



West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy

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Chairperson's Introduction

Island Quotations

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Executive Summary

RPS Planning & Environment were retained by the West Cork Islands Interagency Group through the County Development Board Structure to produce a Strategy for the physical, economic, social and cultural development of the seven inhabited West Cork Islands over the next ten years and beyond.

The purpose of the Strategy is to make the islands a better place to live, work, visit and do business. The Strategy seeks to implement the Mission Statement of the Interdepartmental Co-ordinating Committee as set out in their 1996 Report on Island Development: A Strategic Framework for Developing the Offshore Islands of Ireland, as a vision for the West Cork Islands. This vision is as follows: -

To support island communities in their economic, social and cultural development, to preserve and enhance their unique cultural and linguistic heritage and to enable the islanders to secure access to adequate levels of public services so as to facilitate full and active participation in the overall economic and social life of the nation.

The phases of Strategy preparation included project planning, an inception report, background research and consultation, preparation of working papers, public consultation and final strategy preparation. The process took approximately eight months to complete.

The Strategy has a number of specific levels. Firstly, it sets out a vision as set out above. Four drivers of development are then identified for the West Cork Islands as an island group; physical, economic, social and cultural development. These drivers of development are also considered for each island in an island specific appraisal. The Strategy provides a series of objectives set out under the key development drivers for the West Cork Islands and for the seven individual islands. A series of short-term and long-term actions seek to realise these objectives.

Each development driver has a **Strategic Aim** and these are as follows:

Physical Development:

To protect and enhance the islands' valuable physical characteristics, landscapes and environments and to ensure that new development providing for improvements in the infrastructural, transport, economic, housing and recreational needs of residents and visitors occurs in a sustainable and integrated manner that is appropriate to the circumstances of the islands.

Economic Development:

To maintain vibrant island economies, focusing on the skills and resources available on the islands, fostering new skills and acknowledging the benefits of mixed activities in island settings.

Social Development:

To retain and support island populations, and ensure access to essential social and community facilities and services is available at an appropriate level.

Cultural Development:

To improve appreciation of the cultural significance of the Islands including island traditions, architectural, archaeological, maritime, and military heritage whilst also expanding the awareness of the Arts and the Irish Language within each community.

Each of these Strategic Aims is supported by a number of objectives and actions have been identified with a view to achieving these objectives.

A Strategic Objective has been set out for the island specific appraisals, which is as follows:

To recognise the needs, character and opportunities that are particular to each island and develop facilities, services and activities accordingly.

Each island has been given a single objective:

Oileán Chléire:

To encourage enhanced recognition of the unique character of Oileán Chléire and the importance of the Irish language to the economy, culture and social fabric of the island; protect its linguistic and cultural heritage and support and promote sustainable economic development on the island.

Bere Island:

To retain a strong population level on this large island and build on the existing facilities and economic activities on the island.

Whiddy Island:

To promote Whiddy as a place to visit, improve its links with Bantry and with the oil terminal and develop service provision on the island.

Durseley Island:

To conserve the landscape and cultural quality of Dursey while recognising the needs of its occupants and improving service provision to the island.

Long Island:

To improve services to Long Island and links to the mainland, seeking to encourage visits on a year-round basis and support the retention and increase of the islands population.

Sherkin Island:

To improve services, facilities and attractions for residents and visitors and expand and develop enterprise and employment on the island.

Heir Island:

To develop community facilities on Heir Island, expand on existing enterprise development and maintain and enhance the profile of the island as a tourist destination.

These objectives are supported by actions, which are grouped under the development driver categories as set out above.

A methodology for the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy is set out.

An Environmental Appraisal of the Objectives is included.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy addresses the physical, economic, social and cultural development of the West Cork Islands of Chléire, Bere, Whiddy, Dursey, Long, Sherkin and Heir and sets out a framework of objectives and actions for the next 10+ years, with a view to making the islands a better place in which to live, work, visit and do business.

The production of this Strategy is one of a number of key tasks to be undertaken by the West Cork Islands Interagency Group. RPS Planning and Environment were retained by the West Cork Islands Interagency Group through the County Development Board Structure to prepare the Strategy. Strategy preparation commenced in January 2010 with a view to finalising the Strategy during July 2010.

The Strategy appreciates the unique circumstances of the islands and their importance in a local and national context. For this reason the focus of the Strategy is on local measures to address the development of the West Cork Islands through recognition of these differences and innate assets. The West Cork Islands make a strong contribution to the quality of life, economy and vibrancy of mainland West Cork and Ireland as a whole. Accordingly, the Strategy seeks to raise the profile of the islands, examine how services are best delivered to the islands and encourage agencies to island-proof their policies and work programmes.

1.2 Cork County Development Board and the West Cork Islands Interagency Group

In 1998, the Government established an Inter-Departmental Task Force to address the issue of the integration of the Local Government and Development systems and to examine how the activities of various organisations could be co-ordinated in a more effective way at local level. It identified that a major difficulty for planning and delivery of public services at the local level is the absence of a single template to guide the activities of the many public sector agencies operating within the county. In order to address this, the Task Force recommended the establishment of County/City Development Boards in 2000.

The Cork County Development Board (CDB) prepared a 10-year Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Cork for the period 2002-2011. The CDB Strategy acts as a framework for the various organisations providing public services within the county. This strategy has been reviewed every three years, most recently in 2009, when the West Cork Islands were designated as one of nine priority projects for the CDB in its current programme of implementation. In this regard a local implementation group, the West Cork Islands Interagency Group, was established in Spring 2009. The Group's focus is on integrative actions aimed at a more joined-up approach to local service delivery and the development of a socio-economic strategy for the future development of the seven West Cork Islands. This Interagency Group is the steering group that has guided the development of the Strategy and contributed significantly to its preparation. The formation of the group, which is chaired by the Assistant Cork County

Manager, has involved a high level of participation by many groups representing a broad cross-section of agencies and groups. Members of the Group include representatives from Cork County Council (CCC), Bere Island Projects Group (BIPG), Comhdháil Oileáin na hEireann (Comhdháil), Comharchumann Chléire Teoranta (CCT), Sherkin Island Development Society (SIDS), West Cork Enterprise Board (WCEB), Coastal and Marine Resource Centre (CMRC), Cork Community & Voluntary Forum (C&V Forum), West Cork Rural Transport (WCRT), the Health Service Executive (HSE), FÁS, An Garda Síochána, Fáilte Ireland, Cork County Childcare Committee (CCCC), Údarás na Gaeltachta (Údarás), the West Cork Development Partnership Ltd. (WCDP), the Vocational Education Committee (VEC), the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (DoCEGA), Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA).

The overall strategic goals of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group are:

- To develop a socio-economic strategy and action plan for the West Cork Islands;
- To have an established Community Council structure representing all West Cork Islands, and
- To have a sustainable partnership approach to the Islands through the establishment of a long-term Interagency structure for the West Cork Islands.

To begin with, the groups and organisations on the Interagency Group, following agreement within their own agencies, put

forward a list of tasks that their agency is committed to undertaking for the area. These formed the basis for discussion on common purposes and opportunities for co-operation, which culminated in the establishment of five working groups in the following areas:

- Islands Community Council Working Group
- Health and Social Services Working Group
- Tourism Development Working Group
- Economic Development Working Group
- Integrated Development Strategy Working Group

It is noted that these working groups may change over time, but the above titles were correct at the time of publication. Each of these working groups, made up of members of the Interagency Group and other appropriate local representatives, have come together to make commitments in terms of agreed tasks with targets and designated responsible agencies.

Improved collaboration between public bodies working with communities facilitates change. It is important to get the right people, with the correct disposition and commitment, and senior level support, both of which exist on the West Cork Islands Interagency Group. A number of successes were noted at the time of writing:

- Establishment of a local working group to progress the development of the Lonehort Battery site on Bere Island
- Completion of a management plan for the ferry point at Cunnamore (for Heir)
- Compilation of audit of infrastructure, products and visitor attractions for each island

- Food training course to encourage the development of the food product on the West Cork Islands undertaken by ten islanders
- Input to recently published Fáilte Ireland National Islands Brochure
- Application for funding made to Fáilte Ireland for brochures for the West Cork Islands
- Funding application lodged for Looped Walk for Whiddy
- Provision of new Fáilte Ireland Looped walk on Oileán Chléire
- Preliminary work for community centre and social housing for Heir Island
- Ferry ticketing office for Baltimore Harbour at planning stage
- Promotion and development of a seafood festival on Bere and Whiddy Islands
- HSE and Islanders involved in a community participation project funded by the HSE and Combat Poverty Agency
- Meetings held between islanders and mental health services
- Interagency consultation for County Council Islands Local Area Plans
- Inputs to the West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy, including strong public consultation role

The success of the interagency approach to development on the islands is evident even at this early stage. The continuation of this approach on a long-term basis is a key factor for the future development of the islands and

the progressive implementation of this strategy. The presence of an ongoing group, that meets as required by the local bodies, will provide a key resource for the islands and for the proposed West Cork Islands' Community Council.

1.3 Methodology

The Strategy has been prepared and published to develop a viable working programme for the West Cork Islands Interagency Group and island communities over the coming years.

In line with the ethos of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group, the Strategy has come about through close co-operation between the consultants and the Interagency Group. The Group worked closely with the consultants throughout the process; acting as the key point of contact for each agency, providing relevant documents for review, inputting to the proposed methodology, and contributing significantly to the consultation process and development of proposed actions.

An Inception Meeting was held to discuss the Inception report, which outlined the proposed methodology for strategy preparation. A period of background research followed. This was carried out by the consultants, with information provided by members of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group where necessary. The consultants visited each island. There were discussions via telephone and email between the consultants and local bodies representing or located on the islands in order to gather relevant information. This process culminated in the production of working papers to inform the development of the Draft Strategy: Working Paper 1 - Review of Strategic Role and Existing

Circumstances of the Islands and Working Paper 2 - Analysis of National and International Island Groups. A third Working Paper outlined proposals for Consultation.

The Consultation process included the following steps:

- Letters inviting submissions on the Strategy were issued to a number of statutory bodies and local groups.
- RPS staff carried out informal consultation during island visits.
- The commencement of the Strategy preparation process and initial public consultation was publicised through articles in the Southern Star and Evening Echo newspaper in February 2010 and via newsletter/leaflet drops by the island development groups. Initial submissions from islanders were invited as part of this process.
- Public consultation meetings were organised on the islands by the island development groups, inviting local residents to have their say on the content of the Strategy. An Issues Paper prepared by RPS was circulated by the island development groups prior to the public consultation meetings. Members of the public were again invited to comment on issues considered relevant to the Strategy. A number of submissions were received.
- Ongoing consultation was carried out with members of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group, who approved a Draft Strategy for publication.

- The Draft Strategy was circulated among the island communities, a number of public meetings were held on the islands and submissions on the content of the Draft Strategy were invited. This resulted in a strong response from the island communities and comments were made in writing, via email, via telephone call and through discussion at the public meetings.
- Amendments to the Draft Strategy on foot of submissions received from the public were agreed with the Interagency Group.
- The Strategy was finalised and edited with inputs from the Interagency Group.

1.4 Focus

The focus of the Strategy is on the integration of the seven inhabited West Cork Islands to allow the islands to become a recognisable and functioning island group. This should strengthen the voice and profile of the West Cork Islands at local, national and indeed international level. Experience from other countries and from elsewhere in Ireland indicates that islands can become stronger when recognised as part of a united group as opposed to operating as small individual communities.

The focus on developing an island group however, must be carried out in a manner that recognises the differing characteristics and needs of the seven individual islands. It is fundamental that the West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy forms a framework for agencies, organisations and the island communities to work in partnership to achieve goals for both the islands as a single

entity (an island group) but also to meet the particular needs of individual islands. This Strategy provides a strong basis for future decisions and prioritisation for development on the West Cork Islands.

1.5 Key Principles

The Report on the Interdepartmental Co-ordinating Committee on Island Development 'A Strategic Framework for Developing the Offshore Islands of Ireland in Developing Government Policy to Address Island Communities' (1996), recommends the following principles be taken on board in relation to developing government policy on issues affecting island communities:

- *The special economic, social and cultural contributions which the offshore islands make to the life of the nation should be explicitly recognised;*
- *The strategies to promote economic and social development must seek to safeguard vital aspects of a unique cultural, physical and environmental heritage which might be threatened by over development;*
- *Islanders themselves should be prime movers in strategies to maintain their own communities;*
- *Principles of equality, social partnership and full participation should underpin the State's approach to developing public policy in relation to island communities;*
- *A partnership approach between island communities and State Agencies should be adopted in the development and implementation of policy affecting the islands;*
- *Long-term, sustainable solutions need to be designed, utilising scarce resources to maximum effect;*
- *Mutual benefits resulting from the exchange and support between the*

islands and the contiguous mainland should be maximised and;

- *It is important to recognise that the needs of offshore islands may vary considerably and that the specific assets and characteristics of each island need individual responses.*

These principles are considered a good basis for the development of an Integrated Development Strategy for the West Cork Islands, as they underpin the goals of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group and of the islanders as communicated through the consultation process during the preparation of this Strategy.

1.6 Structure

The Strategy is divided into the following sections:

Chapter 1:	Introduction
Chapter 2:	Current Situation and Strategic Context
Chapter 3:	Vision and Goals for the West Cork Islands
Chapter 4:	Island Development - Key Drivers for the West Cork Islands
Chapter 5:	Individual West Cork Islands - Issues Specific Appraisal
Chapter 6:	Implementation and Delivery
Chapter 7:	Environmental Appraisal

Chapter 2 sets a context for the Strategy. It discusses the location and setting of the West Cork Islands; identifies the Islands' key roles, linkages and relationships; provides a brief socio-economic context for the islands; includes a SWOT analysis and sets out the policy context that informs the Strategy.

Chapter 3 outlines a vision for the development of the West Cork Islands and sets out the key goals for the preparation of the Strategy.

Chapter 4 discusses key development drivers for the West Cork Islands as an island group, which will provide a comprehensive development framework for the islands. The key drivers are Physical Development, Economic Development, Social and Community Development and Cultural Development.

These key drivers are supported by strategic aims, a series of proposals, objectives and actions. The content covers a significant number of individual topics that are relevant to the West Cork Islands and the Strategy seeks to provide an integrated response to those issues.

While the response is divided into individual actions set out under the four development drivers, clearly many actions are inter-related and the successful implementation of an action can have benefits for other areas of the strategy.

This section of the Strategy identifies many opportunities for the islands to work together as a unit and develop new ideas.

Chapter 5 deals with the seven inhabited West Cork Islands individually, focussing on their specific circumstances and providing objectives and actions to assist the individual islands. While the uninhabited islands of West Cork are outside the scope of this Strategy, their importance is recognised throughout and these locations are therefore considered in brief in this section.

Chapter 6 deals with the implementation and delivery of the Strategy.

Chapter 7 provides an environmental appraisal of the proposed objectives.

2.0 CURRENT SITUATION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Location and Setting

There are seven inhabited islands in the West Cork Islands Study Area. These are:

- Oileán Chléire (Cape Clear)
- Sherkin Island
- Heir Island
- Long Island
- Whiddy Island
- Bere Island
- Dursey Island

Oileán Chléire, Sherkin, Heir and Long Islands are located in the Roaringwater Bay area of West Cork, Long Island is separated from Schull by Long Island Sound and the other three islands are located closer to Baltimore. Oileán Chléire located the farthest from the mainland.

Whiddy, Bere and Dursey Islands are located in the Bantry Bay/Beara area; Dursey is separated narrowly from the tip of the Beara Peninsula by Dursey Sound, Whiddy lies close to Bantry and Bere Island is located near Castletownbere.

The island location map at the rear of the document indicates the location of the seven West Cork Islands.

There are a large number of uninhabited islands in West Cork, with particular concentrations around the areas of the seven inhabited islands (e.g. in the Roaringwater Bay area).

2.2 The Role of the West Cork Islands

The West Cork Islands are an important asset to the West Cork region, with distinctive features that add to the overall amenity value of West Cork for locals and visitors alike. The inhabited islands of West Cork clearly have economic importance and are of strategic importance to the established West region. The area is well known nationally and internationally as a tourist destination and is famed for food produce. The West Cork Islands can benefit from the strong profile of the overall West Cork area. This Strategy provides an opportunity to develop actions that can capitalise on this profile improving the status of the Islands locally, nationally and internationally.

The West Cork Islands contribute to the skill base of the West Cork area, particularly in terms of marine-based services and increasingly, in the arts and crafts sector.

The West Cork Islands, due to their scenic landscapes and distinctive island cultures attract people to the wider area. The islands add significantly to the heritage offer of West Cork. Oileán Chléire is one of only two Gaeltacht regions in County Cork and plays a special role in the maintaining the ongoing use of the Irish language both locally and nationally.

The uninhabited islands located in the bays and harbours of West Cork are also of relevance to the development of a strategy for the inhabited islands. Examples include Garinish Island in Bantry Bay and the Three Calves in Roaringwater Bay. The uninhabited islands provide a natural advantage to West Cork, as they represent a unique resource in terms of

scenic amenity and the overall attractiveness of the setting of the inhabited islands.

The Strategy seeks to strengthen the role of the West Cork Islands by implementing the actions set out in the document.

2.3 Linkages between the West Cork Islands and the Local Mainland Area

A number of key settlements and access points on the mainland are of importance to the inhabited islands in terms of service provision and access. These include Castletownbere, Schull, Bantry, Crookhaven, Allihies, Skibbereen, Baltimore and Cunnamore. All of the inhabited West Cork Islands are linked to the mainland via subsidised ferry or via cable car services. The islands with lower populations depend particularly heavily on nearby mainland settlements for access to goods and services, such as banking, medical and retail facilities. The retention and improvement of facilities and services in the mainland towns and access points have clear merits for island residents and visitors and therefore must be supported by the relevant sections of this Strategy.

There are opportunities for enhanced interaction between the islands and the nearby mainland settlements. The implementation of the West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy is the perfect forum for encouraging mainland residents to enjoy the islands' amenities and also to secure and increase the level of service provision on the islands for the benefit of both island and mainland communities.

2.4 Interaction and Co-operation between the Islands

Currently, most of the island communities on the West Cork Islands operate independently of each other, apart from involvement in specific projects or through the remit of some of the local development groups on the islands. There is clear evidence nationally and internationally (e.g. the Aran Islands, the Orkneys in Scotland) that being part of an island group can raise the profiles of islands in particular areas and allow communities to tackle common issues by working together. The concept of inter-island competition at a local level can be detrimental to all. In actual fact, improvements physically, economically and socially on one island (and also on the nearby mainland) can have positive spin-off benefits for the other islands within the island group and for the West Cork region.

There is evidence of existing co-operation between the seven West Cork Islands on specific issues at local level (e.g. the Healthy Islands Project) and interaction between some islands within the overall group in relation to other projects (e.g. Bere/Whiddy seafood festival). It is also noted that there are a number of bodies that address island-specific issues at a national level, which are relevant to the West Cork Islands i.e. Comhar na nOileáin Teo., the Islands Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann.

However, what is lacking at present is a representative structure that can act as an interface between the West Cork Islands as a collective and local services delivery bodies and national structures. Proposals for the establishment of such a structure are set out

later in the Social and Community
Development section of the Strategy.

2.5 Socio-Economic Profile

Only two of the West Cork Islands have an Electoral Division (ED) in their own right - Bere and Whiddy. Oileán DED covers Oileán Chlèire, Sherkin and Reenaroga (an island linked by causeway to the mainland near Baltimore) while Heir, Long and Dursey each make up a small area of three different mainland EDs and therefore population data specific to each island cannot be extracted from the Central Statistic Office (CSO)

figures. Details on population levels of the seven inhabited West Cork Islands are provided in the Comhar na nOileáin Teo. report '*Sustaining island livelihoods*', however and are sourced from the 2006 Census of Ireland. While these figures may not be entirely accurate, as four years have passed since the Census, they act as a useful point of reference.

The 2006 populations and household numbers are recorded as follows:

Island	Population	Permanent Households
Bere	187	44
Whiddy	22	8
Dursey	6	3
Heir	24	12
Sherkin	106	34
Long	5	3
Oileán Chlèire*	125	

*Not covered by the Comhar na nOileáin Teo. report, therefore information sourced from Comhdháil Oileáin na hEireann island profiles on www.oileain.ie

In terms of population trends, the overall population living on the West Cork Islands has generally declined steadily in recent years. Sherkin and Heir are exceptions, with both islands experiencing growth from 1996 to 2002. However, a decrease in population levels followed again from 2002 to 2006. A decline in population has implications for the future sustainability of island life and for the economic activities and social and cultural characteristics that define it.

There is evidence of an ageing population on the islands, which has implications for sustainable populations in future and for service providers, particularly those involved in supporting older people. These trends also point to a need to make the islands a more attractive area for young adults and families to reside. Household sizes on the islands are generally low and in decline.

The issue of a declining and ageing population on the West Cork Islands is particularly acute on the islands of Dursey and Long, with Whiddy also retaining only a small population. The permanent year-round habitation of some islands is clearly under threat.

Statistics from 2006 indicate that the islands experienced a lower unemployment rate than the national average figure. However CSO statistics predate the current economic recession and it is likely that the unemployment rate on the islands has increased in the past four years as per the national trend. However, employment on the islands tends to be mixed, with residents

participating in different activities during relevant seasons for fishing, farming and tourism for example.

There is a clear link between employment opportunities and service provision and population levels, with declines in both creating mutually reinforcing trends. A healthy population needs income sources and services to sustain it. Employment sectors need new entrants to sustain them and service provision requires a critical mass of population to operate. It is essential, in order to encourage population growth and new entrants to both traditional employment sectors and new enterprises that young, educated and skilled adults are attracted to reside on the islands.

In terms of the socio-economic status of the islands, it must be remembered that small measures can have disproportionately large effects on small communities. For example, the creation of one new small business or the provision of a service from an island base can sustain/provide a livelihood for a number of families on an island. This has implications for retention of services and the impetus for establishing groups and social clubs, while conversely the impact of one family moving away from an island can result in the loss of a teacher on an island school.

2.6 SWOT Analysis

This SWOT Analysis summarises the strengths and weaknesses of, opportunities for, and threats to the islands:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close proximity to mainland West Cork - High quality landscapes - Clean green environmental image - The sea - Resourceful community - Publicly subsidised transport routes to all inhabited islands - Established local island development groups with good track record of successful projects - Vibrant Gaeltacht on Oileán Chléire - Cultural heritage such as maritime, military and archaeological sites - Strong and growing arts and craft sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited range or lack of social outlets particularly on the smaller islands - Poor tourist infrastructure - Poor morale on some islands - No retail or limited retail function - Poor transport linkages to main urban areas on mainland from some access points - Outward migration of young people - Low levels of community facilities in places - Lack of public spaces on smaller islands and pressure on some existing spaces - Remote location and physical distance from each other
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building on the high profile and positive image of West Cork locally, nationally and internationally - Potential for islands to work together to improve circumstances and transfer success - Existence of West Cork Islands Interagency Group, which can help maximise opportunities for island communities to work with relevant service providers to improve services to the islands - Proposed West Cork Islands Community Council - Tourist potential, particularly walking routes, sites and activities of cultural/heritage significance, marine based activities, military heritage etc. - Specific island agencies at national level to deal with island issues and policy - EU project involvement with other island groups - Seafood and other food product development - Enterprise and educational improvements based on improved broadband facilities - Increasing the profile of the West Cork Islands as a brand - The Islands as an engine of growth for West Cork tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declining and ageing population - Potential for depopulation of some islands - Downturn in the economy nationally and associated impacts for islands - Decline in rural communities - Restrictions of legislative environment on practices in areas such as fishing and farming - Reduction in funding available currently due to restrictions on public finances - Climate change - Conflicts over uses of spaces on islands, such as piers etc. - Freight costs - Low number of entrants to traditional economic activities - Charges for services that can disproportionately affect islands (e.g. waste collection) - Changes to service delivery that can disproportionately affect islands (e.g. public recruitment embargo)

Table 2: SWOT Analysis

2.7 Policy Context

Based on a comprehensive review of existing policy and literature pertinent to the West Cork Islands it is clear that many issues and challenges facing the Islands are shared with other island groups nationally and internationally. The West Cork Islands must operate within a national policy framework in areas such as fishing regulation, environmental designation and educational curricula. It is recognised that many national policies are developed in terms of a larger community and are not always island-proofed. There has been a significant volume of research carried out on island issues and

policy responses and action plans have been put in place, nationally, regionally and locally. There are also specific documents and policies addressing the West Cork Islands and specific islands within the group. The Strategy takes into account the policy environment set by these documents and the lessons learned from previous experience.

Documents reviewed for the purposes of the preparation of this Strategy are listed in Appendix A.

3.0 VISION AND GOALS FOR THE WEST CORK ISLANDS

3.1 Overall Vision and Key Goals

The vision for the future direction of the West Cork Islands will guide the implementation of the Strategy.

The Interdepartmental Co-ordinating Committee, in their 1996 Report on Island Development: A Strategic Framework for Developing the Offshore Islands of Ireland, set out the following Mission Statement -

To support island communities in their economic, social and cultural development, to preserve and enhance their unique cultural and linguistic heritage and to enable the islanders to secure access to adequate levels of public services so as to facilitate full and active participation in the overall economic and social life of the nation.

In terms of Strategy preparation specifically, key goals were set out with a view to producing a comprehensive Development Strategy for the West Cork Islands. The key goals are to provide a Strategy that will:

- Provide a framework for the physical, economic, social and cultural development of the Islands for the next ten years and beyond;
- Become an important source of information for the people of the Islands, other key stakeholders and potential investors;

- Give expression to the needs and requirements of the residents of and visitors to the Islands;
- Support viable socio-economic island communities in order that the population will be sustained and further increased; and
- Set out a series of actions to be implemented and monitored by the residents of the islands, the Inter-Agency Group and others as relevant.

4.0 ISLAND DEVELOPMENT - KEY DRIVERS FOR THE WEST CORK ISLANDS

4.1 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1.1 Introduction

This section examines the physical environment of the Islands and puts forward proposals, objectives and actions around a number of key areas including:

- Water, Wastewater, Surface Water, Flooding and Coastal Erosion
- Waste Management
- Broadband
- Energy
- Access to the Islands
- Rural Transport
- Environment
- Development
- Public Realm
- Landscape
- Housing

4.1.2 Strategic Aim

To protect and enhance the islands' valuable physical characteristics, landscapes and environments and to ensure that new development providing for improvements in the infrastructural, transport, economic, housing and recreational needs of residents and visitors occurs in a sustainable and integrated manner that is appropriate to the circumstances of the islands.

4.1.3 Water, Wastewater, Surface Water and Flooding

Water and wastewater infrastructure on the islands is generally not in keeping with best practice. This is largely related to the low population levels, isolated location and limited areas of defined settlement. Rerrin Village on Bere Island is the only area on the islands to have both a mains water supply and sewerage system. Surface water management, water supply and wastewater disposal on the islands are generally dealt with on a site-specific basis.

While levels of investment are curtailed in the current economic climate, infrastructural projects should be prioritized over the lifetime of the Strategy.

There are specific issues to be addressed on some islands to improve water supply infrastructure, such as Oileán Chléire and Bere. These issues are dealt with in the relevant island-specific sections of the Strategy.

The need for water conservation is a topical and important issue nationally. Education around the value of water as a resource and prudent use of existing supplies would encourage wise use of existing water resources on the islands. There may be opportunities for rainwater harvesting systems on some of the islands where major infrastructural works might not be viable and in the context of proposed domestic water charges, this might reduce future costs of water supply to the islands. A simple measure would involve the provision of rainwater butts at an affordable price. Carrying out a pilot project on the islands could provide results to evaluate the potential benefits of such a scheme.

It is noted that there is a back-up desalination plant on Oileán Chléire. The benefits of this system should be examined with a view to considering this method of water supply for the islands. Island-based local authority staff generally have a role as water curators and the retention of such staff for maintenance can improve the functioning of island water supply systems.

In terms of the protection of sources of water supply, which are limited in an island situation, the appropriate treatment of wastewater is essential. This is also a key consideration in terms of general environmental improvement and protection of habitats. Wastewater on the islands is generally disposed of to septic tanks or individual treatment systems. Generally the Ministerial proposal to license existing septic tanks and treatment systems and the introduction of the most recent EPA Standards on wastewater disposal throughout County Cork will have a role in improving water quality. Island residents should be kept up-to-date on the proposed roll out of such schemes and be prepared accordingly for their implementation. Again, there are specific issues with wastewater treatment on Bere Island, which need to be addressed given the limitations of the current system at Rerrin and these are discussed later in the specific section on Bere Island.

Infrastructural deficits on the mainland serve to constrain the development of the key service towns for the islands. The implementation of the schemes identified under the Water Services Investment Programme for the relevant West Cork mainland settlements can have positive implications for the islands.

Apart from the combined sewer in Rerrin, there are no collective surface water disposal systems on the islands. Furthermore, there are no flood relief projects. It is however acknowledged within this strategy that climate change may generate requirements for flood relief or tidal surge protection. Relevant plans should be subject to Flood Risk Assessment and other policy documents proofed for implications in terms of flooding.

The importance of measures to deal with surface water and flooding on the mainland are considered in this Strategy. The islands are reliant on roads and facilities on the mainland for access and services. Flooding of vital access routes and service towns has implications for the islands in terms of accessing services. Any works to prevent or relieve flooding of mainland roads and towns that affect the islands should be supported.

Coastal erosion impacts on islands, as well as the nearby mainland, through damage to infrastructure including piers, roads, coastal walks and agricultural and other fencing. Serious erosion can also affect buildings in specific instances. Appropriate works should be carried out to protect important infrastructure where this is under threat on islands, however care should be taken to ensure any protection works are in keeping with Integrated Coastal Zone Management principles (discussed in the Access section of the Strategy in more detail). When designing and implementing any coastal protection infrastructure, it is necessary to balance coastal protection requirements with environmental and socio-economic impacts, such as ensuring safe access to an island.

