

Goleen & District Community Council initial submission to the Review of the Cork County Development Plan 2003 – Issues to be addressed in the Cork County Development Plan 2009.

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1. Introduction

In many ways, Goleen Parish is an example of the way rural living should be. Tourism and Agriculture work side by side; Goleen, Toormore, Lowertown, Crookhaven and Dunbeacon are integrated communities; there are two schools and four churches, many societies and organizations; the community centre with sports hall and field is nearing completion - and yet, the parish is in danger of dying. Bit by bit the infrastructure is whittling away; the farmers are building in Cork all day or their wives are at work out of the parish. The fishing industry has been decimated and made more dangerous with quotas. The withdrawal of the salmon licence will put men out of work for the summer. They don't have the resources to kit up for a new type of fishing. There is no parish priest – the priest is teaching in Schull. The doctor is transferring many of his clinics to Schull. Two thirds of the houses are second homes – not even let out these days as the affluent owners don't need the money. The hotel has been built up with apartments instead of amenities. For six weeks in the summer helicopters fill the sky; powerboats and yachts ply the sea. All the houses are full and business owners try to make the majority of their annual income. There have been few business start ups in the last two years. Six of the seven bars are inherited; one is rented and seasonal. There are developers waiting to build houses in Goleen but the infrastructure is not in place; in the meantime house sales are slowing down. The landscape of the parish is world class, but it is not unique. The main attraction of Ireland is its people. But the emphasis for this area is scenery and wildlife over inhabitants. People have lived here for the last 3000 years yet the wildlife and the flora have survived many thousands living on the land with full cultivation right up the mountains. Now farmers are subject to stringent regulations

and inspections for SPAs, SACs, Chough sites etc. What the area needs is positive discrimination for development social and economic.

Infrastructure, especially water, sewerage and roads has to be improved. Developers in the area are interested in private/public partnerships especially with the availability of new funding for sewerage and water in villages. We need a county that puts positive emphasis on providing services to rural communities. The present plan for the largest communities to be serviced before the smallest has resulted in a drift from rural areas. Giving lip service to development while knowing development is hindered by lack of infrastructure is not acceptable.

2. Population and Housing

The population of our parish has declined. Goleen -8.5%, Crookhaven -4%, Toormore - 3.3%, Dunbeacon -0.9%. The new wealth in the county has driven investment development to the exclusion of economic development in rural areas. We need more social and affordable housing but it will be pointless without employment opportunities. Serviced sites are a preferred option and rental property at affordable prices.

An environmental hazard is that the norm for houses, primary and secondary, is to have at least two bathrooms and 3 toilets. In many houses there is an ensuite bath/shower room in all bedrooms. In rural areas young people are building bigger starter homes which are using much more energy than their predecessors. They usually think that they will do B&B but find it is intrusive and labour intensive.

3. Settlement Strategy

Further development of villages and village nuclei is a priority.

Goleen should be designated a Key village

Barleycove/Lissigriffin should be designated a village nucleus (round Lissigriffin NS and Barleycove Beach Hotel.)

The planners should agree on the development area of Lowertown and Toormore village nuclei. There has been some confusion about this between different departments. The area in Lowertown should be widened to a 1km radius round the church (pushing back the greenbelt to accommodate that)

Goleen development area must extend to include land in Boulysallagh. As discussed in the last Development Plan this flat ground to the northwest of the village is the direction for future development.

More Social Housing is needed in the parish.

Our ambition for the next ten years is to develop vibrant villages and village nuclei with adequate water, waste water disposal and sewerage and to encourage employment based on farming, fishing, tourism, services and cyberspace; to have upgraded access to the area including better roads, light rail to Ballydehob from Cork and an airport in Bantry. We also need car parking in Goleen and extended car parking at Barleycove Beach.

4. Rural Issues

1. Declining Population

Census 2006: Goleen -8.5%, Crookhaven -4%, Toormore -3.3%, Dunbeacon -0.9%.

As with many generations of young people the local youth do not see a future for themselves in the area. It is to be expected that they will want to go to brighter lights. Our strength is a safe, clean environment and a small close-knit community that suits people in their 30s with young children. But we have to create jobs to attract them to settle here.

