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Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd.

Mizen Information Centre

MISSION

The mission of Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. is to operate a commercially viable business with sustainable jobs in a rural area, to involve the community, to enhance the National Tourism Product and to create the best possible experience for visitors.

The project goal objectives are:

- To create sustainable jobs in a rural community in a disadvantaged area.
- To extend the business at Mizen Head Signal Station to the centre of the community
- To offer services to the community and visitors.
- To enhance visitors' experience of the area during their visit to Mizen Head Signal Station.

Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. is an equal opportunities employer

PROJECT PROPOSED

Demolition of existing commercial premises and construct a two storey building to contain a visitor information centre, associated storage and toilet facilities and associated offices at first floor level.

The project is to demolish the building on Main Street, Goleen, known as Mizen Telecottage and construct a sustainable, energy efficient, disabled accessible building, Mizen Information Centre. Mizen Information Centre will deliver an advance ticket office for Mizen Head Signal Station, visitor & citizen's information, coffee dock, gift shop, business services, public toilets and on the first floor, Mizen e-centre.

PROJECT HISTORY

- 1992-93 Mizen Tourism Co-operative registered as a community co-operative with a voluntary Committee of Management. Acquired a lease from the Commissioners of Irish Lights for Mizen Head Signal Station to take it over when it was made automatic in April 1993.
- 1994 Opened visitor attraction 'Mizen Vision'. The path was fenced and the Keepers' Quarters were developed with interpretive displays. Shop, ticket office, café and toilets in portacabins
- 1995 Mizen Tourism Co-operative acquired a lease for the former Bank sub office from AIB in Goleen. The building was developed as Mizen Telecottage where full business services were available to the community and visitors. The services included



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- fax, copying, card phone, word processing, printing, serviced office, computer classes, e-mail, bureau de change, information and accommodation reservations.
- 1997 Mizen Tourism Co-operative bought Mizen Telecottage from AIB.
- 1998-2001 Mizen Head Visitor Centre Phase 1 built on a site given on a long lease by the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Ticket office, Café, Shop and Displays were built near the car park.
- 2003 Mizen Tourism Co-operative closed Mizen Telecottage. Everyone had bought a PC and the services were not so essential. The remaining work for the Telecottage was taken on by a mother working from home. The building was not suitable for public use as it was possible to adapt it to be disabled accessible. It was decided to redevelop it.
- 2003 – 2006 Mizen Head Visitor Centre Phase 2 developed. A dedicated room for the Navigational Aids Simulator, seminar/courses facilities, and more displays were built. The attraction was renamed 'Mizen Head Signal Station'.
- 2005 Mizen Head Bridge condemned by engineers, RPS. Scaffolding with a 5 year lifespan was built to allow the bridge to be crossed by visitors. In the interim finance to rebuild the bridge was actively sought.
- October 2009 – June 2011 Mizen Head Bridge closed for demolition and reconstruction. Fáilte Ireland, the Commissioners of Irish Lights and Cork County Council joined forces to do the job. Cork County Council took over the land and property owned by the Commissioners of Irish Lights on a 999 year lease so that it could be the client for the job. While the bridge was closed and the Signal Station inaccessible, Mizen Tourism Co-op kept the visitor centre near the car park open to maintain employment.
- March 2011 The new Mizen Bridge was open to the public]
- July 2011 The new Mizen paths were opened.
- November 2011 Mizen Tourism Co-operative applies for funding to demolish and reconstruct Mizen Telecottage to create Mizen Information Centre and Mizen e centre.

BACKGROUND

Mizen Head Signal Station, at Ireland's most southwesterly point, in West Cork, is a dramatic place to visit. The Visitor Centre with Café, Gift Shop and Toilets is up at the car park. There are some displays in that building too. But then the outdoor experience starts! The path to the Signal Station goes down the cliffs to the Bridge and out to the point and the former Keepers' Quarters with its interpretive displays. Along the way there are several paths up to wonderful views north up the coast to the Sheep's Head and Beara Peninsulas and down the



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cliff south to the Sea Arch. There is plenty to do and see. This is a world renowned whale and dolphin watch location and often there are seals under the bridge. The Bridge was closed for demolition and reconstruction on October 30 2009 and reopened on March 17 2011.

