



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ACP-323889-25

Development	Proposed facility centre for water sports activities.
Location	Claycastle, Youghal, Co. Cork
Planning Authority	Cork County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	
Applicant(s)	Mary Butler, Gerard Considine and Róisín Furey-Long
Type of Application	EIA Screening Determination
Date of Site Inspection	25 th February 2026
Inspector	Rachel Gleave O'Connor

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Under the provisions of Article 120 (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), a person may apply to the Commission for a screening determination as to whether a development proposed to be carried out by the local authority would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to advise the Commission on whether or not it should issue a Direction to Cork County Council that the proposed development of the proposed facility centre for water sports activities in Claycastle, Youghal, County Cork, should be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The site is located on Front Strand road, adjacent to Claycastle Beach in Youghal, County Cork, within an existing car park area. To the north east of the site there is a car parking area and a caravan park. A commercial café 'The Brunch Box' is also situated to the north of the site. To the north west there is another larger caravan park and open space. The remaining car park area is set out to the south west of the site following the coastline and the beach area. Aura Youghal Leisure Centre is situated to further to the north east of the site.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. This screening determination for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) relates to a proposed facility centre for water sports activities. The proposed facility will comprise a single storey, flat-roofed building containing public toilets, showers and changing facilities at Claycastle beach in Youghal. The proposed gross floor area is approximately 58sqm. Separate foul and surface water drainage systems connecting to existing Uisce Éireann infrastructure is also proposed. The development is described as follows in public notices:

The proposed development consists of a Facility Centre for Water Sports Activities to provide universally accessible Essential facilities including changing rooms, showers, toilets, lockers for storage, wash-down areas, semi-covered induction spaces,

amenity open space, and all associated site development works to support water-based recreation and tourism.

- 3.2. The proposed facility is situated within the hardstanding area of an existing car park and will require the reconfiguration and reduction of approximately 25 marked car parking spaces within a car park with capacity for 250 spaces. There are no works proposed beyond the hardstand area.

4.0 Legislation and Policy Context

4.1. Legislation

4.1.1. Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended

- 4.1.2. Section 179 relates to local authority own development. Under subsection (b), where a local authority proposes to carry out a development, it shall comply with this section and any regulations under this section.

- 4.1.3. Under Section 179 (6)(d), this section shall not apply to proposed development which is development in respect of which an environmental impact assessment report is required under Section 175 or under any other enactment.

4.1.4. Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended

- 4.1.5. Under Article 120 (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended, *“where any person considers that a development proposed to be carried out by a local authority would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, he or she may, at any time before the expiration of 4 weeks beginning on the date of publication of the notice referred to in article 81(2), apply to the Board for a screening determination as to whether the development would be likely to have such effects.”*

Note: References to the Board in the Act now relate to An Coimisiún Pleanála (or ‘the Commission’).

- 4.1.6. Subsection (c) states that an application for screening determination under the above shall state the reasons why the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment and shall indicate the class in Schedule 5 within which the development falls.

- 4.1.7. Subsection (ca) requires the local authority to submit to the Commission the information specified in Schedule 7A for the purposes of the screening determination. Under subsection (cb) this information shall be accompanied by any other relevant information and assessments, and the description of any features of the proposal and measures to avoid or prevent significant adverse effects.
- 4.1.8. Subsection (cc) requires the Commission to carry out an examination of, at least, the nature, size or location of the development and shall make a screening determination. If the determination is that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall determine that an EIA is not required. If there would be likely effects, it shall serve notice on the local authority to prepare an EIAR in respect of the proposed development.
- 4.1.9. Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)
- 4.1.10. Schedule 5, Article 93 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) describes development thresholds that require EIA on a mandatory basis. It reflects Annex I and II of the EIA Directive.
- 4.1.11. EIA Directive 2014/52/EU
- 4.1.12. Annex III of EIA Directive 2014/52/EU as set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), sets out criteria for determining whether a project should be subject to environmental impact assessment. These are as follows:
1. The characteristics of the proposed development.
 2. Location of the proposed development.
 3. Types and characteristic of potential impacts.

4.2. National Policy

- 4.2.1. National Planning Framework (NPF): Project Ireland 2040 NPF is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to the year 2040. National Policy Objective 34 to facilitate tourism development.

