

Proposed New Development at Mizen Head Signal Station. Contact: Sue Hill 028-35225 suehill@eircom.net

The Bridge

Mizen Head Signal Station depends on the availability of access over the Bridge to the Signal Station. Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd., the community organisation that was established in 1992 to develop and operate the Visitor Centre, leases some buildings in the Signal Station, the site of the visitor centre above near the car park and the path over the Bridge down to the Signal Station from the Commissioners of Irish Lights. The Bridge has to be replaced due to corrosion in the iron in the reinforced concrete. The Commissioners of Irish Lights have an application in for funding to assist them and Cork County Council to replace the Bridge. Our application for funding to improve the Visitor Centre is not intended to interfere with that application. The replacement of the Bridge is essential for the continuation of Mizen Head Signal Station as a major national attraction.

Success of the New Facilities in Raising Revenue

The additional features and facilities that were added in the Fáiite Ireland/ERDF 2000 – 2006 Grant period have increased business substantially. Until 2008 the ticket revenue was generated from visitors who went across the Bridge to the Signal Station below. There was not enough interpretive material in the Visitor Centre to merit charging visitors an entrance fee when the Bridge was closed through high winds, the fog was down or the visitors were not physically able to walk down to the Signal Station. Since the new facilities were added, many more people are buying a ticket even if they are just walking to the top of the 99 steps.

In addition, the refurbishment of the displays in the Signal Station has increased interest, in particular for habitual visitors. (The incidence of repeat business is very high)

New Development

The new development will be started in 2010 and finished in 2012.

It is proposed to add two new areas to the visitor centre above at the car park. Additional space and entertainment is needed to make the attraction more all weather and more accessible to the disabled, elderly, very young and for all visitors in bad weather.

Mizen Head is a Special Area of Conservation. Development of the Mizen Head Signal Station Visitor Centre site has been allowed. However, it is necessary to

develop any new facilities within the confines of the original site. At the other end of the site and to the north are the Commissioners of Irish Lights radio masts. To the south the land slopes steeply to the cliffs. The development possibilities are constrained by these factors. At the entrance to the site at the end of the County Council car park it is proposed to add a Tower and a Vertical Garden Room.

Tower

The purpose of the Tower is to give an overview of the whole site from the Fastnet Rock Lighthouse out in the Atlantic to the Signal Station at the point and back to the CIL masts. It will only be as high as is necessary to take in these elements. Inside the Tower there will be a simulation of the Bridge experience for those who cannot walk down to cross it; local folklore and crafts on a mezzanine floor and an observation platform round the top. There will be stair and lift access. There will be a helter skelter type descent to the ground floor for those who wish to use it. The Tower area will be ticketed separately.

Garden Area.

There will be a vertical garden on the back wall of the area and several island-style gardens. Subtropical and native plants will be used. The room will incorporate a hands-on area for young children. It will increase the area of the indoor attraction that the centre can charge for admission even when the weather is too inclement for visitors to go down to the Signal Station.

The rationale for the new development is that the Visitor Centre does not provide sufficient accessible amenities at present. The Tower will ensure a more meaningful experience and accessibility while the garden room echoes the West Cork garden trail theme.

Revenue

Tickets at Mizen Head Signal Station are purchased to go across the Bridge to the Signal Station. Ticketing strategy is to keep the prices the same until 2010 when the Bridge will have been replaced and it is possible to develop the site (which has already been leased from CIL in anticipation) to the north over the Bridge to give access to views across to Beara.

The present rate for adults is €6.00, Seniors and Students €4.50, Child under 12 €3.50, Family Ticket (2 a 3c) €18, Group rate less 10% and Children under 5 free. In 2010 these prices will increase to A €7.50, S&S €5.50, C €4.50, F €24. In 2012 on completion of the new development there will be a separate €1.50 charge for the Tower. Please see the accompanying projections.

Employment

Mizen Head Signal Station Staff Structure 2008

Mizen Head Visitor Centre

1 full time manager
1 full time assistant manager
2 part time guides
3 seasonal guides

Mizen Café and Shop

1 full time manager
2 part time assistants
4 seasonal helpers

The new development with increased visitor numbers will secure the present jobs, extend the season and create 2 part time and 3 seasonal jobs. As a founder member of Fuchsia Brands, the quality mark of West Cork, Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. is dedicated to training.