Reasons for the declining population:

- 1) Lack of infrastructure (water, sewerage and waste water disposal) to enable development.
- 2) Planning permission refusals keep the price of housing and sites too high.
- 3) Lack of employment opportunities
- 4) Lack of incentives for business start ups.
- 5) Poor road access
- 6) Remoteness

2. Current housing policies

Young people who do want to stay here should be given priority with planning permission. Too many are having expensive delays with subjective changes demanded. In general round Goleen parish it is hard to find a site that is not in a scenic area or looks at or can be seen from the sea. The planners have to understand this and make sure that the houses are as sympathetically designed and located on the site as possible in accordance with the Rural Design Guide. To us it is more important that the young person wants to make their life at home than whether the house can be seen by the captain of a ship at sea. We cannot afford the luxury of denying people permission to build on a site at home. They can't buy another site on someone else's farm because the prices have been forced up by the influx of wealthy second home owners.

The planning process is very frustrating at the moment. Pre-planning consultations are impossible to get. The telephone number in Skibbereen is available for 2 hours a week and is engaged most of the time. There should be an onsite meeting between the owner and the planner to work out a solution to any problems. Although this would be time consuming, it would be more satisfactory for everyone. We realise that the number of planning applications is swamping the planning department, but it would be better to accept planning applications only on a timetable that can deal with them efficiently and with closure, without endless expensive changes to plans and time wasted.

Many people who emigrated from the 60s – 90s made their living in cities in other countries. They are now looking to build a house near their birthplace. They have been left sites on the family farm and should be allowed to build. We need their experience and business as much as they need to satisfy a need to return to their roots. The use of the phrase 'genuine local rural housing' is used sometimes to mean people who derive their living in the area but we also benefit from people who bring their income from other areas to spend here. There is a dearth of 'genuine' rural employment.

For families living around Cork City, there is a move towards having a second home in a rural area in West Cork and a house in the sun as well. Second homes used to be let out to cover their costs. Now the owners can afford to leave the houses idle so there is less ongoing benefit to the local area. Holiday rental properties in the area have been sold after ten years and are giving some winter business.

3. Protection of rural environment

Obviously we support the protection of the environment. Our clean air, water, sea, flora and fauna are part of life in Goleen parish. However, it must be within reason so that it is possible to make a living from farming and allow our population to grow.

We need adequate water and sewerage for development in Goleen, Crookhaven, Lowertown and Toormore and to stop putting raw sewage in the sea at Goleen, Crookhaven and Barleycove

4. Agricultural support and diversification

At the moment a large proportion of farmers are working full time in construction out of the area and farm during the evenings and early morning. Many commute from Goleen to Cork City every day.

The opportunities for diversification are scarce. However, a lifeline has been extended to some farmers with the West Cork LEADER organised Rural Workers Scheme. This scheme gives 39 hours work in 14 days to farmers who are living on the edge of viability. This scheme should be extended and the entry requirements should be broadened. As well as being of benefit to the farmers it is a bonus to the community and the County Council.

Agricultural Diversification ideas:

- 1) The temperate climate in Goleen parish could be used to develop year round organic vegetable growing in tunnels if there were suitable incentives for start up and maintenance of the industry. Migrant labour could assist in the development of this industry.
- 2) Honey Production
- 3) Food production plant
- 4) Country Market in Goleen

- 5) Compost and Fuel from Slurry
- 6) Plants for Garden Centre
- 7) Elephant Grass (Miscanthus) production
- 8) Grow reeds and rushes for thatch
- 9) Ethanol production from rapeseed
- 10) Pet farm
- 11) Pet kennels

5. Social and Physical Infrastructure

Goleen & District Community Council has provided a focus and catalyst for social infrastructure. West Cork LEADER Co-op and the County Council have provided excellent programmes and funding for development. However, there is a need for further community development and leadership training. As in many close communities, it is sometimes hard for people to risk ideas or actions that they think may jeopardise their relationship with friends and relations. With the completion of the Community Centre there is an opportunity to develop more social and community building activities. More housing, more business, more infrastructure to enable these and more population will aid community development. Rural communities should be encouraged to have as big dreams and aspirations as their urban counterparts.

5. Economy

The economy of the area is in decline. Although there is more business round the year from the holiday homes it is negligible; the summer season is very intense and lasts for 4-6 weeks. Small farmers have been pushed out of the system through stringent regulations; traditional farmers' wives products like jam, eggs, baking, and cheese have been regulated out; there are only a handful of farms supplying any produce.