- 4.2.2. Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2025: CAP 25 builds on the Climate Action Plan of 2024, reinforcing the measures, actions and policy supports required to support Ireland's transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It represents an update or iteration of Ireland's ongoing climate action strategy, and there is continuity between CAPs and overlap in the iterative evolution of the actions.
- 4.2.3. Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland, a plan that responds to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, to accelerate the identification and implementation of the right measures in the right places to both restore and protect all water bodies. The catchments.ie website provides substantial background information for this plan and the most current and up-to-date information on the status of local rivers, lakes and water bodies.
- 4.2.4. 'Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on Screening' (2017) issued by the European Commission and 'Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Development' issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (August 2003).
- 4.2.5. The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 sets out the considerations with respect to flood risk, to enable future development to avoid areas of highest flood risk and ensure appropriate measures to reduce flood risk. Different types of development are classified as either highly vulnerable, less vulnerable or water compatible.
- 4.2.6. The National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023-2030 includes five strategic objectives aimed at addressing existing challenges and new and emerging issues associated with biodiversity loss. Section 59B(1) of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (as amended) requires the Board, as a public body, to have regard to the objectives and targets of the NBAP in the performance of its functions, to the extent that they may affect or relate to the functions of the Board. The impact of development on biodiversity, including species and habitats, can be assessed at a European, National and Local level and is taken into account in our decision-making having regard to the Habitats and Birds Directives, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and other relevant legislation, strategy and policy where applicable.

4.3. Regional Planning Policy

- 4.3.1. The Regional Strategic Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region includes the Cork area. It supports the goals outlined in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASP) for the three cities in the southern region. The Cork MASP seeks to drive economic and population growth subject to the outcome of environmental assessments and the planning process. It highlights the potential for Youghal (identified as a ring town) with respect to tourism.

4.4. Local Planning Policy

- 4.4.1. The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the applicable local planning policy for the subject site. The site primarily unzoned, while areas abut/overlap land zoned YL-GC-20 Green Infrastructure and to the north land is zoned Existing Residential. ZU 18-13 of the Development Plan states that no development other than development that supports Green Infrastructure will be considered.
- 4.4.2. Youghal is identified as a Self-Sustaining Growth: Medium Town in table 2.9 in the Core Strategy for the County Development Plan. The Cork Ring Network is described as 'A network of Mallow Key Town, Bandon, Kinsale, Fermoy, Macroom and Youghal, all with a strong relationship with the Cork Metropolitan Area and with potential for sustainable employment led growth, consolidation and enhancement.'
- 4.4.3. CS 2-4: Greater Cork Ring Strategic Planning Area (b) Establish an appropriate balance in the spatial distribution of future population growth, in line with this Core Strategy, so that Bandon, Fermoy, Kinsale, Macroom and Youghal can accelerate their rate of growth and achieve a critical mass of population to enable them to maximise their potential to attract new investment in employment, services and public transport.
- 4.4.4. CS 2-7 encourages the provision of services in ring towns to support the vitality and viability of the ring towns, and to serve the needs of the community.
- 4.4.5. Section 10.3 'Tourism Promotion' of the plan, identifies tourism initiatives for the county, including 'Redevelopment of beach amenities at Inchydoney, the Warren

Rosscarbery and the Youghal Boardwalk Project, together with other ongoing research work on future greenways’.

- 4.4.6. Section 13.16.6 ‘As part of the feasibility study, the route between the south coast of Ireland (East Cork) and the north-west coast of France have been proposed for the Celtic Interconnector. EirGrid have noted the subsea cables will make landfall at Claycastle Beach close to Youghal. While the Converter station infrastructure is proposed to be located at the IDA site at Ballyadam, near Carrigtohill. The length of the subsea cable would be approximately 500 km. The total length of the interconnector between the two countries would be approximately 575 km and expected to be completed by 2026.’
- 4.4.7. Objective ET 13-23: Celtic Interconnector ‘Support the development of the Celtic Interconnector project linking the electrical transmission networks between Ireland and France as identified as a key project under Project Ireland 2040 for security of electricity supply, enhanced competition, and direct access to the EU Internal Energy Market.’
- 4.4.8. Table D2 of the plan identifies that water supply upgrades are needed for Youghal.
- 4.4.9. Objective TO 10-10: Tourism Facilities, encourages tourism related facilities.
- 4.4.10. Objective MCI 7-6: Coastal Amenities ‘(a) Maintain and improve County Cork’s beaches to a high standard and develop their recreational potential as publicly accessible seaside amenity facilities where appropriate (including facilities such as toilets and changing areas), as appropriate to individual site conditions and in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. (b) Proposals for development of marine leisure facilities will be subject to ecological impact assessment and, where necessary, Appropriate Assessment, with a view to ensuring the avoidance of negative impacts on designated sites, protected species and on-sites or locations of high biodiversity value. (c) Support the enhancement of existing Coastal Amenities to include parks and harbours along the coastline, including improved or if required new access arrangements for the general public for recreational purposes where safe and possible to do so and in accordance with MCI 7-6 (b).’
- 4.4.11. Objective PL 3-1: Building Design, Movement and Quality of the Public Realm, supports measures to improve building design quality, accessibility and movement,

including in part (m) by ensuring that the aged community and the needs of all ages are facilitated, e.g. through the provision of seating areas and public toilet facilities.