Objective PD1: *To support the progression of necessary infrastructural projects to ensure appropriate provision of clean drinking water and treatment of wastewater on the islands*

Objective PD2: *To consider flood risk and climate change in terms of the future development of the islands*

4.1.4 Water, Wastewater, Surface Water and Flooding Actions

Short Term
<i>Develop island priority listing for infrastructural projects</i>
<i>Support the progression of the Water Services Investment Programme for the relevant service towns for the islands in West Cork</i>
<i>Organise information meetings on water conservation methods</i>
<i>Assess benefits and drawbacks of desalinisation as a water supply option</i>
<i>Investigate the benefits of rainwater harvesting for island communities and implement a pilot scheme to provide affordable rainwater butts on the islands</i>
<i>Promote sustainable drainage practices on the islands</i>
<i>Support the retention and expansion of local authority infrastructure works staff on the islands</i>
<i>Inform islanders of developments on licensing requirements for existing septic tanks/treatment systems or domestic water metering</i>
<i>Increase awareness among islanders of the new EPA on-site wastewater treatment standards</i>
<i>Consider potential implications of climate change for existing facilities, activities and</i>

<i>planned developments</i>
<i>Policy proof relevant documents to ensure implications of climate change are considered</i>
<i>Implement flood relief works on mainland routes and key service towns for the islands where necessary and feasible</i>
<i>Carry out flood risk assessment of relevant development plans</i>
<i>Implement protection works against coastal erosion where these are necessary and appropriate</i>
Long-term
<i>Implement a number of key infrastructural projects on the islands</i>
<i>Monitor any flooding events and continue to carry out flood risk assessment for relevant development plans</i>

4.1.5 Waste Management

Current systems of waste management on the islands are generally community based with collection from mainland piers. These systems operate as part of Waste Management Plans that have been developed for individual islands. There are varying degrees of success in the implementation of the schemes and the level of infrastructure also varies between the islands. The Strategy seeks the implementation of suitable waste management measures and provision of appropriate levels of infrastructure for all of the islands. Optimum waste management solutions will vary between the islands given their differing populations, access arrangements, and community development structures. It is considered essential that island communities work closely with service providers and take collective responsibility for the management of their waste to ensure the

successful implementation of waste management schemes.

In terms of waste management, the waste management hierarchy approach should be applied at individual island level. The focus is on prevention of waste generation, through minimisation of waste produced, working through the tiers in the appropriate order to ultimately reduce the volume of waste that needs to be disposed of to landfill. The waste management hierarchy is illustrated below in Figure 1.

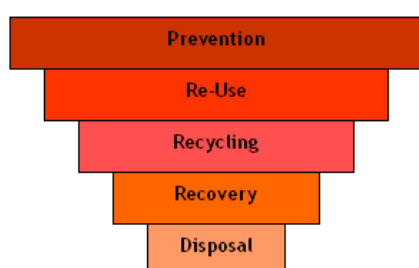


Figure 1: Waste Management Hierarchy

It is considered particularly important to minimise waste generation and ultimately the volume of waste that leaves the islands, as there are both environmental costs and financial costs associated with transporting waste to the mainland.

Composting of organic waste would reduce the quantity of waste and generate a product that can be reused on the islands. The implications of an EU directive preventing food waste from being disposed of to landfill is of note in this context. The local authority encourages home composting (in schools as well as households), and there is scope to consider providing communal vermin-proof compost facilities on larger islands.

Encouraging visitors to islands to bring away waste generated by them when on an island is a simple step to avoid unnecessary build up of additional waste on islands. Some islands implement a ‘no litter bin policy’ to encourage this. This concept should apply to all of the islands. Visitors should be informed of this policy before visiting the island where possible, for example through a simple message contained on tourist brochures or at pier information points.

A significant amount of waste that requires gathering and collection from islands results from dumping at sea. Such waste can be washed ashore from boats in local waters but also from distant sources. Increasing awareness among boat owners and users of the implications of dumping at sea for coastal communities and their environment is recommended. This can be carried out locally through information campaigns and education. Support for more regular clean-up activities should be encouraged.

Waste management facilities on Bere Island are particularly notable in terms of good recycling and reuse practice. Both a paper shredder and baler and glass crusher at the community recycling centre allow the development of reusable and saleable products while reducing the volume of waste that needs to leave the island, thus reducing the cost of waste disposal.

The type of waste collection system should be tailored to the specific needs of each island. For example, collection of residual waste and dry recyclables from mainland piers currently operates well for islands such as Oileán Chléire.

However, the current systems on some of the smaller islands are inadequate, on Whiddy for example, and improved systems are needed. Effective waste management would reduce the need for islanders to travel long distances to dispose of waste, which is clearly an unsustainable practice. A more user-friendly system would also reduce the practice of backyard burning and illegal dumping.

Options which offer value for money to both island communities and the local authority should be considered. For example providing occasional truck collections for certain waste streams from the islands may be a more viable option than weekly collection from mainland piers. Free electrical recycling collection days have been held over the past three years on the West Cork Islands (Sherkin, Long, Heir, Bere and Oileán Chléire). However, there is a need for appropriate, well-managed storage facilities for such options to be successful.

One of the main topics arising in discussions on island waste management is the removal of older cars from the islands. It is noted that most islands avail of an occasional service, e.g. annual collection, whereby cars are removed by barge from the islands. The current approach to car ownership on the islands needs to change. There is a role for island communities to take responsibility for the number of vehicles that they own with a view to minimising the number of cars that require collection from the islands. While it is acknowledged that island-based cars are exempt from the National Car Test, islanders should also ensure that their cars are maintained in a safe condition.

Objective PD3: *To reduce the generation of waste on the islands and promote a culture of waste minimisation and re-use*

Objective PD4: *To improve waste management facilities on the islands and at relevant mainland locations*

4.1.6 Waste Management Actions

Short Term
<i>Foster a sense of community responsibility among islanders towards waste management and waste management infrastructure on the islands</i>
<i>Transfer and share ideas on waste management between islands</i>
<i>Continue to develop and implement waste management plans for the islands</i>
<i>Identify community-based solutions for islands where waste management plans are not working satisfactorily</i>
<i>Provide information sessions on waste prevention minimisation and re-use on the islands</i>
<i>Continue to actively promote and facilitate home composting on the islands</i>
<i>Develop communal composting facilities on larger islands</i>
<i>Expand 'no litter bin policy' across all islands and advise visitors of this policy</i>
<i>Increase awareness locally of the implications of dumping at sea</i>
<i>Support regular clean-up activities on islands</i>
<i>Develop the provision of glass crushers and paper shredders on islands other than Bere</i>
<i>Continue practice of annual electrical recycling days on the islands</i>
<i>Seek to reduce the numbers of cars owned by island households</i>
<i>Encourage islanders to maintain cars in a safe condition</i>

<i>Explore opportunities for affordable and practical solutions to car removal from islands, such as direct contact with ELV (End of Life Vehicles) scrapping facilities</i>	constraints. Reliable services are essential if web-based enterprises and other businesses who use internet and email regularly are to operate effectively. Reliability of service provision is also required for the development of video-conferencing facilities.
Long Term	
<i>Provide capital funding for waste management plan implementation</i>	
<i>Minimise the volume of waste requiring removal from the islands significantly in accordance with set targets</i>	While provision is least cost-effective on the more remote or least populated islands, there is arguably a greater need for broadband in such areas to reduce the impacts of distance and isolation.

4.1.7 Broadband

Broadband services can play a key role in island development by helping to overcome the isolated nature of island locations. There are varying degrees of provision on the islands, with Bere Island enjoying a good level of service following a successful application to the West Cork Enterprise Board in 2007 and high take-up following implementation of the telephone exchange upgrade. Some level of provision is available on all islands, however the quality and extent of coverage requires improvement. There are current proposals for improvements to the service on Oileáin Chléire under the National Broadband Scheme.

The provision of comprehensive and efficient broadband facilities on the islands can facilitate distance learning and home-based employment opportunities. It can also provide a useful resource for the development of tourist facilities such as guest accommodation and ferry booking. The availability of high quality broadband may also encourage visitors or holiday homeowners to spend longer periods on the islands.

Land-based broadband, while it has improved services significantly on the islands, has

There is a need to support the further development of broadband on all of the islands currently lacking full coverage. Effective broadband infrastructure provision over the lifetime of the Strategy would significantly assist in the implementation of goals related to tourism, enterprise, education, health and social inclusion. Careful consideration of the most appropriate forms of provision for each island should be based on the most up-to-date technical advice.

There are continuing developments in the communications sector and the forthcoming BACOPT (Back-haul Optimisation on Heterogenous Wireless Networks) project, a joint research venture between UCC and Altobridge Ltd., which seeks to considerably reduce the costs of mobile internet access for people living in remote areas (including boats and oil platforms) is one such example.

Objective PD5: To facilitate and improve the provision of broadband infrastructure throughout all seven islands

4.1.8 Broadband Actions

Short Term
<i>Identify most appropriate method of broadband for each island based on the latest technical advice</i>
<i>Identify opportunities to enhance broadband availability on the islands</i>
Long Term
<i>Support the roll-out of improved broadband facilities on all islands</i>

4.1.9 Energy

The key objective for the West Cork Islands in terms of energy demand and supply is to reduce the demand for and consumption of energy in the long term and to develop the islands as self-sufficient entities. Potential constraints arise to plans for development on the islands as they are reliant on mainland sources of power. In terms of the nature of power supply, Dursey, Long and Heir have single-phase electricity only. The ESB will respond to needs should future development on the islands require additional supply. However, the ESB currently has no plans to upgrade networks on the islands.

The movement towards self-sufficiency of energy supply is a key opportunity for the islands. This can be achieved through a number of separate approaches. The priority for the islands should be to reduce their demand for energy. Information on energy efficiency should be made available, new ideas on alternative energy sources should be investigated and the most appropriate solutions implemented for each island.

A reduction in energy demand can be achieved via insulation schemes such as the Home Energy Savings Scheme and by raising awareness among islanders about energy saving methods as promoted through the *change.ie* campaign for example. There are opportunities to reduce energy demand on the islands particularly given the older nature of the building stock.

The Warmer Homes Scheme aims to improve the energy efficiency and comfort conditions of homes occupied by low-income households. Regional community based organisations acquire and apply the skills to carry out the work, which includes attic insulation, draught proofing, lagging jackets, energy efficient lighting, cavity wall insulation and energy advice.

The Home Energy Saving (HES) scheme provides grants to homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes in order to reduce energy use, costs and greenhouse gas emissions. The scheme is open to all owners of existing houses built before 2006 and is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). Assistance is provided through fixed grants towards the costs of upgrade measures. Roof insulation, wall insulation, high efficiency boilers and heating control upgrades are covered under this scheme. Islanders receive a larger grant than mainlanders for the scheme. There is also a grant for households who choose to get a Building Energy Rating (BER) assessment before and after the works are completed.

Renewable energy sources present an opportunity for the islands to move forward in providing innovative solutions to energy needs.

These range from micro-renewable level interventions for specific premises or activities and larger scale projects that can supply whole island communities.

In terms of micro-renewables, island home owners should be encouraged to participate in the Greener Homes Scheme, whereby grants are provided to help homeowners buy a home heating system that uses a renewable energy source.

For community based power projects, detailed research into suitable and sustainable options for the West Cork Islands is recommended. This should include a review of existing and current relevant research from home and abroad. Energy sources which could be subject to detailed investigation include wind, wave, tidal, solar and biomass energy options. Given the relatively small scale of the islands, the development of a range of proposals on a single island should be avoided. A co-ordinated and planned approach to island energy self-sufficiency represents a more sustainable and affordable route.

There is an ongoing energy research project being carried out on the Aran Islands by the SEAI and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (DoCEGA). The results of this project should be reviewed when available to consider their applicability to and potential benefits for the West Cork Islands. The trial of electric cars is one aspect of this pilot scheme that may have potential for rollout on the West Cork Islands.

The Scottish Executive has recently announced proposals for ten commercial wave and tidal

energy projects in the Orkney Island area of Scotland. There are also proposals to power the Scottish island of Islay by tidal energy, serving 3500 residents and commercial outlets such as the islands distilleries. Work on energy provision for Scottish Islands demonstrates the potential way forward for Irish islands.

It is notable that the SEAI has a specific wave energy unit, based in West Cork, which could be a useful resource in determining suitable options for the West Cork Islands. The Marine Institute has also carried out some research on wave energy.

Careful consideration is required in terms of the erection and installation of wind turbines and other associated energy infrastructure given the sensitive landscapes associated with the islands and the fishing and aquaculture activities carried out in the surrounding waters. Local physical, economic and environmental circumstances will influence the type of technology or renewable power source best suited to the islands.

There may be potential for the islands to export energy to the grid in the longer-term if successful energy projects can be developed, thus providing the islands with an economic opportunity. The islands present a good opportunity for the implementation of pilot schemes, the outcomes of which could have national significance.

Objective PD6: *To reduce energy demand and consumption on the islands and encourage self-sufficiency of energy supply*

4.1.10 Energy Actions

Short Term

- *Examine the findings of the SEAI-DoECGA study on the potential use of wind and ocean energy to meet electricity, heat and transport requirements on islands.*
- *Identify opportunities for transfer of ideas assessed by the SEAI-DoECGA Study, such as electric cars, to the West Cork Islands*
- *Conduct research into the most suitable renewable energy sources for the West Cork Islands and develop a longer-term plan for the achievement of energy self-sufficiency*
- *Establish links with SEAI to explore opportunities for islands to generate their own energy through renewable methods*
- *Organise information campaigns on efficient energy use on the islands*
- *Organise an energy saving exercise on the West Cork Islands based on the recommendations of initiatives such as powerofone.ie and the change.ie carbon footprint calculator*
- *Promote schemes such as the Warmer Homes Scheme and the Home Energy Savings Scheme in order to reduce energy demand on the islands and actively seek a high take-up rate of such schemes on the islands*
- *Promote take-up of the Greener Homes Scheme to improve energy efficiency in heating schemes in island homes*

Long Term

- *Implement an 'Energy Plan' for some or all of the islands*
- *Support small-scale community based renewable energy projects in suitable locations in a co-ordinated approach to energy generation on the islands*

4.1.11 Access

Access is vital to island development. This section focuses on both strategic access to the islands as well as local access to the islands.

At a strategic level, access to the islands from outside of the West Cork area, including international access as well as from other parts of Ireland the county needs to be considered. Cork and Farranfore airports, Ringaskiddy ferry port and train stations in Cork and Killarney facilitate strategic access to the West Cork Islands. In this context, the recommencement of the Cork-Swansea ferry is noted as a positive recent development. The service reopens a point of access for visitors from the UK to the South West of Ireland, including West Cork and the islands.

Onward travel to the islands from the aforementioned strategic access points is via the national and local road network. The main routes of relevance are the N71 National Secondary Route and the R585 and R586 regional roads. These roads, along with other local roads to ferry/cable car departure points are also important routes for islanders for local access to mainland services.

Travelling to the islands is time-consuming due to the quality of the road infrastructure, particularly the regional and local roads. For

example, Baltimore, which is the main ferry point for Sherkin and Oileán Chléire, is accessed from Skibbereen via the R595, which is narrow in places, and to access Dursey Island's mainland cable car station it is necessary to travel along a narrow section of the R572 for a considerable distance.

It is important that the mainland road infrastructure for West Cork is maintained and improved where necessary for the benefit of the wider region and the islands. Signage at key junctions on approach roads should be improved in a co-ordinated manner for all islands and relevant departure points.

In terms of direct access to the islands by air, there is a helipad on Oileán Chléire and there are facilities at the Department of Defence property on Bere. The development of suitable landing facilities on all islands for emergency access at a minimum would benefit the islands.

For those without access to a car, access to the islands, both in strategic and local terms, is particularly time-consuming and would benefit from improvement.

Bus services of relevance to the islands include Bus Éireann routes to the key service towns and local rural transport schemes. The existing Bus Éireann services are essential for those islanders who do not have access to a car on the mainland. For some islanders however, there is no public transport linking the arrival point on the mainland to the nearby town, for example from Colla Pier to Schull for Long Island residents. The expansion of existing mainland based rural transport services in a manner that co-ordinates with the arrival and

departure of ferries/cable car to facilitate those visiting the mainland to avail of services, should be investigated.

Opportunities to enhance rural transport provision have greater potential where there is a regular Ro-Ro ferry in place. This facilitates a full rural transport service from island base to mainland destination or vice versa as the rural transport vehicle can travel on the car ferry.

Regarding access to and from the islands, ferries are the main mode of transport from the mainland. For effective and efficient ferry operation, and to facilitate islanders and visitors who use private boats to travel to and from the islands, it is essential to have appropriate coastal infrastructure in place. Island and mainland piers and other associated infrastructure are essential elements for island access. Major works are needed in some instances, such as at the pier at North Harbour on Oileán Chléire and in Baltimore generally. Improvement works have been carried out to the northern pier (ferry pier) in Baltimore in recent years. At these departure and arrival points, it is necessary to improve the provision of and management of signage for islands, ferries and parking; to provide accurate, current timetables; manage space for various pier users and provide proper shelters/public facilities.

Management Plans for piers and harbours relevant to islands and island access are necessary. A phased development of such plans can both improve the physical appearance of some of those locations and more particularly set out clear guidance for various users of the infrastructure. This section focuses largely on

ferry access, however ferries are not the only users of piers. The needs of other users such as fishermen and aquaculture workers, emergency services, residents and visitors with private boats and those engaged in marine leisure pursuits must also be accommodated.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) principles, which can have a strong role in island development generally, at a level of detail that lies outside of the scope of this Strategy, are considered particularly relevant to such management plans.

By learning from past experience, the techniques of ICZM can be successfully applied to the preparation of pier and harbour management plans. Key principles include ensuring there is a definitive project officer in place; ensuring public participation occurs as part of a consensus based approach; providing information in different formats; undertaking consultation between local, regional and national interests at an early stage; developing action plans to realise specific goals; strengthening co-operation between partners, establishing permanent mechanisms to keep this in place and ensuring that a management body for implementation is in place.

As well as taking into account the needs of the users of the relevant area, issues such as coastal erosion and water quality must be considered in developing a user management plan for piers and harbours. Some progress has been made to date on management plans for the relevant piers and harbours for the islands and this work should be continued.

Outside of large-scale infrastructure such as piers, access to the islands must also be considered in terms of alternative forms of mooring facilities. Additional moorings and berthage can facilitate island residents and also assist the marine leisure sector in developing this form of tourism on the islands.

In terms of specific operation of public transport to the islands, nationally, there has been a significant improvement in the provision of subsidised ferry services. These were introduced to reduce the additional costs associated with travelling to and from islands. Eighteen islands now benefit from such services. Subsidised passenger ferry services are in place for all of the West Cork Islands, bar Dursey, which is accessed via cable car. There are reduced rates for islanders, students and children and senior citizens travel free. The frequency and quality of ferry services are important for island residents, businesses and visitors. The Dursey cable car does not receive a subsidy under the same scheme. The cable car is provided as a service by Cork County Council.

Ferry services can be a contentious issue for islands and there is dissatisfaction among passengers, operators and agencies with services to some of the West Cork Islands, including issues such as timetabling, pricing, ferry location and the lack of regulation of competition on ferry routes. It is necessary to ensure that ferry contracts continue to be awarded in an open, transparent manner, with independent involvement, and that islanders are consulted on their needs when timetables are set in line with agreed procedures. Ferry Monitoring Committees are in place, however

support is needed to ensure that their role is fulfilled. There is a role for a local task force to input to any reviews of the contents of contracts, for example to take into account the needs of emergency services and to re-evaluate pricing. The introduction of County of Cork Harbour Bye-Laws by Cork County Council should assist in addressing issues relating to the proper and safe use of piers where more than one ferry provider is in operation.

A centralised, regularly updated ferry and cable car website providing information on ferry/cable car departure locations, timetables, fares, access facilities etc. would complement physical infrastructural improvements. This should be gradually expanded to provide booking facilities and integrated ticketing options.

There is a general lack of inter-island ferry routes in West Cork bar some services in the Roaringwater Bay area. The provision of inter-island routes should be investigated, particularly in terms of developing the tourist potential of the area.

The movement of goods to and from the islands is an additional cost to householders and businesses on the islands. Freight services are therefore important facilities. While regular roll-on roll-off facilities are provided for some islands and subsidised freight services are available to all of the West Cork Islands since January 2010, scheduled services are not available to each island. There is a need for more regular services to the affected islands. The availability of and pricing of subsidised freight services requires greater publicity.

The exception to the provision of passenger ferry services is the cable car service to Dursey, which is operated by Cork County Council. The cable car is discussed in detail in the Dursey section of this Strategy. The cable car currently operates for limited periods of the day and there is scope to improve the operating hours to improve access to the island. The cable car caters for passengers but also for freight and livestock. The cable car is the only one in Ireland and as such also has a strategic tourism role which will be discussed under the tourism section of the Strategy.

Objective PD7: *To improve facilities at island and mainland access points and develop clear programmes for use of infrastructure*

Objective PD8: *To create an integrated transport network between islands and the mainland service centres*

Objective PD10: *To improve ferry/cable car services*

4.1.12 Access Actions

Short Term:

- *Continue to improve and maintain mainland road network in West Cork*
- *Identify locations for helicopter landing areas on all islands*
- *Prepare and implement a common signage upgrade scheme for mainland access points and individual islands*
- *Agree a priority list of investment needs for island piers and harbours*
- *Consider needs for shelter, parking, power points, animal handling and loading facilities, toilets, information*

boards and other public facilities at island and mainland piers

- *Prepare new pier and harbour management plans in line with the concept of Integrated Coastal Zone Management*
- *Ensure clear and appropriate areas for equitable usage by islanders and mainlanders are available for transport operators, marine tourism operators, fishermen, residents and visitors at piers and harbours*
- *Engage with relevant harbour commissioners in the preparation of harbour management plans and other relevant activities*
- *Examine ferry timetables in relation to other public transport timetables*
- *Establish dedicated timetabled connections to and from island piers to mainland towns and villages in association with West Cork Rural Transport*
- *Establish a local ferry task force to input to ferry contracts*
- *Adopt bye-laws for ferry operations to the West Cork Islands*
- *Develop web-site with up-to-date information on all ferries and cable car*
- *Support proposals for integrated ferry ticketing and booking facilities*
- *Improve access to freight services for the islands and ensure information on subsidised freight facilities is available to all islanders*
- *Improve availability of berthage and moorings for leisure craft and other vessels*

Long Term

- *Support the improvement of the road network on mainland West Cork*
- *Develop an integrated rural transport system to include on-island rural transport, ferries/cable car and mainland bus services*
- *Apply for Capital Development Programme for Coastal Infrastructure based on the priority list when funding becomes available*
- *Investigate the potential for an integrated ferry service between islands for tourism purposes*
- *Investigate methods of developing an integrated ferry ticketing service*
- *Develop website to provide up-to-date details for all ferries and cable car.*

4.1.13 Island Roads and Rural Transport

Island roads are generally narrow but reasonably well-surfaced given the low levels of traffic. However, there are some road maintenance and surface water ponding issues in places. Some issues with the quality of private roads have been reported. Some island roads have been improved through funding from the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and Cork County Council.

There is a need to ensure that road maintenance on the islands is continued in times of budgetary constraints. More cost effective and time efficient methods of carrying out road maintenance works on the islands should be investigated. The use of island-based companies and workers where suitable would be an efficient way of carrying out necessary works. This would reduce the cost of such works by minimising travel time to

the location of the works. The island development companies could approve contractors and workers on the islands to tender to the local authority for such maintenance projects. This method could also be implemented for other infrastructural works on the islands.

There are rural transport initiatives in operation on three of the islands (Oileán Chléire, Bere and Sherkin Islands). The transport services in place on Chléire and Sherkin meet the ferries. The Bere Island service, supported by West Cork Rural Transport provides transport to Sunday masses on the island, evening events and travels on the ferry for mainland shopping trips, however services are limited due to funding. It is important to retain and enhance rural transport services where possible. These services play a role above and beyond a transport function, but contribute to the reduction of social exclusion and isolation on islands.

Objective PD11: *To improve the rural transport system on islands*

Objective PD11: *To develop efficient methods of carrying out infrastructural works on islands*

4.1.14 Island Roads and Rural Transport Actions

Short Term

- *Investigate more economic island-based methods of maintaining roads and other infrastructure on the islands*
- *Support West Cork Rural Transport initiatives including driver training, volunteer drivers providing rural transport to isolated areas and*

promotion of the social inclusion aspect of the service

- *Continue to develop synergies between the Rural Transport on Oileán Chléire and Sherkin Islands and Bere Island*
- *Develop initiatives and encourage use of rural transport by mainland residents to avail of services and facilities on the islands and facilitate visits for other purposes*

Long Term

- *Set up a transport sub group to highlight and identify issues and opportunities around the provision of transport both on the Island and with mainland connections*

4.1.15 Public Realm and the Environment

The public realm is publicly accessible space. Islands generally lack large public spaces present in mainland settlements, such as parks or squares. However given their size, limited traffic volumes and defined arrival points, there are areas of the islands that act as focal points, such as areas around piers, near beaches, at settlement clusters or villages and outside buildings that serve members of the public. These areas often influence the first impressions of visitors to the islands.

The appearance of such areas is important from both a tourism and investment point of view and in attracting potential new residents. Maintaining these communal areas, and indeed private premises on the islands, to a clean, tidy and attractive standard can encourage repeat visits from non-islanders and instil a sense of pride in residents. Islanders should be

encouraged to take responsibility for the maintenance of their islands and facilities and ensure that pride of place is maintained.

Entry into the Tidy Islands Section of the National Tidy Towns Competition should be encouraged, with Tidy Island Groups actively recording progress each year and making improvement based on judges comments and reports. An increased profile for this section of the competition, which is sponsored by the Islands Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, would encourage interest and should be supported. Currently, the Tidy Island category, while it is competed for at a national level, is classified as a minor award. Islands compete for other national awards on a population basis, which places them in similar categories to mainland villages. A locally run Tidy Island Initiative, such as an inter-island litter league, would encourage maintenance of the public realm on islands.

There are opportunities for small-scale improvements in terms of landscaping, signage, equipment and facilities in public areas on the islands. Any interventions in terms of new paving, planting, play areas or other public facilities should respect the unique character and rural and coastal settings of the islands. Improvements in signage should involve the removal of some existing signs and replacement with a smaller number of suitable signs and a single map-based sign at the arrival point. Improved access to community workers such as those employed under FAS schemes or the Rural Social Scheme would be a key resource for island communities in terms of maintaining and improving public areas.

It is important to respect the natural environment of the islands as this is a key resource and new development and works should be considered in terms of their impacts on the environment. There are Natura 2000 designated sites such as Special Areas of Conservation in the vicinity of some of the West Cork Islands and the protection of their integrity will present challenges for islanders going forward. Environmental awareness and education should be promoted on an ongoing basis on the islands.

Objective PD12: *To instil pride of place on islands through appropriately scaled and developed public realm improvements and ongoing maintenance of the islands' built and natural environment*

4.1.16 Public Realm and the Environment Actions

Short Term

- *Maintain communal spaces as clean and attractive areas*
- *Enter/continue to enter all islands in the Island Section of the National Tidy Towns competition annually and work to improve the profile of the island award category*
- *Initiate local inter-island tidy island/litter league*
- *Review reports from the tidy towns competition and work towards improvement on each island for the following year's competition*
- *Develop a programme of minor public realm improvement works for key areas on each island*

- Investigate potential for improved access to community workers to carry out improvement and maintenance works on the islands
- Identify needs for public facilities and infrastructure on each island such as toilets, playgrounds and picnic areas
- Develop clear policies on appropriate types of development and development locations on the islands in the forthcoming local area plans
- Encourage participation in annual An Taisce Spring Clean Day
- Set out clearly in forthcoming local area plans where appropriate assessments might be required for development proposals on the islands
- Promote the sustainable development of the marine and natural resources of the islands
- Consider proposed activities on the islands and surrounding waters in light of their implications for protected habitats
- Support environmentally focused educational initiatives on the islands

4.1.17 Landscape

According to the draft *Cork County Landscape Strategy* and the *Skibbereen and Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plans*, each of the seven inhabited West Cork Islands are classed as being of *Rugged Ridge Peninsulas* landscape character type, which is of national importance. This landscape type is located in the extreme southwestern corner of Ireland. Its predominant components include rocky peninsulas, separated by drowned valleys and

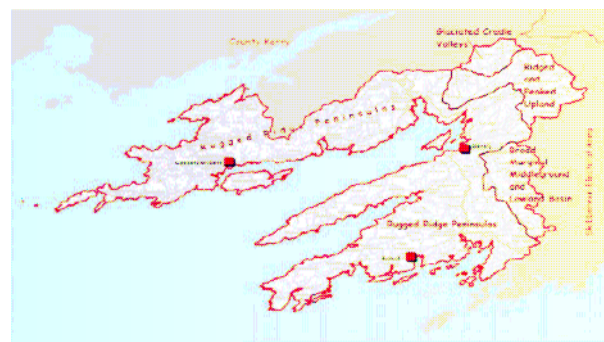
relatively low-lying bays, rocky promontories and islands extending out into the sea.

Roaringwater Bay contains many small islands, including Long and Heir Islands, while Bantry Bay includes Whiddy Island and the notably larger Bere Island. The exceptional depth of Bantry Bay is noted due to its capability of providing a natural harbour, which can accommodate large ocean-going tankers.

The built environment within this landscape is deemed high quality with the retention of vernacular buildings and high quality heritage buildings noted.

