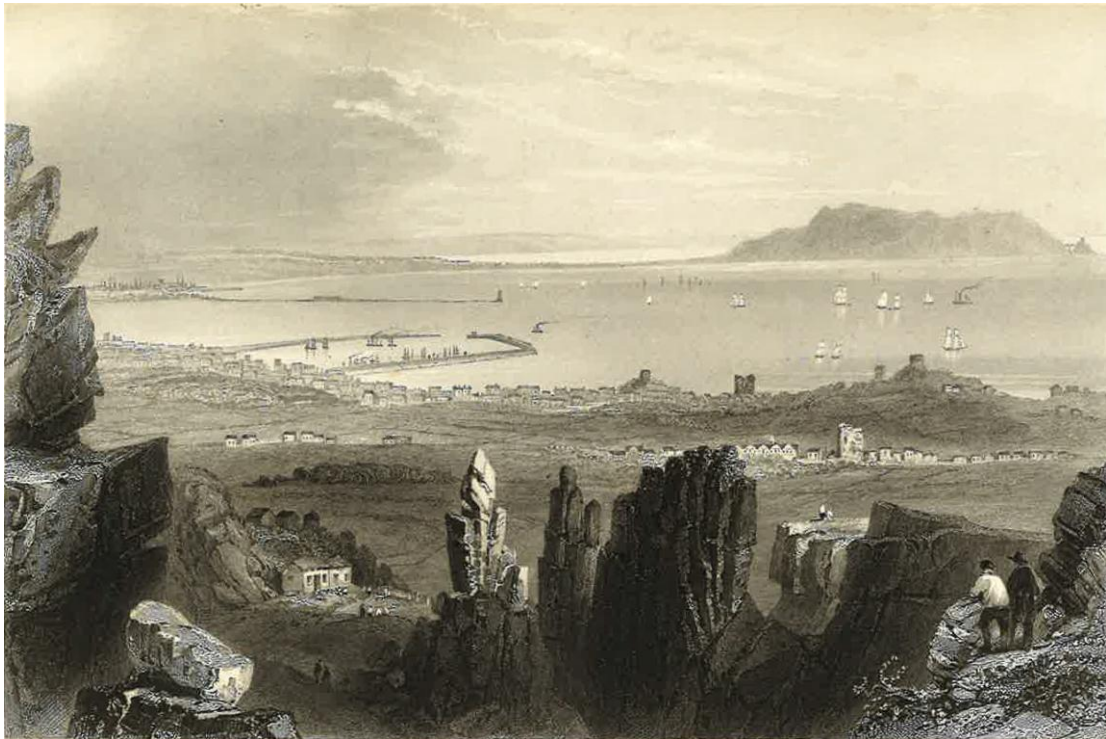


DUN LAOGHAIRE HARBOUR, DUN LAOGHAIRE, CO DUBLIN

## CRUISE BERTH PROPOSALS



## HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

August 2015

*Howley Hayes Architects have been asked by the Dun Laoghaire Combined Sailing Clubs, to provide an expert opinion on the proposal to construct a new mooring berth at Dun Laoghaire Harbour. The proposals consisting of a concrete pier projecting some 435m into the sea designed and the associated landscaping and infrastructural works have been designed by Shaffrey Associates Architects and Waterman Moylan Engineering Consultants, is intended to facilitate large cruise ships in Dun Laoghaire Harbour. This report will consider the design of the proposals and the impact they would have on the harbour, which is both an historic place of international cultural significance and an amenity area, unrivalled in its popularity in Ireland. Radical interventions into important historic places present significant challenges. To be successful they require sensitivity, humility, courage and most important of all – the highest standards of design. Such interventions, of any scale large or small, should only be considered if they enhance the quality of the original design and extend its amenity, without detracting in anyway from the spatial qualities and historic character of the place. It is within these parameters, consistent with guidelines set out by international conservation charters such as the Venice Charter and the Burra Charter that this opinion is presented. Howley Hayes Architects is one of Ireland’s leading conservation practices with responsibility for many of the country’s most important historic buildings and places. Their completed work includes several projects within and adjacent to Dun Laoghaire Harbour.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Dun Laoghaire**