- 4.4.12. Section 11.11.28 Flood Resilient Design – For any development proposal in an area at moderate or high risk of flooding that is considered acceptable in principle (passed plan making justification test), the site specific FRA must demonstrate that appropriate mitigation measures can be put in place and that residual risks can be managed to acceptable levels. This may include the use of flood resistant construction measures that are aimed at preventing water from entering a building and that mitigate the damage floodwater causes to buildings. Alternatively, designs for flood resilient construction may be adopted where it can be demonstrated that entry of floodwater is preferable to limit damage and allow relatively quick recovery.
- 4.4.13. Objective WM 11-16 concerns flood risk and avoiding developing in areas at risk of flooding, and applying the sequential approach to flood risk management, with application of the justification test if required.
- 4.4.14. Objective WM 11-17 concerns proposals for development in flood risk areas, with the application of criteria set out in Table 3.2 of the Flood Risk Guidelines.

4.5. Natural Heritage Designations

- Proposed Natural Heritage Areas: Ballyvergan Marsh c.115m; Blackwater River and Estuary c.1.4km; Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) c.3km;
- Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC c.1.4km;
- Ballymacoda Bay SPA c.1.6km;
- Ballymacoda SAC c.2.9km;
- Blackwater Estuary SAC c.2km; and
- Ardmore Head SAC c.9.5km.

5.0 Planning History

- 5.1. None of relevance.

6.0 Request for Direction

6.1. Following public notice by Cork County Council of a proposed facility centre for water sports activities at Claycastle Beach in Youghal on 22nd October 2025, a total of 3 submissions were received from the following applicants under Article 120 (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, requesting the Commission to undertake a screening assessment as to whether the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment:

1. Mary Butler
2. Gerard Considine
3. Róisín Furey-Long

6.2. The requesters were asked to provide further information within a specified period, stating which class of development they considered the proposed development to belong to under Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended. The requesters responded with reference to 'Buildings and structures for recreational or sports purposes...' Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. There is no correlation between this reference to 'Buildings and structures for recreational or sports purposes under Schedule 5, including consideration of part 2 development in Schedule 5.

6.3. References to 'recreational' or 'sports' is found in Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and relates to exempted development. This is distinct from Schedule 5 which outlines the types of development subject to Environmental Impact Assessment as provided for under Part 10 of the Regulations. The proposed development is a Local Authority development under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and therefore reference to Part 2 is not relevant to this request for an EIA Screening.

6.4. The requesters reference to Part 2 does not satisfy the requirements under Article 120(3)(c) as extracted below:

An application for a screening determination under paragraph (b) shall, in order to be considered by the Board, state the reasons for the forming of the view that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment and shall indicate the class in Schedule 5 within which the development is considered to fall.

6.5. While the requesters have set out their reasons for their view that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, they have not indicated the class under Schedule 5 the development is considered to fall. However, I continue with my assessment below.

6.6. A summary of points raised by the requesters is set out below:

- No engagement with the local residents, including sea swimming group of approx. 150 members who swim on the Front Strand, where such a facility would be of more benefit.
- Irresponsible and unsustainable to deem that no EIA required as the construction of this permanent infrastructure would be on a site potentially at risk of climate-related damage.
- Query how drainage will be managed / maintained. Existing sewage drains are prone to blocking. Risk of untreated water discharging to ground water or the sea, or spilling in the event of flooding. Query if there will be monitoring. Could put blue flag status and wildlife at risk.
- The area is home to protected species under the Wildlife Acts including sea otters and seals.
- Concern that reduced car parking will put pressure on the dunes which are currently utilised for parking during peak season and suffer damage.
- Bins in the car park overflow daily, particularly in the summer and this facility will add waste. Query how this will be managed. Existing bathrooms throughout the town are not properly managed. Volunteers currently do most of the cleaning of litter.
- Increased visitors that the facility will attract will add more pressure to maintenance and waste management, with negative impact on wildlife and the landscape, risking a gradual urbanisation and loss of natural character.
- Existing issue with anti-social behaviour and the proposed facility will provide another focus for such behaviour.
- Local residents have already endured a year of sustained disruption due to the construction of the Celtic Interconnector by Eirgrid.

