



## Transport & Mobility Forum

Liam Lynch  
Project Manager  
Dursey Island Cable Car & Visitor Centre  
Cork County Council

Transport and Mobility Forum  
Cork

May 2019

### **Dursey Island Cable Car & Visitor Centre Development**

Dear Liam,

The Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork (TMF) is a representative group of organisations who have a common interest in sustainable travel. The TMF fully support sustainable modes of travel measures and policies. Sustainable and Active travel helps reduce congestion on roads, improve air quality, supports a low carbon economy, reduces noise pollution and improves public health.

We would like to comment on the proposed Dursey Island Cable Car and Visitors Centre Development Project. We are in support of the replacement of the existing cableway and cableway stations on the mainland and island. However we have concerns over the scale of the proposed mainland-site visitors centre and upgrade to the mainland-site carpark as well as the proposed additional passing bays along the local road network.

Firstly, we cannot emphasise enough the environmental sensitivity of the area as evident from the high level of designation within 15km of the area (table 4.1 of Scoping Document). This includes four SPAs, the Kenmare river SAC, Pulleen Harbour Bog NHA and six pNHAs. Birds such as the Fulmar and Cough, the Common pipistrelle and Leisler bat species, the Flora Protection Order (FPO) species Betony are all present in the area. The threat of the spread of the invasive species Japanese Knotweed and Rhododendron ponticum which are already present along the approach road and could therefore easily be spread during construction. The Hydrogeology of the area makes it highly vulnerable to groundwater contamination due to the absence of overlying soil. As well as this, the rocks in the area are considered poor aquifers and do not have sufficient storage capacity therefore limiting recharging of the groundwater. Not only does this environment hold intrinsic value which should be protected, it also provides essential ecosystem services to the local community such as natural flood defences, clean air and water and carbon sequestration. In addition, the landscape is of high value and any future development will irreversibly affect the untouched and rugged views of the peninsula and therefore, the experience of the local community and visitors to the area who are attracted by this very landscape.

While we appreciate that you will address these concerns in the EIAR, we cannot see how a development like this can be delivered without adverse and irreversible effects on the local environment and quality of life of the local community. We therefore urge you to consider alternative



## Transport & Mobility Forum

locations for the interpretive centre away from this environmentally sensitive area in the already existing urban towns of Castletown Bere and Allihies.

The increase in carpark spaces from the current 70 to 100 will invariably lead to an increase in traffic volume in the area and with the proposed new carpark to feature a large bus bay, this will undoubtedly include large bus and bus tours. The addition of the proposed passing bays along the approaching roads, will result in more traffic along these rural roads which leads to increased noise, visual and air pollution in the form of CO2 emissions and particulate pollutions. This change would significantly alter the quality of life for the local community and the quality of experience for visitors. Tourists are drawn to this area because it is one of the few remaining peninsulas that hasn't been overly developed. There are far better ways to increase tourist economy in the area without risking the very uniqueness the peninsula has to offer.

We accept that the current situation is not ideal with cars having to make U-Turns and many visitors waiting too long at the current site and leaving. We also appreciate the potentially positive socioeconomic impact an increase in tourism, employment and facilities will bring but we believe these benefits can be gained through an alternative development which will not pose such disastrous threats to the local environment and landscape.

We recommend that the visitor/interpretive centre be built in Castletown Bere or Allihies which will act as the entry and exit point for tourists who will be shuttled to the cable car and back. This system will control the number of visitors to the area and spread out the visitors over the quieter hours/days etc. Visitors will be able to book on arrival or online. Having the interpretive centre in one of the nearby towns is of benefit for several reasons:

- Less vehicular traffic along the rural road network and less traffic being directed into the most sensitive part of the peninsula
- Visitors will also be encouraged to park their car at the visitors centre and cycle or walk out to the area through the rental of bikes, e-bikes (a new system of e-bike rental and charge points should be developed) and walking gear. Guided cycles and walks by local people can be promoted at the centre and online as well as local B&Bs.
- The existing carpark can be developed to cater for locals, a new system of shuttle buses, bike and e-bike parking facilities and limited facilities for walkers/cyclists/shuttle bus visitors such as toilets, seating and shelter areas. These structures would be far less impacting on the local area compared to the proposed visitor centre which will invariably become an attraction in itself.
- The alternative location in a nearby town will also help encourage tourists to do a loop of the area and visit other attractions such as the copper mines, Dzoichen beara, etc. rather than just driving directly to and from the proposed visitor centre and bypassing other attractions. This model spreads out the socio-economic benefits and encourages tourists to stay over in local B+B's to explore all the area has to offer.
- This option doesn't pose a threat to the existing walking/hiking visitors who would be massively impacted by an increase in traffic along the on-road sections of very popular way-marked routes such as the Beara Way.



## Transport & Mobility Forum

A smaller, low-impact structure designed in the vernacular style i.e. a cottage or rural house similar to local dwellings could be built at the cable car to offer facilities for walkers, cyclists and those arriving via the shuttle buses. A small café/canteen with toilets and facilities for walkers and cyclists to wash and clean their boots, etc. would offer the relevant facilities without endangering the local environment and landscape.

We would urge Cork County Council to adopt a more sustainable tourism model whereby the very landscape that is attracting tourists is protected and lower-impact options are supported such as designating the peninsula as a Dark Sky reserve, developing cycling and e-biking in the area and increasing walking tourism. These options support the protection of the local environment and attract tourists to stay for longer and in the case of the Dark Sky tourists, visit during off season periods over winter.

Should you require any clarifications, please email me at [tmfcork@gmail.com](mailto:tmfcork@gmail.com).

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephan Koch".

Stephan Koch (Chair)  
Transport and Mobility Forum

**Note:** *The comments within this submission are solely the view of the Transport and Mobility Forum (TMF) as a whole and not the opinion or view of any individual partner of the TMF.*



## Transport & Mobility Forum

### Appendix 1

#### Code of Conduct for users of shared-use pedestrian and cycle paths

Shared use paths away from the road help many people make their everyday journeys safely and they are also important for leisure. Many people including young, elderly and disabled people benefit from shared paths, which provide valuable opportunities to travel in a traffic-free environment, and to relax, unwind and play. All users of shared use paths have responsibilities for the safety of others they are sharing space with. People riding bikes tend to be the fastest movers on these paths and particularly need to consider their speed so not to startle other people, particularly those who are frail or who have reduced sight, hearing or mobility.

#### Top tips for sharing the space

- Use the path in a way that is considerate to the comfort and safety of others.
- If there is a dividing line segregating cyclists from pedestrians, keep to the appropriate side; this is normally indicated on blue and white road signs and by logos on the road surface.
- When it's dark, or in dull conditions, make sure you are visible to others, use lights at night.
- Be particularly careful at junctions, bends, entrances onto the path, or any other 'blind spots' where people could appear in front of you without warning.
- When riding a bike, travel at a speed appropriate to the conditions and ensure you can stop in time.
- Be courteous and patient with other path users who are moving more slowly than you and slow down as needed when space is limited or if you cannot see clearly ahead.
- Please be aware, especially of more vulnerable users such as older people, people with small children, people in wheelchairs, or the hearing or visually impaired.
- Give way to slower users and wheelchair users and take care around horse riders leaving them plenty of room.
- When riding a bike, ring a bell well in advance if approaching people from behind.
- Keep your dog under control which may require a short lead.

(Ref: 'Advice on using Shared Paths' by Sustrans. <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/what-you-can-do/cycling/cycling-safety-and-rules/advice-using-shared-use-paths>)