The landscape of West Cork including the islands is an asset that attracts both short-term visitors and long-term residents. The landscape is suited to recreational activities such as walking, marine leisure pursuits and visits to historical sites. It is noted that the terrain and scenic nature of the landscape can limit activities such as certain types of agriculture and built development. The Landscape Type of this area of West Cork is identified in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Landscape Type West Cork



Source: *Bantry EALAP, 2005*

The West Cork Islands enjoy high quality landscapes. This benefits the islands in terms of quality of life and economically in terms of tourism. It is important that the landscape resource of the islands is protected appropriately to ensure the continuation of these inherent advantages. The uninhabited islands play a role in contributing to these landscapes and this should be recognised. The scenic nature of the landscape does present challenges to those who live and work on the islands. There is a need to build a consensus when formulating relevant landscape policy. This process should acknowledge the challenges faced by islanders and develop appropriate solutions.

Objective PD13: *To promote and support the conservation and protection of the islands' landscape while acknowledging the challenge that this landscape can present for island communities*

4.1.18 Landscape Actions

Short Term

- *Raise awareness of the economic and quality of life impacts of the high quality landscapes associated with the West Cork Islands*
- *Acknowledge the potential of and positive aspects of the landscapes of both the inhabited and uninhabited islands in the forthcoming LAPs*
- *Ensure that any future review of Cork County Council's landscape strategy has regard to the unique characteristics and challenges faced by the inhabited and uninhabited islands in West Cork*

4.1.19 Housing

Population is generally declining on the islands. To attract permanent population on the islands, one issue to be addressed is the availability of affordable housing that can be occupied on a year-round basis.

There are a significant number of second homes on the islands and this affects the availability of the existing housing stock for permanent occupation. This is a persistent issue for most islands and is particularly noticeable on islands with low populations such as Long and Heir. The relatively high numbers of second homes on the islands, can boost the population and demand for services temporarily, thus providing some additional support to island businesses during those short periods of the year. However, the underlying impact, which overrides any short-term benefits, has implications for access to affordable housing for potential permanent residents.

Second homes are generally under-utilised as they are generally unavailable for short-term lets as well as being unavailable for permanent occupation. High demand for and access to existing housing stock for second home use drives up property value on islands, making it difficult for locals to compete on the property market. This holds true for those wishing to acquire suitable sites for new homes, which are more restricted on islands given their limited carrying capacity for new development. Increasing awareness of the implications of second homes is a first step towards achieving better occupancy rates of the existing housing stock.

It is important to distinguish between second homes and properly managed holiday homes which allow short-term letting and therefore tend to be occupied for longer portions of the year, thus making a greater contribution to island communities.

A detailed analysis of settlement and housing policy with a view to determining its suitability to and its impact on the West Cork Islands is necessary. This should inform the development of island specific housing policy.

In terms of providing social and affordable housing on the islands, there is no zoned land or development boundaries in the planning policy documents relevant to the islands and local authorities therefore can not avail of the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Acts to facilitate such needs on the islands. Other opportunities and mechanisms to provide social and affordable housing on the islands should therefore be explored. A voluntary housing association for the islands, or local authority provision through Compulsory Purchase Order under the Derelict Sites Act are two such options.

Given the ageing population profile of the islands, small-scale provision of sheltered housing for the elderly should be considered.

There are a small number of local authority owned housing properties on the islands, with the largest provision comprising a six-unit development on Sherkin. A new scheme is planned for Heir. Cork County Council operates island-specific policies on the sale of such units and there is merit in retaining these

policies, which recognise the special circumstances of the islands.

Settlement patterns vary between the islands, with generally dispersed patterns on Whiddy and Heir but clusters on Dursey for example. There are distinct examples of vernacular housing on most of the islands, including Congested Districts Board housing on Long Island and Heir Island.

There is little evidence of modern housing on the islands in comparison to the mainland, with housing stock notably older. The completion of a housing audit for the islands would confirm the condition and age of the stock as well as providing detail on the extent of the use of the dwellings and identifying potential for renovation and occupation. Some auditing has been done for Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann and this should be completed or updated as necessary. There are a significant number of ruins and derelict houses on most of the islands, particularly on Dursey and Long. Some former dwellings are used for agricultural and storage purposes.

The provision of good quality short-stay visitor accommodation as well as an increase in the number of permanent dwellings on the islands should be directed to renovation and conversion of existing dwellings or sites containing derelict or disused dwellings. A number of planning applications for renovations of ruined dwellings have been made to Cork County Council on islands such as Bere, Heir and Sherkin. This principle should be encouraged as a sustainable model for housing provision on the islands in a manner that does not detract from the

character of the islands. Attendance at local authority pre-planning clinics is recommended before such proposals are progressed however so that owners gain awareness of the issues that would need to be addressed when applying for planning permission.

The overall physical development of the islands including appropriate siting of and form of new buildings and structures will be addressed by the new *Skibbereen and Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plans*. These new plans should ensure that new building development is of an appropriate scale to the islands and sensitive to the local population, environment, culture and heritage.

It is important that such planning policy documents provide a reasonable degree of certainty for those proposing to develop on the islands. As with proposals for renovation, attendance at Cork County Council pre-planning clinics should be encouraged for all new housing development proposals on the West Cork Islands given the sensitive nature of the landscape and environment. Where new dwellings are proposed, sustainable practice is to locate these in or close to existing clusters of development and/or services. Design should respect the vernacular traditions of the islands housing stock and the *Cork Rural Design Guide* should be of assistance.

Objective PD14: *To provide housing for permanent occupation in a sustainable manner appropriate to the islands*

Objective PD15: *To improve the availability of affordable housing on the islands and to recognise and address the differing*

circumstances between island and mainland housing needs

4.1.20 Housing Actions

Short Term

- *Develop and implement innovative island-specific housing policy initiatives*
- *Investigate the potential for a voluntary housing association for the islands*
- *Increase the provision of permanent housing on the individual islands in a sustainable manner*
- *Maintain an island specific approach to housing policy regarding sale of local authority properties on islands*
- *Raise awareness of the implications of second homes for the islands*
- *Consider appropriate locations for new housing development on the islands, located in or adjacent to existing service clusters and/or clusters of existing development where applicable and appropriate in the preparation of the forthcoming Draft Skibbereen and Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plans*
- *Complete audit of existing housing stock on each island (type, size, age, standard, ownership)*
- *Review island housing waiting lists*
- *Investigate other alternative solutions to the provision of social and affordable housing, such as use of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) under Derelict Sites Acts*
- *Consider the needs for small-scale sheltered housing on the islands*

- *Retain policies that encourage respectful refurbishment of existing buildings on islands as opposed to new buildings*
- *Ensure islanders are aware of local authority pre-planning facility and encourage take-up of attendance at pre-planning clinics by islanders and others proposing new development on the West Cork Islands*
- *Promote the design principles contained in the Cork Rural Design Guide for renovations/extensions and new dwellings on the islands*

4.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4.2.1 Introduction

This section examines island economies and provides proposals, objectives and actions around the following main themes:

- Agriculture, Fishing and Aquaculture
- Economic Infrastructure and Enterprise
- Tourism
- Retail and Commercial Development

4.2.2 Strategic Aim

To maintain vibrant island economies, focusing on the skills and resources available on the islands, fostering new skills and acknowledging the benefits of mixed activities in island settings.

4.2.3 Agriculture, Fishing, Aquaculture and Food

Introduction

The West Cork Islands have inherent advantages in terms of their natural resource base, including access to the sea and a high quality landscape and environment. However, the relative remoteness of the islands, the limits to competitiveness for island businesses due to transport costs and journey times to markets, and difficulties in retaining a young population present challenges to all economic sectors of the islands.

Many islanders work in a number of different sectors to generate their overall income, as has traditionally been the case. Some of the key primary industries with strong traditions on the West Cork Islands are agriculture, fishing and

aquaculture; the latter has developed strongly in areas such as Bantry Bay in recent times. Appropriate measures to support the farming, fishing and aquaculture sectors would benefit efforts to retain population on the islands.

Economic development and population are intrinsically linked. Generally, economic opportunities impact upon population levels on the islands, while in turn, population levels and age profile influence the supply of new entrants to enterprises. This is particularly relevant to the areas of farming and fishing.

Agriculture

The Irish agricultural industry has undergone significant changes in recent years. Farmers are a declining proportion of the national workforce and the average age of farmers is increasing. The proportion of land under agriculture in Ireland is decreasing. However, the agri-food sector remains a key element of the Irish economy, when other inputs such as food processing and marketing are included.

The Strategy recognises that the agricultural sector contributes to the islands' economies. Island farmers are important customers for barge services for example, and thus improve the viability of such services.

The islands are identified as 'rural diversification areas' in current planning policy for Cork County. This is largely due to the less intensive nature of farming on the islands and the relatively weak population structure. The main type of agriculture

carried out on the islands is suckler cow and calf rearing and the fattening of dry cattle. There is also some sheep farming on the islands but this has declined. Some goat farming, vegetable growing and organic farming is also noted.

Farming on the islands is largely part-time in nature. However, it is the main economic activity on islands such as Dursey. The trend of depopulation on the islands has had a significant effect on agriculture, with very few farmers remaining on the West Cork islands as people increasingly take up residence or employment on the mainland.

Agricultural decline can also have environmental and visual impacts, as agricultural practices on islands contribute to the maintenance of the islands' landscapes when carefully managed.

Agriculture operates in an increasingly regulated environment and national policies and schemes should be island-proofed to ensure that the specific circumstances of island farmers are considered. There has been positive discrimination towards island farmers in the application of some schemes, such as the 17% top-up for island farmers in REPS and the additional payments available to island farmers awarded farm building grants.

Cost Reduction Measures

The additional costs associated with transporting animals to and from the islands, increased veterinary and contractor fees and additional costs in buying feed and fertilizer make it difficult for island farmers to compete with mainland farmers. There is no specific

aid to compensate island farmers for these particular costs. The movement of animals to the mainland can also be time-consuming. For example, only one large animal can be accommodated at any given time on the cable car from Dursey.

To reduce costs of agricultural inputs, animal feed, such as hay and silage, should be produced on the islands where possible. On the larger, more populated islands a cooperative, planned approach to the purchase of specific machinery could reduce the costs associated with employing mainland contractors. This could also generate income for some island households and contribute to improved quality of feed crops, as machinery would be more likely to be available at optimum harvesting dates.

It would be beneficial if mainland agricultural service providers offered greater flexibility to island-based farmers. For example, the farm plastic collection depots could be requested to accept waste plastic from island farmers for a number of weeks in advance of the recycling company's collection date. Currently island farmers are allocated a single day each year during which waste plastics can be brought to the depot. However, should difficulties arise on that particular day due to poor weather, island based farmers must wait until the following year to recycle their plastic.

Furthermore contractors and agricultural consultants should be made aware of the specific difficulties encountered by their island-based clients and encouraged to develop methods to provide services to island

farmers on an affordable basis. In order to facilitate service providers, groups of island farmers could operate a formal collective approach to the use of agricultural services and the transport of goods.

While many island farmers availed of the REPS scheme, take-up was not as high as expected. Contributing factors include issues of viability for mainland based REPS consultants, the proportion of island land owned by non-farmers and the level of dormant land. There was a limited time period for farmers to consider entry to the new Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS). Island farmers should be encouraged to avail of any future agri-environmental schemes as these are most suited to low intensity farming systems. The success of the current BurrenLIFE project, funded by unused single farm payment schemes is notable; this is a three-year agri-environmental programme aimed at supporting high environmental value farming in the Burren. The scheme could provide a useful model for the future management of agriculture on the islands.

The decline in agriculture on the islands has economic impacts, in that agriculture is traditionally part of a mixed income stream for many island households. Non-agricultural income and direct payments are important sources of income for island farmers. Therefore, it is important to avail of supports for on-farm diversification and opportunities for supplementary off-farm income. Island farmers should be fully informed of any relevant supports and schemes.

Diversification

Organic farming can be suited to islands as it can reduce the need for and therefore reduce the transport costs associated with inputs such as sprays and fertilizers. While organic systems are labour-intensive, this can be supplemented by workers from the Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF) movement. Sourcing workers through this scheme has the added benefit of attracting additional temporary residents to the islands. There are a number of organic farms on Oileáin Chléire.

A number of the islands, such as Dursey and Bere, have substantial upland areas. Uplands require careful grazing management to ensure agriculture is sustainable in the future. A management plan for island upland areas would be beneficial. The uplands also provide opportunities in terms of setting out a viable direction for organic farming. The 'Organics with Altitude' initiative, for example seeks to develop a certified organic meat product from the Irish uplands and could suit production on some of the West Cork Islands.

There has been a recent resurgence in private production of vegetables and fruit on the mainland. In urban contexts, allotments and community gardens are increasingly common. Private or communal vegetable gardens should be developed on the islands to encourage self-sufficiency on a seasonal basis in vegetables and certain fruits. There may also be opportunities for the development of enterprises on some of the islands in this sector. Vegetables are being grown currently on part of the fish farm site on Oileáin Chléire for example. The rearing of domestic fowl on

the islands should also be encouraged at an appropriate scale. Birds are less costly to transport to the islands than large animals and it should be possible for islands to become self-sufficient in fresh eggs from a small number of producers.

The development of locally-farmed products and locally grown or reared inputs to other food products should be supported through appropriate training and mentoring and the establishment of market presence.

The use of agricultural land for the production of biomass fuel on islands should be carefully considered in the context of energy plans for those islands.

Options for additional income from non-farming activities, which would facilitate the implementation of the Strategy's tourism section, include the development of a high quality network of on-farm bed and breakfast/guesthouse accommodation, which can provide visitors with an enhanced experience of the islands while boosting income for island farms.

Fishing & Aquaculture

The sea is a key resource for the West Cork Islands. The central role of fishing to island communities is an integral part of island cultures and traditions. It provides an important source of income for many island households.

There has been a decline in fishing practices on the islands and the future role of commercial sea fisheries is uncertain in terms of its ability to provide sufficient levels of income to island

communities. However, some fishing activity is carried out on all of the inhabited West Cork Islands.

The Comhar na nOileáin report *Sustaining Island Livelihoods* provides statistics on fishing on the West Cork Islands. Bere Island has the highest number of fishing boats of these islands. All of the boats on Bere hold general polyvalent licences with some boats on Sherkin, Heir and Chléire confined to potting activities only. The level of employment provided by fishing and aquaculture is generally proportional to the population of the islands. Employment is largely seasonal and part-time and the level of earnings from fishing are concentrated into specific seasons depending on the species landed. As with island farming, there is a need for income supports to ensure adequate household income and a need to attract younger people into the sector.

The main species fished off the West Cork Islands are lobster, scallop, shrimp, crawfish, brown crab, velvet crab, spider crab, whitefish, mackerel, winkles, prawns and mussels. Lobster, scallops, shrimp and mussels are the most valuable species landed. Concentrating on landing sustainable volumes of high value products and building on successful small boat activities can maximise the earnings possible from fishing and aquaculture.

Issues affecting commercial fishing and aquaculture nationally disproportionately affect island fisheries. These include a decline in fish stocks, industry regulations, market access problems, fuel prices, the loss

of drift net salmon fishing and the size and age of the fishing fleet. The declining and ageing population on the islands exacerbates these issues. Some island fishermen have had to acquire larger vessels and move these to the mainland to compete in larger scale fishing markets. Recent studies have found that small-scale fisheries are the most sustainable on islands, particularly where they form a part of a mixed household economy.

Fishing and aquaculture (as well as agriculture) operate in a highly regulated environment, which can deter new entrants and prevent practices such as dual licensing for fishing and passenger use. Conversely, lack of enforcement of legislation can result in illegal fishing practices and cause difficulties for those depending on fishing as a livelihood. These issues affect the West Cork Islands in common with other fishing communities. Fish stock conservation should be encouraged at a local level.

Aquaculture has proved to be a successful diversification for the areas around some of the West Cork Islands and there are further opportunities in this area. The Bantry Bay area is well-known for its mussels. The development of aquaculture should be progressed carefully in appropriate locations and managed as part of overall plans for island waters. Appropriate training and development is required as is the necessary licensing, which can prove difficult to obtain.

Land-based fish farms have also been developed on some islands, including the abalone farm on Bere. There have been problems with land-based fish farm enterprises

in the past, due to disease for example, and any proposals for new land-based fish farms should be carefully assessed to ensure viability.

Infrastructural constraints to the sustainable continuity of fishing on all islands should be addressed. Boat repair facilities, stores, cold storage, cranes etc. would benefit the fishing operations on the islands. Pier and harbour management plans would benefit fishermen as the use of infrastructure such as piers is shared with other users. There is a role for local management agreements to ensure fishing and other uses have sufficient and appropriate spaces at piers.

Harbour management plans should consider the optimal location of aquaculture facilities to allow the development of this sector in a manner that does not hinder other marine users. At the time of writing, funding for aquaculture was not available as the relevant Operational Programme had yet to be agreed between the government and EU. This agreement is pending the resolution of matters relating to environmentally designated sites such as Special Areas of Conservation.

There are some representative groups in place for fishermen on the islands and West Cork area, including Cumann Iascairí Chléire. Local level representation for those involved in fishing and aquaculture on the islands would assist in securing improvements through liaison with national bodies. Such representation could be developed on a seven islands basis for the West Cork Islands, which would allow the pooling of resources and the sharing of information. It is worthwhile

considering the best use of available funding, such as that granted under the Salmon Hardship Fund in terms of its potential to improve operating conditions for island fishermen.

If the availability of high quality fresh seafood on the islands and the nearby mainland centres was increased it would strengthen the local food product and assist in the development of a restaurant culture on the islands to attract visitors. The seafood festival held recently on Bere and Whiddy is notable as it promotes the local seafood product and is one method of building on the reputation of West Cork's seafood produce. The existing West Cork Fuchsia branding could support the local seafood product as well as other island food products. Certification for products in terms of sustainable practices and/or organic produce could bring added value to the output of island fisheries.

Island fisheries are supported by other elements of this Strategy including actions on island-proofing of policy documents, coastal erosion, dumping at sea, infrastructure improvements, enterprise development, ICZM and pier/harbour management plans and support for the celebration of the maritime and marine heritage on the islands.

Training & Development

Generally, there is a need to develop the concept of farming, fishing and aquaculture as enterprises and businesses in their own right and improve the morale and confidence of workers in these sectors. Local facilities and supports for training should be capitalised upon (e.g. the Regional Fisheries Centre in Castletownbere, the BIM Seafood Development

Centre in Clonakilty, Clonakilty Agricultural College and locally-delivered support services provided by the WCEB, Comhar na nOileáin Teo. and the VEC). With specific reference to seafood products, the WCEB, in association with BIM organise a Seafood Management Development Programme, which should be promoted among islanders working in or interested in this area.

Objective ED1: *To support and improve the economic sustainability and viability of agriculture, fishing and aquaculture*

Objective ED2: *To support diversification and innovative measures to add value to products in the agriculture, fishing and aquaculture sectors and provide appropriate training*

Objective ED3: *To support families engaged in agriculture, fishing and aquaculture on the islands*

4.2.4 Agriculture, Fishing, Aquaculture and Food Actions

Short Term

Agriculture

- *Reduce costs of inputs to island agriculture by producing animal feed on islands where possible*
- *Encourage planned, co-operative approaches to the purchase of machinery by island farmers to reduce the need for contractors*
- *Liaise with mainland agricultural service providers to encourage flexibility in their approach to island farming*

- *Formalise a collective approach among island farmers for dealing with mainland suppliers and services*
 - *Liase with farm plastic collection depot operators to request an extended period for acceptance of waste plastics from island farmers*
 - *Review BurrenLIFE project as a potential model for low intensity agriculture on the islands*
 - *Prepare management plan for common areas/uplands on the islands in conjunction with relevant experts*
 - *Investigate the potential for developing the organic product of the islands including the possibilities of the 'Organics with Altitude' concept and the WWOOF movement*
 - *Encourage islanders to move towards self-sufficiency of vegetable supply on a seasonal basis*
 - *Encourage islanders to keep domestic fowl to supply the islands with fresh eggs*
 - *Promote the development of farm-based bed and breakfast/guesthouse accommodation on the islands*
- *maximise the potential of this facility in relation to developing value-added seafood and other food products*
 - *Support the establishment of a West Cork Islands' representative group for fishing and aquaculture Consider location of aquaculture sites within the context of Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans for Bays and Harbours*
 - *Protect the overall marine resource through sustainable practices in fishing and aquaculture to conserve and enhance stocks*
 - *Establish local working group to consider freight requirements of island fishermen and farmers and investigate measures to reduce costs*
 - *Provide storage facilities for fishermen at or near island piers where appropriate*
 - *Investigate potential of further land-based fish farms on the islands*

Fishing & Aquaculture

- *Support the sustainable development of the marine resource of the islands*
 - *Make optimal use of the facilities afforded by the Regional Fisheries Centre in Castletownbere*
 - *Develop island specific action plans for appropriate seafood harvesting and produce development*
 - *Develop links with the BIM seafood development centre in Clonakilty and*
- #### **Training**
- *Provide life coaching and mentoring facilities to assist farming and fishing families in making changes in their traditional practices and ways of life to sustain appropriate levels of income*
 - *Promote seafood development programme run by BIM and WCEB*
 - *Provide training for islanders on branded food products*
 - *Provide food training for tourist operators*

General

- *Develop awareness of farming and fishing as enterprises*
- *Promote positive perceptions of and positive self-image among island farmers and fishermen*
- *Support diversification into niche markets, food and agri-tourism*
- *Provide information to island farming and fishing families on income supports and aids for diversification*
- *Secure local markets and local selling places both on islands and mainland centres for island food produce*
- *Develop island brands of seafood produce and encourage island producers to achieve quality and sustainability certification for seafood*
- *Investigate opportunities for island linkages to the West Cork food trail*

Long Term**Agriculture**

- *Carry out a feasibility study on the viability of on-farm energy crops on the islands as part of the development of an overall island energy plan*
- *Assess any future agri-environmental schemes in terms of their potential benefits for island farmers and encourage and assist in take-up where appropriate.*

Food

- *Support and develop an expanded range and standard of food and accommodation offer on the islands with a view to increasing availability of locally produced fresh products*

- *Achieve Fuchsia branding for island food products*

4.2.5 Economic Infrastructure and Enterprise on the Islands

According to *Sustaining Island Livelihoods* (Comhar na nOileáin) Bere Island and Sherkin are two of only three non-Gaeltacht inhabited islands nationally that have the level of economic infrastructure to support local development and facilitate sustainable year round employment. Outside of the more prevalent activities of farming, fishing, aquaculture and tourism, the majority of enterprises in existence on the West Cork Islands, such as construction/plant hire, boat yards, craft enterprises, leisure activity providers and translation services, are found on the larger islands of Bere and Oileán Chléire. There is a strong entrepreneurial spirit on Heir and Sherkin. The existence of Conoco Philips Bantry Bay Terminals on Whiddy is notable as it is the only large-scale employer on the West Cork Islands and has a strong place in Whiddy's identity.

Several businesses have been funded on the West Cork Islands in recent years through schemes that support enterprise development, including a restaurant, boatyard, dry dock facility, sailing school and boat tour enterprise.

Enterprise supports are operated by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, the West Cork Enterprise Board and Comhar na nOileáin Teo. Údarás na Gaeltachta support enterprise development on Oileán Chléire. Cork County

Council provide a 50% concession on rates for island businesses and there is also a 70% reduction on development contributions for those developing new facilities permitted by the local authority. This is a practical example of island proofing/locally agreed positive discrimination towards islands that may be transferable in principle to other organisations.

This Strategy recognises that further employment is necessary in order for the islands to experience economic growth and to attract investment. Education and training courses can provide skills to islanders to diversify into new employment sectors and to help identify niche markets appropriate to the development of commercial services and facilities on the islands.

Potential Employment Opportunities

New enterprise should focus predominantly on the skills and resources of the islands. Marine support services have been successful on some islands. Applications for a new course in Fishing Vessel Shipwright Practices have just been advertised and training opportunities of this type can support local enterprise development and the handing on of specialised skills. The course is discussed in more detail under the education section of this Strategy.

The arts and crafts sector on the West Cork Islands is also growing. This sector is already supported by the Visual Arts Course on Sherkin and craft courses such as basketry offered on Bere. Arts and craft products can serve both local and tourist markets.

Another area worth exploring for further enterprise development is island-sourced

seaweed products (e.g. food, healthcare, cosmetics, horticulture and animal feed). Companies such as Arramara Teoranta in Connemara have enjoyed success.

There are opportunities for the islands to tap into the film/TV industry; the Beara peninsula has been the chosen location for a number of high profile productions such as *Falling for a Dancer* and *Ondine*. Links to this industry should be explored and developed to attract further productions to the West Cork area, including the islands.

New entrepreneurs should take into account the additional costs associated with moving inputs and goods to and from the islands, which affects competitiveness and need to focus on appropriate markets, minimise transport requirements and consider providing less costly types of services.

Information Technology

Improvements in broadband should be prioritised for the islands as this facility can counteract the effects and costs of remoteness and distance. Video conferencing facilities would also benefit the islands' business community. Shared facilities in a communal space are the most cost effective way of providing this service. These facilities should also be available for education, health and other community purposes.

The Islands as Service Providers

With proper supports and careful consideration of the type and scale of enterprises, the islands have the potential to develop a mainland catchment in addition to serving the needs of island residents and

visitors. In essence, the islands can become service providers for their own populations and a wider mainland market. In effect, this is already occurring in some successful island based initiatives, e.g. the Irish colleges on Oileán Chléire, the dry dock facility on Bere, the DIT art course on Sherkin and the Island Cottage restaurant on Heir, all of which provide an island-based service with a mainland custom or patronage. The extension of this concept should be considered in terms of the provision of public and state services for example and in the consideration of new private business ventures.

If the status of the West Cork Islands in the forthcoming Draft Skibbereen and Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plans is changed to accord a higher profile than the current 'other locations' designations it would support the development of such a concept.

Micro-Enterprise and Home Working

Micro-enterprises are particularly suited to the islands. The scale of the catchment available and the time and cost of travel to the islands curtails the potential of the islands as bases for the establishment of larger businesses producing certain goods and services.

Home working can provide opportunities for sustainable employment, particularly where the appropriate IT supports are in place. A forthcoming study by the West Cork Development Partnership should provide guidance on potentially suitable options in this regard.

Supports

The development of enterprise can be encouraged by the provision of suitable training and supports, a clustering of inter-related activities, reliable IT and communication structures and sharing of information, spaces and facilities between island business people.

New facilities, groupings and supports for enterprise are recommended. Appropriate training needs must first be identified. Suitable branding and marketing can play a key role in the promotion of island businesses and the role of a West Cork Islands brand for food and craft products should be investigated.

The recently published Draft Review of Employment Needs and Economic Development Potential of the Islands (DoCEGA) acknowledges the additional costs of doing business on Ireland's islands, examines available supports and recommends further measures such as zero VAT rates on freight, the establishment of a panel of mentors for early stage entrepreneurs, the examination of the Business Expansion Scheme to make the islands a more attractive investment prospect and the carrying out of a pilot feasibility programme of integrated initiatives for the provision of island offices.

Objective ED4: *To develop and support innovative new businesses and suitably sized enterprises on the West Cork Islands*

Objective ED5: *To support the competitiveness and continued development of existing local business on the islands*

4.2.6 Economic Infrastructure and Enterprise Actions

Short Term

- *Island proof economic policy documents as they are put forward for consultation*
- *Maximise the use of the term ‘West Cork Islands’ as a place and theme throughout all activities*
- *Support the designation of the islands with a specific status other than that currently listed in the settlement structure in the relevant Local Area Plans*
- *Identify existing entrepreneurial skills*
- *Investigate training needs of islands by carrying out training needs analysis survey*
- *Increase awareness among islanders of Enterprise Board and other supports for island enterprises and vice versa*
- *Provide speakers or mentors on specific relevant business topics*
- *Provide appropriate enterprise courses based on the outcome of the training needs analysis*
- *Consider new micro-enterprise opportunities based on island resources and skills and the needs of islanders, visitors to the islands and users of the surrounding waters*
- *Investigate enterprise opportunities for start-up businesses and expanding existing businesses*
- *Investigate the feasibility of developing a technology centre on two/three of the islands enabling the use of video conferencing facilities and other communication advancements*
- *Identify sustainable business opportunities on the islands using broadband capability*
- *Encourage take-up of broadband where available*
- *Review the findings of the West Cork Development Partnership Study on home-working in terms of its relevance to the islands and support of home businesses*
- *Provide one-stop shops on the islands for access to information on enterprise supports*
- *Utilise multi-purpose spaces on islands to promote and/or sell island produce*
- *Investigate innovative approaches to reducing freight costs and support proposals for zero VAT rates for freight*
- *Tap into publicity from previous film activity in Beara the and Visual Arts course on Sherkin as well as developing crafts sector on islands including Bere and Heir*
- *Investigate the potential of seaweed related products*
- *Develop opportunities around marine-related services and products generally*
- *Investigate the possibility of apprenticeship programmes with island employers*

Long Term

- *Identify business opportunities around the provision of renewable energy projects on the islands*

- *Support the establishment of a West Cork Islands Business Group that includes traditional enterprises such as fishing and farming*
- *Promote the development of appropriately managed communal business spaces*
- *Create business learning networks using latest communication technologies in partnership with relevant bodies*
- *Develop West Cork Islands products and market these with Island branding*

4.2.7 Tourism

General

Tourism represents a key opportunity for the islands in terms of economic diversification, employment generation and the retention of young people on the islands.

Tourism development is also one of the main areas in which the islands can work together to raise their profile as an island grouping. A joined-up approach to tourism would allow the islands to maximise the potential benefits arising from West Cork's high profile in this sector and its success in award schemes such as tourism destinations of excellence. The co-ordinated marketing of the West Cork Islands will develop the concept of the 'West Cork Islands' as an identifiable destination within West Cork. The islands should be in a position to work together to offer inter-island visitor packages in future.

Inter-island events should be developed to promote the possibilities of multi-island breaks. For example, weekend walking festivals taking in the three Bantry Bay and Beara Islands or the

four Roaringwater Bay islands could be established. In the long-term opportunities for island hopping based on multi-island ferry routes would enhance the experience of the West Cork Islands for long-stay visitors. Increasing the number of visitors who stay overnight on the islands would increase economic benefits for the islands.

