

AUGUST 2020

SUBMISSION: CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Meitheal Mara - Community Boatyard Cork

Presented in association with:

Blackrock Rowing Club

Cork Dragons

Cork Missing Persons Search and Recovery

Naomhóga Chorcaí

Sailing into Wellness



INTRODUCTION

Meitheal Mara is working in collaboration with a number of organisations in the city with a similar interest in boats, boating and providing opportunities for people of all backgrounds to get out on the water. We have a collective need for suitable waterside facilities to house our activities, with an associated vehicular slipway capable of providing for a range of users.

As a collective, we welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the forthcoming City Development Plan. We are delighted to see the emphasis given to green and blue infrastructure in the CDP Issues Paper, 'Our City Our Future'.

We look forward to contributing to the proposed 'Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy' and 'Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Strategy'. Meitheal Mara was a partner in the recent Placemaking Training pilot with Cork Healthy Cities and Cork Local Sports Partnership, supported by the Directorate of Community, Culture and Placemaking. The focus of the training was the River Lee and the city's waterfront public parks at Ballincollig, Lee Fields, Fitzgerald's Park and the Marina. The area of the Lee within the newly extended boundary of the city is almost 179 hectares. Combined with the adjacent riparian parkland, Cork is traversed by approximately 285 hectares of open urban public space, leading directly into the waters of Cork Harbour – a really exciting opportunity for this riverine port city.

The development of new and improved safe access points to the water with associated facilities is essential to sustain and develop recreational and other use of the river and harbour, as recognised in the current City Development Plan.

In this submission we propose that a Maritime Activities Centre and public slipway for the city is provided for as an objective in the City Development Plan. There is a planning precedent for a rowing clubhouse complex and launching facilities on a site at the eastern end of the Marina Park where approval was granted by the Council in 2009 and upheld by An Bord Pleanála in 2010.



POTENTIAL LOCATION

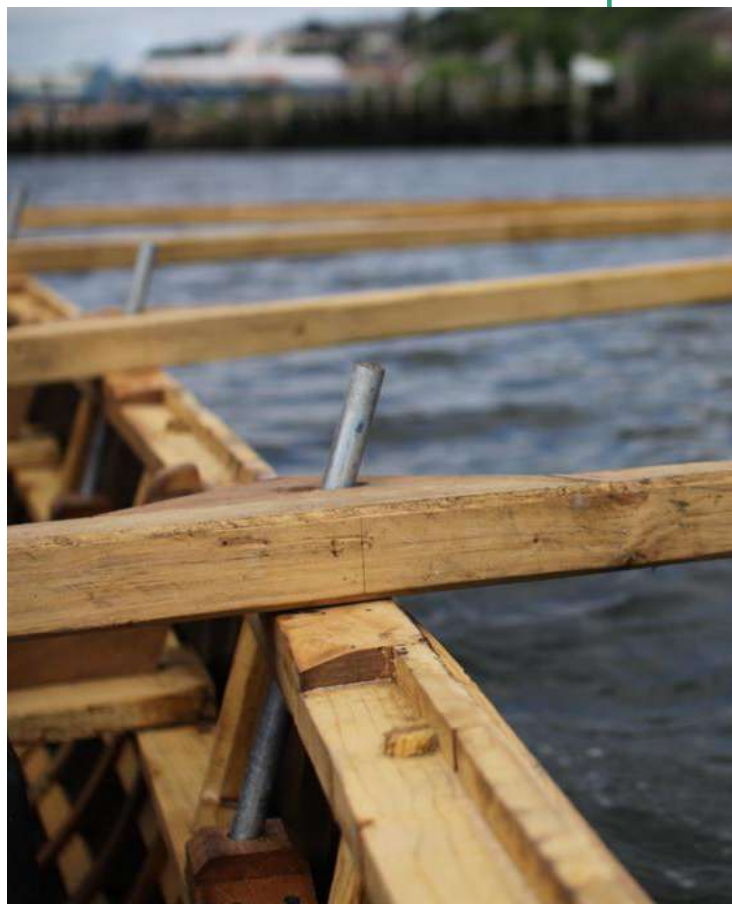
Maritime Activities Centre

The site proposed for the Maritime Activity Centre is at the east end of the Marina within the Marina Park. It is identified in the 2013 Marina Park Masterplan for Cork Boat Club and/or Blackrock Rowing Club. Planning permission granted for Cork Boat Club on the site expired early in 2015 (1). Blackrock Rowing Club made an incomplete application for planning permission for an extension to the Scout Hut at Blackrock Harbour in 2015.