Households are much smaller and mobile; in general their provisions are bought in towns further away. The four mini markets and two creameries have a struggle to survive. One creamery has been cut down to a three day week and is staving off closure. Three mini markets are attached to a Post Office. The drink driving laws have had a serious effect on the trade in the licensed premises.

We need housing, better access to the area and business development incentives. Our education is excellent with two good NS and Schull Community College, but the young

people are educated out of the area to college and then to employment round the world. The infrastructure and jobs are not in place to attract the most suitable new inhabitants – young families.

6. Employment

The population in some areas may appear to be increasing (although it is declining in our area), but business is declining. Small business start ups in small towns and villages like Ballydehob, Schull and Goleen are in decline. The year round population is too small and the costs are too high. There are no incentives to invest in the parish. The summer season is too short.

Possible employment opportunities

It is necessary to look at our facilities and strengths to develop new employment

- 1) Goleen Sports Academy. The new community sports hall and pitch can be used to develop a Sports Academy. The idea is to establish a foundation for excellence in sports which would offer coaching weeks to people in different sports (GAA, Rugby, Football, Basketball, Table Tennis etc.). A hostel with catering facilities and classrooms would be built to accommodate the teams and management. In down time the hostel can be used for tourism or other groups.
- 2) Letting and Maintenance Agency An agency could be established to caretake the second homes, offer a letting service and maintenance. Basically owners would be offered a service that allowed them to use their homes without any problems.
- 3) Nursing Home and Sheltered Housing There is a need for a nursing home to offer care within the community. At present the nearest homes are in Drimoleague and Skibbereen in conjunction with Schull Hospital, which is overcrowded.
- 4) Rural Workers scheme and Fás should be given more emphasis, flexibility and funding.
- 5) Broadband/Call centre/ distance working business development
- 6) Babysitting Service
- 7) Hackney/Taxi
- 8) Garden Centre in Lowertown
- 9) Recycling

10) Water sports and Diving (in conjunction with Underwater National Park)

11) Fishing

12) Arts and Crafts

7. Retail

Retail therapy is a component of a modern holiday. At present in Goleen parish, there are two mini markets (one seasonal), three post offices with mini markets, one butcher shop (1 day a week), one fruit and veg shop, one antique shop, seven pubs, one full time and one part time creamery shops, three souvenir shops and two derelict shops (on Goleen Main Street). There are no available premises to buy or rent and no incentives to establish a shop or office.

8. Tourism

Extension of the season is the best way to develop tourism. Insurance and start up finance are still a problem. The loss of the Cork Swansea Ferry, which brought 500 car driving visitors a night into Cork from the UK and as a landbridge from mainland Europe, is incalculable. A replacement ferry company must be found if they won't find a new boat.

The controversy over the finances of Cork Airport and the lack of sufficient direct flights to Europe and none to the USA is an ongoing disadvantage to West Cork.

Possible tourism development

- 1) Underwater National Park (Mizen Head – Ballyrisode) see :
http://www.johnpennekamp.com/about_history.html
- 2) Goleen Community Hostel
- 3) Mizen Way walking route to link in with Sheep's Head Way at Durrus. (This would be ideal, but there is stiff opposition from land owners)
- 4) Walking routes using minor roads
- 5) Pet Farm
- 6) Pony Trekking

- 7) Water sports – boat, wind surfer etc hire
- 8) Diving facilities
- 9) Stocked lakes for fishing. (The lakes have not been stocked for years and Lissigriffin Lakes have silted up and need dredging)
- 10) Golf Course. (The nearest golf courses are Bantry and Skibbereen. The golf course at Barleycove is covered in sand)
- 11) Pitch & Putt
- 12) Hotel with full spa amenities
- 13) Improved Marina in Crookhaven
- 14) Busking (or music) festival out of season

9. Community Facilities

- 1) Community Centre with Sports Hall and Pitch
- 2) Health Centre
- 3) 2 Parish Halls
- 4) Community Alert

Need:

- 1) Resource Centre - Lowertown
- 2) Health Centre
- 3) Youth Centre

10. Social Inclusion

We have been lobbying and waiting to be included in the Social Inclusion programme of WCCP, Bantry.