The local market has strong potential for the islands. There are many mainland residents who have not visited their local islands. Targeted marketing for day trips such as school tours or annual outings can be carried out at a local level. The wider domestic and UK markets and routes to international markets are also readily accessible through Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. The recommencement of the Cork-Swansea ferry link is timely as it should increase the number of visitors from the UK to the South-West of Ireland and thus increase the pool of overseas visitors who could be encouraged to visit the West Cork Islands.

Fáilte Ireland has recently published an updated brochure on Ireland's Islands, which includes features and information on the seven inhabited West Cork Islands. The main activities of interest to visitors are identified for each island. While there are common themes such as walking, each island has specific strengths to promote. The key strengths of the West Cork Islands in terms of tourism offering include culture and heritage, particularly military and maritime heritage and the Irish language; marine leisure pursuits; walking; and other outdoor activities such as cycling and birdwatching. The islands' environment, landscapes and built

heritage play a role in all of these activities. The need to maintain these in a clean and attractive manner is important in terms of achieving a good reputation among tourism promoters, attracting visitors and encouraging repeat visits.

Military Heritage

In terms of developing the military heritage aspect of islands such as Bere and Whiddy, links can be forged with other key sites within County Cork. This is timely in light of recent announcements relating to Spike Island. The island was handed over to Cork County Council in Summer 2010 to facilitate its use for tourism. Securing the development and the opening of Lonehort Battery as a visitor attraction on Bere Island is crucial to the development of the military history product on the West Cork Islands. In the long-term, this should be followed up by working to secure access to an additional island site such as the Middle Battery on Whiddy.

The heritage of the islands should be interpreted through leaflets, exhibitions or displays and guided or self-guided tours and walks. Such measures would improve the visitor experience of the islands. This is essential to encourage repeat visits and word of mouth recommendations.

Marine Leisure

The Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy (MLIS) carried out for the Western Division of Cork County Council provides a strong basis for the development of the marine leisure industry on the islands and within West Cork as a whole. The MLIS sets out a comprehensive programme to improve the use of the region's coastline and

associated marine infrastructure to facilitate the development of marine leisure activities. Proposals include harbour management plans, which should set out guidance for all harbour users including marine leisure users, and developing the potential of small piers for marine leisure use. Islands, by their nature, are inherently suited to marine leisure pursuits and therefore this Strategy supports the implementation of the Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy.

The MLIS advises that marine leisure activities should be clustered. Guidance on appropriate activities is provided for each area within West Cork. The specific marine leisure activities suited to the West Cork Islands include fishing/angling, diving, snorkelling, sailing, kayaking, rowing, whale and dolphin watching and other boat tours including cruises and rib rides.

When developing additional marine leisure activities, care is needed to ensure that the particular type of activity is appropriate to the particular island. Suitable facilities for marine craft storage and craft hire need to be provided. Tuition and instruction should be made available. Where wildlife watching is proposed as part of marine leisure activities, information on sightings should be recorded regularly and best practice should be followed when operating boats near animals. It is important to support inter-island marine leisure pursuits such as the existing boat tours around the islands of Roaringwater Bay and a potential sea kayaking trail.

Walking

The islands are ideal destinations for walking trips due to their size and topography, scenic nature and limited vehicular traffic. Waymarked walking routes are in place on some of the islands. Additional routes are being provided on an ongoing basis. The West Cork Islands can build on the existing and proposed infrastructure by developing walking events, continuing to market the islands as a walking destination and providing new way-marked walks and facilities for walkers on the islands where these are lacking. Any new walking routes should be developed in accordance with best practice based on locally available expertise.

Tourist Accommodation and other Infrastructure

The amount of, range of and standard of accommodation, food and visitor attractions varies across the islands and can be improved. Supporting infrastructure such as clear, well-located signage is necessary as is up-to-date and easily navigable online information.

Any new development for accommodation or other tourism purposes should be of a form and scale appropriate to the islands. For example, large new hotels would not be suitable for the islands, but the conversion of existing buildings for use as serviced accommodation or Bed and Breakfasts/Guesthouses could improve the quantity and range of accommodation. An increase in farm or other home based bed and breakfast/guesthouse provision would supplement agricultural and other incomes and offer visitors an insight into island traditions.

There are innovative examples of alternative accommodation provision in other sensitive settings that are suffering from population decline. One international example that offers new ideas for island-based accommodation, particularly on the islands with very low population and a high proportion of disused buildings is ‘Sextantio Albergo Diffuso’ in Santo Stefano di Sessanio in Italy. This hilltop village was suffering from population decline and a deterioration in its buildings. Disused buildings were restored and are used as a ‘hotel’ that has different functions located in several buildings, i.e. reception is located in one building and individual guest rooms, suites and restaurant are housed in separate structures around the village.

Accommodation providers should be encouraged to provide their own food offering where appropriate. This would increase the variety and quality of food options available for visitors. Food providers should be encouraged to use locally produced, seasonal produce where possible.

Given the uncertainty of Irish weather it is important that each island has at least one indoor facility for visitors. This could provide interpretation of island heritage and features and should offer shelter and rest facilities. This is particularly important for day-trippers or for walkers who may not have an accommodation base on the islands. The recently published Draft Review of the Employment Needs and Economic Development Potential of the Islands recommends indoor facilities such as games rooms for families.

The cable car to Dursey Island represents a significant piece of infrastructure that is of strategic importance in terms of tourism in the South West of Ireland. The cable car, which was replaced in 2009, is Ireland's only such facility. The cable car trip in itself is a unique experience in Ireland and its tourist potential should be maximised. It could attract additional visitors to Dursey, Beara and West Cork, with clear spin-off benefits for the West Cork Islands. A review of operating hours, pricing and promotion would support this objective.

Information signs for visitors to islands should be provided in a co-ordinated manner. They should be kept to the minimum number necessary, with existing areas of prolific signage tidied accordingly. Signs should be appropriately located and be of suitable size, design and material for their location.

Uninhabited Islands

The role of the uninhabited islands in West Cork must be acknowledged in terms of their role in enhancing the visitor experience to the area. Garinish Island for example, is a well-established day-trip from Glengarriff, combining the visit to the island's Italian Gardens with seal-watching on the boat trip. Views from the inhabited islands often include uninhabited islands that add interest for walkers for example (e.g. views of Chapel Island from Whiddy). Uninhabited islands are also an attraction for boat trips and kayakers for example, adding to the scenery enjoyed by those involved in such pursuits.

Objective ED6: *To market the West Cork Islands as an island group destination and instil*

the concept of the West Cork Islands as a destination in the tourist mindset

Objective ED7: *To expand on the tourist potential of all islands and to ensure a strategic approach to the delivery of tourist facilities on each island*

4.2.8 Tourism Actions

Short Term

General

- *Identify ways to encourage the length of visitor stay and the visitor season by expanding the range of activities, timing events for shoulder or low season and providing indoor facilities*
- *Support the development of package tours and day tours that include visits to the West Cork Islands*
- *Develop the 'school tour' and 'annual outing' visitor market locally*
- *Encourage island-hopping tours or ferry routes*
- *Increase awareness of the potential benefits of a sustainable level of tourism among islanders*
- *Maximise the potential use of the Failte Ireland Explore Ireland's Islands Brochure*
- *Prepare Island maps and information leaflets based on a common theme and standard and group these into a West Cork Islands' brochure*
- *Review and provide updates for the Discover Ireland website to ensure sections on the West Cork Islands are comprehensive and accurate*

- *Monitor opportunities for promotion of the islands, including entry to suitable tourism competitions*
- *Provide a key contact from each island's tourism sector to work closely with Fáilte Ireland*
- *Provide mainland tourist offices with accurate island information*
- *Build on recent Fáilte Ireland staff familiarisation days on the islands*
- *Produce an annual combined calendar of festivals and events on the West Cork Islands*
- *Record and monitor visitor numbers and prepare report on an annual basis*
- *Complete a tourism needs analysis with particular focus on training needs and provide appropriate training in areas such as web skills, food, event management, accommodation and guiding*
- *Identify opportunities for inter-island events*
- *Develop the strengths of each island as identified by the audit of attractions contained in the Explore publication*
- *Develop a work plan for the 'Discover West Cork Islands for a Day' activity*

Military Heritage

- *Prepare a plan for the development of the military history product on the West Cork Islands*
- *Liaise with developers of other proposals for military history tourism sites in County Cork and promote the concept of a military history trail*

Marine Leisure

- *Support and implement the recommendations of the Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy (MLIS) on a phased and priority basis*
- *Support the continued development of marine leisure activities that are identified as suitable for the West Cork Islands in the MLIS*
- *Develop linkages between island tourism representatives and West Cork Adventure Hub network*
- *Promote and develop shore and sea angling and other opportunities around fishing tourism*
- *Build on the existing facilities on the islands to promote sailing in the area*
- *Consider needs for winter storage of marine craft*
- *Encourage local involvement with the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group to record sightings*

Walking

- *Promote existing and proposed looped walks and develop walking tourism in general on the islands*
- *Review and evaluate Walking and Talking Festival held on Oileán Chléire with a view to developing future events on the West Cork Islands*
- *Increase number of walking routes on the islands*

Tourist Accommodation and Other Infrastructure

- *Ensure new facilities for tourism development are of a type and scale*

- appropriate to their individual island locations*
- *Encourage accommodation providers to develop their own food offering*
- *Encourage food providers to use locally produced, seasonal produce where possible*
- *Erect information boards at arrival points on each island and keep these up to date*
- *Ensure information points/offices on the islands have sufficient and up to date information for visitors where these are in place*
- *Update signage at visitor sites*
- *Support the provision of bicycle hire facilities on the islands*
- *Consider alternative and innovative accommodation options on the islands which avoid inappropriately scaled new development*
- *Maximise the tourism potential of the cable car to Dursey and promote this facility accordingly*
- *Develop a strong outdoor, marine and wildlife based tourism reputation through promotion of a range of activities that meet appropriate standards*
- *Investigate the potential to expand diving opportunities adjacent the islands through the provision of purpose-built wreck dive sites*
- *Develop sea kayaking trails around the islands*
- *Develop a multi-purpose and sustainable indoor facility on each island to interpret its history and heritage and provide information on facilities*

Uninhabited Islands

- *Consider the role of the uninhabited islands in developing tourism proposals for the inhabited West Cork Islands*

Long Term

- *Develop the appropriate infrastructure to allow 'island-hopping' holidays*
- *Support the proposals to provide cruise vessel berthing at Castletownbere and consider the potential for the Islands arising from this proposed visitor market*

4.2.9 Commercial and Retail Facilities

The Comhar na nOileáin Teo. Report 'Sustaining Island livelihoods' advises that there are two tiers of commercial infrastructure on Ireland's islands, depending on population. Islands with less than 10 inhabitants have little if any commercial facilities, whereas islands with more than 10 residents have at least basic levels of commercial infrastructure such as accommodation, a post office and food establishments. This generally holds true for the West Cork Islands with service provision in the main correlates with population.

Larger islands with higher populations such as Bere Island and Oileán Chléire can support more services than smaller communities on islands such as Long Island or Dursey. Larger communities tend to have more organised structures to facilitate the development and

organisation of facilities and events and to lobby for the retention and development of services.

The presence of relatively large facilities on the islands such as the Department of Defence barracks on Bere Island and the Irish colleges on Oileán Chléire is also a factor in the availability of facilities and services, as is the level and type of visitor numbers to individual islands.

There is some small-scale retail provision evident on the islands, including small convenience shops on Bere, Chléire, Heir and Sherkin. There are facilities to purchase comparison goods on some islands, such as at the craft shop on Chléire and the Heritage Centre on Bere.

In terms of retail provision on the mainland, Bantry, Castletownbere, Schull and Skibbereen contain supermarkets, with some small-scale convenience shopping also available in Baltimore and Allihies. The larger settlements are also the key service centres for the West Cork Islands in terms of comparison retail facilities, and the provision of commercial services such as banking, accountancy, auctioneering and solicitors.

The development and retention of services in the nearest mainland settlements should be supported to ensure goods and services can be provided as conveniently as possible to islanders. Baltimore for example, has a limited range of services and there would be merit in improving facilities there to reduce the need for islanders arriving at this location to travel further distances for services.

There are some facilities in place locally to assist islanders in carrying out convenience shopping, i.e. Field's Super Valu in Skibbereen offers a shopping service to deliver goods ordered to Cunnamore for the Heir Island ferry and to Baltimore for the Chléire and Sherkin ferries. Some ferry operators carry groceries for free; others apply a small charge. For other goods and services, it is noted that Drinagh Co-op for example, has a weekly delivery date for the provision of goods to its island customers.

Key issues for all businesses, including retail and commercial facilities, are limited markets, freight costs and relative isolation. The potential for island-based retail and commercial businesses to share appropriately scaled facilities should be examined. The provision of public buildings/spaces on smaller islands could provide a small selling area for island produce for example.

Objective ED8: *To support an appropriate level of retail/commercial services on the islands and in the key mainland service centres*

4.2.10 Commercial and Retail Facilities Actions

Short-term

- *Ensure that goods and services not available on the islands are conveniently provided on appropriate sites in adjacent mainland settlements so as to meet the needs of island communities*
- *Support retention of retail and commercial facilities on the islands*

- *Provide suitable selling spaces for island products and services*
- *Encourage innovative solutions to delivery of goods and services not available on the islands*
- *Improve transport service between mainland pier and nearby town for islands lacking retail stores*

Long term

- *Ensure availability of a base on each island where visiting commercial services can operate*

4.3 SOCIAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

4.3.1 Introduction

This section examines services, social and community infrastructure and representation under a range of topics and puts forward proposals, objectives and actions around these key areas:

- Island Population
- The Community Resource and the West Cork Islands Community Council
- Agency Support for the West Cork Islands
- Health Services
- Emergency Services
- Educational Facilities
- Childcare
- Community Facilities, Community Development and Other Public Services
- Sporting and Social Facilities and Activities
- Social Inclusion

4.3.2 Strategic Aim

To retain and support island populations, and ensure access to essential social and community facilities and services is available at an appropriate level.

4.3.3 Island Population

Any development strategy should be founded on the key assets and existing resources of the area it relates to. The SWOT analysis presented earlier includes island communities among the strengths of the West Cork Islands. Island communities are widely acknowledged as resourceful and resilient and the population of

the West Cork Islands is no exception. To retain even basic levels of regular service provision and support community and social facilities on the islands, it is crucial that the islands retain existing levels of population and increase inhabitants where possible.

The island communities in West Cork are well supported by their local development groups. Innovation and enthusiasm in terms of projects and approaches to local development is evident on visiting the islands. Island populations are declining however, and efforts are required to retain and enhance existing levels of population. Small changes in population levels can have significant implications for the ability of islands to retain service provision due to their isolated nature.

As discussed in the economic section there are potential opportunities for islands to provide services to the mainland and retain facilities based on a wider pool of users. This principle can apply to social and community services and facilities in the same way as it applies to enterprise. For example, mainland residents attend evening classes held in the heritage centre in Bere Island along with island residents. This boosts the numbers attending and makes the classes viable. Where the tutor travels from the mainland to teach the class on the island, pupils from the mainland can then avail of the special ferry service to facilitate travel to the class.

To expand on this concept, attendance of mainland children at island schools could be investigated, particularly where spaces at mainland facilities are limited and island

schools need additional pupils to retain teaching staff.

The improvement of the designation of the West Cork Islands in the settlement hierarchies of the Skibbereen and Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plans (LAPs) would be beneficial. The LAPs are currently under review and this Strategy is intended to inform the development of policy for the West Cork Islands in those plans. The islands are currently classed at 'Other Locations' in the LAPs, which comes at the end of the settlement hierarchy. Services are generally directed to settlements further up the hierarchy.

Population decline is one of the key challenges facing the West Cork Islands over the coming years. Decline in permanent population in particular, underlies many more of the issues faced by the island communities. All of the actions set out in this Strategy are intended to assist in retaining and restoring vibrant island communities.

Objective SC1: *To retain and enhance population levels on the islands*

Objective SC2: *To foster a spirit of appreciation of the island communities and support networks.*

4.3.4 Island Population Actions

Short Term

- *Give the West Cork Islands higher priority than the current designation as 'other locations' in the forthcoming review of the relevant local area plans*
- *Explore opportunities to increase attendance by mainland residents at*

social and community activities, events and facilities on the islands

- *Policy-proof relevant documents for impacts on island population*

Long Term

- *Support the local development groups on the West Cork Islands to continue to provide innovative solutions to island needs*

4.3.5 Developing the Community Resource through Establishment of a West Cork Islands Community Council

As set out earlier in this Strategy, one of the key aims of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group is to establish a voluntary representative structure for the West Cork Islands as an Island Group.

The proposed Community Council could speak for all of the islands' communities and work for their long-term overall interests, as a voluntary, collective, representative structure modelled on Muintir na Tíre.

The proposed West Cork Islands Community Council is not intended to take on the roles and responsibilities of existing local island development groups that have been set up for the islands and is not intended as a replacement structure. These groups are funded on a national basis and employ local development workers. It is vital that the process of establishing a Community Council does not undermine these fragile structures. The proposed new structure is intended to enhance the islands' community infrastructure as opposed to replacing or duplicating the existing structures.

It is acknowledged that in the current economic climate the local island development groups, along with their mainland counter-parts are operating under a reduced resource allocation while being requested to expand their work areas. The proposed Community Council structure must therefore be embedded in the existing community infrastructure of the islands, and driven by the existing local island development groups. The Council should add a more representational and collective approach to the development of the West Cork Islands, while ensuring that this is not at the expense of the individual requirements of the islands in terms of their need for local development support. This approach will facilitate the exchange of information and experiences between the island communities.

The local island development groups should drive the process of establishing such a representative structure.

Role and Functions

The West Cork Islands Community Council would have the following key roles and functions:

- Collective Representation of interests on all seven inhabited West Cork Islands
- Assistance with the implementation of the Integrated Strategy for the West Cork Islands in conjunction with relevant agencies
- Assistance with the implementation of other relevant plans as they arise
- Collective liaison with Statutory Bodies on behalf of islands

- Liaison with other agencies through the existing West Cork Islands Interagency Group and a future ongoing interagency structure as well as individually where required
- Promoting public awareness of the West Cork Islands as an entity and island group, while recognising the individual differences and specific issues pertaining to each individual island.

Benefits of a Community Council for the West Cork Islands

Going forward, it is considered that the establishment of a Community Council to represent the West Cork Islands as a single group has several important advantages that will benefit the island communities and those who visit the islands and work with island communities into the future. Advantages include:

- Potential for improved interaction and co-operation among the individual islands as an Island Group
- Provision of a permanent structure for co-ordinating development within the West Cork Island community as a whole
- Provision of community leadership at an inter-island level
- Increased capacity for the islands' community to take control of its own development and future direction
- Provision of an inclusive representative structure which will involve all members of the community

and allow residents to become involved in the development of their own area

- Strong opportunities for participation for all groups within the community
- Provision of a strong collective voice and decision making structure for the islands
- Increased potential to access funding for development projects as collective activity leads to improved possibilities for obtaining grant aid
- Provision of greater legitimacy and credibility to the community when dealing with government departments and funding agencies
- Provision of a single point of contact and key resource for statutory bodies and other agencies dealing with the West Cork Islands in terms of service provision
- Provision of opportunities for enhancing the integration and community focus of existing services
- A mechanism for targeted attraction of new and enhanced services and facilities for the overall island community
- Creation of the capacity to take a more strategic approach to the community needs of the seven inhabited islands, which can be responsive to local needs, existing structures and community priorities
- Promotion of collective activity between the islands, which in turn can foster collective support among the islands

Principles and Proposals for Establishment

A Community Council as a representative structure for the collective islands, should have widespread credibility and authority, be accountable to the population of the West Cork Islands, set out its roles clearly and have adequate resources to operate effectively.

The Community Council structure should comprise one representative from each island's existing local development group and another representative from the individual island. The Council should comprise ten to fourteen people.

The process for elections should be developed locally and should be broadly similar for each of the islands. However it is acknowledged that some degree of flexibility is required to facilitate specific situations on each of the islands. Elected representatives should serve for an agreed set term only, allowing for change and distribution of workload over the years.

The Community Council should review relevant policy documents and issue co-ordinated responses and submissions where opportunities arise. Annual accounts and record of activities, applications for funding etc. should be up to date and available for viewing by all.

To progress the establishment of the proposed West Cork Islands Community Council, it is recommended that a Steering Group be established with assistance from the Community Council Working Group of the Interagency Group. In the longer term, links

between the proposed Council and an ongoing interagency structure for the Islands should be maintained to obtain maximum benefit for both islands and agencies that interact with islands.

Objective SC3: *To strengthen the voice and representative power of the individual islands through the formation of a West Cork Islands' Community Council*

Objective SC4: *To ensure a consistent approach to the application of supports for the West Cork Islands from local, national and European level*

4.3.6 West Cork Islands Community Council Actions

Short Term

- *Establish a Steering Committee to oversee the process of setting up the West Cork Islands Community Council*
- *Establish a set of principles for the formation of a Community Council*
- *Develop a list for nominations*
- *Determine the nomination and voting process*
- *Consider the issues of residency and different interest groups in determining the nomination process*
- *Ensure all islanders are aware of the nomination and voting procedures through publicising same on the islands*
- *Encourage nomination and representation from each of the seven inhabited islands*
- *Carry out nomination and election process*

- *Investigate the merits of a regular inter-island newsletter for distribution by the proposed Community Council*
- *Set out a list of required activities and publications, to include annual accounts*

Long Term

- *Support the new Community Council in its role as an inter-island representative body*
- *Maintain links between an ongoing interagency structure and the West Cork Islands Community Council*

4.3.7 Retaining and Developing Agency Support for the West Cork Islands

The West Cork Islands, along with other islands benefit from the support of several dedicated island organisations that operate at national level, e.g. the Islands Division of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and Comhar na nOileáin Teo., the national local development company for the islands. The existence of these specific departments and bodies allows the islands to benefit from supports distinct to those provided to mainland communities. Oileán Chléire also benefits from Udarás na Gaeltachta support.

At a local level, the West Cork Islands Interagency Group includes representation from island specific organisations, local island development groups and well mainland based agencies that provide services to the islands. This group structure will remain in place until 2012 and offers a key opportunity for the West Cork Islands to benefit from a co-

ordinated agency approach to the Islands. It is the intention that a similar structure, albeit in another form, will continue this co-ordinated approach to addressing island issues and challenges beyond the lifetime of the current County Development Board programme. This structure would meet as required by the Island group and this integrated approach would have significant benefits for the West Cork Islands in the long term.

The existence of these supports are beneficial to the island residents and care is needed to ensure that such supporting bodies are retained, either in their existing format or in an alternative manner into the future. Such positive discrimination in terms of specific bodies to address island needs is considered necessary to overcome difficulties experienced by island communities in terms of suitable access to goods and services.

There are current proposals to reform the board structure of Comhar na nOileáin Teo. whereby current managers of the Community Development Programmes and the Comharchumann would no longer be able to represent their islands on the board. Managers would then have to be replaced by volunteers, who would need to take on significant costs to fulfil this role and feedback may deteriorate.

Further proposals to place the island community development programmes under Comhar na nOileáin Teo. as opposed to the Islands Division would separate the Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht islands under different parent structures. This is considered a regressive step. A single body would be more

user-friendly, allowing the seven West Cork Islands to operate as a unit.

Objective SC5: *To engender a sense of support for island specific organisations with a view to retaining and developing this resource*

4.3.8 Retaining and Developing Agency Support Actions

Short Term

- *Develop proposals for the continuation of an interagency approach to the West Cork Islands beyond the lifetime of the current group.*
- *Support the retention of island-specific departments, contacts and groups at national level*
- *Maintain regular contact between local organisations and national island-specific groups*
- *Consider the need for appropriate island representation on Comhar na nOileáin Teo.*
- *Support the retention of a single structure where Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht community development structures can continue to work together*

Long Term

- *Retain an interagency approach to the West Cork Islands at local level*

4.3.9 Health Services

For the purposes of this Strategy, the following are considered to be important areas in terms of health and well-being on the islands: access to primary care team services,

elder care providers, health promotion and screening services, family support services, maternity care, chiropody, substance abuse supports and counselling services. The provision of suitable spaces for healthcare professionals to work in when on the islands must also be considered as this is lacking in many cases.

The seven inhabited offshore islands in County Cork were, along with 18 other groups, selected for a pilot programme for community participation in Primary Health Care Teams (PHCTs) in November 2008. The *Healthy Islands: Community Participation in Primary Health Care Teams* (PHCT) Project has been set up to develop an effective community participation model from the seven inhabited West Cork islands to feed into the local PHCTs. A number of issues and actions have been identified within this project which have been fed into this Strategy.

According to the Health Development Plan 2007-2010 Update, Health Services in the community will continue to be developed within the Primary Care framework and islands will be linked into Primary Care Teams.

In 2004 a Health Needs Assessment was undertaken by the HSE in collaboration with the island populations. This assessment consisted of an individual needs assessment and comparison with the mainland (undertaken by Public Health Nurse Service) and consultation with the community. The main conclusions of this assessment highlighted a need for clarification in terms of emergency protocols, levels of services available and barriers to

accessing services especially with regard to older people, children/adolescents.

The nearest general hospital to all of the islands is Bantry hospital, which has a limited range of services and facilities, so for comprehensive/tertiary hospital and consultant services islanders usually need to travel to Cork City or to Tralee. There are however many outreach consultant outpatient clinics held in Bantry General Hospital. There are three community hospitals serving the island populations, i.e. Castletownbere, Skibbereen and Schull. Southdoc provide out of hours GP services for all of West Cork with bases in Castletownbere, Bantry and Skibbereen.

In terms of primary care examples of island provision include the full-time nurse and monthly GP surgery on Bere. A public health nurse visits the Islands based on need. Islanders receive dental treatment on the mainland. Due to the difficulty in accessing health services on many of the islands, health conditions may deteriorate due to the inconvenience involved in accessing GP services. The ageing population on the islands will result in increased dependency and increased need for health and other support services in the coming years. The HSE does provide grants for some services on the islands, such as active retirement groups.

There is a role for island communities, in working together; to communicate their main needs in the area of health to the primary health care providers. There are opportunities around improving information on specific areas of health on the islands and

investigating the role of technology in improving access to health care, particularly the potential use of video conferencing facilities.

In the context of an ageing islands' population, and an increasing need for elderly services, the development of home help services, chiropody and improving opportunities to avail of day care services need to be addressed.

The area of mental health should be specifically examined as stigma around mental illness can tend to be strong in small communities and there is a particular need to address such matters sensitively.

The development of recreational facilities, some of which are created predominantly for tourism purposes, for example can have a role in encouraging health and well-being among island residents. For example, well-maintained and attractive walking routes can encourage regular activity by locals as well as visitors to the islands, thus encouraging participation in exercise and contributing to opportunities for general health and well-being.

Objective SC6: *To support health promotion, participation in healthy activities and general well-being among all sectors of the community and to improve awareness of available health and welfare facilities*

Objective SC7: *To encourage co-operation between relevant agencies in the provision of health and welfare services*

4.3.10 Health Services Actions

Short Term

- *Provide clear, user-friendly information on health service eligibility and availability to all islands as a matter of urgency. This information should be bilingual as appropriate*
- *Develop a programme for health promotion activities and talks on the island, focussing on a series of key issues considered most relevant to the islands*
- *Hold health seminar training events to promote PHCTs and to generate interest in community participation*
- *Support the HSE in an integrated manner through community participation within the PHCTs in Castletownbere, Skibbereen, Bantry and Mizen*
- *Establish collaboration between the HSE and the representative organisations from the island communities on the development of agreed capital projects*
- *Support the flexible approach adopted by the HSE in order to maximise availability of services on the islands be continued*
- *Explore methods to maximise health service delivery on the islands*
- *Organise an annual meeting between Health Service Executive personnel and representatives of the island communities*
- *Establish a health forum for the seven West Cork Islands*
- *Ensure that opportunities for islanders who fulfil the criteria for*

attendance at day care centres are maximised

- *Provide a comprehensive chiropody service on the islands for those who meet the criteria for same*
- *Implement arrangements for Southdoc cover in consultation with HSE*
- *Investigate the issues relating to a strategy for local responses to mental health issues on the islands*
- *Promote increased awareness of mental health issues on the islands*
- *Examine the role of new recreation/tourism ventures in facilitating healthy lifestyles on the islands*
- *Investigate the potential role of information technology in improving access to healthcare*

Long Term

- *Provide an acceptable level of core service provision to all islands on a needs basis including medical, nursing and home help*
- *Promote ongoing liaison between the Local Implementation Team and Island representatives to endeavour to address the health needs of the local community*

4.3.11 Emergency Services

All islands by their nature require specific mechanisms to deal with emergency situations. The West Cork Islands as a general rule are remote from large-scale emergency medical and fire services. It is particularly important for remote islands such as Chléire and Durséy to have appropriate arrangements in place to deal with emergencies. The presence of the oil

terminal Seveso site on Whiddy means private emergency facilities are in place. The potential for improved interaction between the operators of the terminal and the community on Whiddy are discussed in the Whiddy section of the Strategy.

The protocol for evacuation of individuals from the West Cork Islands is currently under review. This protocol was initially developed by the HSE Island Health Services Group in response to the Health Needs Assessment carried out in 2004. This protocol aims to provide a clear statement of procedures to access relevant health services in relation to evacuation of casualties in the event of an emergency arising from either accidents or sudden illnesses and when urgent medical attention is required outside of scheduled ferry times.

Evacuation procedures for emergencies should be in place. All relevant services should be involved in the preparation of emergency plans. These should be reviewed regularly and each island community must be aware of the content of their emergency plan. All islanders should at the least be aware of key contacts in the event of an emergency.

In the event of serious illness or accidents, access to the islands by air is essential to allow quick responses and transfer to the appropriate medical facilities. This is particularly important in times of poor weather. Oileán Chléire and Bere Island have helipads but the other islands lack such facilities. Areas should be identified on each island where helicopter landing can be facilitated. Co-ordinates should be provided

to emergency services to avoid any delay. Working with relevant agencies to improve response times for emergency airlift would be of clear benefit.