Environment

Mizen Head Signal Station is of benefit to the environment because as a destination it is a catalyst for visitors drawing them through West Cork. The fragile ecosystem of the cliffs and heath surrounding Mizen Head are protected by keeping visitors along the path and not running all over the cliffs. The interpretive displays educate, inform and entertain on many environmental issues. The design of the building is sympathetic to the location.

Fáilte Ireland and Regional Strategy

Mizen Head Signal Station is one of the premier attractions in the Southwest. It conforms to the most basic and advanced requirements of a tourist attraction. It is an authentic experience in a unique location on a spectacular site. Over three fundings by West Cork LEADER, ERDF/Fáilte Ireland and Cork County Council in the last fifteen years the attraction at Mizen Head has been painstakingly developed to give visitors an unforgettable experience. It is a world class attraction with tremendous international appeal. After the last phase of development, Mizen Head Signal Station is ready to be marketed aggressively in the international market.

Mizen Head Signal Station provides for all the following Fáilte Ireland strategic requirements.

Achieves growth in market share with a higher yield.

Over 15 years Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. has had steady financial growth and the number of visitors to Mizen Head Signal Station has grown from 32,000 in 1992 to 48,000 in 1992. This is commensurate with the growth in facilities through the

developmental stages. As each amenity or interpretive area has been developed the visitor numbers have increased. Mizen Head is at the end of a small winding road at the most southwesterly point of Ireland. It is a tribute to its durability that the number of visitors p.a. has risen steadily with the incidence of repeat business remarkably high, especially with Irish people bringing friends and relations.

Has a pristine physical environment

Mizen Head is on a cliff site. The original heath is covered with wild flowers and supports choughs, pipits, skylarks and many extraneous species, blown off course. The cliffs are home to kittiwakes and seagulls; gannets fish the ocean. Whales and sharks can be watched from the centre. The path to the Bridge and Signal Station is fenced on both sides for safety and to protect the habitat.

Has key iconic attractions to entice visitors

There are many iconic features at Mizen Head - the Arched Bridge is the iconic symbol of West Cork; Mizen Head Signal Station, built in 1908-10, is an iconic sentinel - the Irish Lights' role in safety at sea fascinates the visitor. The Navigational Aids Simulator now has a specially commissioned CGI Three Castle Head - Mizen Head – Crookhaven – Fastnet journey. The displays in the Keepers' Quarters, the Workmen's' Quarters and the Engine Room celebrate the lives of the Keepers and the work of Marconi in Crookhaven. The reason for the building of Mizen Head Signal Station was the number of shipwrecks off the cliffs – this aspect is interpreted. The birdlife and whale watch are very active. There is an electronic moving Tide Clock, Geological display – there are so many interpretive displays for when the weather is bad.

Delivers a range of authentic experiences, in a friendly, engaging environment

But the authentic experience of the Mizzen is the walk down from the car park, across the Bridge to the Signal Station. It takes about ten minutes and is down a steep path (the 99 steps are used for the return journey) – if you go down without stopping. The cliffs, the Atlantic, the Bridge, the Fastnet offshore, the birds, whales and seals (sometimes the mothers leave their pups in the rocks below the Bridge while they fish), the clouds, the waves, the flowers – there is a constantly changing kaleidoscope of experience. The guides are knowledgeable and friendly – there to chat or answer questions. Stephen O'Sullivan, the Manager, was a lightkeeper, who was stationed all over the country before he was made redundant from the Mizen in 1993. He provides valuable insight and knowledge to visitors.

Demonstrates and delivers continuous product innovation

There is a constant upgrading and expansion of the product. In the last funding period, the Signal Station displays were all renovated, upgraded and improved. The Workmen's' Quarters were renovated and brought into use with interpretive displays. This is why we need help with the funding to develop the next phase.

Makes a sustained contribution to the development of the economy, especially from a regionally diverse viewpoint

Mizen Head Signal Station is a major year round employer in this rural disadvantaged area. The staff is sourced locally and they spend their money locally. For the development as many local people, products and suppliers are used as possible. It has a steady, sustained influence on the economics of the area. From a regional and national viewpoint this is an ideal product for this area.

Respects and supports Irish culture in all its diversity

Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. through Mizen Head Signal Station respects and supports all aspects of Irish culture through history, geology, Irish life etc.

Provides a positive international profile of Ireland.

Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. through Mizen Head Signal Station Visitor Centre celebrates the best in Ireland. 'If you miss the Mizen you haven't done Ireland' – this slogan sums up our belief in a great product with proven international drawing power.