Dun Laoghaire harbour defines the town of Dun Laoghaire and its hinterland in a way that is unique in Ireland and rare internationally. While many historic places may have impressive and memorable manmade landmarks, from the Eiffel Tower to the Sydney Opera House, few historic structures dominate and have influenced their settings as powerfully as the Dun Laoghaire Harbour. Originally designed to safeguard the commercial interests of Dublin, its merchants and merchant shipping fleet, the harbour became the catalyst for Ireland's first railway line and the thriving Victorian seaside town that sprang up around it.

Constructed from granite quarried locally, the harbour extended out into Dublin Bay, in the form of two elegant, almost embracing arms, while at the same time sculpting the great rugged rock face of the former quarry on Dalkey Hill. This bold and ambitious example of early civil engineering, from the late-Georgian period, is remarkable for the beauty of its design, form and detail, and equally so for the pioneering and innovative way in which the works were carried out. To create such a vast, monumental structure at a time before the development of any meaningful road or rail network, and when animal power was the only means of bulk transport on land, is almost unimaginable today. As is the challenge of building load-bearing, masonry structure far out into the sea. Today the popular walkway known as *The Metals* bears testament to the ingenuity that used gravity to transport millions of tons of rock from the quarries to the shore on metal tracks, with loaded carts pulling empty carts up the steepest inclines, during their own descent.

### **Local Distinctiveness**

The sense of *local distinctiveness* in Dun Laoghaire is all-pervading and no structure represents this better than the harbour. Grey brown Leinster granite forms the core of the Dublin and Wicklow mountains and the hills that extend from them eastwards towards the Irish Sea. The southern stretch of Dublin Bay, from Blackrock to Killiney Head, is dominated by granite exposed by wave action. It is the above-tide rock formations that give character and colour to this stretch of the coast, out of which the two great piers of the harbour grew so successfully.

Granite is a hard stone to work with the result that it finds expression in several ways when used for the construction of buildings or structures. In fine civic buildings or structures it may be squared and dressed as ashlar, such as found in the railway station or the town hall in Dun Laoghaire. In other structures the stone may be exposed as random or squared rubble walling, such as the great retaining walls of the railway line. Most historic houses and medium sized structures such as the yacht clubs, were constructed with thick rubble granite walls coated with lime and sand plaster, with the only exposed

granite being cills, copings, string courses and other dressings. Granite was also used in paving, railing plinths, kerbing and steps all within the public realm. The very fabric of the harbour both rubble and dressed granite, the structures and monuments built into it, such as the former lifeboat house, the battery, the anemometer and the elegant stuccoed yacht clubs, all owe their appearance, character and sense of local distinctiveness to this attractive local stone. It is unlikely that the harbour could have been built without this stone and without the harbour there would be no town, no railway and the coast and surrounding hills would be very different to that which we find today. Few functional structures ever constructed in Ireland have had such a wide influence on their surroundings, while at the same time providing such an attractive focal point and distinctive landmark.

## 2. DUN LAOGHAIRE HARBOUR

### **Brief History of the Harbour**

There is little need for us to re-emphasise in detail the merits of Dun Laoghaire Harbour. This has been already been done, most eloquently, in the scholarly publications of Peter Pearson, John De Courcy Ireland and Rob Goodbody. From their books comes the story of a remarkable engineering achievement, driven both by commercial and humanitarian impulses. The venture helped to sustain the financial viability of Dublin, while creating the attractive and populous new town of Kingstown, later changed to Dun Laoghaire. This new town embraced Dublin Bay, in a way that none of the other coastal suburbs of Dublin had quite managed. Topographical authors visiting Dublin – from G N Wright , N P Willis, J Sterling Coyne and the Halls, from the first half of the nineteenth century, were quick to recognise the qualities afforded Dublin through its proximity to the nearby sea in Dublin Bay. Before this time the city had little link to the bay other than in the steady encroachment of the growing port, through land reclamation along the estuary of the River Liffey. Until the growth of Dun Laoghaire, stimulated by the completion of the new harbour, most of the properties adjoining the coast of Dublin Bay were either large private villas or small fishermen's cottages. This was to change with the development of Dun Laoghaire (formerly known as Kingstown.)