Communities should be trained in basic emergency response techniques. Emergency equipment such as fire-fighting equipment and stretchers should be available. Defibrillators should be available on all islands.

Clear arrangements need to be made with regard to 'Out of Hours' GP services/ Southdoc to ensure that Islands will be given priority in terms of urgent and routine medical calls.

Preventative measures such as smoke alarms and water safety courses should also be priorities to endeavour to minimise the occurrence of emergency situations.

Disruptions to water supply, power and communications have more serious implications for islands than for mainland communities. Usually when such events occur on the mainland, those affected can travel relatively easily to another area to access fresh water or a power source for example. This is not the case for islands, as alternative supply requires a boat journey. Such instances must therefore be given priority by the relevant agencies and suppliers and those involved in providing water, power and communication to the islands should be involved in developing emergency plans for islands.

Objective SC8: *To provide a co-ordinated approach to emergency services between all parties*

Objective SC9: *To provide all islanders and visitors with access to emergency services*

4.3.12 Emergency Services Actions

Short Term

- *Support the implementation of the protocol for evacuation of individuals from inhabited islands in West Cork in consultation with the HSE*
- *Identify areas for coastguard helicopter to land on each island and provide GPS co-ordinates to coastguard*
- *Examine international models on response times to emergencies on islands and implement measures to improve where possible*
- *Provide GPS co-ordinates for all island piers and other access points to emergency services*
- *Ensure the ongoing update of listing of emergency phone numbers be made available to all island communities*
- *Develop island fire and emergency actions in an integrated fashion in conjunction with county major emergency plan*
- *Involve power, communications and water supply providers in the preparation of emergency plans*
- *Ensure that islanders provide information on emergency services to the Southdoc Co-operative*
- *Ensure emergency equipment such as fire-fighting equipment and stretchers are available when needed*

- *Input to Pier Management Plans to ensure suitable areas are available to allow emergency services to operate*
- *Make First Aid courses and First Responder course available to all island communities as a matter of priority*
- *Prioritise island households with reference to the Cork County Council Smoke Alarm Scheme*
- *Seek the provision of water safety courses on all islands*

Long Term

- *Examine the potential for the inclusion of the island communities in the Medico service*
- *Continue to work with representative organisations on the islands in order to provide a system of transport for emergencies on the islands*
- *Provide defibrillators on each of the islands and provide training and refresher courses to islanders on their use*
- *Continue to support links between the HSE and island communities/voluntary organisations with a view to improving the health of islanders*

4.3.13 Educational Facilities

Existing educational facilities on the West Cork Islands consist of primary schools on Bere Island, Sherkin Island and Oileán Chléire, the Irish colleges on Oileán Chléire, the Visual Arts Degree programme on Sherkin and adult

education courses on some islands.



Island primary schools are crucial services in terms of retaining young families on the islands. They should be supported where necessary and opportunities to attract and retain families on the islands should be developed. Opportunities to boost numbers in island schools through the provision of places to mainland pupils could be investigated.

Island children of secondary school age attend schools in the nearby mainland towns, including Bantry, Castletownbere, Schull and Skibbereen. In terms of facilities, Schull Community School offers sailing as part of the curriculum. Education in marine pursuits of this nature can be of benefit to island-based students. The development of such skills could offer advantages to those interested in developing a career or part-time employment in the marine leisure sector.

New secondary schools are planned for Skibbereen and Bantry, which will improve the facilities available to students that attend second level education in those towns. The campus in Bantry will also include a new Gaelscoil. The provision of modern educational facilities in nearby mainland towns should be supported so that island children can access the best second-level

education opportunities possible, within a reasonable travel time from their islands.

The loss of young people on the islands to the mainland for secondary education does threaten the future vitality of the islands to an extent. However, the provision of second-level education on the islands is neither viable nor indeed desirable in terms of the limited opportunities for interaction with other students that would arise. It is therefore important to ensure that there are other resources and facilities in place for island youth both on the islands and/or within easy reach on the mainland to allow second-level pupils the opportunity to remain living on the islands without feeling excluded from opportunities for social interaction. Needs and opportunities in this area are discussed in more detail under youth services below.

The Visual Arts Degree Programme on Sherkin represents a unique example of successful outreach third level education. The course is accredited by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) but is based on Sherkin Island. As the subject matter is art, the course founders decided against using standard models of distance education and teachers from DIT travel to Sherkin to provide some classes, while best practice in distance education including virtual classrooms and video-conferencing are also used. The course is a successful model for lifelong learning and access to education in rural areas. It is a level 8 Honours Degree Programme and attracts high quality students; twenty of whom commenced the course in September 2010. Local applicants are prioritised. The course provides a welcome boost to the economy and vitality of Sherkin.

The West Cork Islands could provide the base for other such courses based on a similar model, for example in the Irish language, other languages or creative writing.

A new Fishing Vessel Shipwright Practices training/apprentice course has recently been advertised. The course is to be based in Castletownbere/Bere Island. Three places are available for 2010. The course will be delivered on a partnership basis by BIM, FAS, the VEC, Bere Island Boatyard, the WCEB and BIPG. This initiative represents a practical example of agencies and private companies working together to provide locally run specialist training, which has an island-based element.

Adult education courses are successfully run on some of the larger islands, mainly on a request basis to ensure that courses meet the needs of islanders. Issues arise on smaller islands due to lack of suitable premises or numbers. Difficulties can be encountered in running courses when weather prevents tutors from accessing the islands. Residents on the West Cork Islands who have teaching experience, or particular skills that could be passed on through on-island educational programmes, could be encouraged to become involved to provide a cost-effective and efficient educational service. With continued relationships between the VEC and island groups appropriate adult education can be provided regularly and further opportunities in this area developed. Joint ventures between agencies in the area of adult education should be explored.

Island students of all ages can experience difficulties in accessing education in times of poor weather. Improvements to IT provision, including the provision of tele-conferencing facilities and enhanced broadband availability are considered crucial for the development of educational opportunities on islands. Such facilities should be shared between island enterprises, health care professionals and students to make the provision of such facilities as cost-effective as possible. The facilities could provide continued access to education for students who experience difficulties in attending mainland educational facilities on a regular basis, for example where bad weather prevents travel.

Creating links between education providers and interested parties on the islands could provide opportunities to share innovative solutions to learning on the islands and keep all residents up-to-date on opportunities in education. The availability of and choice of distance learning courses is constantly expanding, both in Ireland and through third-level institutions abroad. This can be of particular benefit to students in remote areas such as islands as it increases the course options available to them.

Objective SC10: *To provide islanders with access to all levels of education whether island based or mainland based*

4.3.14 Educational Facilities Actions

Short Term

- *Support the islands national schools*
- *Investigate potential to provide primary school places to mainland children where appropriate*

- *Liase with Schull Community College to increase use of the sailing education facilities by island children to improve marine leisure skills*
- *Support the ongoing success of the DIT Visual Arts programme*
- *Support the proposed Fishing Vessel Shipwright Practices course*
- *Maintain a relationship between island communities and the VEC to identify adult education needs*
- *Continue the provision of Basic and Community Education for adults where required*
- *Facilitate adult education courses on a needs basis where possible*
- *Identify teaching resources on the islands in terms of skilled individuals*
- *Provide guest speakers on specific topics for islanders*
- *Provide adult guidance and information services through island visits on a requirement basis, co-ordinated through the Sutherland Centre*
- *Establish joint ventures in the area of adult education*
- *Build partnerships with education and training providers to plan and deliver education and training so as to maximise utilisation of these services in each of the geographic regions*
- *Increase awareness among islanders of distance learning opportunities both nationally and internationally*
- *Maintain links between the VEC and other agencies relevant to the islands*
- *Identify “champions” who will support innovative education and*

training initiatives on and for the islands

- *Create academic learning networks using communication technologies in partnership with relevant bodies*
- *Implement improvement of broadband facilities in mainland secondary schools*
- *Improve IT facilities and access to such facilities for school-going children on the islands, including computers, broadband and tele-conferencing for educational use*

Long Term

- *Pursue the development of new secondary school campuses in Skibbereen and Bantry and the Bantry Gaelscoil and encourage island children to participate in available activities during and after school hours*
- *Approach third level colleges to identify opportunities to run outreach or resident courses on the islands*

4.3.15 Childcare

The numbers of children for which childcare needs arise on the islands varies each year and between islands. The isolated nature of the islands makes it particularly difficult to plan for services. Service provision on the islands generally correlates to the characteristics of the population of the particular island. The most developed facilities are on Bere Island (Monday to Friday crèche) and Oileán Chléire (naoínra and after school service).

To attract families to relocate to islands, or encourage families to remain, flexible approaches to childcare provision need to be

considered. The size and type of existing facilities must be reviewed regularly so that they can be adapted or improved to meet the specific requirements of the particular island at a specific time. The development of parent and child activities in existing facilities or other community facilities would benefit young parents on the islands. Childminding in the home is a more sustainable and appropriately scaled system for childcare on smaller islands.

Objective SC11: *To improve opportunities for all in terms of childcare facilities*

4.3.16 Childcare Actions

Short Term

- *Maintain and improve existing childcare facilities*
- *Support childcare facilities where the need arises in consultation with the Cork Childcare Committee*
- *Promote Childminding as an employment option and provide childminding training assistance*
- *Encourage home-based childminding on smaller islands*
- *Support the development of parent and child activities on the islands*

4.3.17 Community Facilities, Community Development and Other Public Services

Community Facilities

The provision of community facilities varies between islands; the larger and most populated islands generally enjoy a reasonable level of provision in the form of a public hall and/or meeting space or school

facility. Oileán Chléire benefits from a newly constructed Irish college, which is used for community purposes in addition to its main function. The island also has a health centre and a small clubhouse at the North Harbour for social activities. Sherkin has a community centre including a library, internet facilities and kitchen facilities. The local development organisation intends to extend this building to provide a games area. Bere Island has a community centre and a health centre.

Public facilities are lacking on Whiddy, Long and Dursey. Heir currently lacks facilities, however there are plans to provide a community centre with licensed kitchen and toilets among other uses. The lack of a public building on these islands is a constraint to community development. The development of multi-use public buildings, including visitor facilities, on these four islands would allow heritage interpretation, and accommodate visiting agencies, as well as serving as a community space for local groups to hold meetings, events and activities.

In the interim, alternative support measures should be established, such as a single community website for the West Cork Islands. This would act as a virtual one-stop-shop for community information. A Citizen's Information Service would be beneficial also.

Community transport on Oileán Chléire, Sherkin and Bere helps improve the accessibility of the community facilities on these islands, by providing transport to Sunday masses for example. Measures proposed for rural transport development elsewhere in this strategy will

assist in supporting attendances at community activities.

There are churches on three of the West Cork Islands (Bere, Chléire and Sherkin).

Most islands have some level of postal delivery service, although delivery improvements would benefit Long Island, Dursey and Oileán Cléire in particular. The post office on Bere is currently being automated, which is necessary to prevent closure. It is recommended that a closer relationship with An Post is developed to discuss the best way of providing regular services to the islands.

Library facilities are in place on two of the islands (Sherkin and Oileán Cléire) and library services are provided to the pier at Baltimore. There is scope to improve library facilities on islands through innovative solutions to provide suitable services to islands, through e-books for example. The library services can be expanded to host scheduled events and support island book clubs. Island libraries can play a role in social inclusion through access to information technology.

EU funds may provide opportunities for the islands to develop their resources in relation to the provision of community facilities and for community development generally.

Community Development

Community development has been discussed to an extent under the earlier section on the proposed West Cork Islands Community Council which discusses a proposed inter-island structure. The Strategy also recognises

that the local island development groups are an important asset for the islands. The voluntary effort on the islands should be acknowledged. Going forward, it is important to encourage a larger number of island residents to get involved in community development to reduce workloads on individuals.

Community development on the islands could be enhanced through improved links between the local development companies for the islands and for the West Cork mainland, i.e. Comhar na nOileáin Teo. and West Cork Development Partnership. Currently each has a geographically based remit for service delivery, i.e. Comhar to the islands and WCDP to the West Cork mainland. Joint ventures could allow the provision of improved services, e.g. organising training courses on a joint basis could allow for more frequent courses with enhanced attendance.

There are no Garda stations on the islands. However there are opportunities to enhance the role of mainland Gardaí on the islands, particularly in terms of their community development role. The Gardaí can also provide services such as assisting in youth education and promoting awareness of schemes such as community alert. In the absence of a significant Garda presence, community alert schemes should be in place on all islands.

Managing and Developing Public Services on Islands

In terms of public services, which benefit the island communities directly, Cork County Council has some staff based on the islands of Sherkin, Oileán Chléire and Dursey. These staff

members are mainly water curators who are also responsible for roads. There are no council workers on the islands of Whiddy, Heir or Long and workers on Bere Island have now retired. Due to the current public recruitment embargo, these workers will not be replaced. Generally, mainland crews cover works on the islands. For larger works on the islands, these crews move machinery and materials to the islands by barge for the duration of the works. There are opportunities to be explored in developing proposals for basing public service provision for both islands and local mainland on the islands and delivering those services from that base. A pilot project should be established to assess the merits of this approach.

Support for service retention in nearby mainland towns is also important for the islands. Public service bases in towns such as Skibbereen and Bantry play an important role in the lives of island residents by ensuring accessibility for all.

At a more strategic level, public agencies should incorporate the practice of island-proofing relevant plans and policies and corporate documents into their regular work routine. Public agencies should discriminate positively towards the islands where possible. Examples in practice include the reduction in development contributions for islands in Cork County.

Public agencies should ensure that their staff is aware of the need to consider islands within their functional areas when considering means of service delivery. Staff dealing with islands should be encouraged to visit the

islands to ensure an appreciation for the specific circumstances and the need to carefully consider their approach to delivering services to the islands. The existence of a key, named contact with specific responsibility for islands in public service organisations is essential.

Objective SC12: *To provide appropriate community and public service facilities on the islands and develop innovative ways of delivering services to islands*

Objective SC13: *To promote awareness, participation and empowerment of island communities and individuals in future decision-making for island sustainability*

Objective SC14: *To promote development of community organisations (in partnership with others) to ensure that they are representative and inclusive of all island voices*

Objective SC15: *To give islands a high position on the agendas of public service providers and implement practices to reflect this in their work programmes*

4.3.18 Community Facilities, Community Development and Other Public Services Actions

Short Term

Community Facilities

- *Support the retention of existing community facilities on larger islands*
- *Encourage provision of multi-use community buildings on islands where public buildings are lacking*

- *Set up community website for West Cork Islands*
- *Develop a Citizens Information Service for the islands*
- *Avail of opportunities for EU funding for community facilities and other community supports*
- *Liaise with An Post regarding the retention of and improvement of postal services to the islands*
- *Continue to deliver a library service via the existing island branch libraries and work with the relevant communities to improve library premises*
- *Provide scheduled events such as Bealtaine and Summer Arts Programmes and Children's Book Festivals through island libraries*
- *Explore library service delivery options to islands without libraries*
- *Include specific policy for islands in next county library plan*
- *Support and develop island book clubs*
- *Enhance social inclusion through the continued development of ICT services in island libraries, enabling full participation in the information society*

Community Development

- *Establish links between the West Cork Development Partnership and Comhar na nOileáin Teo. And develop joint projects*
- *Co-ordinate voluntary effort on the island in conjunction with community, voluntary and public organisations*

- *Improve Garda presence on the islands*
- *Develop role of Gardai on this islands, particularly in terms of their community development role*
- *Establish a programme of areas in which the local Gardai can provide clinics and awareness events for island communities*
- *Support community alert schemes on the islands to ensure optimum use*

Public Services

- *Develop proposals to initiate pilot projects for basing public service provision on the islands*
- *Incorporate an island-proofing policy into corporate policy documents*
- *Commit to positive discrimination towards islands where appropriate and possible in the delivery of services to the islands*
- *Encourage public service staff with responsibility for islands to visit the islands*
- *Support the retention and improvement of public services on nearby mainland towns*

Long Term

- *Ensure the provision of at least one multi-purpose public community space or building on each island*

4.3.19 Sporting and Social Facilities and Activities

There are a limited number of sporting facilities on the islands. Oileán Chléire benefits from a GAA pitch adjacent to the new Irish

college. A sports club is being established on the island to avail of new indoor facilities in the college to supplement existing activities. Other facilities of note are the GAA Club on Bere Island, where a new pitch and dressing room was officially opened in June 2010. There are rowing clubs and other water sports facilities and clubs on some islands. Generally other facilities are confined to a handball alley on Bere and a tennis court and crazy golf course on Whiddy, which are not used regularly.

Supports for sporting activities are available. For example, there are plans to use such funding to establish an inter-Island Junior GAA team for the West Cork Islands. The Cork County Local Sports Partnership (CCLSP) recently awarded a grant of €5,000 for the purpose of increasing physical activity opportunities and participation in sport and exercise on the islands. The CCLSP also ran an active leadership course for the Islands in 2009, training local people as physical activity leader, allowing them to plan, organise and assist in local leisure pursuits, activities and sports events.

The promotion of activities such as walking and yoga would benefit most sectors of the population. Supporting existing clubs, actively liaising with the CCLSP for assistance with projects and using facilities to their maximum potential is essential on islands as there is a limited population that can participate on teams and in competitions. In the longer-term, small-scale indoor training facilities could be developed on the larger islands to provide year-round exercise and training facilities on some of the islands.

Younger children on the larger islands would benefit from the provision of play areas.

Islands, by their nature, are particularly suited to water sports and specific areas could be identified around the islands for serious swimmers and divers for example. The implementation of the Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy will assist in designating areas for other marine leisure pursuits that will benefit islanders as well as visitors.

Social opportunities on the islands, particularly those islands with small populations are generally low and tend to be limited to public houses, although there is evidence of alternative entertainment on some islands, including cards nights, active retirement groups, evening classes and traditional music sessions. Social events on the islands can be concentrated during the summer months as some activities are weather dependant. Social events are needed most during winter, as island population levels drop to their lowest during this season. The availability of facilities can also impact on the level of social activities available to some islanders.

Maintaining appropriate levels of and suitable types of social outlets on islands is important to counteract the sometimes isolated nature of island life. In some cases, where the provision of regular entertainment/social events is not viable on the islands and there are no facilities outside of private homes in which to socialise, trips to nearby mainland amenities could be facilitated e.g. by special ferry services and rural transport services.

Objective SC16: *To ensure that there is a range of sporting and social activities suited to all sectors of the population on the islands*

4.3.20 Sporting and Social Facilities and Activities Actions

Short Term

- *Promote Slí na Sláinte walking routes on the islands*
- *Organise inter-island community games*
- *Develop a sports project between island schools*
- *Promote activities such as yoga and similar classes suited to all age groups*
- *Identify areas on islands for serious swimmers and divers*
- *Promote training and development with regard to sports and community initiatives*
- *Promote and support active community groups and initiatives*
- *Promote Sports and Exercise (Healthy Islands Plan)*
- *Support existing sports clubs and encourage new initiatives*
- *Support the development of meet and train groups for walking, running, cycling or swimming*
- *Encourage clubs to register with the Community and Voluntary Forum and avail of group insurance scheme*
- *Encourage links between island sporting groups and the Cork County Local Sports Partnership*
- *Encourage community maintenance of existing sporting facilities*

- *Support the development of cafes, card groups, music groups and other non-sporting social activities on the islands*
- *Investigate improvement of access and services to allow late night socialising on the mainland*

Long Term

- *Establish indoor training facilities and explore the potential for sharing of spaces, equipment and insurance*
- *Develop play areas for younger children*

4.3.21 Social Inclusion

Given the small size of island communities and relative remoteness of the islands, some residents may become isolated and/or excluded from their communities. All sectors of the population must be considered in developing actions for social and community facilities and activities. Outreach facilities should be available to those most at risk of isolation and social exclusion, including the elderly, those living alone, island women, people with disabilities, people of other nationalities or ethnic groups and island youth.

Actions identified below target youth and older people predominantly as these are key sectors identified as needing additional supports on the West Cork Islands presently. In conjunction with small-scale actions facilitating youth outings, more ambitious projects such as youth exchanges are proposed. The need for sheltered housing should be evaluated in the context of an ageing island population. Proposals for other sectors are also included, such as measures to support island women and those living alone.

Objective SC17: *To promote social inclusion among all sectors of the islands' population*

4.3.22 Social Inclusion Actions

Short Term

- *Examine the potential for the new LCDP programme for the islands to ensure the delivery of its full potential for the islands*
- *Liaise with outreach workers in addressing isolation and social exclusion*
- *Promote active retirement groups*
- *Implement a telephone contact scheme in line with the Caring Peninsulas or Care-Ring West Cork models*
- *Develop outreach services for elderly islanders*
- *Support development of services - in partnership with others - which focus on the care and security of older people in their own homes or other accommodation*
- *Provide information on services such as home help, carer's allowance, meals-on-wheels etc.*
- *Support the development for youth programmes for the islands*
- *Encourage volunteer involvement in youth, community and sporting activities*
- *Provide weekend events on islands for local youth and summer camps during school holidays*
- *Facilitate trips to the mainland or other islands for youth events*

- *Establish opportunities to support youth events at nearby mainland centres*
- *Organise health promotion event for youth on each island*
- *Encourage youth involvement in community projects and the arts*
- *Organise an annual (or more regular) inter-island event for women living on the West Cork Islands*

Long Term

- *Evaluate island needs for sheltered accommodation*
- *Investigate opportunities for island youth exchanges between islands, between islands and the nearby mainland and between the West Cork Islands and other national and international island groups*
- *Organise an annual inter-island weekend youth event on one of the West Cork Islands*

4.4 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

4.4.1 Introduction

This section examines the cultural environment of the islands and puts forward proposals, objectives and actions around a number of key areas including:

- Island Traditions
- Architectural Heritage, Archaeology and National Monuments
- Maritime and Marine Heritage
- Military History
- Arts
- Irish Language

4.4.2 Strategic Aim

To improve appreciation of the cultural significance of the Islands including island traditions, architectural, archaeological, maritime, and military heritage whilst also expanding the awareness of the Arts and the Irish Language within each community

4.4.3 Island History and Traditions

The West Cork Islands each have their own varied history and enjoy a particular set of island cultures and traditions, as is widely recognised in policy and research documents addressing island life in Ireland.

The West Cork Islands were once more populated areas and have strong histories linked to nationally significant events and also more locally known incidents. Some of the islands are specifically associated with some of the well-known families in Irish history, such as the O’Sullivans and the O’Driscolls. Research into island histories and genealogy should be supported for its cultural and economic value.

Economically, the central role of fishing and farming to island communities is acknowledged as an integral part of island cultures and traditions as well as being an important source of income. Islands have specific customs and practices and due to limited facilities on islands over the years, traditions in the area of entertainment can remain focused on activities such as home visiting, card playing, storytelling and traditional music. Such activities are still evident on the West Cork Islands and some are celebrated through events, for example the annual Oileán Chléire Storytelling Festival. Coastal rowing regattas are further examples of particular island traditions being celebrated on a regular basis. Such traditional activities have suffered due to a declining and ageing population, migration of young people and wider structural issues.

Island culture and traditions are factors which attract residents and visitors to the islands and therefore have an important role in the future viability and vibrancy of the West Cork Islands. The continuing celebration of island traditions should be supported, to ensure that the unique island culture is handed down to new generations of islanders in West Cork and to educate visitors about island life. Support for annual events is needed and new opportunities should be explored in terms of alternative ways of ensuring traditions are carried on. Island based courses for those wishing to develop skills in activities carried on the islands can be a successful way of handing down skills, traditions and heritage.

The development of spaces to interpret island heritage and customs on each island is

considered an important long-term goal for the West Cork Islands. Heritage can also be interpreted in other means such as through leaflets and on the internet.

Objective CD1: *To ensure that island traditions, customs and folklore are passed on to future generations*

4.4.4 Island History and Traditions Actions

Short Term

- *Support research into island history and genealogy on the West Cork Islands*
- *Organise an annual fair or similar event on a different island each year which celebrates traditional island practices in farming, fishing and other enterprises*
- *Support the continuation of activities that keep island histories, traditions and folklore alive, such as festivals and regattas*
- *Develop weekend courses based on island skills to ensure such skills and traditions are handed down*
- *Provide accessible interpretation of local cultural heritage to ensure information is passed on to future generations of islanders*

Long Term

- *To seek suitable spaces on each island for the interpretation of island heritage generally*

4.4.5 Architectural Heritage, Archaeology and National Monuments

The Record of Protected Structures for Cork County lists 9 buildings on the West Cork Islands as being of special significance. These include two Martello Towers on Bere Island, an artillery and Fortifications on Whiddy Island, Templekieran on Oileán Chléire and Sherkin Island Abbey on Sherkin Island.

It should be noted that the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage has completed a survey of buildings in West Cork. This is due for publication in the Autumn of 2010. This survey is likely to result in the designation of additional protected structures on the islands.

The buildings contained on the Record of Protected Structures are an asset to the islands and the wider area, as they are symbols of the particular histories of the islands and of West Cork. The buildings have potential both in their own right as heritage attractions and as features of interest to visitors to the islands for other reasons such as walkers.

On visiting the islands, it is clear that there are structures of architectural merit that are not protected under the Record of Protected Structures, for example some old schoolhouses on the islands retain their identification plaques noting their construction dates. Most of these are now derelict. The structures on Dursey, Long and Whiddy are of particular interest as these are located on islands that lack public facilities such as community or heritage buildings. The restoration of some of these buildings in a sensitive manner for public use or private

enterprise that serves public needs would both assist in the provision of public amenities and in the conservation of the buildings and their heritage value. The history of the island schools is an interesting aspect of island life in its own right.

In terms of archaeology, there are a large number of national monuments to be found on the islands:

- Heir has a ritual site/holy well, mass rock and burial ground.
- Sherkin has a number of promontory forts, burial grounds, cup-marked stone and stone group, a standing stone, a megalithic tomb, a holy well, castle/tower house and a fish palace among other sites.
- Whiddy has three batteries listed as national monuments, a tower house, ritual site, ecclesiastical enclosure, church and graveyard.
- Dursey has a wealth of monuments including enclosures, standing stones, an impressive signal tower, two churches, holy well, a number of cup-marked stones, an unclassified castle, a bridge, graveyard and 18th century tomb.
- Bere Island has a large amount of national monuments including promontory forts, standing stones, a signal tower, barracks, ringfort, children's and other burial grounds, a cross-inscribed stone, souterrains, holy well, a fish palace, piers and jetties of interest, Martello towers, breakwater, megalithic tombs and a battery.

- Oileán Chléire contains monuments including promontory forts, field boundaries, hut sites, cross-inscribed slabs and stones, a tower house, bawn, church, graveyard, holy well, standing stone, lighthouse, signal tower, passage tomb art, possible leper hospital and a stone row.
- There are no national monuments on Long Island.

Some of these monuments represent features that are not visible on the ground any longer but are important indicators of the history and heritage of the islands and identify former customs, settlement patterns and important dates. Other monuments such as the signal tower on Dursey, the batteries on Whiddy and the castle on Sherkin remain prominent and are important features of interest on the islands.

The archaeological resource of the islands should be celebrated and any interpretation of the islands culture and heritage should draw on the information on the islands' histories provided by these sites. The wealth of monuments on many of the islands and their associated histories can provide interesting material and themes for publications, exhibitions and walking routes. The same holds true for the protected structures and buildings of interest discussed above. The concept of walking routes anchored by interpretative material in an indoor facility allows maximum benefits to be gained from such heritage by both residents and visitors.

There is a duty of care on the islanders to ensure that both protected structures and

recorded monuments are protected and respected for the benefit of future generations.

Objective CD2: *To promote and support the conservation and protection of national monuments and sites of architectural and archaeological significance as valuable resources*

4.4.6 Architectural Heritage, Archaeology and National Monuments Actions

Short Term

- *Raise awareness of the importance of monuments and sites of interest on the islands*
- *Provide appropriate interpretation for significant sites on each island to anchor heritage trails on the islands*
- *Encourage and support the development of walking routes and cycling routes between cultural sites*
- *Provide appropriate direction to sites of cultural interest*
- *Increase awareness of requirements for development associated with protected structures and of conservation grants*

Long Term

- *Develop heritage based walking routes on each island, taking in significant sites, anchored by an indoor interpretative facility*

4.4.7 Maritime and Marine Heritage

The West Cork Islands have a strong maritime heritage, which includes traditions associated with boats, fisheries, wrecks, maritime skills and land-based maritime-related monuments.

In terms of natural heritage, the seascapes, marine wildlife habitats and other physical features of the islands created by the forces of the sea are notable.

These aspects of island heritage have both a cultural value in terms of tradition but also an economic and educational value. Islanders have acquired a specific knowledge base and skill sets due to their experience with the sea. The maritime and marine heritage of the islands attracts visitors, for diving for example and can anchor events such as the annual boat festival on the nearby mainland at Baltimore. Social and sporting activities on islands often stem from this heritage. Yawl rowing is one such example.

In terms of the West Cork Islands specifically, there are some important physical sites related to maritime and marine heritage.

Lighthouses are a point of interest on several of the West Cork Islands and the history of these facilities and their development over time, from the era of lighthouse keepers to automation, as well as associated events such as the Fastnet Yacht Race disaster in 1979 are all part of the development of island heritage and culture.

Shipwrecks can be of interest to divers and the area of underwater archaeology has been strengthened in recent years with the Underwater Archaeology Unit of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government working on a national shipwreck inventory, which has nearly 10,000 entries. There are a number of these wrecks near the West Cork Islands. One such wreck

is visible from Bere Island. Such sites have been identified in the Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy for West Cork and should be acknowledged and promoted.

Other aspects of the maritime heritage include visible evidence of the island fishing tradition such as traditional boats, lobster pots and nets for example, activities such as shellfish collection and dive sites in Roaringwater Bay in particular.