The An Bord Pleanála's inspector's report on the Marina Park site also highlighted the support from schools and voluntary groups involved in the management and use of rowing facilities for young people, stating their importance, and also the need for increased provision to accommodate the growing need in the city. The aim of the Maritime Activity Centre is to provide a home and facilities for a number of organisations and activities, in line with Meitheal Mara's collaborative way of working. Potential partner groups and organisations include Naomhóga Chorcaí, Cork Dragons, Ocean to City with the Cork Harbour Festival, Cork Arts 'n' Education, Meitheal Mara Men's Shed, Crew Fionnbarra, Cork Missing Persons Search and Recovery, Blackrock Rowing Club, Sailing into Wellness, Blackrock Sailing Club and Active Connections, amongst others.

(1) The site was previously approved as the location of a rowing clubhouse complex. Planning Permission was (TP08/33263 ; PL 28.234211) granted to Cork Boat Club in 2009 for such a development including a floating pontoon. In the report of the Bord Pleanála inspector (R234211) it was clearly stated that the proposed development complied with the zoning objective for the site.

The establishment of a Cork Maritime Activity Centre is fully in tune with the Council's plans for this area of the city. The theme of water is central to the Marina Park Masterplan, and use of the river has the potential to at least double the recreational open space that the park will provide. The public realm strategy for the South Docks Local Area Plan has a focus on facilitating access to the waterfront and the water by developing quayside amenity areas. Objectives relating to arts, cultural heritage and tourism (Chapter 8) and recreational infrastructure (Chapter 11) in the City Development Plan include promoting the use of open space, supporting recreational facilities, promoting water activities and river use and developing amenity routes.



The public pontoon completed alongside the Marina in 2015 is ideal for light boats that can be launched by hand (kayaks, sliding seat rowing boats, paddle boards) and for embarking and disembarking crews and passengers safely from all types of small boat. It is heavily used.

Provision of a well-designed new slipway, accessible to vehicle trailers, is likely to be equally well-used and would complement the pontoon by providing access for all other small - medium boat types from the Marina, including rescue and search and recovery RIBs.

The realisation of the Maritime Activity Centre is envisaged as a partnership operation that will benefit the City Council and the people of Cork City and Harbour as well as Meitheal Mara and associates. The Centre will provide a facility for the promotion of health, recreation and leisure activities, social inclusion, enterprise and culture. It will be unique, promote Cork and generate tourism.

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PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Through the Cork Harbour Festival and Ocean to City, Meitheal Mara collaborates among diverse partners: state, community, business, and voluntary groups to highlight Cork's great natural amenities, Cork Harbour and the River Lee. With the Maritime Activities Centre the organisation continues to bring together these partners to create a social and economic platform promoting the maritime environs and heritage for community development, tourism, and to promote the public good.

The collective of maritime organisations behind this submission has come together under the auspices of Meitheal Mara with the objective of collaborating to develop a shared centre to promote and celebrate the community activities of boatbuilding and boating, and to foster an appreciation of traditional and other hands-on boats and maritime culture. The groups represented in the collective have been instrumental in developing and sustaining access and participation in the life of the harbour for the people of the city and county.

The proposed development will enhance existing facilities for maritime leisure, health promotion, water safety, community education and social enterprise in Cork, promoting integrated provision through addressing competing interests for the current limited marine infrastructure.

This will allow the partner clubs and organisations to develop and flourish whilst at the same time the facility will attract many additional recreation and leisure visitors to the city with associated social and economic benefits.

The Cork and River Lee Maritime Activities Centre will be a showcase for an imaginative public realm with a range of facilities to create a vibrant maritime recreational and cultural destination for the people of Cork and those visiting the city and harbour.



PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT

The proposed location of the Maritime Activity Centre sits within the wider context of Cork City's planned development in fulfilling objectives within the Cork City Development Plan, the South Docks Local Area Plan, the Cork City Local, Community and Economic Development Plan, and the national planning and policy framework for maritime heritage in Ireland. The following paragraphs outline the points of alignment between these plans and policies and how they relate to the proposed centre.

