant adverse effects on any Natura 2000 sites, their Qualifying Interests, Conservation Objectives or Integrity as a result of the proposed project to develop a floating pontoon at South Quay, Wicklow.

Foreshore

An application for a Foreshore Licence under the Foreshore Act 1933 has been submitted to the Foreshore Unit of the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government.

Flood Risk Assessment:

The proposed development will not result in any risk of flooding.

Traffic Impact:

The proposed development will not have a significant impact on vehicular, marine or pedestrian traffic. The proposal will improve accessibility to vessels and increase the overall capacity along the river.

Services:

Power & Lighting

Ducting will be provided for the future provision of power and lighting along the pontoon. Electrical services will be brought to the site via underground ducts. Initial lighting along the pontoon will be by way of existing street lights. The full lighting requirements in this area will be assessed at a later stage.

Water & Foul Drainage

There will be no water or foul drainage facilities on the pontoon.

Waste

No bins will be provided on the pontoon but additional bins will be provided on the northern end of South Quay.

Construction

It is proposed that construction works will commence as soon as the Part 8 is approved and foreshore consent received. It is anticipated that works on site would take approximately 3 weeks to complete.