Please find attached a Paste up of the proposed new development at Mizen Head Visitor Centre, near car park and Site Location Map. The project is at an early stage and there are no architect's drawings yet.

Management and Organisational Structure

Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Regd. no 4724R Registered with Registry of Friendly Societies, Member ICOS.

Committee of Management

(Voluntary – elected at AGM)

Chairman: Dr. Brian O'Connell (G.P., Goleen)

Treasurer: Willie Buckley (Joint Owner, Goleen P.O./Quik Pick; Manager, Killarney Hotels)

Secretary: Stephen O'Sullivan (Manager, Mizen Head Visitor Centre)

Development Officer: Sue Hill (Owner, The Heron's Cove B&B and Restaurant, Goleen since 1985)

Committee Members:

Michael Barnett (Joint Owner, Barnett's Drapery Store, Schull)

Michael McCarthy (Rates Collector, Cork County Council, Goleen)

Maureen Newman (Joint Owner, Galley Cove House B&B, Crookhaven)

Dermot Sheehan MCC (Cork County Councillor, also representing Cork County Council. Estate Agent. Owner, Sheehan's Supermarket, Goleen)

Brian Murphy (Businessman, Schull; former chair Schull Development Association)

Member Cork County Council staff.

Since 1993, Mizen Head Signal Station has been developed and managed on a day to day basis by Sue Hill, Development Officer, Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. (voluntary) and Stephen O'Sullivan, Manager, Mizen Head Signal Station (salaried). They have a proven track record of successful management.

Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. was registered solely to develop and operate Mizen Head Signal Station Visitor Centre. It has no other business interests.

Current Asset Shortfall.

Current Liability includes deferred payment for capital grants, which is not a cash item. When this amount is excluded, current assets exceed current liabilities in each year. For more information please contact David Griffin, Senior Manager, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 1 South Mall, Cork. 021-4276631 He will also confirm that Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. is an SME.

Please find Profit and Loss and Balance Sheets 2007 attached.

Marketing

Overview of Region

Mizen Head, Ireland's most southwesterly point, is 80 miles from Cork City. It is a destination for West Cork drawing visitors domestic and international through Co. Cork – mainly on the N71 which comes from Cork City to Ballydehob and turns north through Bantry, Glengarriff and Kenmare to Killarney. West Cork has developed a cachet as a hidden, largely undeveloped gem and therefore is perceived as unspoilt.

West Cork has the advantage of beautiful accessible scenery (coastal and mountainous) interspersed with small towns and villages. Much of the coastline is EU environmental designated for conservation. New opportunities are opening up all the time with millions of passengers passing through Cork Airport in 2002, new routes and the enhancement of services to Kerry Airport, only 50 miles away. However the loss of the Swansea Cork Ferry is a tremendous blow to West Cork. The ferry must be restored as soon as possible. UK independent travelers with their own car were the backbone of West Cork tourism. The other problem is the loss of the Northern Ireland visitors following the peace process and the burgeoning of cheap flights out of Belfast. Around July 12th the inhabitants of the North used to decamp to the southwest and they are missing in 2007. Hopefully in time, Irish holidays will regain their popularity amongst that group.

The tourism season is concentrated in July and August with reasonable numbers in April, May, June and September. There is some business in the winter months, but in general the main way of life is still farming.

There are several visitor attractions in the area –
Bantry House Gardens and Armada Centre (29 miles)
Schull Planetarium (14 miles)
West Cork Model Railway, Clonakilty (55 miles)
Skibbereen Heritage Centre (33 miles)
West Cork Garden Trail
Innacullin, Glengarriff (35 miles)
Bamboo Park, Glengarriff (35 miles)
Kenmare Heritage Centre (40 miles)
Call of the Sea, Castletownbere (60 miles)

Mizen Head Visitor Centre is building up a considerable international and domestic reputation as a good value, spectacular place to visit. In 2003 it was included in the Sunday Times/Readers Digest 100 Most Amazing Places in Britain and Ireland. It is not on the way to anywhere so visitors have to take a

long detour from the main road and yet visitor numbers are staying steady with some growth each year. 38% of visitors to West Cork are from Munster so domestic day trips are an important market for Mizen Head as well as holiday visitors from other parts of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In the context of the National Tourism Product, Mizen Head is a useful product to enhance the marketing of tourism interests both at domestically and internationally.