The **Cork 2050 submission to the National Planning Framework** positions Cork city as a driver of economic growth for the wider region and outlines the vision for the city as housing more than 500,000 people within its Metropolitan area by 2050. It is noted that the growth in both population and economic activity will be supported by continued investment in the public realm and increased levels of accessibility to Cork's unique waterfront setting. The submission seeks to create a 'sense of place' to be delivered through five priority areas including that of Vibrancy and Activity. This strategy is supported by principles which include a focus on creating quality public space and public realm with enhanced recreational activity, and where maritime opportunity is seen as an asset of the county with Cork boasting the second longest shoreline of any county in Ireland and the second largest natural harbour in the world and an extensive marine environment.

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The **Cork City Development Plan (2015-2021)** outlines key areas for the development of the city, including enhancing its identity as a Maritime Harbour (Objective 8.3), supporting further development of Cork as a centre for maritime culture and recreation. Central to this will be the enhancement of physical access to the water from the existing quaysides for amenity purposes such as boating/kayaking as well as improving visual access to the water for pedestrians and cyclists, with the specific objective to:

"Improve physical and visual access to the water and promote water-based activities"



Section 11.31 (Water Sports) highlights Cork's "strong tradition of water-based transport, water sports, recreational boat use and water heritage, including rowing, sailing, canoeing and traditional boating (e.g. currachs)". It sets out the City Council's intention to review river access points and services to meet the needs of river users, including organisations, and identifies the need for a new public water slipway, accessible to vehicles, to serve the city in a manner "capable of meeting the needs of individuals and organisations that use the water".

Objective 11.8 seeks to support the development of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, which are easily accessible to all members of the community.

These and other specific objectives within this Plan which directly support the development of a Maritime Activities Centre are outlined in the table below.



The **South Docks Local Area Plan** is similarly supportive of rowing activity along the river and Objective SD 64 supports the provision of upgraded slipways and rowing facilities.

Chapter 7	Inclusive Neighbourhoods	
Objective	7.1	Inclusive neighbourhoods strategic objectives
	7.2	Sustainable neighbourhoods
	7.4	Social inclusion
	7.5	Community facilities (esp. Docklands)
	7.15	Neighbourhood recreation and amenity
Chapter 8	Arts, Cultural Heritage and Tourism	
Objective	8.1	Enhancing Cork's cultural identity – strategic objectives a, g, i
	8.2	Enhancing Cork's cultural identity – Cork City and Harbour
	8.3	Maritime Harbour – strategic objective e <i>"Improve physical and visual access to the water and promote water-based activities"</i>
	8.4	River City/City Island
	8.9	Imagined in Cork – strategic objective g <i>"... arts and culture plan for Marina Park"</i>
	8.17	<i>"...it is the intention of the City Council to commission a River Use and Management Plan to examine the commercial and recreational potential of the Upper Harbour as well as the management of future river uses and users and ongoing maintenance of the navigable waterway in this location."</i>
	8.20	<i>"...there is also potential to strengthen the actual interpretative routes connecting the city and the Lower Harbour area including walking/cycling and boat and rail links. The City Council will work to secure the remaining waterfront links from Albert Quay to the Marina and from Blackrock Village to Blackrock Castle for use as a riverside amenity area, taking in the planned Marina Park."</i>
	8.21	<i>Improving access to the water will be a key component of the City Council's strategy to enhance the city's identity as a Maritime Harbour. Central to this will be the enhancement of physical access to the water from the existing quaysides for amenity purposes such as boating/kayaking as well as improving visual access to the water for pedestrians and cyclists.</i>
Chapter 11	Recreational Infrastructure	
Objective	11.1	Recreational infrastructure strategic objectives – i <i>"... ensure that the city's open space and recreational assets are managed effectively, efficiently and smartly so that the maximum benefit for all in the common good can be obtained ..."</i>
	11.10	Sports facilities and grounds
	11.12	River use and management plan – b <i>"... explore the potential for a new public water slipway in Cork City in partnership with stakeholders"</i>
	11.13	Amenity routes

The **Cork City Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 –2021 Pure Cork** sets out the objectives and actions which will guide the economic and community development of Cork city over the next six years. These actions are being delivered by a range of economic and community development stakeholders.