- Do not objection to a facility being constructed but have many issues and concerns as highlighted above.

7.0 Local Authority Response

7.1. Cork County Council was invited by the Commission in accordance with article 120(3)(ca) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, to submit information specified in Schedule 7A for the purposes of a screening determination. They were also requested to submit a hard copy and digital copy of the documentation for the Part 8 project under the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

7.2. The following documentation was submitted to the Commission to consider in its deliberations:

- Letter from Cork County Council 6th February 2026;
- Schedule 7A Information Report;
- Uisce Éireann Confirmation of Feasibility;
- Operating Manual Water Sports Facilities;
- Covering Letter Part 8 Documents;
- Part 8 Application;
- Appendix I Design Statement – Youghal Claycastle;
- Appendix II AA Screening and Determination Report – Youghal Claycastle;
- Appendix III EIAR Screening Assessment – Youghal Claycastle;
- Appendix IV Flood Risk Assessment RKA Consultant Engineers – Youghal Claycastle;
- Appendix V Planning Report - Youghal Claycastle; and
- Appendix VI Services Report RKA Consultant Engineers - Youghal Claycastle.

7.3. The Local Authority response includes a copy of the Part 8 documentation, including Appendix III entitled Environmental Impact Assessment Screening. This contains a statement from a Senior Planner at Cork County Council that:

“Having regard to the description (and nature, size and location) of the proposed development, I am satisfied that the proposed development does not fall within a class set out in Annex I or Annex II of the Directive; or (Schedule 5 Parts 1 and 2 (*including Part 2, Class 10(b)(iv), and Class 10(k)*) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended); and as such the proposed development is not subject to the EIA directive, and screening is not required.”

7.4. As part of this, I note the relevant sections of Part 2 in Schedule 5 of the Regulations specified above, comprise the following development:

- 10(b)(iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.
- 10(k) Coastal work to combat erosion and maritime works capable of altering the coast through the construction, for example, of dikes, moles, jetties and other sea defence works, where the length of coastline on which works would take place would exceed 1 kilometre, but excluding the maintenance and reconstruction of such works or works required for emergency purposes.

7.5. The Planning Authority Response also includes a Schedule 7A Information Report which describes in accordance with Article 120(3)(c) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and Annex III of the EIA Directive, the particulars of the proposed development. This is considered further below as part of my assessment.

8.0 **Assessment**

8.1. **Overview**

8.1.1. On 22nd October 2025 Cork County Council gave notice under Part 8, Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), of a proposed facility for Water Sports Activities. The facility is intended to provide universally accessible essential facilities including changing rooms, showers, toilets, lockers for

storage, wash-down areas, semi-covered induction spaces, amenity open space, and all associated site development works to support water-based recreation and tourism.

- 8.1.2. Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), requires the local authority to indicate a conclusion with respect to a screening determination for EIA in relation to local authority own development. Cork County Council concluded in its screening determination that on the basis of the description (nature, size and location) of the proposed development, the need for environmental impact assessment can be excluded.
- 8.1.3. Under Article 120 (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), a person may apply to the Commission for a screening determination, where they consider that a development proposed to be carried out by the local authority would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Commission has received a total of 3 applications under Article 120 (3)(b) for a screening determination as to whether the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- 8.1.4. This assessment will address both the mandatory and sub-threshold requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development as they relate to the proposed development.

8.2. Schedule 5 Mandatory EIA Thresholds

- 8.2.1. Schedule 5, Article 93 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) describes development thresholds that require EIA on a mandatory basis. It reflects Annex I and II of the EIA Directive.
- 8.2.2. The proposed development is a 'project' as it comprises the construction of a building, however it would not fall under the type of projects described in either Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5. Neither does the proposed development does not reflect the scale or character, of the type of projects addressed in Schedule 5. As part of the Local Authorities own EIA Screening, they highlight the two mostly likely projects in Part 2, Schedule 5 to be considered as part of screening (section 7 above refers), specifically paragraph 10 'infrastructure', (b)(iv) relating to urban development and (k) coastal works, which the development would not fall under. In my view, the scale

and nature of the proposed development clearly isn't in alignment with any of the project types described in Schedule 5.