Anticipated programme

- 1) 4 more community care houses for seniors in addition to 4 existing
- 2) Disability and Access programmes
- 3) Caring Peninsulas Project
- 4) Agricultural advice service
- 5) Child care
- 6) Rural Transport extended service

- 7) Warmer Homes Project
- 8) Outreach education (in Community and Resource Centre)

11. Transport and Movement

- 1) Cork-Swansea Car Ferry essential
- 2) Secure future and direct flights for Cork Airport.
- 3) Extended Bus Eireann Expressway service from Cork-Goleen
- 4) Light rail from Cork City – Bandon – Bantry and Skibbereen (Ballydehob?)
- 5) http://www.parrypeoplesmovers.com/community_transport.htm
- 6) Phone and Go Rural Bus Service
- 7) http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2003-04/uonu-cpa040703.php
- 8) Development of Bantry Airport and in the short term - longer runway
- 9) Helipad for Goleen
- 10) Upgrading of R591/2 to Crookhaven and extension to Mizen Head. This is an economic route not a tourism route. It is needed to bring visitors to Mizen Head.
- 11) Footpaths needed round Goleen and up to the Community Centre and from Crookhaven to Barleycove Holiday Park
- 12) Upgraded roads – privatised upgrading to save money.
- 13) Car parking at Ballyrisode, Goleen and Barleycove beach.

12. Water, Waste. Sewerage and Drainage

We agree with the issues paper that adequate infrastructure has to be put in place in conjunction with or before development. With several large development planned in Goleen it is preferable for the County Council to have the infrastructure in place, using public/private partnership with the developers. The services for the whole village can be upgraded in this way. Demand and investment should be linked with this partnership at the pre-planning level.

There should be more separation of waste. Paper shredders, cardboard packers and composting bins at the recycling and landfill sites.

Lowertown and Toormore will need sewerage plants and connection with the Schull water supply.

13. Energy and Telecommunications

Telecommunications requirements

- 1) Full coverage of Broadband is needed
- 2) Fibre optic cable
- 3) Eircom exchange upgraded in Goleen to provide broadband.
- 4) 3G Supply

Energy Options

- 1) Tidal energy. There is a 15' range in the tide coming into Goleen harbour, which could be used to harness energy.
- 2) Geothermal energy in new homes
- 3) Energy saving house grants
- 4) Biomass
- 5) Wind power

14. Built Heritage

To devise a way for visitors to see more of the historical sites safely, with permission and insurance

Sites: Churches, Mizen Head Bridge and Signal Station, Rock Island Lighthouse, Castles – 3 Castles, Dunmanus, Leamcon, Gun Point, Ancient sites – wedge tombs,

cross slab, standing stones, Mining sites and buildings, Towers (O'Mahony, O'Driscoll and Napoleonic), Fish Palaces, Graveyards, Goleen Crossroads Fair, Crossroads Dancing Platform, Lowertown Replica Village, Dunbeacon Creamery Stand, Lissigriffin School Site, Building of the Fastnet Rock Lighthouse Memorial,

15. Natural Heritage

SACs, EPAs, Designated Chough sites. The parish is protected environmentally in all directions – we need more flexibility. We don't need to be a European environmental statistic.

16. Landscape Character Assessment

Goleen Parish is the last parish on the Mizen Peninsula surrounded and pounded by the Atlantic Ocean. Geology, Old Red Sandstone synclines and anticlines, has given the area its main landscape characteristics of high hills, steep cliffs, and gentle valleys on land and drowned rias at sea joining the land with spectacular strands.

The area known as Dunbeacon at the north east corner of the parish is divided between two parishes, Goleen and Schull. On the main road from Bantry to Crookhaven the landscape is classic southwest peninsulas with views opening out to the Atlantic through a widening Dunmanus Bay with the hills of Sheeps Head peninsula to the north and the hills, Keen, Knocaphuca, Knocnamadree and Mizen Peak, stretching west all the way to Three Castles Head. The fields are small and rocky, edged with walls or hedges. There are some plantations of conifers. This is sheep country. The settlement pattern all the way down the peninsula through Dunmanus, Dunkelly, Dhurode and Gortduv is sparse and dispersed, contrasting with the greater development of the Sheeps Head peninsula.