Meitheal Mara is named in the plan as one such community stakeholder, as indicated in the table below. The roles suggested for Meitheal Mara are to lead out on the realisation of core objectives for the development of Cork city's maritime culture to include a City Maritime Strategy, a Maritime Centre and a City Maritime Festival, and to act as community partner in providing maritime activities for children and young people

A feasibility study into locating a maritime activity centre for Meitheal Mara and associates on the potential site on the Marina was completed in 2018 by Karan Thompson Consulting and Ove Arup and Partners Limited . It was funded as an action in the LECP via the Healthy Ireland Fund.



LECP Action	Key Steps	Partners	Output	Timeline
2.18 Investigate the development of a Maritime Centre to promote greater use of the river in the City.	Secure suitable site with river frontage downstream of River Lee bridges	Cork City Council, Cork Healthy Cities, EcoWell and RSE. Suggest Meitheal Mara as potential lead partner (subject to approval of MM Board); include other city maritime recreation clubs, river rescue services, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility Development Plan Facility Finance Plan Maritime Recreation Hub Masterplan 	2017 - 2018
2.19 Investigate the development of a Maritime City Strategy to promote tourism, employment around river- based activities in the City.	Development of maritime centre (2.18)	Cork City Council, Cork City Heritage Forum, and Community Groups. Suggest Meitheal Mara as lead community partner (subject to approval of MM Board)	Maritime City enterprise network and strategy	2018 - 2019
2.20 Investigate the feasibility of a City Maritime festival with links between river activities and on-shore river bank activities.	Extend and develop existing festival	Meitheal Mara, Cork City Council and Community Groups.	Cork Harbour Festival - week-long maritime festival with events in city and throughout harbour	Annual
8.7 Promote maritime activities for children and young people.	Suggest building on existing programmes and partnerships to develop a youth maritime activity network	Cork City Council and LCDC Suggest Meitheal Mara as a community partner; also Sail Training Ireland, Lee Rowing Club and other rowing clubs, Phoenix Kayak Club, Aghada Sea Scouts, sailing clubs in the harbour, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cork City youth maritime activity network 	2018

Other policies and initiatives:

In presenting Cork as an inclusive city with an attractive lifestyle and as "easy to use", the active use of the river and the harbour, which is literally at the centre of that city is a clear reinforcement of that message. The activities of Meitheal Mara and associates, with the support of Cork City Council make a considerable contribution to the life of Cork City, as highlighted on the **We are Cork** website.

Amenity access to the river and coastline featured strongly amongst the "Top 3 asks for what you want to see more of in the next 5 years" in responses to Cork Chamber's 2020 survey (**Imagineer your city, your county**), carried out for its recently launched **Sustainable Cork Programme**.

Provision of appropriate facilities and services for young people is referred to in the current City Development Plan (Objective 7.1 Inclusive Neighbourhoods) and in Section 10 of the issues paper, Our City, Our Future. An outcome area in the **National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020** is achieving active and healthy, physical and mental well-being for young people, with the following objectives:

- Objective 1 Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle, in particular with regard to their physical, mental and sexual health and well-being.
- Objective 2 Young people benefit from involvement in recreational and cultural opportunities including youth work, arts, and sports

Research for the National Youth Strategy indicates that only 12% of post-primary school children engage in recommended levels of physical activity. It recommends support to enable arts, culture, sports and youth organisations to cooperate at a local level to enhance quality and developmental opportunities for young people. The strategy is for all young people, and provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.



Meitheal Mara works with young people from neighbourhoods throughout the city through the **Bádóireacht programme**, which provides opportunities to work with boats and to get on the water.

Groups of young people learn to work together both in the workshop and on the water. We envisage a Maritime Activity Centre for Cork very much as a youth-friendly space, providing an opportunity to develop an associated Youth Café or other specific outlet for young people at the same time.

CONCLUSION

A collective need has been established for suitable waterside facilities for water activity and boat building providers, with an associated vehicular slipway capable of providing for a range of users. Provision for a Maritime Activity Centre for Cork is proposed to meet this need.

There are no similar facilities in Ireland. This is an opportunity for Cork to shine with a unique facility and a statement of Cork's status as an historic port and riverine city, with a vibrant, contemporary maritime culture.

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MEET THE MARITIME ACTIVITIES CENTRE PARTNERS

These are our fantastic
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