Mizen Head Signal Station has been developed as a visitor attraction by Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. over the last nearly 20 years. The full potential of the location has never been fulfilled before this year because as soon as the buildings had been completed in 2005, the bridge was condemned and it took four years to secure funding for a replacement. In 2009 the Commissioners of Irish Lights leased the headland to Cork County Council, who agreed to be the client for the demolition and reconstruction of the bridge. Both bodies gave €200,000 towards the work with Fáilte Ireland granting €875,000. A further €500,000 was granted to Cork County Council to fund pathways and fencing. The bridge was closed from October 29 2009 until March 17 2011; the other works were finished in June and the official opening of the bridge was on August 5th. The new bridge has been nominated for several engineering and reinforced concrete prizes in Ireland and the UK. The resultant publicity has been remarkable and the numbers visiting the Mizen this year have exceeded all expectations.

When the buildings were finished at Mizen Head in 2005, the next project was to develop the premises known as Mizen Telecottage in the former AIB Sub-office in the centre of the village of Goleen. It was bought by Mizen Tourism Co-operative from AIB in 1997. It was developed as a business centre where office services were available for visitors and the community. The services included fax, copying, card phone, word processing, printing, serviced office, computer classes, email, internet, bureau de change, information and accommodation reservations. It was one of the first community telecottages in the country. But gradually everyone locally got a PC and the internet. The need for the telecottage was not so urgent. The building needed a revamp as it was not accessible and therefore did not comply with the regulations necessary for a public building. The Co-op concentrated on completing the buildings and displays at Mizen Head and closed the telecottage until it was able to bring it up to date. Because of the work on the bridge which virtually closed the attraction and reduced income to the Co-op drastically, it was not until now that it has been possible to revisit the Telecottage and rebuild it for use as Mizen Information Centre.

Mizen Head Signal Station attracts well over 60,000 visitors a year. All these people go through Goleen. Mizen Information Centre will give visitors an incentive to stop in the village. It will integrate the visitor attraction with the community and extend the financial benefits derived from that number of visitors with more of the community. A key building in Goleen village, that is derelict, will be replaced by an energy efficient sustainable building with triple glazed glass, rainwater harvesting tank for toilets, solar panels for heating water, heating by geothermal and heat exchange pump. In 2010 9 houses were completed by Cork County Council in the village. The change to the population of the village is seen in the attached stats from the Census. Lowertown and Goleen gained in population where the trend in the county and the area has been down. Services and employment opportunities are needed Goleen. There are only four pubs, a mini market and a post office open in the village every day; the butcher opens two days a week in the winter (more in July and August). In the



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Winter at present none of the pubs offer food. There are several derelict buildings. Mizen Information Centre will be open all the year round. In the winter it will open for 20 hours a week i.e. the two days the butcher opens (one of which is pension day) and the weekend when Mizen Head Signal Station is open. This will offer a meeting place for people coming to the village. From April - August it will open at least 5 days a week. The e-centre will be accessed by clients any time by arrangement. The public toilets will be open when the Centre is open. All these opening times will be reconsidered when demand is demonstrated.

RATIONALE

Mizen Head Signal Station attracts well over 60,000 visitors a year. All these people go through Goleen. Mizen Information Centre will give visitors an incentive to stop in the village, integrate the visitor attraction with the community and extend the benefits derived from that number of visitors with more of the community. A key building in Goleen village, that is derelict, will be replaced by an energy efficient sustainable building with triple glazed glass, rainwater harvesting tank for toilets, solar panels for heating water, heating by geothermal and heat exchange pump.

SERVICES

The services offered will be:

1. **Advance Ticket Office** Mizen Information Centre will act as an advance ticket office for Mizen Head Signal Station linking the village with the visitor attraction. A computerised ticketing system (to be devised and implemented) will link the Centre with Mizen Head Signal Station. At the moment well over 50,000 people go through the village, but there is little incentive to stop. By bringing the Mizen to the village this dynamic will be altered.
2. **Visitor information**
3. **Souvenirs** serviced by Mizen Gift Shop
4. **Accommodation bureau** B&B and Self-catering
5. **Shuttle bus** There is an expressway bus to Goleen from Cork, but no public transport out to the Mizen. A minibus will be purchased and the drivers trained by Goleen & District Community Council will be employed. The bus will be for the community use as well. The Rural Transport scheme is very vulnerable to government cuts in the near future. As the bus is housed in Bantry (33kms away), it will be more flexible and cost-efficient to have a local bus.
6. **Bicycle Hire** – A bicycle shed will offer a business opportunity for a local unemployed person.
7. **Coffee Dock** serviced by Mizen Cafe
8. **Public Toilets.** There are no public toilets in Goleen.
9. **Citizens Information** WCEB will provide business and EU information to the centre.
10. **Free WiFi**
11. **e-centre** The e-centre will offer an office facility to local home workers. One local resident who is working for a UK company has asked for this. The desks will be rented on a monthly, daily or hourly basis depending on demand. It will also offer an opportunity for business start ups. Business coaching, mentoring and training will be offered in conjunction with GDCC facilities. Developed in conjunction with Cork County Council and WCEB with hot desks, which offer a business the best possible start by eliminating expensive overheads or costly long-term contracts.