### **Unique Design**

The design of the double-tiered walkways, found on both piers, is a unique feature, in harbours of this era, of which Dun Laoghaire Harbour was at the time of its construction the finest in the British Empire. The scale and majesty of its engineering is complemented by the beautiful masonry detail found in the walls, steps, bollards and also the larger buildings incorporated within it such as the lighthouses, light keeper's house, anemometer and the original lifeboat house. These and the adjoining yacht clubs combine to make a very special historic place, set against an equally attractive backdrop of the Victorian town.

### **Growth of the Town**

As a consequence of the construction of the new harbour and the new railway link into Dublin, elegant terraces of houses sprung up all along the coast, many of which faced directly onto the bay. The occupants of these houses were quick to recognise the great source of recreational amenity offered by the sea through walking, fishing, swimming, rowing or sailing and others from further inland were soon to follow. Over time these facilities have grown in popularity providing a quite exceptional amenity so close to a major urban centre and capital city. It is within this wider context of the importance of Dun Laoghaire Harbour in stimulating and sustaining a wide range of amenities

currently enjoyed by all citizens of Dublin, and visitors from outside Dublin that any major interventions should be judged.

### **Amenity Value of the Harbour**

Intended originally as a functional asylum harbour within which ships could dock safely during gales, the local citizens were quick to appreciate the amenity value of the harbour, for walking, angling and sailing. Three elegant nineteenth-century yacht clubs were soon to be constructed along the foreshore within the newly constructed harbour, taking full advantage of the safe moorings it provided. Two of these three protected structures are amongst the oldest purpose-built yacht clubs in the world, constructed in the early years of sailing as a leisure activity and competitive sport. Less privileged citizens were also able to enjoy the amenity of walking on the harbour piers and fishing off them. All of these activities have grown in importance over the years making the harbour one of the busiest sailing centres and one of the most popular walking destinations in Ireland.

While the amenity value of the harbour has grown, the commercial function has died away with the cessation of the Stena Line ferry that formerly sailed from Dun Laoghaire to Holyhead. The Holyhead Ferry service ceased in 2014 leaving the purpose-built ferry terminal and its extensive standage area desolate and redundant. It is almost always preferable for an historic structure to retain its original intended purpose and the loss of the commercial shipping is to be regretted, particularly bearing in mind the unfortunate visual impact of the now redundant terminal building. Encouraging new shipping in the form of cruise ships is a most appropriate aspiration, particularly if they could use the redundant terminal building. It would appear from the applicant's proposals that only ships of much greater size are anticipated, requiring new berthing infrastructure on a hitherto unprecedented scale. The essence of this report will be to consider whether the scale and form of these proposals is appropriate to such a unique historic place, and whether the design will enhance or detract from the heritage, historic character and local distinctiveness of the harbour, that so distinguish and enrich the town of Dun Laoghaire and its surroundings.

### **Interventions**

The harbour has already suffered many adverse interventions over the years, including the infilling of several important parts of the harbour and the addition of a number of unsightly and insensitive structures. These include berth number one, the crude rock armoured breakwaters of the marina and the now redundant car ferry terminal with its ugly steel berthing "pontoons". Areas of infill have included the removal and covering up of significant granite-built features dating from the nineteenth century, such as - the Navy steps, St Michael's Wharf and the Depot, together with the infilling of open water in front of the three Victorian yacht club houses.

### 3. CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

#### **Burra Charter**

The guidelines to the Burra Charter state that - *Cultural Significance is a concept, which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past, or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations.*

They also state that what is significant about a place should help determine how to look after it and what changes are appropriate. Four broad categories are used to evaluate the cultural significance of historic places, these are: aesthetic, historical, scientific, and social. Within these general categories are specific categories such as – archaeological, architectural, artistic, literary and spiritual, which are also relevant in assessing and understanding the significance of Dun Laoghaire Harbour.