- 8.2.3. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed development does not fall under any of the development thresholds set out in either Part 1 or 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

8.3. Sub-Threshold EIA Development

- 8.3.1. Having determined that the proposed development does not meet the criteria set out in Schedule 5 for mandatory EIA, the criteria under Annex III of the EIA Directive (as transposed by Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended), is assessed below to determine whether the proposed development would trigger sub-threshold EIA. This also considers the criteria under Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, as addressed by the Local Authority in their response.

- 8.3.2. 1. Characteristics of projects

- 8.3.3. The characteristics of projects must be considered, with particular regard to:

- 8.3.4. (a) the size and design of the whole project;

- 8.3.5. A description of the proposed development is set out in section 3 of this report above. The size thresholds would not trigger the need for mandatory EIA as outlined above. The proposed development comprises a single storey low rise building of approximately 58sqm. It will result in the loss of a relatively minor number of car parking spaces, c.25 of a total 250 bays. Water and wastewater supply will be connected to existing Uisce Éireann infrastructure and confirmation of the feasibility of this connection is submitted with the Local Authority response. No works are proposed to the nearby dune system, beach or intertidal zone. The site is located within an existing car park hardstand area.

- 8.3.6. I note that the Local Authority Schedule 7A report states that *'The development falls within the class of "buildings and structures for recreational or sports purposes" under Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations but is sub-threshold and does not trigger mandatory EIA.'* However, there is no such class under Schedule 5. Reference to recreation and sport facilities is under Part 2 of the Regulations (not

within Schedule 5) and concern exempt development, which is of no relevance to this screening determination.

- 8.3.7. In any case, I am satisfied that the size and design of the proposed project would not trigger the need for sub-threshold EIA.
- 8.3.8. (b) cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects;
- 8.3.9. The site is in the vicinity of the location for the Celtic Interconnector where it will make landfall at Claycastle Beach in Youghal. This is an underwater electricity link across the Celtic Sea that is currently under construction. The foreshore licence for the Celtic Interconnector has been subject to its own EIA and its effects will be suitably mitigated through measures set out in that assessment. The proposed development does not form part of that project and there are no likely effects arising from the proposed development in combination with that project.
- 8.3.10. There are no other major projects nearby.
- 8.3.11. (c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- 8.3.12. The scale of the proposed project does not attract significant use of natural resource. The proposed development will be situated in an existing car park area, resulting in the minor reduction of c.25 car parking bays in a total car park of c.250 bays. The Local Authority Schedule 7A report addresses biodiversity, dunes and coastal geomorphology as well as water. The proposed development is entirely situated within the existing hardstand area for the car park. No significant effects are identified.
- 8.3.13. (d) the production of waste;
- 8.3.14. The construction of the development will invariably result in temporary generation of waste. The Local Authority Schedule 7A report describes that the construction period will be c.9-12 months and will be managed through standard contract controls including a Construction Environmental Management Plan to address dust and protection of adjacent environments. The extent of waste during construction will be relatively minor as a result of the small scale of the proposal.
- 8.3.15. The potential for waste generation, and specifically litter during operation of the proposed development, is also addressed. The facility will be managed and operated by Cork County Council in accordance with the Operating Manual for Water Sports Facilities (submitted), which provides for cleaning, maintenance and waste

management. The submitted documentation states that adequate bin provision and services will be maintained, with frequent collections. No significant effects are anticipated.

8.3.16. (e) pollution and nuisances;

8.3.17. As outlined in the Local Authority Schedule 7A report, construction will be managed through a Construction Environmental Management Plan addressing noise, dust, traffic management and protection of adjacent environments. No significant effects on dunes and coastal geomorphology are identified. The proposed structure is to be situated within the existing hardstanding area for the car park and existing access to the beach will not be impacted. All foul wastewater will discharge via a sealed foul drainage system to the public sewer operated by Uisce Éireann (Confirmation of Feasibility submitted). Surface water will be conveyed separately to the public stormwater system. Operation of the facility will be managed and operated by Cork County Council in accordance with the Operating Manual for Water Sports Facilities (submitted). No significant effects anticipated.

8.3.18. (f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;

8.3.19. Flood risk is addressed in submitted documentation as part of the Local Authority response. The development constitutes water-compatible development in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. The proposed finished floor level is 4.60m OD above the elevated modelled tidal flood levels for Flood Zones A and B. Flood mitigation is also included in the design, with an external envelope to allow floodwaters to pass through without obstruction, a confined service core, non-return valves on both foul and surface water drainage, flood-resilient wall / floor finishes, electrical services installed at ceiling level, corrosion / water resistant fixtures / fittings and reinforced concrete raft foundations. The design therefore ensures that the proposed development will not displace or intensify flood risk elsewhere. No significant effects are identified.