Lowertown at the south east corner of the parish to Dunbeacon is the widest part of the peninsula N-S. The land round Lowertown is characterised by a flat boggy plateau with small fields surrounded by walls and hedges. The hill rises to the south topped by Leamcon Tower and flattens away to the south to tranquil inlets (such as Cruagh) looking out over the sea to the islands (Cape Clear, Hare, Dick's etc) of Roaringwater Bay. The settlement pattern is dispersed inland and along the coastal road. The development of

the village nucleus at Lowertown around the church and creamery will give focus to the area.

The old bog road from Schull to Goleen has been improved and as it goes west from Lowertown towards the village nucleus of Toormore, views of the hills to Mizen Head open up. It is an iconic view of West Cork. Toormore backed by a rocky ridge is nestled round the bay by The Altar Church, close to the Altar Wedge Tomb, rising to the centre of the village with a post office and falling to the west round the beautiful Ballyrisode strand. The main road from Bantry (R591) cuts across the flat boggy saddle of the peninsula from the Turn of the Lakes through a gap in the ridge to a junction with the R592 from Schull at Toormore. The development of the village nucleus at Toormore is naturally to the north in Gurtyowen behind the ridge. This is an area without unique scenic value.

Travelling west, the road to Goleen is very narrow and twisting. The landscape opens out to the south with spacious panoramic sea views over to Yokane at the end of the Crookhaven peninsula and the Fastnet Rock Lighthouse, which dominates sea views from Church Cross near Skibbereen to the Mizen. All round the hills Knocknaphuca and Knocknamadree enclose the landscape to the north and west. There are roads in gaps through the hills at Kealfadda near Toormore and Ballydevlin near Goleen, over to the north side. The land is rocky and the soil poor. There are a few farmers, who are improving land with some large green fields, but in general the fields are small, rocky and land use is minimal.

Goleen is the key village in the parish. Knocknamadree, the highest hill in the parish rises above the village. The village developed from a crossroads fair and its development ignored the small harbour which gave its name to the village. The river which drains Knocknamadree enters the sea in the harbour. This is a very special ecological area. There is a NS, Church, Community Centre and Sports Pitch, Parish Hall, Post Office, Health Centre, Social Housing, Community Care Housing for Seniors and Shops. The future development of the village will evolve in the Boulysillagh area to the north on the flat plateau at the base of the hill. There is some coniferous planting on that land, but otherwise some land is farmed proactively and the rest is rocky, boggy, covered with uncultivated grass.

West from Goleen a wide valley opens out in between two high rocky ridges, higher on the south. The lower slopes of Letter Hill are cultivated but the top is a rocky commonage. The valley ends in the Lissigriffin lakes and Barleycove beach and dunes. The coast road to the south from Goleen skirts round Letter Hill first looking over to the Tower at Gunpoint south of Ballyrisode and out over the ocean to the Fastnet Rock, Cape Clear and the islands of Roaringwater Bay up Long island off Schull. Then views of Crookhaven village across the harbour open out. Here the rocky steep hill comes directly down to the sea. Sandy Cackle Strand is at the head of the harbour with Brow Head rising to the south west. The road continues round the side of Letter Hill past the Holiday Park, Stony Beach, Chimney Strand and Barleycove Beach. This is a continuation of the North Skibbereen Syncline. There is a NS and Apartment/Villa/Hotel complex in Lissigriffin/Barleycove with a concentration of settlement along the road by the hotel.

The roads out to Mizen Head and to Three Castles Head are narrow and twisting. As all round this area, the land is rocky and fields small bounded by stone and sod banks. There is some land reclamation with new grass. At the end of the peninsula, Mizen Head Signal Station is located in the midst of ORS cliffs with massive folding from the Hercynian orogeny. Views to Sheeps Head and Beara to the north are world class. It is a geological wonder. Three Castle Head is north of a wide plateau which gives expansive views over the Atlantic. The Three Castles are private but assistance should be given to the owners to restore or at least halt dereliction for this magnificent icon.

There are slips and quays all round the coast.

The whole parish has a remarkable historical and archaeological inventory. Much of the coast is protected by SAC, but sensitive development is possible and necessary. There should be consistent flexible planning.

We would like to be included in the consultation for the assessment of our landscape.

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