

MAYOR'S UPDATE

JANUARY 2007

Councillor Derek Mitchell, Mayor of Greystones



Improved harbour design now on display

The New Harbour Design now includes the finest Public Square in Ireland overlooking the Best Community Harbour in the country. I asked the Public Enquiry to move the new buildings 100 metres to the North to reduce the impact on the Victorian aspects of the harbour and am delighted this has happened. They now start North of the existing houses and have been redesigned so that the side facing the square will be reduced to 3 storey and will match, in scale and height, Bayswater Terrace to the South of the square.

This provides space for a Public Square, larger than Smithfield, and will be a Great Focal Point for the town. It will be the 'icon' of Greystones in the same way that the (privately built) Promenade is in Bray.

The club buildings of the Sea Scouts, Rowers, Anglers and Divers have been lowered to a single storey so they do not interfere with the views. Being left at 2 storeys has favourably treated the Sailing Club, even though this will interfere with the view, but it has been moved as far North East as practicable to reduce the impact.

The number of homes has been reduced to 341 and the maximum height is 4 storey.

Public Square

The Council brought in a specialist in designing Public Squares. Paving is arranged in a radial pattern with LED lights in the pavement to emphasise the pattern. Dramatic overhead lights will denote the civic nature of the space. Monkey Puzzle Trees and low hedges break it into smaller areas. At the entrance there is a dramatic glass sculpture pyramid, which leads into an amphitheatre area sheltered by grass mounds. Facing south there is a sheltered Café Square with water jets blowing through the paving in specific areas. In another area modern canopy structures, suspended on black columns, with down lighters, frame an area for the Arts Festival and others shows. There are tall columns for banners and festive decorations.

This Visionary Plan is supported by:

- 8 of the 9 Greystones Town Councillors
- Greystones Chamber of Commerce
- Greystones Community Group
- Greystones Sea Scouts
- Greystones Ridge Angling Club
- Greystones Rowing Club
- Diving Club
- Irish Coastguard volunteers
- Greystones Local Fishermen.

All of us ask for public support in implementing this project which has so many benefits for the Town and which has been revised to reduce negative impacts. The town has been trying to get the harbour sorted out for over a 100 years. This Plan is well designed to the best modern standards as a major Public Amenity. Lets stop the talking and get on with it!



Harbour Model Wave Test

An exact scale model of Greystones New Harbour has been built at the Danish Hydraulic Institute. A wave-making machine, like in some swimming pools, then sends waves from the different directions that storms come from. This tells us whether boats will be safe in a storm, the amount of water that might come over the walls and whether the blocks in the walls will be shifted by the waves. The pictures show the large waves outside, much lesser waves in the outer basin and a very calm inner basin. You can also see the many places in the harbour where rocks have been placed on slopes so as to break the waves inside the harbour, the large beach and the 2 excellent slipways. Some of the rocks in the model are coloured so they can tell if they have moved. Irish Rail uses a Danish firm to design the coastal protection for the railway from Wicklow to Dublin. The harbour model uses many of the same inputs which is why it has been built in Denmark.

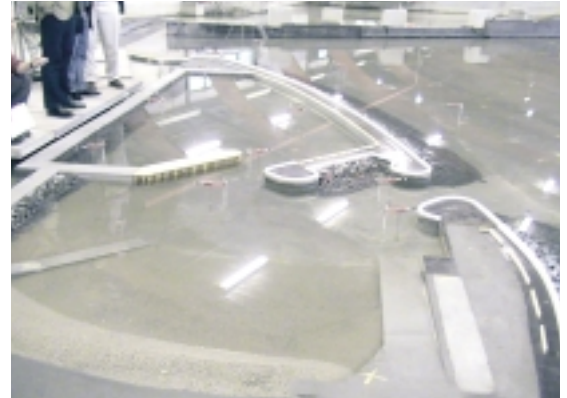
At an earlier stage of the project extensive computer models were used but the much more expensive 'real' model was needed to confirm the results.

Building a harbour at Greystones, good enough to last 100 years, is a big design challenge. The sea is very rough and there is a lot of silt in storms. If you look at the beach after a storm it can have dropped or risen 3 metres. A large amount of wave energy comes in the entrance in an Easterly gale. The large beach in the harbour is needed to absorb the energy of the waves as are the extensive number of rocks placed on slopes inside the harbour.

A vertical harbour wall reflects the waves which hit it. Look at the outer wall of the present harbour in a storm, the reflected waves hit the incoming waves and the area is very rough. The same applies inside as with vertical walls the reflected waves make the area much rougher than without any walls! The rock slopes which are needed to calm the waves take up space. In the pictures of the model you can see that a lot are included. The Public Boardwalk, between the shops and the marina, is placed above a rocky slope.

A harbour with an inner and an outer basin is needed to provide calm conditions and to reduce the amount of silt. Dredging is very expensive which is why none has been done for decades in either Greystones or Bray.

Over 10 different harbour designs were tested before adopting the current proposal.