8.3.20. There are no other major accident / disaster risks associated with the proposed development.

- 8.3.21. (g) the risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).
- 8.3.22. During construction effects will be mitigated through measures in a Construction and Environmental Management Plan.
- 8.3.23. There will be no direct or indirect discharges to the beach, dunes or groundwater, or marine environment, with sealed connection to public infrastructure. There are no significant effects upon the bathing quality of water or Blue Flag status anticipated.
- 8.3.24. The Local Authority Schedule 7A report confirms that the provision of sanitary and changing infrastructure to support existing water-based recreational use at Claycastle / Front Strand supports improved public health outcomes, accessibility and user safety. The development is anticipated to contribute positively to the local amenity and visitor economy of the area by supporting coastal recreation.
- 8.3.25. 2. Location of projects
- 8.3.26. The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by projects must be considered, with particular regard to:
- 8.3.27. (a) the existing and approved land use;
- 8.3.28. The site comprises the hardstanding for an existing car park area in an area with well established recreational use associated with the beach. There are sensitive coastal features in the wider area, however the proposed development is minor in scale and confined to the existing car park, with no associated effect upon adjacent sensitive environments. The proposed development will have no effect upon access to the beach and will facilitate recreational use of the beach, which is already established.
- 8.3.29. (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;
- 8.3.30. The footprint within which the proposed building will be located, and areas associated with the proposed construction works, do not contain any rare habitats or natural uses. Land clearance will not affect natural resource as the area the structure is to be located comprises previously modified land.
- 8.3.31. (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:

- (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
- (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;
- (iii) mountain and forest areas;
- (iv) nature reserves and parks;
- (v) areas classified or protected under national legislation; Natura 2000 areas designated by Member States pursuant to Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC;
- (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
- (vii) densely populated areas;
- (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

8.3.32. The subject site is situated on a car parking area for the beach, and therefore in a coastal area. The proposed development is complementary to established recreational use associated with the beach and coastal area, providing toilets and changing facilities for users of the area. The minor scale of the proposed structures means that the range of potential effects is limited.

8.3.33. The submitted Local Authority Schedule 7A report describes that construction of the development will be managed in accordance with a Construction and Environmental Management Plan, and its operation will also be managed in accordance with the Management Plan submitted. The proposed facility will also have sealed connection to existing water and wastewater infrastructure with no emissions to the surrounding environment. No works are proposed to the shoreline, dunes or any natural habitat areas.

8.3.34. The site is not situated within a protected site and European designated sites in the wider area are identified in section 4.5 above. The closest is over 1km away. No significant effects are anticipated. All potential effects are localised and of a minor magnitude.

8.3.35. 3. Type and characteristics of the potential impact

8.3.36. The likely significant effects of projects on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in points 1 and 2 of Annex III (as outlined above), with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in Article 3(1), taking into account:

(a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);

(b) the nature of the impact;

(c) the transboundary nature of the impact;

(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;

(e) the probability of the impact;

(f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;

(g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects;

(h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

8.3.37. I have identified above, the potential impacts of the proposed development and discussed the magnitude, nature, probability and reductive measures of relevance.

8.3.38. I am satisfied that impacts associated with the proposed development will be minor and localised and can be considered not significant due to the nature and duration of the works, alongside environmental controls and mitigation measures that will be in place during the construction of the proposal.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1. Having regard to the above assessment, it is considered that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and, accordingly, an EIA is not required. It is therefore recommended that Cork County Council be advised that the preparation and submission of an EIAR is not required in respect of the proposed development.

10.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to:

- (i) The provisions of Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended and Article 120 (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended);
- (ii) Schedule 5 and Schedule 7A Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended);
- (iii) Annex III of the EU EIA Directive 2014/52/EU;
- (iv) The submissions requesting an EIA Screening Determination by the Commission;
- (v) The documents 'Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on Screening' (2017) issued by the European Commission and 'Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Development' issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government August 2003;
- (vi) The limited nature and scale of the proposed development which does not meet any relevant thresholds for EIA;
- (vii) The limited potential for significant impacts arising from the proposed development; and
- (viii) The report and recommendation of the Commission's Inspector.

It is considered that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and, accordingly, an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

Rachel Gleave O'Connor
Senior Planning Inspector

3rd March 2026