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A hot desk is the ideal launch pad for a new business and offers:

- High speed broadband internet
- Canteen facilities, providing the opportunity to meet other businesses
- Printing/copying/scanning facilities
- A chance to share ideas, opportunities and problems with fellow entrepreneurs
- Meeting room facility
- Networking
- 24/7 access

The e centre also will offer

- Business training
- Business coaching
- Business mentoring
- Linkages to support bodies that can assist companies to grow their idea, from concept to marketplace
- Business start up facilities
- Business classes

Mizen Tourism Co-operative is not able to build Mizen Information Centre without funding, but it is capable of supporting it until it becomes self sufficient.

MARKETING

Overview

Mizen Head Signal Station has built up a solid market since 1994. It is a key attraction in West Cork with over 60,000 visitors per annum. In 2011 it has moved into a different league with the opening of the new Bridge and Paths. The publicity deriving from the nomination of the new Bridge for Project of the Year in the Engineers Ireland Excellence Awards has been phenomenal. Fáilte Ireland, Cork County Council, RPS (Design and Engineering), Carillion IrishEnco and Mizen Tourism Co-operative have been canvassing for online votes worldwide with posters, leaflets, direct email shots, Facebook and YouTube.

Mizen Tourism Co-operative has not had to fund any of the demolition or reconstruction of the Bridge or the subsequent publicity. Consequently we have been able to take an advertisement in all 10 of the Tourism Ireland brochures for tour operators. They cover 13 markets for 2012,

The brochures are distributed in USA, UK, Canada, Australia/New Zealand (in English) Nordic countries, Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Spain (translated into the various languages). For 2012 Tourism Ireland will include Mizen Head Signal Station in their promotional material, as stated in this email message from Fiona Buckley, Fáilte Ireland Southwest:



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I am liaising with Tourism Ireland to update some of the overseas promotional material to include the bridge. Is there any chance you can provide me with some high resolution images of the bridge and permissive usage rights to enable us spread the word.

Mizen Tourism Co-operative has rejoined the marketing group Heritage Island for 2012. Membership was dropped for 2010 to conserve funds while the Bridge was closed.

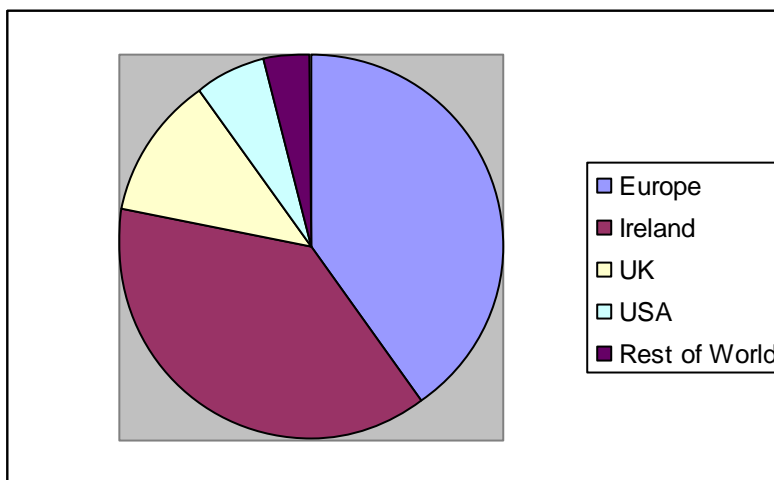
Opening Hours: Daily mid March, April, May, September, and October 10.30 – 17.00; June, July, August 10.00 – 18.00; November-mid March Weekends 11.00 – 16.00

Prices: Adult: €6, Senior/Student: €4.50, Child: u 12 €3.50, Child u 5 Free, Family Ticket: 2A3CH €18.00, Groups 10+: 10% discount The ticket entitles the holder to go through the Visitor Centre interpretive displays, to cross the Bridge, to visit the Signal Station, the point and all the new paths.

The tourism season is concentrated in the summer season. Business is apportioned through the year: July & August 51%, April, May, June, September 37%, October-March 12%.