The sea provides a wealth of natural heritage, including some designated habitats in the vicinity of the islands (e.g. the Roaringwater Bay SAC), which attracts divers and has established the base for the Sherkin Marine Station, a long standing institution in West Cork and a source of many publications that raise the profile of that particular island. The existence of the station on the West Cork Islands is an asset in terms of a key source of information on marine life, which can inform interpretative material on the development of island cultures based on the sea and its produce. It also shows that there is potential to carry out significant research from an island base.

The existence of the Coastal and Marine Resources Centre in Cork is also a useful resource for the West Cork Islands in terms of efforts to preserve and develop maritime and marine heritage. There is scope for producing additional publications on the maritime heritage of the Islands which can be supported by the research facilities in the area.

Measures set out in the economic development section of the strategy seek to allow the

continuation of the fishing tradition on the West Cork Islands and such actions should support this element of island heritage.

The marine and maritime heritage is an inherent part of island culture, which has influenced the livelihoods and lifestyles of islanders and is affected and developed in turn by the traditions of island life. Some facilities to interpret the associations of island life with the sea and its creatures and plants have been developed over the years (e.g. an exhibition on Chléire and the former aquarium on Sherkin). Such facilities if they are to be developed should be housed in appropriate facilities.

Objective CD3: *To conserve and promote the islands' maritime and marine heritage*

4.4.8 Maritime and Marine Heritage Actions

Short Term

- *Market the maritime heritage associated with the islands in line with the strategy for tourism development*
- *Develop educational material for sports divers, fishermen and the general public about the value of Ireland's maritime heritage*
- *Work to identify and protect underwater archaeological sites of interest*
- *Develop exhibitions on the islands which include elements on the maritime heritage*
- *Capitalise on and support the Sherkin Marine Research Station and promote the islands as a strong base for*

information and research on the sea and sea life

Long Term

- *Carry out detailed projects on maritime and marine heritage features*
- *Develop publications on the maritime heritage of the West Cork Islands*

4.4.9 Military History

The West Cork Islands of Whiddy and Bere in particular have a strong military heritage. However other islands also contain features of interest and have associated links with military history. This area has been identified as an opportunity for the West Cork Islands in the strategy for tourism set out earlier. The development of such a theme would link well to an overall military history trail in County Cork. Charles Fort in Kinsale is an established successful military history tourist attraction, Spike Island has just recently been made available with a view to facilitating public access with planned walking tours, and there are other significant structures of interest along the coast such as James' Fort in Kinsale and Camden in Crosshaven.

There are striking remnants of military history at several locations including Lonehort Battery on Bere, the Middle and Western Batteries on Whiddy and several Martello towers and signal towers.

On Bere the main site of interest is the Lonehort Battery on the eastern end of the island, which is owned by the Department of Defence. A working group has been established locally with a view to developing the site as a visitor attraction. Two of the Martello towers on the island are reasonably intact, and date

from the Napoleonic wars. There are also structures associated with the development of the military presence on the island such as officer's houses.

On Whiddy, the Middle Battery enjoys excellent views of Bantry Bay and the Beara peninsula and is currently privately owned. Both Lonehort on Bere and Middle Battery on Whiddy are relatively intact and retain significant features such as buildings, and guns in the case of Lonehort. Whiddy also contains the north-eastern battery which is inaccessible and the western battery which is also privately owned but visible from the public road. There are also remains of a WW1 American Seaplane terminal on Whiddy.

Substantial research has been carried out on the military history of the islands - a recent exhibition was held in the Bere Island heritage centre, material from which can be retained and reused. Local history groups on the mainland may be interested in collating further material on military history and there is scope to develop links with groups throughout Cork to further explore this area of the West Cork Island culture.

The Department of Defence retains property on Bere Island and the ongoing use of part of the island for military purposes is an essential part of the history and culture of that island in particular.

Objective CD4: *To interpret and develop the military history theme on the West Cork Islands*

4.4.10 Military History Actions

Short Term

- *Expand on the provision of information in relation to military history of the islands*
- *Collate detailed records on military history of the West Cork Islands*
- *Further develop military history as a theme for the islands, particularly Bere and Whiddy*
- *Develop links with groups interested in military history elsewhere in Cork to fully explore this theme*

Long Term

- *Provide improved access to sites of military significance on the islands*
- *Develop military history trail in association with mainland groups in Cork County*

4.4.11 Arts

As well as contributing to island culture, the development of the arts sector can have economic value and opportunities in this area should be explored. The value of the arts as an educational tool, a source of employment and a social activity must also be recognised. There are a relatively high proportion of artists living on the islands. There is a strong visual arts and crafts scene on Sherkin and Heir and growth in this area is evident on Bere. Studio space for visiting artists is lacking however. A strong arts sector can contribute to the cultural vibrancy of the islands.

In terms of performing arts, some islands have venues where local productions, musicians or touring groups perform. There is an annual storytelling festival on Oileán Chléire, which

continues a strong tradition of island culture and attracts a wide following.

There are opportunities to improve the presence of the arts on the West Cork Islands and to improve facilities and develop events for resident and visiting artists. There are vacant dwellings on some of the islands that represent opportunities for artist's accommodation and studios. Some buildings worthy of investigation for this purpose include the Congested Districts Board housing on Long Island and former military buildings on Bere. Mainland festival organisers should be encouraged to hold some events on the nearest islands to the festival centre.

The Cork Arts Plan will be reviewed within the next year and represents an opportunity to strengthen the profile of the islands.

Objective CD5: *To engage with the arts community to develop a vibrant agenda for art, creativity and culture on the West Cork Islands*

4.4.12 Arts Actions

Short Term

- *Identify individuals on the Islands to support Arts development there*
- *Liaise with West Cork Arts Centre to identify further opportunities for the development of the arts and arts events on the islands to encourage visitors to the islands*
- *Encourage local mainland festivals to host events on their nearby islands are part of their festival programmes*

- *Include a section on arts and the West Cork Islands in the next County Arts Plan.*
- *Encourage touring groups to schedule performances on the islands and develop a programme of touring events*
- *Retain and encourage traditional music sessions on the islands*
- *Continue and expand the provision of classes in arts, crafts and music skills on the islands*

Long Term

- *Support the continuation of existing island arts events*
- *Develop a visual arts festival on the islands*
- *Investigate potential of islands as venues for media production such as filming of feature/short films and mini-series.*
- *Research the feasibility of renovating derelict or disused buildings as studio/work spaces and accommodation for visiting artists*
- *Develop and extend partnerships with local, regional and national arts bodies*

4.4.13 Irish Language

Oileán Chléire is the only Gaeltacht among the Islands; English has been the spoken language on the other six islands since the early 1880s. Many placenames on the islands are in or derived from Irish. Due to the fact that Irish is only spoken on a daily basis on Oileán Chléire, key opportunities and actions around this theme are largely covered under the Oileán Chléire section of the individual Island appraisals later in the Strategy. There is an opportunity however to develop the use of the

Irish language around the other islands. The Irish names for the islands for example provide an interesting aspect to the culture of the islands, i.e. Inis Ui Drisceoil (Heir Island), Inis Earcáin, or Arcáin as it is locally known (Sherkin), Inis Fada (Long Island), Oileán Baoi (Durse), An tOileán Mor (Bere Island) and Faoide (Whiddy). Irish translations should be provided on new signage on the English-speaking islands.

Objective CD6: *To encourage an increased appreciation of the Irish language on the non-Gaeltacht islands of West Cork as well as on Oileán Chléire*

Objective CD7: *To support and enhance Oileán Chléire as a functioning and viable Gaeltacht area into the future*

4.4.14 Irish Language Actions

Short-term

- *Promote the use of Irish on all of the islands by residents and visitors*
- *Encourage the delivery of state services through the medium of Irish on Oileán Chléire*
- *Include Irish translations on new official signs*
- *Interpret the meanings of the Irish island names for visitors*
- *Include the Irish name for the islands on official publications and brochures*

5.0 INDIVIDUAL WEST CORK ISLANDS - ISSUES SPECIFIC APPRAISAL

5.1 Introduction

This section focuses on each of the seven inhabited West Cork Islands as places in their own right with specific issues and opportunities to address and explore. The content of each individual island sub-section sets a context for the key areas in which actions are proposed. A short sub-section for the uninhabited islands is also included.

Development plans for many of the individual islands are in place, which are more comprehensive and relevant to individual island development, whereas this Strategy takes a broader and more strategic approach to all of the islands on a collective basis. The focus of this overall Strategy is to bring the islands together to work in co-operation towards the achievement of goals for the West Cork Islands as an entity. Accordingly, the section of the strategy focusing on the islands as individual places does not contain as many actions as the foregoing sections on the four development drivers for the islands as a group.

Furthermore, the number of actions for each island is not constant. This is due to the fact that some of the islands will benefit to a greater extent from the actions set out under the key development drivers detailed in the earlier section.

5.2 Strategic Objective

The strategic objective for the appraisal of the seven individual islands and the uninhabited islands:

To recognise the needs, character and opportunities that are particular to each island and develop facilities, services and activities accordingly.

A single objective is provided for each island within its own sub-section.

5.3 Oileán Chléire

Is oileán Gaeltachta é Oileán Chléire, atá ar cheann de seacht oileán amach ó chósta na hÉireann. Fréamhaíonn a charachtar ó chultúr agus oidhreacht an teanga dúchais Gaeilge chomh maith le saibhreas agus áilleacht na timpeallachta.

Oileán Chléire has a population of approximately 125 people. Development on the island is largely concentrated into two main clusters; one between South Harbour and North harbour where services such as pubs, the shop and restaurants are located, and the other in the middle of the island near the church, heritage centre and fish farm. There are a number of services located near the pier at the North Harbour on Oileán Chléire including an information point and island map, the island library and the Raidió na Gaeltachta studio. Other services on the island include the primary school, naíonra/playschool, helipad, Comharchumann Chléire building with tourist information office, bird observatory, holiday home complex, hostels, camp site, picnic benches, fuel pump and a graveyard. The main services and features on Oileán Chléire are indicated on the map at the end of the document.

The island is located significantly further offshore than the other West Cork Islands and access is therefore more vulnerable to disruption by poor weather. This has implications for service provision, access to goods and services for islanders and the holding of events on the island, particularly during the winter months.

There are four main piers at the island. The main access point is known as North Harbour (Trá Chiaráin), which is owned by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF). Within North Harbour, there are three piers; the middle pier (generally used by ferries and yachts), the dock (which is used by fishing boats and ferry mainly during winter) and the outer pier (the Bull's Nose), which is in a poor state of repair and has been declared unsafe for use. The poor condition of this pier is a significant issue for the island; its condition has a negative impact on both fishing and sailing vessels. There is funding in place to conduct a study this year to assess options for the repair and improvement of the DAFF pier. It is crucial that these options are reviewed with a view to progressing works to the pier as soon as funding becomes available. Access to the island would also benefit from improvements to the pier at Baltimore.

Barges and RoRo traffic can access the island via Cuas an Duglais (at the eastern end of the island), which is maintained by Cork County Council. There are two other piers on the island - Foilcoagh and South Harbour. There is a need for a deepwater slip at North Harbour to accommodate RoRo traffic and the feasibility of such a project should be investigated.

The island is accessed via a 45-minute ferry ride from Baltimore; one ferry operates year-round, and additional summer ferries operate from Baltimore and Schull. There is a permanent crane on the ferry to take goods on and off the ferry at the piers.

Roads on the island are generally narrow and steep. The island has its own rural transport bus service that meets people from the ferry as well as a helipad used for the emergency services and other occasional use.

There is a need to upgrade the public water supply on the island, with mains replacement being the first priority.

Domestic waste is collected centrally in the harbour and removed by the islanders to meet the Cork County Council waste collection service in Baltimore. There are recycling facilities on the island. However, these facilities could be improved. Waste reduction should be encouraged and a glass crusher and paper baler such as those operated on Bere Island would be useful given the distance to and cost of transporting waste to the mainland.

The appearance of the public areas of the island could be improved and proactive responses to Tidy Islands/Gaeltacht reports could enhance the island focal points.

Oileán Chléire is home to two Irish colleges, which attract Irish language students to this Gaeltacht community. One of these colleges is newly constructed and was partly financed by the Comharchumann Chléire Teo. (20%) and partly by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (80%). The presence of the colleges on the island is an important asset, attracting long-stay visitors to the island for courses and in terms of the existence of facilities on the island, provision of spaces for sports, meetings and other events.

There are significant opportunities arising from the Irish language product on the island for tourism and educational enterprise. The island has an established reputation for its Irish language schools and this can be built on. Language events could be held on the island outside of the busy summer season. There are other opportunities outside of the 'summer language school' arena. For example, a tour operator on Sardinia, Italy provides walking tours of one of the towns while teaching visitors basic Italian and a similar concept could apply to walking tours and other outdoor activities on Oileán Chléire.

Other facilities of interest to visitors to the island include a pebble beach, watersports, and a number of sites of cultural/historic interest i.e. the marriage stones, Dún an Óir castle, Oileán Chléire lighthouse and signal tower, the museum and heritage centre. Work on developing a sandy beach area has commenced and would provide an additional amenity on the island, particularly for families.

Oileán Chléire is an attractive base for walking and a Walking and Talking Festival was organised on the island this year. This event should be critically reviewed to establish the benefits of holding such an event on an annual basis and seek improvements where necessary.

The birdwatching product on the island could be developed further, centred on the island's observatory, which stores records of bird sightings and provides hostel accommodation for birdwatchers. The Oileán Chléire

observatory is the only one of its type in Ireland. Its research database is extensive as a daily log of bird sightings is recorded from March 23rd to November 5th annually since 1959. The observatory is run by Birdwatch Ireland and the data is used for inputs to government policy development among other uses. 307 species of bird have been recorded on the island, including 36 American species blown off-course. Courses in relation to birds as well as other ecology topics are run on the island. The nature and range of the birds that can be observed on the island extends the visitor season, as the important periods for birdwatchers are late spring and September/October. This facility, along with the Marine Research Station on Sherkin, is a further example of how islands can be successful bases for research facilities and the observatory should be supported. Its presence is also of importance economically.

Given the location of the island at a considerable distance offshore, it is particularly suited to activities such as whalewatching and other marine-based activities. There are some facilities in place for marine leisure pursuits on the island such as kayaking and support for the continuation of these activities and development of additional activities on the island should be provided through the implementation of the Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy.

Economic activity on the island also includes beef farming, goat farming, organic farming, vegetable growing, fishing and fish farming as well as computer-based services such as translation. Micro-enterprises and home-based businesses, particularly in the areas of language

tuition and translation should be promoted. In the longer term, shared facilities for small businesses should be supported.

The island lacks a banking facility and the possibilities of providing an ATM or laser cashback facility should be investigated which would benefit residents and visitors given the island's distance from the mainland.

Other opportunities to support the island include the potential for intensive adult education weekend courses, which would improve the viability of tutor provision from the mainland. A permanent library facility and a social services centre would benefit the island in the long-term. Permission has been secured on the island for an enterprise centre, which will include space for the library as well as offices and enterprise space.

Comharchumann Chléire Teo. is the local development group on the island and offers substantial community supports to the island. The Comharchumann has a remit that allows it to become involved in various community development projects including island rural transport and renewable energy. Údarás na Gaeltachta provides a range of supports for the economic, cultural and social sustainability for the Island.

The supports in place to maintain the island as a functioning Gaeltacht, include those provided by the Islands Division of the DoCEGA and Údarás na Gaeltachta, e.g. the Ionad Seirbhísí Teanga. The Gaeltacht culture of the island is a key attraction for visitors to the island, thus contributing much to the economy of the island. The Irish

language is also important on a social level. Continued support to the island as a Gaeltacht is necessary as the integrity of such areas does come under pressure with population decline, despite resurgence in interest in the Irish language nationally in recent years. To further protect the Gaeltacht nature of the island, a number of measures are proposed. These include encouragement for state services to operate through Irish on the island.

The annual storytelling festival represents a popular and unique cultural event in the area. Oileán Chléire benefits significantly from its cultural assets and for this reason a cultural action plan for the island would ensure this resource is protected and developed in an appropriate manner.

Objective OC: *To encourage enhanced recognition of the unique character of Oileán Chléire and the importance of the Irish language to the economy, culture and social fabric of the island; protect its linguistic and cultural heritage and support and promote sustainable economic development on the island*

5.3.1 Oileán Chléire Actions

Physical Actions

Short Term

- *Prepare Pier Management Plan for and extend pier in Baltimore*
- *Review findings of forthcoming study on Bull's Nose pier in relation to options for repair*
- *Liase with DAFF on pier repair and improvements*

- *Encourage the implementation of the Waste Management Plan for the island*
- *Continue to enter Gaeltacht/Islands Section of Tidy Towns Competition*
- *Implement small public realm improvement projects at the main development clusters*
- *Implement water mains replacement on the island*
- *Investigate the potential for the development of a deepwater slip at North Harbour*

Long Term

- *Continue to invest in harbour infrastructure both on the island and at mainland access points at Baltimore and Schull.*
- *Consider potential for a recycling facility comparable to that on Bere Island*
- *Investigate potential for creation of a beach*

Economic Actions

Short Term

- *Review the 2010 Walking and Talking Festival with a view to improving future events*
- *Develop the bird watching potential of the island based on the existing observatory*
- *Support the continuation and development of marine leisure activities on the island*
- *Support sustainable micro-enterprises and home-working in the areas of translation and language tuition*

- Investigate the possibility of providing an ATM or laser cashback facility on the island
- Implement planning permission for the enterprise centre on the island
- Support proposal for the development of accessible social centre on Oileán Chléire in association with the HSE and the representative organisations from the island communities

Long Term

- Build capacity and support the development of enterprise infrastructure on the island
- Assist in the development and promotion of cultural tourism packages such as ‘Saoire Tré Gaeilge’ and combining tours and activities with language tuition

Social Actions

Short Term

- Investigate opportunities for intensive weekend adult education courses on the island
- Maximise the use of the facilities afforded by the new Irish College on the island
- Ensure that all childcare services available are in Irish - including crèche facilities, naíonra, full-time day care and after school services.
- Continue to support Comharchumann Chléire Teo. to provide relevant services to the local community
- Implement the Comharchumann development strategy for Oileán Chléire

Long Term

- Develop permanent space for library services in permitted enterprise centre

Cultural Actions

Short Term

- Include policy in relevant documents to protect the Irish language from adverse impacts of new development on this Gaeltacht island
- Update and reorganise signage on the island and ensure all new signage erected on Oileán Chléire is in Irish only
- Policy-proof documents for impacts on this Gaeltacht island
- Encourage state services operate through Irish on the island
- Encourage and promote the use of the Irish language as a community language through ongoing supports provided by the local Ionad Seirbhísí Teanga
- Actively promote the use of Irish by visitors to the island
- Continue to support the Irish language support services being provided by Comharchumann Chléire Teo. In conjunction with the Ionad Seirbhísí Teanga
- Support the Irish College on the island by encouraging more households to accommodate Irish language students
- Continue support for youth initiatives, such as the summer camps being run by Óige na Gaeltacht Teo.

- *Provide public services on the island through the medium of Irish where possible*
- *Continue to expand and deliver the range of Artist in Residence programmes on Oileán Chléire through the West Cork Arts Centre in association with Ealaín na Gaeltachta, Cork County Council and other agencies in order to provide access to arts activities for the island community.*
- *Support the continuation of the Oileán Chléire Storytelling Festival*

Long Term

- *Develop a cultural action plan for the island based on previous island initiatives*

5.4 Bere Island

Bere Island is located at the mouth of Bantry Bay and is separated from the mainland by Berehaven Harbour to the North. The island is seven miles long by three miles wide; the direct translation of its Irish name being 'The Big Island'.

The population of the island is approximately 209, according to the Bere Island Projects Group Development Plan, (CSO figures for 2006 record a population of 187). There are a significant number of holiday homes on the island, and the island population increases considerably during the summer months. The Department of Defence camp on the island caters for FCA and army personnel in training, which influences population and activity levels on the island.

There are a few key areas on the island where development and services are clustered. Key areas of interest are indicated on the Bere Island map. The Department of Defence properties, including the barracks, are concentrated at the east and south east of the island. Also near the eastern end of the island is Rerrin Village. Rerrin contains a hostel, shop, public house and pier. The island post office is located in Rerrin and was recently automated. Lawrence Cove marina and associated facilities are located just west of the village.

The Ballynakilla area, nearer the centre of the north of the island contains a community centre, Roman Catholic church and graveyard. There is a significant dry dock facility on the waterfront in this area. The dry dock is a successful and important enterprise on the

island and attracts custom from as far away as Galway.

Other facilities on Bere include the Hotel, which is a pub/restaurant located near Ballynakilla. The national school and Heritage Centre are located between Ballynakilla and Derrycreeveen. The community centre and the heritage centre provide a range of services between them such as crèche facilities from Monday to Friday, Irish dancing, contemporary dancing, language classes, guitar lessons, cooking classes and quizzes. The Bere Island Project Group office on the island plays a significant role in community development on the island and is an important resource. There is a cafe/restaurant and recycling facility near the Derrycreeveen pier at the western end of the island.

The island is accessed via a ten minute ferry journey from Castletownbere to Derrycreeveen and a second ferry operates from the Pontoon, east of Castletownbere, to Rerrin pier. Both ferries can cater for vehicles, however the cost of taking a car to the island is expensive for visitors. The island's rural transport service should be examined in terms of any potential role in accommodating visitors to encourage more visitors to the island. However it is key that the primary purpose of the rural transport bus remains as a service for the residents of the islands.

Pier and harbour management plans, as discussed earlier would benefit Bere Island as well as the nearby mainland area. The Pontoon Pier Management Plan should be

completed and implemented. Castletownbere is a particularly busy harbour and the area near the ferry departure point would benefit from detailed examination in the form of a harbour management plan in conjunction with all relevant users and actors. In the short-term, basic facilities such as a shelter should be provided at the pier. Castletownbere itself, as the main departure point for the island, and key service centre would benefit from significant public realm improvements. Small-scale public realm improvements at key areas on the island are also recommended.

Rerrin has a water and wastewater mains supply and drainage system. However, this is owned by the Department of Defence and there are a number of issues arising with its operation, including illegal connections. In the long-term, improvements to the wastewater treatment system are required.

The island recycling centre is innovative in that it includes a paper shredder and glass crusher. Both facilities reduce waste leaving the island and produce usable products, i.e. paper bales for animal bedding and crushed glass for drainage and construction. Continued innovation in waste management can reduce the costs of waste disposal for island residents and businesses.

The economy of the islands is largely based on agriculture, tourism, fishing/ aquaculture, service industries, the boat yard, education and a number of small businesses. Most families have more than one source of income. For example, average farm size is c.20 hectares, which is not likely to provide sufficient income alone. Beef and sheep farming are the main forms of

agricultural activity, with some fields used to grow miscanthus grass for proposed energy production.

There is one land-based fish farm on the island. There are further opportunities in the area of aquaculture, which should be examined spatially in the context of a Harbour Management Plan. The boat yard/dry dock is a key employer with potential for improving the island's reputation as a marine service provider. Appropriate training with potential apprenticeship opportunities should be provided to ensure a supply of suitably skilled labour.

In terms of tourism, the strongest opportunities on the island are in the areas of military history and other heritage features, marine leisure, walking and cycling. The key site of interest in terms of military history on the island is the Lonehort battery, where a number of buildings and guns survive. A deep moat surrounds the military fortification. Lonehort was built on behalf of the English army by the Royal Engineers and is currently owned by the Department of Defence.

Clearance of scrub on the premises is underway and plans to open the site to visitors on a phased basis are supported by this Strategy. A feasibility study is required at the outset to establish a plan for securing Lonehort Battery for health and safety purposes. The battery is a protected structure and any works should be carried out in line with best practice in conservation techniques to ensure the long-term integrity of the site is maintained. In the short-term, limited visitor access would serve as a focal

point for tours of the island and in the long-term a substantial visitor facility could anchor the military heritage theme of the island and of the West Cork Islands as a whole.

Other sites of interest to visitors to the island include the Martello towers, Ardnakinna lighthouse, a shipwreck visible from the northern shore of the island, a wedge tomb and the Viking shipyard and breakwater, which are visible from the south of the island and are an unusual feature. The Heritage Centre is an excellent example of a successful restoration of an attractive island building to provide a range of functions to the resident community and visitors alike. It is used as a meeting venue, exhibition centre, shop, café and accommodates evening classes and weekend courses.

There are a number of signed walking routes. Part of the Beara Way covers much of the island. Walking routes include a western loop, the Dun Beag loop, the Lonehort loop and the proposed eastern loop, which is to open this summer. The island's potential as a walking destination should be promoted, particularly with a view to encouraging overnight stays by walkers.

There is also a signed cycle route around the island roads. Attracting cyclists to the island represents a more viable option for visitors using the ferries than transporting private cars across and allows much of the island to be explored on a day-trip. The potential for an off-road mountain bike trail could be investigated.

There are two beaches on the Island - Scart and Lonehort; the latter can only be used when rifle training is not ongoing in the area.

The development of tourism will require the improvement of the range and quality of accommodation on the island. A designated campsite with facilities such as a laundry room and spaces for camper vans would provide an alternative option for visitors. In the long-term, should Castletownbere develop as a cruise destination, opportunities from this market should arise for the island. The marine leisure potential of the island should be developed in line with the Marine Leisure Infrastructure Strategy as discussed in the General Development Strategy.

The island benefits from the heli-pad located within the army barracks, which can be used in cases of emergency. The island post office faces possible closure if it is not upgraded and automated. Given the population level on this large island, it is important to retain such services. There is also merit in investigating the potential for the installation of an ATM on the island.

The facilities on the island, i.e. primary school, heritage centre, access to a youth officer, childcare and new GAA pitch and clubhouse allow for the continued development of services in the areas of education, youth, sporting and social facilities, which will benefit the island both socially and economically. These facilities should be used for a mixed range of activities to avoid the need for substantial new building projects on the island. A specific childcare building would however, allow flexibility in

the provision of and expansion of such services where appropriate. The use of Department of Defence facilities by the local community such as the handball alley should be investigated through liaison with the Department. The presence of a women's group on the island is notable and the continued development of this group could include activities for women on other West Cork Islands in future.

The services of the rural transport bus could also be expanded to allow mainland residents and visitors to access facilities and events on the island. In the long-term, a full time rural bus service such as that available on Chléire and Sherkin could be provided.

The Bere Island Conservation Plan has been in place for a number of years and sets out an important set of principles to allow economic development while respecting the traditions and heritage of the island. These principles should remain in place as the Plan's provisions set a strong, locally-agreed framework for the future development of the island.

The development of an island tour, the continuation of a temporary exhibition programme in the heritage centre, the continued use of the Bere Island Conservation Plan as a check on future development and the development of the military history theme can all contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the culture and heritage of Bere Island. There is an active theatre group staging regular productions on the island. This group contributes to the social life and cultural development of the island.

Objective BI: *To retain a strong population level and build on the existing facilities, economic and social activities and entrepreneurial spirit on the island*

5.4.1 Bere Island Actions

Physical Actions

Short Term

- *Provide shelter facility at ferry point at Castletownbere*
- *Prepare Pier Management Plan for Pontoon*
- *Implement Waste Management Plan for the Island*
- *Build on the innovation at the current recycling centre to reduce the volume of waste generated and exported from the island and expand the range of waste materials that can be processed on the island for re-use*
- *Maintain FAS workers on the island*
- *Carry out appropriate public realm improvements at piers and development clusters on the island*

Long Term

- *Prepare Harbour Management Plan for Castletownbere Harbour in conjunction with relevant actors and users*
- *Further co-operate with the Department of Defence regarding the improvement of the wastewater treatment scheme in Rerrin*
- *Support public realm improvements at Castletownbere*

Economic Actions

Short Term

- *Consider further potential of aquaculture as part of a Harbour Management Plan*
- *Investigate the potential for spin-off services from the dry dock on the island*
- *Develop training and apprenticeship programmes for marine services*
- *Carry out feasibility study for the development of the Lonehort Battery as a visitor attraction*
- *Develop the Lonehort Battery as a visitor attraction on a phased basis*
- *Identify a suitable site for the provision of a campsite*
- *Consider the potential of island transport for use by visitors*
- *Promote the island as a walking and cycling destination*
- *Investigate the potential for an off-road mountain bike trail*
- *Consider the possibility of providing an ATM facility on the island*
- *Develop an Island tour of Bere Island in conjunction with relevant stakeholders both on and off the Island*

Long Term

- *Develop a marketing strategy and associated indigenous tourism related industries around the availability of a Bere Island bus tour and rural transport in association with West Cork Rural Transport*
- *Develop Lonehort as an anchor for an enhanced military history product*

- *Capitalise on cruise visitor market to Castletownbere if terminal developed*

Social Actions

Short Term

- *Retain automated post office services on the island*
- *Support evening class and weekend course continuation and development at the Heritage Centre*
- *Support the continued work of the youth officer in Castletownbere*
- *Expand the provision of youth activities on the island and on the mainland*
- *Examine methods of using the rural transport vehicle to access mainland in a more economically viable manner to allow increased use by different groups*
- *Support the HSE in an integrated manner for the provision of accessible health services*
- *Support and encourage participation in existing sports clubs on the islands and maximise use of facilities on the island such as the GAA clubhouse*
- *Liaise with the Department of Defence regarding the use of facilities on the island such as the tennis court and handball alley*
- *Support the continued development of the Women's Group on the island*

Long Term

- *Support the continuation of the childcare facility on Bere island in association with the HSE, the Cork County Childcare Company and the representative organisations from the island communities*
- *Support proposal for the development of purpose built childcare facility on Bere Island in association with the HSE, the Cork County Childcare Company and the representative organisations from the island communities*
- *Provide a full time public transportation bus service on the island similar to Sherkin and Oileán Chléire*

Cultural Actions

Short Term

- *Continue programme of temporary exhibitions at the heritage centre*
- *Continue to implement the recommendations of the Bere Island Conservation Plan*
- *Support the continuation and development of the Bere Island theatre group*

Long Term

- *Increase focus on military history and heritage on the island and liaise with Whiddy Island to develop themed events*

5.5 Whiddy Island

Whiddy Island is located in Bantry Bay, and lies close to the town of Bantry. Approximately 22 people live on the island, in a generally dispersed settlement pattern, apart from a cluster of houses near the Kilmore lakes.