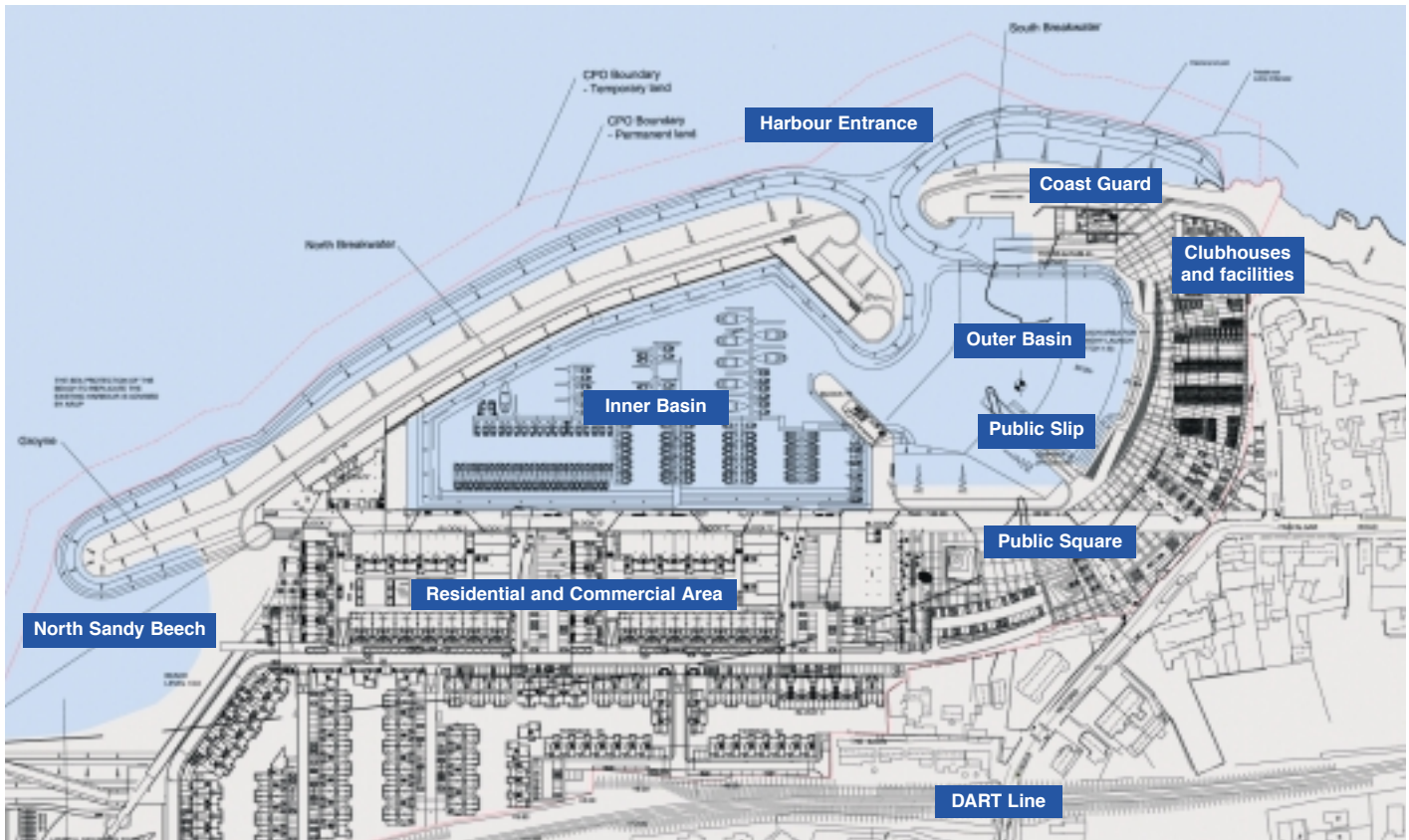


Scale model before testing



Simulated easterly gale conditions showing wave energy being absorbed in outer basin while leaving inner basin calm





Building the Harbour

It will take 21 months to build the harbour walls and clubhouses. There will be some disruption and extra traffic as building any harbour is a big task. A temporary slipway will be built for the harbour users and it is expected that there will only be very limited disruption to marine sports. After 21 months the clubs will move to the new clubhouses and slipways. Completing the homes, Public Square, 17 acre public park and coastal protection will take a further 3 years but will be less disruptive as there will be less traffic. The reduction in the scale of the project has reduced the construction time by 4 months. The developer will be bonded to maintain the Square, Harbour, Park and North Beach for 30 years.



Smaller Harbour Option: IT WON'T WORK

The GPDA produced a harbour design that was circulated to most houses. However this would become full of sand and grass after a few years, just like the present harbour there would be no water in it and we would have wasted tens of millions. Another problem was it used vertical walls and would probably be even rougher for moored boats than the present harbour, which is unsafe. Also it did not provide for most of the Community Clubs. This is why the Council rejected it.

Leaflets circulated by Bray based politicians Liz McManus T.D. and a Green Party Councillor both supported this small option which is very ill advised as three independent sets of engineers examined this small option and all rejected it. I cannot understand why they want to build such an unusable harbour.

THERE IS NO LONG-TERM SMALL LOW COST OPTION!

Cliff Walk and Erosion

The Walk will be kept open through the site during construction. Erosion will be reduced and most of the beach will have 15m of extra land after 30 years, compared to doing nothing. At no point will erosion be worse with the scheme. Over half of the cliffs will be protected.

However further North erosion closed the Walk in December 2006. The Northern part of the cliffs is not included in the scheme. Most erosion here is due to streams eroding the cliff face. I am pressing to get a land drainage scheme completed at the same time as the harbour works and jointly funded by the Council and Department of Marine. So far I cannot get a response but will be asking Bord Pleanala to encourage it. (I might be able to get a photo of me standing next to the collapse). As a short-term measure, to get the walk reopened, the Council is trying to buy more land.



Full details of the project are at www.wicklow.ie/specialprojects

If you would like copies of the review of the Small Harbour Option or my submission to the Public Enquiry please E-Mail me. Comments on the design can be made to Bord Pleanala, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 before the 29th January 2007 quoting reference 27.EF2016. I expect a decision in early Summer.



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