The nationalities of visitors to the Mizen in 2009 were: 40% Europe, 38% Irish, 12% UK, 6% USA, 4% Rest of the World.

Nationalities paying to cross the bridge in 2009 Jan 1 – Oct 29 (when the bridge closed for reconstruction)



In a full year Mizen Head Signal Station is open for 1742 hours. 54000 visitors paid to cross the Bridge from March 17- Sept 30 2011. Visitors who come to the Visitor Centre and not the Signal Station or who are shareholders are not counted.

Mizen Information Centre will be included in marketing for Mizen Head Signal Station with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Heritage Island, ITOA (Incoming Tour Operators Association),



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incoming transport providers, word of mouth, new Mizen website, App, brochure, email shots, social media

Mizen e-centre will be marketed by Mizen Tourism Co-operative through WCDP, WCEB, Enterprise Ireland, Cork County Council, word of mouth, GDCC Newsletter, networking, familiarisation visits, social media, online advertising and Mizen Head Signal Station

Assessment of Demand

1. Market Research:

- **Formal** market research has been ongoing at Mizen Head Signal Station to identify the numbers and nationalities of visitors who pay to go down to the bridge since it was established.
- **Informal** The lack of public transport from Goleen to Mizen Head is a deterrent to many people from visiting the area is evidenced by email requests on the Mizen websites about how to get to the Mizen from Goleen. This is a major disadvantage primarily to the young, the old and visitors who don't want the responsibility of a rental car.
- **Informal** The lack of information office for tourist and accommodation is also evidenced by the number of requests for help on the Mizen websites.
- **A request** has been made for a local e-centre

2. Principal target groups

- **Visitors to Mizen Head Signal Station:** Advance ticket office and information centre, accommodation bookings, shuttle bus, WiFi, souvenirs. All year round, but mainly March - October
- **Local home workers working remotely:** e centre and WiFi to provide a physical office outside their homes All year round
- **Second home owners:** e centre and WiFi can extend the length of time houses are used, accommodation booking bureau, All year round, but mainly May – September, school and bank holidays
- **Holiday makers:** Use of WiFi, local information, souvenirs, bicycle hire, shuttle bus, and accommodation bookings. Mainly March - October
- **Local residents all ages:** employment, citizens information, WiFi, shuttle bus, accommodation booking bureau, e-centre facilities, facilities for business start-ups in conjunction with GDCC. All year round
- **All groups** will use the coffee dock and public toilets

Year round: local home workers, local residents, business start ups.

During the summer: visitors, second home owners.



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3. Assumptions

The assumption is that there will be a demand for all the facilities offered by the Information Centre by all the target groups. Which of the facilities offered becomes viable will evolve when the centre is a reality. The primary requirement is that Mizen Head Signal Station has an advance presence in Goleen to share the benefits with the village. All the other advantages and facilities are derived from this.

4. Marketing Programme

- **Mizen Information Centre** will be included in marketing for Mizen Head Signal Station with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Heritage Island, incoming tour operators, incoming transport providers, word of mouth, Mizen website, App, email shots, social media
- **Mizen e-centre** will be marketed by Mizen Tourism Co-operative through WCDP, WCEB, Enterprise Ireland, word of mouth, GDCC Newsletter, networking, familiarisation visits, social Media, online advertising.

The marketing programme for Mizen Head Signal Station and Mizen Information Centre will be managed and financed by Mizen Tourism Co-operative.

Mizen Tourism Co-operative Society Ltd. Marketing Budget Projections

	2012	2013	2014
Print	6750	7500	7500
Subscriptions	500	500	500
Online	7450	3350	3300
Marketing groups	2000	3000	3000
Workshops	1500	1500	3000
Brochure	0	2300	1200
Email shots	0	0	0
Familiarisation	250	250	250
	18450	18400	18750

Print Tourism Ireland, Bus & Coach Operator, Bus & Coach Professional,
Swansea Cork Ferry, Ireland of the Welcomes, Days Out UK
Schull Book

Subscriptions Irish Whale & Dolphin Group, Birdwatch Ireland, Lighthouse Digest US, .



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Online	US Lighthouse Society 2012 New Website, App All years Website management, App, Facebook and Google ads
Marketing Groups	Heritage Island, Fuchsia Brands, West Cork Tourism
Workshops	Tourism Ireland , Failte Ireland Meitheal, ITOA
Brochure	100,000 flyers printed 2011. 2013 Will need a new brochure to include Mizen Information Centre 2014 Will attend more workshops and will need brochure or flyer.
Email shots	To our mailing list
Familiarisation	Entertaining visiting media groups

5. Prices

Prices will be competitive with similar products and services in other similar facilities taking into consideration the size and requirements of the community and the ability to pay.