Facilities on the island include a public house, which opens at weekends and in the summer and also provides food, and the adjacent tennis court and concrete crazy golf course, used during the summer. There are also holiday homes for rent on the island. The services and main features of interest on the island are indicated on the map at the rear of the document.

Outside of the public house, the island lacks a public building to facilitate community events, meetings, service providers visiting the island or provide visitor facilities or information. There is an identified need to resolve this deficit and the provision of such a facility should be a key goal for this island.

As with many of the islands, mainland signposting for the island, departure point and ferry information is inadequate. Given that there are two ferry departure points for the island, the current situation may be confusing for visitors. The private oil terminal ferry and a car ferry also operated by the terminal run from the Abbey Slip. The public passenger ferry operates from Bantry pier. At present there is no signposting or information on ferry times at the pier or on the tourist notice boards in Bantry. The shelter on the pier is poorly maintained. The departure point at Bantry contains a significant amount of informal parking along the pier and access road. There

is a large public car park near the town square within a five-minute walk. However, this is not signposted from the pier.

Berthing facilities near the island pier could be improved and some repair works are required. A pier management plan would assist in identifying issues to be addressed.

A weekly waste collection scheme from the mainland pier was introduced in Whiddy. However, there have been difficulties in terms of loading the waste onto the ferry and the scheme has been unsuccessful to date. This needs to be resolved to provide the island with a fully functioning waste collection service and work is ongoing to address the situation.

Sheep and beef farming is quite prevalent on this island, which has some reasonable quality land. In terms of fishing and aquaculture, the island has capacity to build on the strong reputation of Bantry Bay for seafood. However, careful management of additional lines in Bantry Bay is required as there is a considerable amount of activity in this area already. The seafood festival run with Bere Island can help to promote local produce.

The Conoco Philips Bantry Bay Terminals oil storage facility is a dominating feature at the south of the island. This SEVESO facility limits the potential for development on the island. Outside of its physical presence, it contributes to the specific character of Whiddy as it has served as a major employer for the Bantry area for a considerable number of years. The presence of the terminal on the island is responsible for the existence of

private facilities such as the car ferry, fire fighting equipment etc. Some of these facilities are available for use by the public but there is scope to increase interaction between the terminal and the island community. The presence of the terminal places more pressure on the island road network than is the case on other islands and specific attention to road maintenance on Whiddy is needed. There is scope for the terminal operators to contribute to public realm improvements and service sharing on the island and the development of an active relationship with regular interaction between the terminal and island community should be encouraged.

The development of the terminal and furthermore, the Betelguese tanker explosion in 1979, while a sad part of local history, is synonymous with the island. This should form part of any interpretation of the island's history and heritage. As well as islanders, many mainland families in West Cork have connections to Whiddy because of the terminal. Yet the visitor numbers to the island are low despite the short ferry ride from Bantry. An improvement in facilities would encourage more activity on the island.

Whiddy is generally attractive to walkers and there are good views of Bantry Bay, Chapel Island and the Beara peninsula from the island, particularly from its higher points. The islands heritage features are points of interest as discussed below. A looped route is to be developed and this will attract additional walkers to the island.

Bantry has been identified as a cycle hub by Fáilte Ireland and there may be potential to

offer a short cycle route on Whiddy as part of the development of the hub. Bicycle hire on the island would facilitate exploration of the island by visitors.

Small-scale marine leisure facilities may also serve as an attractive activity on the island.

Along with Bere, Whiddy Island has a strong military history, containing three gun batteries. Two of the batteries are in reasonable condition and visible from parts of the island and the mainland, however one battery is in ruins. There are opportunities for the military heritage theme on Whiddy to be developed in conjunction with proposed projects on Bere and elsewhere in Cork. Providing access to one of the batteries on the island, ideally Middle Battery, in the long-term could open up opportunities for Whiddy in terms of employment and spin-off services.

Other points of interest on the island are the 15th century Reenavanny Castle, the remains of a WWI American Seaplane terminal, the former Whiddy Island National School, and an old church and graveyard. The path to the ruined church and graveyard has been cleared recently but needs further improvement in terms of access and maintenance. Generally, there is a need to examine historical sites on Whiddy with a view to improving safety and access.

There are no health or education facilities on the island, and limited social opportunities, with the public house as the only facility. The implementation of the actions set out for the seven Islands under the four key development drivers has a strong role to play

in the enhancement of services to Whiddy, however the specific provision of a public building would facilitate space for public and other service provision. The old school could be a suitable premises subject to the availability of funding for restoration.

In terms of emergency services, there is a need to prepare a combined emergency/evacuation plans that would serve both the terminal and the community.

Objective WI: *To promote Whiddy as a place to visit, improve its links with Bantry and the oil terminal and develop service provision on the island*

5.5.1 Whiddy Island Actions

Physical Actions

Short term

- *Improve signage at and near Bantry pier*
- *Prepare pier management plan for main pier on the island*
- *Improve berthing facilities near Whiddy pier and repair facilities where necessary*
- *Improve implementation of waste management plan for island*
- *Develop stronger relationship between the terminal and the community to allow for sharing of facilities and improvements to the island generally*
- *Repair roads as necessary*
- *Improve access to graveyard and encourage maintenance*
- *Investigate possibility to acquire FAS or Rural Social Scheme worker for the island*

Long term

- *Provide public building for community and visitor use*
- *Improve access and safety of routes to historical features*

Economic Actions

Short term

- *Develop seafood product with careful consideration of location of aquaculture sites*
- *Build on seafood reputation and seafood festival*
- *Implement looped walking route*
- *Investigate the possibility of providing cycle routes on the island and support bicycle hire facilities near the pier*
- *Support the development of small-scale marine leisure activities on the island*
- *Provide visitor information facilities on the island*

Long term

- *Provide access to one of the military batteries on the island*

Social Actions

Short term

- *Establish programme of regular meetings between community and Conoco Philips Bantry Bay Terminals and develop a strong working relationship*
- *Establish a combined emergency plan for all residents and employees of the terminal*

Long-term

- *Provide space on the island for accommodation of visiting service providers*

Cultural Actions

Short term

- *Develop the military history theme of the island*
- *Provide information in relation to the history of the Oil Terminal and Betelguese disaster*

5.6 Dursey Island

Dursey Island, known locally at ‘the Dursey’, is separated narrowly from the tip of the Beara Peninsula by Dursey Sound. Dursey Island is an un-spoilt island with spectacular scenery and despite its proximity to the mainland, is relatively remote given its location at the extreme south west of Ireland. The island has a population of approximately six people and is threatened by permanent depopulation.

To retain permanent residents on the island, the level of basic services should be improved and the island will require particular attention in the application of many of the actions of the Strategy as set out under the four development drivers earlier.

The island is the only one of the West Cork Islands not to have a ferry route; the Dursey Sound being an extremely dangerous stretch of water. Instead the island is accessed by a cable car (the only one in Ireland), operated by Cork County Council. The older cable car was replaced in 2009. The cable car does not benefit from national subsidies available to ferry routes and this disparity should be raised at national level with a view to seeking equitable treatment regarding access to Dursey Island.

The island is the best provided for in terms of signage of the departure points and timetable information despite its remote location. However, the timetables displayed should differentiate between summer and winter times of operation, with information displayed accurate for the relevant time of year. There are merits to investigating an expanded operating schedule to allow later return from

the islands by day-trippers in summertime. An increased number of core operating staff would allow more flexibility in the operation of the cable car. Pricing should be reviewed in the context of operating costs and the costs of ferry services to other islands.

The cable car station on the mainland provides facilities such as a ticket office, informal parking area, toilets, a defibrillator and a crush and pen for loading animals. On the island side, there is also an animal crush and pen for loading. Works to a cattle grid require completion on the island. There is a rough concrete building for shelter with a telephone at the cable car station, however the building would benefit from regular cleaning and maintenance. Outside of the cable car service, the level of freight service by barge should be examined and provided as appropriate.

Dursey has three distinct clusters of development (Ballynacallagh, Kilmichael and Tilickafinna), with no settlement outside of those hamlets. This settlement pattern, in its particular topographical setting, is quite distinct among the West Cork Islands. In this regard, the island bears more resemblance to the Great Blasket in Kerry in terms of village/hamlet remains and topography. There are a significant number of ruins and derelict houses in these three clusters and any future development should be directed towards renovation or sensitive replacement where necessary, of those structures, apart from exceptional circumstances where new build may be necessary to provide a particular facility. The forthcoming Draft Bantry Local Area Plan should set out guidance for

development on Dursey, which protects the landscape setting and built form of the island, while allowing for the development of services for the resident population and visitors to the island.

In terms of servicing, Dursey Island has a water treatment scheme (chlorination treatment) and a limited public main. This water service does not reach the settlement at the western end of the island however, and appropriate forms of water supply to that area should be investigated.

Improvements are also necessary in the area of waste management and a suitable waste collection programme should be implemented. It is particularly important that this is enhanced during the summer months, when visitor numbers to the island increase significantly and accordingly levels of waste increase.

The cable car to the island, as well as being an essential means of access, is an attraction for visitors to the Beara area. It passes over the Dursey Sound, where the main tidal streams around Ireland split; one going south through the sound towards Cork and Wexford and on to Dublin and the other going North to Kerry, Mayo and Donegal. The tidal streams meet at the Isle of Man.

It is necessary however, to provide facilities on the island to cater for visitors, particularly in poor weather and those who are not visiting for the purposes of undertaking a substantial walk. The restoration of the old island school to provide a public building on the island could provide a space for visitor facilities such as heritage interpretation and other information,

shelter, public toilets, refreshments as well as serving other functions for the island community as discussed below. The island's rich heritage and history provides a wealth of material for displays in this regard and a number of publications are available which feature information on the island. The school in itself is an attractive building and enjoys an impressive setting on a hill above Kilmichael, providing spectacular views of the West Cork coast.

Existing facilities for visitors to the island are limited to self-catering accommodation and part of the Beara Way walking route, which is also signed as part of the National Looped Walk scheme. The walking route is easy to follow and takes in stunning scenery, including views of the Bull, Cow and Calf islands from the western end of the island, the signal tower at the island's highest point and the island's three settlements. The promotion of Dursey as a walking destination should be actively continued as the viability of any future facilities is likely to depend heavily on attracting a reasonable number of such visitors to the island.

The island is also a suitable destination for birdwatching, and whale and dolphin watching and information on the species and seasons should be made available locally. Rock fishing on Dursey was recently covered on UK television and has potential for development as an activity on Dursey.

In terms of employment, farming is the currently the main activity for those living permanently on Dursey. Fields are concentrated on the southern side of the

island, on the lower lying land. Much of the island is upland and exposed and a grazing management plan for the island could be of benefit both commercially and environmentally.

As regards fishing, a small level of activity is maintained but opportunities have declined significantly since the closure of the salmon fishery. Neither the pier on the island or mainland are suitable for providing sheltered berthage for vessels. The viability of the fishery here is questionable and future entrants are unlikely at the current time given the age profile of the island's residents. There may be tourist potential for rock fishing from the island however.

In the immediate future, it is considered more appropriate to maximise the island's tourism potential as a means of attracting residents, visitors and activity to the island in the manner discussed above. It is important however, in developing opportunities in tourism to ensure that visitor numbers to the island are not excessive and do not take from the sense of remoteness that is an attraction to the island itself. A visitor management plan should be developed to control numbers to an acceptable level given the sensitivity of the island.

Dursey has a limited and restricted level of social and community services. Services and facilities need to be expanded and the needs of islanders met if the island is to retain a permanent population and expand this to a level that creates an environment to support further improvements over time. A detailed and comprehensive service needs analysis and audit should be compiled to ensure that even

basic service provision is available. The implementation of actions applicable across the West Cork Islands in terms of health, education and social services will be more difficult to implement on Dursey for economic and physical reasons and particular efforts are needed to ensure that the island receives special attention in this regard. Enhanced emergency plans are needed to ensure that residents and visitors can be removed from the island to the necessary care facilities in the event of an accident or illness.

Dursey has a rich heritage and traditionally was a strong island community with interesting cultural assets.

The island history includes the massacre of 1602 and interesting features around the island include the ruined houses, St. Mary's Abbey and graveyard which includes the tomb of the O'Sullivan chieftains, and standing stones. Also contributing to the island's cultural heritage are the history of the development of the cable car, Dursey's role in the story of the O'Sullivan clan and the site on the mainland where the last light ceremony was held for the 2000 millennium celebrations and sunset over the island was televised and broadcast worldwide.

The islands attractive landscape and setting is an inspiring feature and could form the basis for encouraging artistic activity on the island.

Objective DI: *To conserve the landscape and cultural quality of Dursey, while recognising the needs of its occupants and improving service provision to the island for both residents and visitors*

5.6.1 Durseley Island Actions

Physical Actions

Short Term

- *Engage with Islands Division of DoCEGA to seek subsidy scheme for cable car in line with ferry routes to other islands*
- *Ensure accurate timetable information for the cable car is displayed year round*
- *Consider provision of return cable car in the summer evenings to facilitate visitors to the island who are not remaining over night and generally review summer timetables with a view to an expanded service*
- *Review pricing scheme for the cable car*
- *Investigate feasibility of securing additional core staff for the cable car*
- *Maintain cable car shelter on the island in a clean condition*
- *Ensure protection of the sensitive landscape setting of the island*
- *Include policies in the forthcoming Draft Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plan to protect the physical development pattern of the island in its current form and to encourage the re-use and refurbishment of existing structures in the three island settlements*
- *Review water supply on island and investigate feasibility of extending public supply to all occupied houses or providing alternative supply*
- *Implement an appropriate waste collection service*
- *Provide freight services to the island in line with services to the other islands*

- *Complete works to the island cattle grid*

Economic Actions

Short Term

- *Investigate feasibility for improved visitor accommodation on the island through restoration of existing buildings*
- *Continue to promote Durseley as a destination for walkers*
- *Promote Durseley as a location for bird, whale and dolphin watching and for rock fishing*
- *Develop a visitor management plan for the island*
- *Develop a grazing management plan for the island*

Long Term

- *Support the restoration of the schoolhouse as multi-purpose public building for the island to function as a meeting space, selling space, information and heritage interpretation space and visitor facility*
- *Continue to develop visitor facilities on the island in a sustainable manner*
- *Assess situation of island fisheries and explore opportunities to attract new entrants*

Social Actions

Short Term

- *Carry out needs analysis and audit of nature and extent of services to the island and seek to improve provision in an appropriate manner*

- *Develop improved emergency procedures for the island*
- *Improve information to islanders regarding their opportunities to avail of services*
- *Investigate the feasibility of outreach facilities for various services to the island*

Cultural Actions

Short Term

- *Develop interpretation and education of the island's history*
- *Encourage artistic activity on the island*

5.7 Long Island

Long Island is a small island located in Roaringwater Bay in close proximity to the town of Schull. The island has six inhabitants and as with Dursey is at risk of permanent depopulation. This is despite the islands proximity to a busy tourist town.

There are two main clusters of houses on the island. One is located around Midland Pier and one at Westerland. Much of the housing on the island was built by the Congested District Board and Long Island is known for having a concentration of this particular style of housing. The distinctive housing style should be respected by any future development on the island, which would be best placed in or adjacent to the existing clusters.

All of the houses are privately owned, with only a small minority being occupied on a permanent basis (four houses). The majority of houses on the island have mains electricity, mains water supply, and some form of telephone service. There are however a significant number of disused houses on the island.

The island currently lacks a public building and as with Dursey, a multi-purpose community building for meetings and events, provision of services and amenities to visitors should be provided. Again there is an old school on the island. This is in private ownership but may have potential for purchase and restoration for public use. Alternatively, one of the existing derelict dwellings may prove suitable.

Long Island is accessed via a ten-minute ferry journey from Colla Pier, which is approximately five minutes drive south of Schull town centre,

along a narrow road. Signage to this pier could be improved. A full seven-day service is not available and measures to improve this service should be considered, taking into account the views of the islanders.

There is no public transport on the island or from Colla Pier to Schull. There is a substantial car park at Colla Pier which has recently been re-surfaced. There is a small sign at both Colla Pier and Midlands Pier on the island displaying summer and winter ferry timetables. An old ferry is stored at Colla pier. The potential for rural transport to serve Colla pier from Schull should be investigated to improve access to the island for those without private transport.

There are two piers on Long Island; Midlands is used by small boats at all tides and by the ferry. A power point is provided at the end of the pier but this is difficult for islanders to access due to its location, according to feedback from consultation. There are a number of old cars and boats located at Midlands Pier. Disused vehicles and boats should be removed to free up space and tidy up this area. The second island pier is located at Westerland and provides access to small boats but only at high tide in calm seas. Pier management plans would benefit the piers that serve Long Island. Such plans should deal with the provision of information and public facilities such as shelters.

When large items are required to be transported on and off the island, a barge must be hired from Baltimore, resulting in significant expense to islanders. The proposed national recommendation to examine the

possibility of a zero VAT rate for freight, as outlined in the economic sub-strategy earlier would assist islanders in this regard.

There is no waste facility on the island. Regular waste services should be provided in line with an agreed waste management plan. As for all of the islands, reduction of waste produced should be a key priority and waste removal methods appropriate to the needs of the island should be developed. Methods should evolve based on Long Islands' specific needs and other islands' experiences.

Non-intensive beef farming is a source of income for one island resident. Most animals on the island are owned by non-residents. Fishing is not practiced commercially according to consultation, although there are references to two boats used for this purpose in the *Sustaining Island Livelihoods* report.

In terms of accommodation, restoration of existing houses should be encouraged over new build.

Long Island is undervalued as an asset to Schull and the wider area. The island is an attractive feature of the area and should be recognised as such. An improved profile for Long Island should be promoted through liaison with mainland tourism, development and business groups. Long Island should be featured as a place to visit in tourist literature relating to Schull and the Mizen peninsula for example. An improved recognition of the island on the nearby mainland should contribute to an increased level of visitors to and residents on the islands.

There are currently no facilities to allow residents to make a living from tourism on the island. Given the proximity of the island to Schull, which is particularly busy in the summer months due to its strong water sports reputation, a small cafe could be viable on the island. Such a facility, along with the development of a short looped walking route and the provision of information about the island could attract an increased number of visitors to the island. Access issues need to be resolved in the implementation of a walking route. Other activities possible on the island are swimming and shore fishing. Public amenities at the beach would enhance the use of this facility.

There are no sports, educational, health, social or community facilities on the island. The island also lacks a proper postal service. As with Dursey, a full needs analysis and examination of options to enhance service provision is needed. The retention and expansion of the availability of services in Schull should be supported as the town can offer services to the island within a reasonably close distance.

There are concerns on the island that emergency procedures are insufficient. Planning for emergencies should be carried out and reviewed for all islands as per the earlier content of this Strategy.

While the island lacks protected or national monuments, which are generally plentiful on the West Cork Islands, there are particular points of interest about the island that should be interpreted as part of information and exhibition in a public building, for example

the island's copper mines, the beacon and the story of the island's own postage stamps.

Some of the unoccupied Congested Districts Board housing on the islands could have potential for conversion into studio space for visiting artists, which would attract additional population, albeit of a transient nature onto the island and contribute to an island economy.

Objective LI: *To improve services to Long Island, improve links between the island and the mainland, seek to encourage year-round visits and stays and support the retention and increase of the islands population*

5.7.1 Long Island Actions

Physical Actions

Short Term

- *Implement Midlands Pier Management Plan and develop further plans for other relevant piers*
- *Upgrade power points at Midlands pier*
- *Provide public facilities at the main pier in the form of toilets and shelter*
- *Improve mainland signage for the island*
- *Improve information point at the island pier and provide signage on the island*
- *Consider development of land-based public transport potential to link pier to Schull*
- *Implement a waste management plan for the island*
- *Investigate the possibility of purchasing the existing schoolhouse building as a community meeting space and visitor facility*

- *Include policy in the forthcoming Draft Skibbereen Electoral Area Local Area Plan that acknowledges the merits of the Congested District Board housing on the island*

Long Term

- *Improve ferry service to and from the island*
- *Provide a public building on the island for use by both the community and visitors*
- *Provide appropriate public amenities on the island*

Economic Actions

Short Term

- *Liase with mainland groups to raise profile of Long Island as an asset to Schull and promote it as a destination from the mainland*
- *Investigate opportunities for the development of walking routes on the island*
- *Consider development of facilities for day-trippers generally on the island*
- *Support the development of a cafe/restaurant on the island*
- *Promote the activity of shore fishing from the island*
- *Investigate feasibility for improved visitor accommodation on the island through restoration of existing buildings*

Social Actions

Short Term

- *Support the retention and enhancement of services in Schull*

- *Seek the provision of an improved and structured postal service for the island*
- *Provide regular healthcare provider visits*
- *Review emergency provisions for the island*

Cultural Actions

Short Term

- *Explore possibilities of use of some Congested District Board Housing for visiting artists spaces*
- *Interpret history of the island and make available through mainland tourist information outlets*

5.8 Sherkin Island

Sherkin Island is located in Roaringwater Bay and has a population of approximately 106 people.

Patterns of settlement on the island are generally dispersed, however the island does have one cluster of housing called 'The Lane'; an older row of houses. A local authority owned social housing development is built across the road from 'The Lane'. Larger, more modern houses are built towards the centre and south of the island.

Services and facilities on the island include a church, school, hotel, public house, summer takeaway/coffee shop and the community centre which houses the library and public toilets. There are plans to extend the centre to provide a games room, which would provide a useful indoor facility for families on the island. Key facilities are indicated in the Sherkin Island map.

The main ferry departure point for Sherkin is from Baltimore; approximately a ten minute trip.

The road leading to Baltimore from Skibbereen is a regional road and is well signposted. However there are limited passing opportunities and the journey can be slow. Improvements to this road to increase safety and facilitate access to the island should be supported.

There is no designated shelter for ferry users at the departure point in Baltimore. Timetables for the ferry are not co-ordinated or laid out in a common fashion. Significant improvements are required at this pier in terms of

infrastructure to improve services to the islands.

Baltimore does provide public toilets and a number of bars, restaurants, cafes and shops (including ATM) within close proximity of the pier. Facilities are reasonably limited however and have a focus on the tourist market. Any improvement in services and facilities in Baltimore would be of benefit to islanders on Sherkin (as well as Chléire).

There are two piers on the island. Space is limited at the working pier in particular. Pier management plans should improve the use of these piers.

Sherkin benefits from an on-island rural transport bus service, which meets every ferry.

Signage on the island is haphazard and there are no picnic benches or viewing points. Small-scale public realm improvements through the suitable provision of such facilities in appropriate locations should be encouraged.

There are recycling facilities on the island near the community centre on Sherkin, which is due for upgraded facilities. Dry recyclables are collected occasionally and other refuse is sent to mainland for landfill as a load is filled. A waste storage building is planned, which would reduce costs of transporting waste off the island.

In terms of economic activity, there is some beef farming. Shrimp and lobster fishing and oyster production dominate fishing activities.

Lack of suitable marine infrastructure creates additional costs however. Uncontrolled intensification of the fishing effort is considered a threat. It is important to take a sustainable approach to fishing practices to ensure a long-term viable enterprise. The location within a Natura 2000 site and consequent implications may mean that certain practices or activities may be restricted or stopped on environmental grounds going forward.

There are a number of attractive sandy beaches on the island, which are well signposted and offer good bathing, including Silver Strand, Cow Strand and Trá Bán. The beach areas could be enhanced by sensitively designed and located public amenities and improved access.

The island is home to the Sherkin Island Marine Research Station, however this facility is not open to the public. Liaison with the owners/operators regarding the development of a marine life exhibition in the research station or elsewhere on the island would provide an indoor attraction for visitor and build on the island's reputation for marine research.

The island has a wealth of opportunities for those interested in marine biology, birdlife and other flora and fauna. There are good views of other islands and the mainland from Sherkin, which make the island attractive to visitors including walkers. Sherkin enjoys some of the most attractive landscape of the islands on a micro-scale with scenic views opening up from limited points on the island as the roads wind around the islands bays and inlets. There are proposals in place for two looped walks around

the island. Walking and bird watching tours are available.

A temporary marina operates during the summer and activities based on the island include sailing, rib boat trips, sightseeing, island hopping, eco trips and boat charters. The relatively calm waters around the island, rich marine life and its proximity to other islands make the area suitable for diving and kayaking and a strong reputation for these activities should be pursued through the development of appropriate facilities and promotion. An all-weather marina would extend the season for boating activities on the island.

The existence of a hotel and hostel on the island is an asset for Sherkin in terms of providing a choice of accommodation and providing other facilities. There are a number of guesthouses/B&Bs on the island and some self-catering accommodation.

The DIT Visual Arts Degree Programme is a key feature of Sherkin in terms of its social, economic and cultural contribution to the island. As discussed earlier in the Strategy, the course is a successful example of how services that benefit both island and mainland residents can be delivered on an island and is a good model for the further provision of innovative education initiatives on the islands. The course attracts an additional student population to the island as well as visitors on occasions such as exhibitions. In April 2010, President Mary McAleese visited the island to present the degrees to the graduating class of this year. The continuation of this course is crucial for the

island and should be supported through the implementation of the strategy where possible.

As well as providing a visual arts degree course, the island has also developed a strong arts and crafts sector and together these assets offer a different economic and educational angle for Sherkin. There is also a strong craft sector on nearby Heir and a combined arts festival could be successful.

The community development group on the island (SIDS) is interested in developing a community kitchen for the island, where space could be rented by different food-related enterprises, thus reducing costs for individual businesses. A feasibility study is recommended to ensure a viable sector can support the development of such a facility.

The main site on Sherkin of historical and cultural interest is the old friary just to the rear of the pier at the north of the Island. This friary was established c.1460 by the O'Driscoll's. Sherkin Abbey has been substantially restored and renovated by the Office of Public Works (OPW) over the last 20 years, and contains an old graveyard and large courtyard. The upper floors are accessible but are not roofed. Interpretive material on the detailed history of the abbey is available within the site. The abbey is not currently advertised as a visitor attraction as the OPW cannot provide committed opening times. There had been plans in the past to roof a building (sacristy) within the abbey to provide a tourist office, however these were not implemented. The potential of the site should be explored and liaison with the OPW is recommended to try to resolve difficulties with public opening.

The island in general has a strong heritage and features of interest visible on the island include the ruins of Dunalong Castle (The Fort of the Ships), which was built by the O'Driscoll's, a lighthouse and keeper's cottage.

The island has been relatively successful in attracting performing arts events to the island and the continued development of this activity should be supported.

The library space on the island is small and could be improved to provide a more user-friendly service.

Objective SI: *To improve services, facilities and attractions for residents and visitors and expand and develop enterprise and employment on the island*

5.8.1 Sherkin Island Actions

Physical Actions

Short term:

- *Support improvements of Skibbereen to Baltimore road where appropriate*
- *Improve Sherkin Bring Site, provide waste storage building and continue to investigate appropriate and innovative solutions to waste management on the island*
- *Prepare pier management plans for island piers*
- *Improve signage on the island*
- *Make small public realm improvements and provide picnic benches and viewing areas*

Long term:

- *Prepare Pier Management Plan and extend pier in Baltimore*
- *Provide public amenities near the beaches*

Economic Actions

Short term:

- *Support the development of services in Baltimore*
- *Improve marine infrastructure on the island as appropriate to reduce costs for those involved in fishing and aquaculture*
- *Develop aquaculture in a manner that respects the habitats in the waters around the island*
- *Carry out feasibility study around food preparation kitchen for use by multiple businesses*
- *Liase with OPW and investigate potential for further development of friary as a visitor amenity*
- *Implement looped walking routes on the island*
- *Investigate feasibility for all-weather marina with boat yard*
- *Further develop marine leisure sector, particularly sailing, boat tours, diving and kayaking*
- *Support the retention of hotel and hostel facilities on the island*
- *Further develop the arts as an economy on the island*

Social Actions

Short term:

- *Support the implementation of Sherkin Island Development Society plans to extend community centre to provide games room*
- *Support the continuation of the island-based DIT Visual Arts Degree programme on Sherkin*
- *Provide continued library support to the Visual Arts Degree programme through provision of course materials and research facilities*
- *Improve Library Space on the island*

Cultural Actions

Short term:

- *To explore potential for organising initial Islands Arts festival in conjunction with Heir Island*
- *Continue to attract touring arts groups to the island*
- *Provide interpretation on sites of interest on the island*

5.9 Heir Island

Heir Island is located in Roaringwater Bay, close to Sherkin. The island has a population of approximately 29 people currently, accommodated in a dispersed settlement pattern. Facilities on the island are indicated on the Heir Island map. Facilities include a restaurant, shop, cookery school, sailing school and gallery.

Ferry access to Heir is predominantly from Cunnamore, although a boat also runs to Heir from Baltimore during the summer. Improved signage (brown standard tourist signage) would be of benefit, as while signs are in place for the island from the N71, the Heir Island sign tends to be lost among a number of other signs for townlands and other areas signposted from this section of the main road. At the Cunnamore pier departure point, there is a small car park and a plastic shelter.

Necessary works to Cunnamore pier include the provision of a new slip. Co-funding is needed before works can be progressed. Improvements to shelter for vessels using the East End Pier on the island are necessary and the process of design, planning and sourcing of funding should be commenced. The shelters on the island and at Cunnamore could be improved to enhance the appearance of the departure point to and arrival point on the island.

Road access to Cunnamore is particularly poor in the latter section before the pier. This area of road is extremely narrow and poorly aligned. Road improvement opportunities are limited and significant upgrades in the road here could interfere with the character of the area. Maintenance of the road in this area should

therefore be prioritised. There is a rural transport service between Heir and Skibbereen on a Friday evening, which is beneficial to islanders.