Marketing Objectives

1. To increase visitor numbers
2. To increase turnover
3. To pay the shareholders a dividend eventually

Competitor Analysis

Mizen Head Visitor Centre is not in competition but complementary to other attractions in West Cork. It is a major economic benefit to the area both locally and throughout West Cork. It is attuned to the location and promotes environmental issues. It is an example of successful sustainable tourism and visitor management in an environmentally sensitive area. This phase of the project will enhance the benefit of Mizen Head Visitor Centre to the whole area.

Marketing and Promotions Strategy

The marketing and promotions strategy employed by Mizen Tourism presently will continue with the new development. The following marketing tools are used:

Websites: www.mizenhead.ie www.mizenhead.net

Advertisements

- Magazines such as Avis/Budget Rentacar Ireland at your Leisure, Holiday Times, Carlton Group, Jury Doyle, Kingsway,
- Newspapers – especially in support of special whole page advertisements co-ordinate by tourism interests such as Bord Fáilte/Tourism Ireland, Fuchsia Brands in Irish Examiner, Sunday Tribune, Irish Times etc.
- Holiday Times UK, Coach Tour UK
- Days Out UK

Publications

- Discover Ireland
- Be Our Guest

- Schull Book
- Heritage Island
- Visitor

Poster

Kerry Airport

Membership of Marketing Groups

- Fáilte Ireland Southwest Tourism
- Heritage Island
- Fuchsia Brands (The West Cork Quality Mark)
- West Cork Tourism

Brochures designed and published by Mizen Tourism

- Mizen Head Visitor Centre
- The Magic of The Mizen
- Ireland's Spectacular Southwest Peninsulas

Tourism Workshop

Mizen Tourism is represented at the Fáilte Ireland Meitheal Workshop. Workshops are an important marketing tool.

Promotion

- Television and radio programmes, newspaper articles, informational trips, visits by guidebook writers, mail shots.
- Information sent to guidebooks

Pricing Strategy

The strategy on price is to maintain Mizen Head Visitor Centre as a value for money destination. The current prices will be held (e.g. Adult: €4.50 Family Ticket: €14.00) until the new development opens when the prices will rise 34% (e.g. Adult: €6.00 Family €18.75). The prices will hold until 2010 when it will rise 25%. Stability in prices has been a feature of Mizen Head Visitor Centre since its inception in 1994. See attached **Projected Income in 2010**

Distribution Strategy

- Websites

- Guidebook Online
- Tourism Workshops
- Membership, Heritage Island, Fáilte Ireland Southwest, Fuchsia Brands, West Cork Tourism
- Information Visits Journalists, Television and Radio (Local and National), Guidebook writers
- Poster in Kerry Airport, brochures
- Schools Packs
- Mail Shots

Marketing Budget

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total	15700	15750	16000	16500
Advertising	%	%	%	%
Magazines (annual)	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5
Newspapers	8	8	8	8
Books	7	7	7	7
Poster	7	7	7	7
Marketing Group Memberships	25	25	25	25
Websites	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Workshops	8	10	10	10
Brochures	25	25	25	25
Promotions including IFV & Direct Mail	5	3	3	3

Projected visitor numbers by segment

	2012
Holiday	65%
VFR	20%
Conference/Incentive	5%
Business	3%
Other	7%

Please see attached sheet (Projected income in 2010) with estimated numbers and income.

Finance

The project is at a very early stage. Our track record is that we have completed three phases involving an expenditure of €1.86, on budget, on time. If we are granted the 75% funding that we need to undertake this phase we will revert with details of the matching funding.

The work on the displays, fit out and interpretive material will be carried out by individual artists, craftspeople and artisans. It is necessary to know that the project is going ahead before compiling designs and costings. €425,000 will be needed for completion.

See attached sheet for ticket income: **Projected income in 2010** The financial projections and workings/assumptions are coming under separate cover from David Griffin, Senior Manager, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 1 South Mall, Cork. 021-4276631

Cork County Council is represented on the board of Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. The County Manager, Mr. Martin Riordan, has visited the Mizen project; the indemnity from the local authority will be negotiated. It will be confirmed.

There is no application for Planning permission yet.

The reason that we need this funding is to expand the all-weather facilities at Mizen Head Signal Station for all visitors and to enhance the experience for those unable to walk down to the Signal Station. This is an exciting phase which will secure Mizen Head Signal Station's position as a major iconic national and regional attraction.

We realise that we are at an early stage of the development; but if we are not able to secure sufficient funding we will not be able to proceed with this phase.