6. Add value to other local projects

Mizen Information Centre will complement Goleen Community Centre. It draws visitors through West Cork. This benefits other visitor attractions as well as the towns and villages.

7. Nearest facility

Mizen Information Centre is similar to Alice West Visitor Centre, Kilcrohane 37kms

Nearest e-centre Bantry, 33 kms

Mizen Information Centre is unique in that its everyday expenses will be managed and funded by the financially successful Mizen Head Signal Station. Although Mizen Tourism Co-operative is not in a position to build the Centre, it will be able to sustain and nurture the centre through the first years when it is finding its feet financially. It is also a mechanism for using the income from the community Co-operative for the wider community.

8. Expected Life Long term

1. Financial impacts

- Employment
- Impact on Local Economy with more people stopping in the village. The e-centre will give year round financial benefit to the village



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- Efficiency of Resource uses The building is derelict now and will be replaced with sustainable building with low running costs
- Extends impact of financial advantage from one local area to another
- Financial /Opportunities for entrepreneurs
- Business services for residents will be available without having to go out of the area.
- Local accommodation bureau will capture the visitors who have no pre-booked accommodation and assist advance bookings all year round.

2. Impact on Innovation and Competitiveness

- Opportunity for new business
- Use of new business model

3. Impact on Social Cohesion and Community Engagement

- Linking of local community bodies. Mizen Tourism Co-op and Goleen & District Community Council will work closely to maximise the use of both Mizen Information Centre and Goleen Community Centre for business classes.
- Employment. There will be an opportunity for a self starting manager for Mizen Information Centre, a local person trained up to take the responsibility by Mizen Tourism. Seasonal jobs for young people needing experience and also money for college or school.
- Local pride of place. Mizen Information Centre, at the beginning of the village, will give a good impression of the village without dominating it.
- Co-operation. Mizen Tourism will work with local bodies to make a difference to living in a small village with seasonal fluctuations in population
- Social responsibility Mizen Tourism Co-op is taking responsibility for bringing the advantages of so many visitors each year back into the community.

4. Impact on Quality of Life

- Connectedness
- Improvement of local facilities
- Social inclusion
- Relief of isolation providing a meeting place that is not a pub.
- Provision of opportunity in the e centre and bicycle shed
- Mizen Information Centre on Main Street will give a focal point to the community for business and social purposes.
- Mizen Information Centre coffee dock will be a place where the community can meet the visitors
- Community development Providing a facility for use by the local population as well as visitors.
- Provision of Public Toilets and baby changing facilities in the village



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EMPLOYMENT

Mizen Information Centre will initially make one full time job all year round and two seasonal jobs. The jobs will be PAYE/PRSI jobs. Job sharing will be considered. It is planned that the Centre will be open 7 days a week in the summer and 4 days (20 hours) a week in the winter. The Shuttle Bus will give employment to drivers trained by Goleen & District Community Council. The Bicycle Shed will be rented to a local unemployed person on a subsidised rent for the summer months. It is envisaged that the bikes will be sourced from a bicycle hire business in Skibbereen. Local entrepreneurs will have support and encouragement. Most of the businesses in the village are inherited and family run so there are few employment opportunities at present.

As can be seen on the table below Goleen and Lowertown were two of the few places where the population grew according to the 2011 Census due to the occupation of 9 new Cork County Council houses.

Population in area Schull to Mizen Head

	Pop 2006	Pop 2011	Males 2011	Females 2011	Actual difference	% Diff
Skull Rural Area	4077	4105	2054	2051	28	0.7
Crookhaven	239	228	122	106	-11	-4.6
Dunbeacon	211	202	107	95	-9	-4.3
Dunmanus	240	236	108	128	-4	-1.7
Goleen	239	252	135	117	13	5.4
Lowertown	232	247	135	112	25	11.3
Toormore	205	183	95	88	-22	-10.7
Schull	<u>1033</u>	<u>983</u>	<u>461</u>	<u>522</u>	<u>-50</u>	<u>-4.8</u>
w/o Kilcoe	2399	2331	1163	1168	-58	-9.4

SUMMARY

Mizen Information Centre will enable Mizen Tourism Co-operative to bring the business at Mizen Head Signal Station into the heart of the community and to provide a structure for the community to benefit from the success of the visitor attraction. It will provide employment and business services for the community, opportunities for entrepreneurs, and enhancements to the Mizen experience for the visitors.