On the island, there is a need to improve access to the west of the island through appropriate works to the bridge.

Waste services on the island are very limited and there is scope to improve recycling facilities and the mechanisms for waste management on the island generally.

Some of the existing housing on the island dates from the Congested District Board's provision of dwellings in West Cork.

The proposed social housing development on the island, which is to be located adjacent the planned community centre, should be commenced to provide necessary permanent housing on the island.

In terms of economic development, farming and fishing are important sectors of the island's economy and should be supported in line with the measures for these sectors set out earlier in the Strategy.

There are opportunities in the areas of aquaculture, home-based and micro-enterprise, arts and crafts, food, watersports, walking and birdwatching. All such areas would build on the existing strengths of the island, which has a growing reputation for enterprise and as a place to visit.

Aquaculture should be carried on in a sustainable manner. The designated habitat

in Roaringwater Bay should be respected in any development of fishing and aquaculture activities around the island.

There are a number of micro-enterprises and home-based enterprises existing and developing on the island. These are supported by broadband services from two providers. A business group is being established which should generate ideas and provide mutual support to business owners on the island, including farmers and fishermen. Supporting the concept of island-based businesses through this business group should assist in the development of innovative ideas and the creation of additional jobs on the island. The WCDP study of home-working on the island is referred to earlier in this Strategy and should be reviewed by this business group.

Heir Island's 'Island Cottage' is a well-renowned restaurant, which attracts visitors to the island specifically to eat there. The restaurant owners also run a cookery school. This unique dining experience and spin-off cookery school has established the island as a dining destination and the development of the food product on the island has potential to reinforce this reputation. Careful sourcing of local produce for island-based catering facilities should be encouraged to maintain a high standard of food offer on the island.

The sailing school on the island is an asset in terms of attracting tourists and local groups. The island, along with the wider area, should be promoted as a sailing destination, building on the existing facilities. There are also opportunities for the island to branch into other watersports, such as kayaking. The annual

regatta should be continued. Additional complementary activities on the island could encourage longer stays on the island.

The island has a number of sandy beaches, which are attractive and safe for bathing. These beaches are an important amenity to the island, particularly for visiting families. The provision of appropriately scaled public amenities, such as seating, at these beaches and elsewhere on the island could attract additional visitors to the island, providing increased support for island businesses.

The island is an attractive location for walking, although access is restricted. The development of a signed walking route on the island should direct walkers to the key points of interest. The island's main advantage in terms of attracting walkers is its attractive scenery, including views of the nearby mainland coast and other islands in Roaringwater Bay.

The islands of East and West Skeam have particular associations with Heir and there is potential to develop visitor opportunities on Heir based on physical, visual and historical links with these uninhabited islands.

The 'Reen' reed bed is noted as a good location for bird watching and providing information on the species visible in this area would be of benefit to visitors.

The island has a growing arts and crafts sector and could benefit from increased interaction with Sherkin, to mutually support arts culture on both islands.

In terms of visitor accommodation, the sailing school has accommodation on site and there are holiday homes/self-catering on the island.

The island lacks community facilities and has limited services. There is a need to consider improved methods of service delivery to the island. The proposed community centre will benefit the island. The provision of a community centre would allow a base for public and other services when visiting the island and should generally be used for a wide range of events and services. The proposed building should be multi-purpose and could accommodate a display of information on the island's heritage.

In the short-term however, enhanced provision of health services and development of emergency plan are required specifically.

The children's graveyard at Cillín was consecrated in 2004 and a memorial mass is held there annually. The island has numerous other points of interest, such as the fish palace. The new community centre should have a role in displaying information on the island's history, heritage and places of interest.

As discussed above, there is scope to develop the arts sector on the island, building on the existing gallery for example. The new community centre when developed could provide a venue for performing arts and additional studio spaces could contribute to the visual arts scene on Heir.

Cultural activities and events should be supported on the island for the benefit of both residents and visitors. Existing events include

the annual regatta and the Heir Islanders' Dinner Dance.

Objective HI: *To develop community facilities on Heir Island, expand on existing enterprise development and maintain and enhance the profile of the island as a tourist destination*

5.9.1 Heir Island Actions

Physical Actions

Short term:

- *Improve sign posting for ferry and island from N71 and on local roads near Cunnamore*
- *Maintain road surface from N71 to Cunnamore Point*
- *Carry out appropriate improvements to the bridge accessing the western part of the island*
- *Implement Cunnamore Pier Management Plan*
- *Seek co-funding for new slip at Cunnamore pier*
- *Improve shelters on island and mainland pier*
- *Improve signage on the island*
- *Implement a waste management scheme for the island including improved recycling facilities*
- *Commence construction of planned social housing scheme*

Long term:

- *Provide new slip at Cunnamore Pier*
- *Commence process to improve shelter for vessels using East End Pier*

Economic Actions

Short term:

- *Develop aquaculture at the island in a sustainable manner*
- *Support existing enterprise and the development of new micro- enterprises on the island*
- *Support the development of the business group on the island*
- *Build on the reputation of the island as a destination for sailing*
- *Explore development of suitable marine leisure activities on the island such as kayaking*
- *Build on the established reputation of the island as a food destination and maintain high standards of food provision on Heir*
- *Support the growing arts and crafts sector on the island*
- *Provide waymarked walking route on the island*
- *Provide appropriate public amenities on the island*
- *Utilise the island's proximity to East and West Skeam in the development of the island's tourist offer*
- *Provide information on the island's birds at 'the Reen'*

Social Actions

Short term:

- *Establish improved emergency services and health facilities*
- *Finalise plans for and commence construction of a community centre for the island*

Long term:

- *Utilise community centre for a mixture of activities, including provision of information on the island's heritage*

Cultural Actions

Short term:

- *Develop arts sector on the island*
- *Provide studio spaces on the island*
- *Explore potential for organising an Islands Arts festival in conjunction with Sherkin*
- *Support the continuation of and development of cultural activities on the island*

5.10 Uninhabited Islands

Throughout this Draft Strategy, there have been references to the uninhabited islands of West Cork. These islands are an important part of the seascape of West Cork. The islands vary in character, from the rocky outcrops of the Fastnet, which accommodates the iconic lighthouse and the Stags, associated with the sinking of the Kowloon Bridge; to islands such as Horse Island and Castle Island, which are used for grazing; to Garinish Island, which is an established tourist destination due to the Italian Gardens contained there.

These islands add interest for walkers, cyclists, those engaged in watersports and other tourists from the West Cork Coast and their contribution to the area should be recognised. For example, the ferry journey to Oileán Chléire currently includes a commentary on the features of interest on the route, including both inhabited islands and uninhabited islands such as Sandy Island and Quarantine Island, which adds significantly to visitors' enjoyment of the area. Inappropriate use of or development on such islands should be avoided given their contribution to the scenic nature of the area.

Points of interest regarding the uninhabited islands should be included in information developed for the inhabited islands where particular uninhabited islands are visible from those islands, e.g. from walking routes and boat tours for example. Access to some of the uninhabited islands could enhance the experience of visitors on inter-island tours and those participating in watersports. Such access however would need to be agreed with relevant landowners.

Objective: To recognise the importance of the uninhabited islands of West Cork and seek to protect and support their appropriate use and development

5.10.1 Uninhabited Island Actions

Short-term

- *Include policy on uninhabited islands in forthcoming Draft Local Area Plans*
- *Include information on uninhabited islands in interpretative material for the inhabited islands*
- *Investigate potential for access to some of the uninhabited islands and develop water based tours where appropriate*

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION & DELIVERY

6.1 Introduction

The West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy establishes a programme for change for the Islands, which in seeking to secure the achievement of several broad objectives, touches on a comprehensive range of aspects of island life and pertinent issues. One of the key components of a successful strategy is its implementation and it is essential for the West Cork Islands to see tangible benefits from the proposals contained herein as the actions set out are delivered. A strong implementation programme will assist in making the Strategy a catalyst for change. An agenda for monitoring and review of the implementation programme must be included to allow for the assessment of the impact of the Strategy over the coming years.

6.2 Strategy Implementation

The Draft West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy proposes an extensive list of actions to be carried out over the next 10+ years. Ideally, all actions identified of potential benefit to the West Cork Islands would be implemented in a short space of time. However, it must be acknowledged that a strategic document such as this one will be in place for a significant length of time and that there will be changes in the physical, socio-economic and legislative context in which the strategy will operate over that time. This is further compounded by the fact that strategy implementation will commence in a time of economic uncertainty and budgetary constraints. Prioritisation of actions must therefore be made from a practical viewpoint and it must be recognised from the outset that there will be a need to allow a degree of

flexibility in implementing the strategy to allow for changing circumstances over the course of time.

The final document will not be a statutory plan and therefore it is possible to accommodate some flexibility around the order of implementation of actions, and indeed the precise nature of actions as the need arises. Inevitably, there will be some actions that are intended for short-term implementation, but due to unforeseen circumstances will become long-term actions. The implementation of proposals not specifically mentioned in the Strategy but covered by the broad topic areas could benefit the West Cork Islands.

6.3 Key Requirements

The requirements for Strategy implementation are as follows:

- Commitment by all stakeholders in participation and involvement in the implementation process.
- Particular focus on maximising participation by the West Cork Islands' communities.
- Continuation of an interagency approach to optimise the chances of success of actions requiring multi-agency involvement and an integrated response to issues that arise during implementation.
- Continued active involvement in the implementation process by organisations and individuals with resources and the appropriate level of authority to facilitate implementation.

- Ongoing development of a strong relationship between those involved in strategy delivery, particularly between island communities and agencies.
- Full agreement between all relevant parties on the necessary mechanisms to allow strategy implementation.
- Optimum use of existing structures and proposed structures such as the West Cork Islands Community Council in terms of their roles in the delivery of the strategy.
- Identification of targets with implementation of actions beginning in September 2010.
- Identification of lead partners and supporting partners for all actions; lead partners being the drivers of the delivery of that action and the co-ordinators of the supporting partners who would also be involved in facilitating the implementation of the action.
- Appropriate grouping of actions that could be delivered by similar methods in corresponding timeframes to avoid duplication of workload, excessive numbers of meetings etc.
- Development of performance indicators to facilitate assessment of the impacts of strategy implementation and agreement of dates on which these indicators should be reviewed.
- Identification of necessary resources to implement actions and consideration of the best approach to secure such resources, noting particularly the benefits of an inter-island approach to requests for funding and the

opportunities around shared funding between agencies.

6.4 Key Parameters for Strategy Delivery

On a whole it is intended that each agency or community group that deliver services to the West Cork Islands would be involved in the delivery of actions where they can play a role, either as lead partner or supporting partner. Some elements of the final agreed Strategy should become part of plans and strategies of the agencies involved; the forthcoming Skibbereen and Bantry Electoral Area Local Area Plans 2012 is one such example. Actions implemented by the incorporation of certain recommendations of the strategy into those plans would then become formalised into the statutory planning context that guides decisions on planning and development proposals for the islands. It is intended that some other proposals will become part of operational plans or will inform the delivery of services to the West Cork Islands, for example certain island development groups' development plans for their islands, or in health service or Garda Síochána plans.

The West Cork Islands Interagency Group in its current form will immediately be involved in the delivery of the Strategy. It is important to the implementation and review of the Strategy that any member of the Group, should they move on from their current role, ensure that a replacement member from their respective agency is co-opted onto the Group, so that the links developed to date continue to flourish.

While the Group was initiated by the County Development Board as a three-year targeted response to address issues facing the West Cork Islands, it is intended that a level of interagency support would remain in place to assist in the implementation of the strategy and to provide other supports as appropriate following the expiration of the three-year period. It is therefore intended that an interagency structure will remain in place in an appropriate form beyond the specific term of the existing Group and with continued involvement in the implementation of the Strategy as necessary.

One of the proposals of this Draft Strategy, which stems from the overall objectives of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group is the formation of a West Cork Islands Community Council. The successful establishment of such an inter-island Council would provide a representative structure for the seven inhabited islands that could assist in the implementation of the strategy as it develops.

Where a number of partners are identified for an individual action delivery, co-ordination and co-operation between the community and agencies, between agencies and between individual island communities is essential. The continuation of a long-term interagency approach to the islands and the establishment of an inter-island representative structure will facilitate this collaborative approach.

6.5 Monitoring and Review

Progress reviews must be built into target setting for the implementation of the strategy. These will allow an assessment of the number and type of actions delivered, assessing the

actual impact of their implementation. Analysis of impacts can then inform any necessary amendments or enhancements of actions not yet implemented, proposals for new ideas and future action planning for the West Cork Islands. Performance indicators would be useful in this regard and examples could include reviews of visitor numbers to the islands, unemployment levels on the islands and the approval of funding for particular projects depending on the nature of the actions concerned.

At a minimum, following one year of the implementation process, a review of actions should be taken. The following questions referred to each action should provide guidance on future direction for particular actions:

- Has the action been completed?
- If so, are benefits evident?
- If the action has not been completed, why not?
- Is the action nearing completion? If so what is the expected completion date?
- If the action is not nearing completion, then what are the obstacles that need to be addressed?
- Would a modified version of the action be more appropriate in the circumstances of the time?
- Overall, how many of the actions have been completed or are progressing?

It is recommended that after three years, the implementing parties in place at the time should undertake a comprehensive review of the entire strategy, including the short and long-term actions. At this stage, a significant

amount of progress on short-term actions should have been made and impacts should be more readily identifiable and measurable. The review should take into account any specific changes that have occurred that are outside of the control of the strategy implementation team that would affect the future delivery and direction of the strategy. Further reviews should be scheduled through the lifetime of the strategy.

The Strategy is intended to build on the work of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group to date and comprises a key component of their targeted objectives. It should build on the co-operative approach currently in place. It must be acknowledged however that the Islands Interagency Group or its constituent members have not produced the Strategy. While members of the Group contributed data, submissions and feedback, full agreement from all parties to all elements of the document is not inherent. The focus of the strategy however, is on integration and encouraging a partnership approach to development between communities, organisations and agencies. It is hoped that the implementation will be a force for positive change, that the island communities will grasp the opportunity to assist and drive the Strategy, will take full advantage of the positive impetus in place since the establishment of the West Cork Islands Interagency Group and work together under the proposed Community Council structure with an ongoing interagency support for the West Cork Islands.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL

7.1 Introduction

The West Cork Islands Integrated Development Strategy is a non-statutory document. It seeks to provide strategic guidance on the future development of the islands. In itself, the Strategy does not formally change existing policy but will inform future policy documents and work programmes of statutory and other agencies.

It is considered appropriate to include an environmental appraisal of the Strategy objectives to consider any likely significant impacts on the environment resulting from the implementation of these objectives. Care has been taken during the formulation of these objectives to avoid significant adverse impacts on the environment. In essence, the environmental appraisal of the Strategy has been an ongoing process.

The outcome of the environmental assessment is summarised in the Environmental Appraisal Table in Section 7.2, which considers the objectives in terms of the potential positive, adverse, neutral and uncertain environmental impacts associated with these objectives. While the tenets of the objectives are positive, it must be accepted that the implementation of the Strategy may have some environmental implications over a long period of time and accordingly the implications of some objectives for certain elements included in the assessment are uncertain. In such cases, the effects of the achievement of these objectives through specific actions (as set out in the Strategy), should be considered by the relevant actors. Those involved should proceed in a manner that

removes or mitigates against any significant adverse environmental impacts.

This however must be understood within the context of the wider development process. It must be acknowledged that the Strategy will form a key input to the forthcoming Skibbereen and Bantry Local Area Plans, which are subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as part of their current review. Accordingly, specific actions arising out of the implementation of the strategy objectives will be subject to the necessary environmental assessment procedures where relevant.

Overall it is considered that the objectives proposed for the West Cork Islands in this Strategy will have a positive impact on the physical, economic, social and cultural well being of the islands as they are gradually realised.

7.2 Environmental Appraisal Table

The following table provides an environmental appraisal of the objectives of the Strategy under the topic headings of Population, Human Health, Flora/Fauna, Water, Soil, Air Quality, Climate, Material Assets, Cultural Heritage and Landscape.

X – Negative 0 – Neutral ✓ - Positive ? – Uncertain

Driver												
Objective No.	Objective	Population	Human Health	Flora / Fauna	Water	Soil	Air Quality	Climatic factors	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape	
Physical Development												
Objective PD1	To support the progression of necessary infrastructural projects to ensure appropriate provision of clean drinking water and treatment of wastewater on the islands	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	?	
Objective PD2	To consider flood risk and climate change in terms of the future development of the islands	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Objective PD3	To reduce the generation of waste on the islands and promote a culture of waste minimisation and re-use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Objective PD4	To improve waste management facilities on the islands and at relevant mainland locations	✓	✓	0	✓	0	0	✓	✓	0	✓	
Objective PD5	To facilitate and improve the provision of broadband infrastructure throughout all seven islands	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	
Objective PD6	To reduce energy demand and consumption on the islands and encourage self-sufficiency of energy supply	✓	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0	0	?	
Objective PD7	To improve facilities at island and mainland access points and develop clear programmes for use of infrastructure	✓	✓	?	?	0	0	0	0	0	?	
Objective PD8	To create an integrated transport network between the islands and the mainland service centres	✓	0	0	0	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	
Objective PD9	To improve ferry/cable car services	✓	0	0	0	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	
Objective PD10	To improve the rural transport system on islands	✓	0	0	0	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	
Objective PD11	To develop efficient methods of carrying out infrastructural works on islands	✓	✓	0	✓	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	
Objective PD12	To instil pride of place on islands through appropriately scaled and developed public realm improvements and ongoing maintenance of the islands' built and natural environment	✓	0	?	?	?	0	0	✓	✓	✓	
Objective PD13	To promote and support the conservation and protection of the islands' landscape while acknowledging the challenge that this landscape can present for island communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	?	✓	✓	

Objective PD14	<i>To provide housing for permanent occupation in a sustainable manner appropriate to the islands</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Objective PD15	<i>To improve the availability of affordable housing on the islands and to recognise and address the differing circumstances between island and mainland housing needs</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Economic Development											
Objective ED1	<i>To support and improve the economic sustainability and viability of agriculture, fishing and aquaculture</i>	✓	0	?	0	✓	0	0	✓	✓	?
Objective ED2	<i>To support diversification and innovative measures to add value to products in the agriculture, fishing and aquaculture sectors and provide appropriate training</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Objective ED3	<i>To support families engaged in agriculture, fishing and aquaculture on the islands</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective ED4	<i>To develop and support innovative new businesses and suitably sized enterprises on the West Cork Islands</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	?
Objective ED5	<i>To support the competitiveness and continued development of existing businesses on the islands</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	?
Objective ED6	<i>To market the West Cork Islands as an island group destination and instil the concept of the West Cork Islands as a destination in the tourist mindset</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Objective ED7	<i>To expand on the tourist potential of all islands and to ensure a strategic approach to the delivery of tourist facilities on each island</i>	✓	0	?	?	0	?	0	✓	✓	?
Objective ED8	<i>To support an appropriate level of retail/commercial services on the islands and in the key mainland service centres</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Social and Community Development											
Objective SC1	<i>To retain and enhance population levels on the islands</i>	✓	0	0	?	0	?	0	✓	0	?
Objective SC2	<i>To foster a spirit of appreciation of the island communities and support networks</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective SC3	<i>To strengthen the voice and representative power of the individual islands through the formation of a West Cork Islands Community Council</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓
Objective SC4	<i>To ensure a consistent approach to the application of supports for the West Cork Islands from local, national and European level</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Objective SC5	<i>To engender a sense of support for island specific organisations with a view to retaining and developing this resource</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0

Objective SC6	<i>To support health promotion, participation in healthy activities and general well-being among all sectors of the island communities and to improve awareness of available health and welfare facilities</i>	✓	✓	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0
Objective SC7	<i>To encourage co-operation between relevant agencies in the provision of health and welfare services</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Objective SC8	<i>To provide a co-ordinated approach to emergency services between all parties</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective SC9	<i>To provide all islanders and visitors with access to emergency services</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective SC10	<i>To provide islanders with access to all levels of education whether island based or mainland based</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Objective SC11	<i>To improve opportunities for all in terms of childcare facilities</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective SC12	<i>To provide appropriate community and public service facilities on the islands and develop innovative ways of service delivery to islands</i>	✓	✓	0	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	✓
Objective SC13	<i>To promote awareness, participation and empowerment of island communities and individuals in decision-making processes for islands</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective SC14	<i>To promote development of community organisations (in partnership with others) to ensure that they are representative and inclusive of all island voices</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective SC15	<i>To give islands a high position on the agenda of public service providers and implement practices to reflect this in their relevant work programmes</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0
Objective SC16	<i>To ensure that there is a range of sporting and social activities suited to all sectors of the population on the islands</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Objective SC17	<i>To promote social inclusion among all sectors of the islands' population</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural Development											
Objective CD1	<i>To ensure that island traditions, customs and folklore are passed on to future generations</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Objective CD2	<i>To promote and support the conservation and protection of national monuments and sites of architectural and archaeological significance as valuable resources</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	?	✓	✓

Objective CD3	<i>To conserve and promote the islands' maritime and marine heritage</i>	✓	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0
Objective CD4	<i>To interpret and develop the military history theme on the West Cork Islands</i>	✓	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0
Objective CD5	<i>To engage with the arts community to develop a vibrant agenda for art, creativity and culture on the West Cork Islands</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0
Objective CD6	<i>To encourage an increased appreciation of the Irish language on the non-Gaeltacht islands of West Cork as well as on Oileán Chléire</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0
Objective CD7	<i>To support and enhance Oileán Chléire as a functioning and viable Gaeltacht area into the future</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0

Oileán Chléire												
Objective OC	<i>To encourage enhanced recognition of the unique character of Oileán Chléire and the importance of the Irish language to the economy, culture and social fabric of the island; protect its linguistic and cultural heritage and support and promote sustainable economic development on the island</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0
Bere Island												
Objective BI	<i>To retain a strong population level and build on the existing facilities, economic and social activities and entrepreneurial spirit on the island</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Whiddy Island												
Objective WI	<i>To promote Whiddy as a place to visit, improve its links with Bantry and the oil terminal and develop service provision on the island</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Dursey Island												
Objective DI	<i>To conserve the landscape and cultural quality of Dursey, while recognising the needs of its occupants and improving service provision to the island for both residents and visitors</i>	✓	✓	0	✓	✓	0	0	✓	✓	✓	

Long Island											
Objective LI	<i>To Improve service provision to Long Island, improve links between the island and the mainland, seek to encourage year-round visits and stays and support the retention and increase of the islands population</i>	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0
Sherkin Island											
Objective SI	<i>To improve services, facilities and attractions for residents and visitors and expand and develop enterprise and employment on the island</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓
Heir Island											
Objective HI	<i>To develop community facilities on Heir Island, expand on existing enterprise development and maintain and enhance the profile of the island as a tourist destination</i>	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0

Glossary of Terms

Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS)

This scheme replaces REPS and provides payments to farmers for the undertaking of identifiable and verifiable environmental measures, which assist in the implementation of various environmental directives.

Battery

Group of cannons in a fixed fortification for coastal or frontier defence.

Beara Way

A long distance coastal walking trail in the Beara Peninsula, with sections on Bere and Dursey Islands.

Bere Island Projects Group (BIPG)

An island development group supporting voluntary groups and projects funded under the Local Community Development Programme and managed by a voluntary committee. Projects covered include those in the areas of education, tourism, services waste management and childcare. BIPG works with the communities of Bere, Whiddy & Dursey Islands.

Board Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

BIM is the Irish State agency with responsibility for developing the Irish Sea Fishing and Aquaculture industries.

Breakwater

A protective structure of stone or concrete extending from the shore into the water to prevent a beach from washing away.

Building Energy Rating (BER)

An energy rating for homes on a scale of A-G, with A-rated homes being the most energy efficient. A BER certificate is compulsory for all homes being sold or rented since January 2009.

Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais (CLÁR)

The CLÁR Programme is a targeted investment programme in rural areas and supports physical, economic and social infrastructure in rural areas of special disadvantage.

Comharchumann Chléire Teo.

Comharchumann Chléire Teo. is a community development co-operative established in 1969 to co-ordinate services and development on Oileán Chléire. The Comharchumann administers the Irish Summer College, language learning initiatives and community services. The main source of funding for service co-ordination is through Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann (Irish Islands Federation)

The Irish Islands Federation is the representative body for the inhabited offshore islands of Ireland.

Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta

Comhar na nOileáin Teo. is the LEADER/Partnership Company for the inhabited offshore islands of Ireland and is responsible for the delivery of the Rural

Development (LEADER) programme 2007-2013 for the West Cork Islands.

Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

CPO is a legal function that allows certain bodies which need to obtain land or property to do so without the consent of the owner.

Congested Districts Board

The Congested Districts Board was a body established in 1891 to develop the West of Ireland in response to the problems of isolation, poverty and unemployment through financing infrastructure and improvements and subsidising the introduction of new industries and agricultural products.

Cork Community and Voluntary Forum

The Cork Community and Voluntary Forum was established by the Cork County Development Board to facilitate feedback to the Board from the representatives of the community and voluntary groups throughout the county.

Cork County Childcare Committee (CCCC)

The CCCC was established in 2000 as part of the National Childcare Policy to provide support, advice and information to existing and potential childcare service providers; to address issues of social inclusion; promote quality childcare; facilitate the development of local networks of childminders and to implement the strategies outlined in their Strategic Plans 2001-2006 and 2007-2010.

Cork County Development Board (CDB)

CDBs were established in each county and city in Ireland in early 2000, are led by local authorities and are representative of local

development bodies along with state agencies and social partners operating locally. Cork CDB works collaboratively in a process of long-term planning and development for the county.

Cork County Vocational Education Committee (VEC)

A statutory authority, which provides education and training throughout Cork County including second-level education, adult basic learning and outdoor education.

Cork Local Sports Partnership

The Cork Local Sports Partnership is an organisation that promotes involvement and increased participation in sports throughout Cork City and County.

Electoral Divisions (EDs)

EDs are the smallest legally defined administrative areas in the State for which Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) are published from the Census.

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland is a government agency responsible for the development and promotion of the indigenous business sector.

Fáilte Ireland

The national tourism development organisation that provides strategic and practical support to develop and sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourist destination, working with the tourism industry in areas such as business support, enterprise development, training and education, research, marketing and destination development.

Fórsa Cosanta Áitiúil (FCÁ)

The FCÁ is also known as the Reserve Defense Force (RDF) or the Army Reserve and is a part-time voluntary organisation; its primary role is the second line Reserve of the Irish Army.

Fulacht Fiadh

A Fulacht Fiadh is a Bronze Age site consisting of a low horseshoe shaped mound of charcoal-enriched soil and heat shattered stone with a central pit or trough.

Greener Homes Scheme

The Greener Homes Scheme provides grants to help homeowners buy a home heating system that uses a renewable energy source and is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

Home Energy Saving Scheme

The Home Energy Saving Scheme provides grants to certain homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their home and is administered by SEAI.

Ionad Serbhísí Teanga

Irish Language Centres or Ionad Serbhísí Teanga operate in all Gaeltacht areas providing Irish language supports and certified language courses. The provision of language support services on Oileán Chléire is delivered by Comharchumann Chléire Teo.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

ICZM is a process for the management of coastal area using an integrated approach to all aspects of the coastal zone, including geographical and political boundaries and all

users, to achieve sustainable development of the coast.

Irish Farmers' Association (IFA)

The IFA is a national organisation which represents the interests of Irish farmers.

Martello Tower

A circular masonry fort for coastal defence.

Micro-Renewable

Small domestic scale energy devices which generate energy from renewable sources such as wood-fuelled heating or solar panels.

Muintir na Tíre

A national voluntary organisation dedicated to promoting the process of community development.

Pobal

Pobal is an intermediary company with charitable status that works on behalf of the government and the EU to support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion, reconciliation and equality.

Primary Health Care Team

A group of health care professionals working in the community, offering a co-ordinated approach to treatment and care of patients.

Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

The principal mechanism for protection of buildings and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical importance.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is energy generated from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides and geothermal heat, which are renewable energy sources.

Seveso Sites

Sites involved in the storage and/or production of dangerous substances that present a major accident hazard, subject to the Control of Major Accident Hazards Directive 96/82/EC.

Sherkin Island Development Society (SIDS)

SIDS is a co-operative development group that liaises with and lobbies administrative, development and government bodies at all levels, in relation to island development issues, primarily on Sherkin.

Southdoc

A service which provides access to doctors for urgent medical needs outside of normal business hours.

Souterrain

A Souterrain is an underground chamber, passage or series of rooms sometimes used as a store.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

SACs are strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive for the protection of habitat types and species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process, which evaluates the likely consequences on the environment of

implementing a development plan and influences plan preparation to seek to avoid significant adverse impacts.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the state development agency with statutory responsibility for the development of the economy of the Gaeltacht, thereby maintaining the Irish language as the principal means of communication in the Gaeltacht.

Warmer Homes Scheme

The Warmer Homes Scheme aims to improve the energy efficiency and warmth of homes that are lived in by people on low incomes. It is operated by SEAI.

West Cork Development Partnership (WCDP)

The WCDP was formed in 2007 from the merger of West Cork LEADER Co-Op and West Cork Community Partnership and is the local development company responsible for the delivery of the Rural Development (LEADER) programme 2007-2013 in the mainland West Cork area.

West Cork Enterprise Board

The West Cork Enterprise board is a company, established under the Industrial Development Act 1995 to promote and encourage local enterprise development in West Cork.

West Cork Rural Transport

West Cork Rural Transport is funded under the NDP Rural Transport Programme, Departments of Community Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs, and Social & Family Affairs and FÁS and provides subsidised transport services to communities throughout West Cork.

provides food, accommodation and opportunities to learn, in exchange for assistance with farming or gardening activities.

WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms)

WWOOF is a loose network of national organisations that facilitate the placement of volunteers on organic farms. The host

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Appendix B - Maps