#### **Aesthetic Significance**

The aesthetic significance of the harbour is found not only in the beauty of its form and architectural detail, but in the great expanse of water it contains, and the way this opens up to the bay beyond. It is remarkable that the historic pier structures have remained largely intact, beautiful and fully accessible to the public for a period of almost 200 years. The watered area within the harbour has not fared so well during the past fifty years, with the steady encroachment of new construction and landfill along the southern and western edges. A harbour is defined by the safe water that is found within it, and the relationship between the harbour walls and the water is inseparable, providing a continuity that is to be treasured and safeguarded for posterity. Of particular importance is the view from within the harbour through the harbour mouth, out into the open sea beyond. This key view, framed by the elegant circular ends of the east and west piers, combines natural and manmade beauty while at the same time illustrating the ingenious design and original purpose of the structure.

Architectural significance lies in the form and details of the masonry and the ornamental structures large and small that adorn both piers, such as the temple-like original lifeboat house, the curving battery with its gun emplacements and lighthouse, the anemometer, the lighthouse and light keepers' house on the West Pier and the various monuments to heroic rescue and tragic loss that add poignancy and dignity to the place. All of these structures grow seamlessly from the two piers, constructed of the same grey/brown Leinster granite as the adjoining shoreline. The elegant cast iron structures of the bandstand and adjoining shelter on the East Pier are also of considerable architectural and artistic significance, while also preserving the memory of another important social function in music making and public performances.



Equally significant to the architecture of the harbour is the unique collection of historic yacht clubs that once commanded the western, landward edge. These are important internationally as early examples of a new building type that evolved with the new sport of recreational sailing and are still used for their originally intended purpose. The two earlier clubs of the Royal Irish and the Royal St George are particularly fine examples of early Victorian classicism, albeit that their original commanding presence on the seaward side has been changed irreversibly by crude extension, landfill and the construction of large two large ferry terminals. Notwithstanding the loss of their original context on the harbour side, the buildings are of historic, social and, with their fine period interiors, artistic significance.

Artistic significance is also found throughout the harbour in the well-crafted detail of cut stone, decorative ironwork, and in the sculptural beauty of the ornamental and commemorative structures such as the George IV obelisk, the anemometer and the Boyd Memorial. The monumental quality of the masonry on some of the upper walls, steps, edge stones and bollards, and the sensuous curving ashlar of the battery and lighthouse, all represent craftsmanship of the highest order, combining artistic, architectural and engineering significance. Another layer of artistic significance lies in the authors who have written about the harbour or used it as a setting in their novels, and the artists who have drawn or painted the harbour, the numbers of which are too great to list.

### **Historical Significance**

The history of the harbour is equally significant, in its purpose, design concept and the remarkable story of its construction and the subsequent impact it has had on Dublin and Ireland. It represents a vast civil and civic undertaking through a parliamentary decision to create a solution to a serious and pressing problem. Having been conceived as an asylum harbour to provide refuge in stormy weather for sailing ships bound for the Port of Dublin, it soon became a terminal in its own right with the establishment of the London to Holyhead railway line, bringing mail from London to Dublin in ever shorter delivery times. Ceremonial arrivals and departures including numerous royal visits, the most notable of which was the departure of George IV, were important historic events, as were the visits of many other dignitaries who used Dun Laoghaire as an alternative way of arriving in Ireland.

The history of the harbour is also the history of many heroic deeds of marine rescue as seen in the beautiful former lifeboat house at the start of the east pier, which is one of the oldest lifeboat houses to survive. The lifeboat service still operates from the harbour providing a continuum to a long history of selfless voluntary service that combined heroic rescue with tragic loss. An industrial archaeological significance also exists within the earlier inner harbour, situated at the start of the West Pier, that until relatively recent times still served as a fishing port and before for that a coal harbour. This earlier, harbour within a harbour, provides a surviving record of the small fishing village that existed at what was then called Dunleary, before the asylum harbour was constructed and the town sprung up around it. There is also an

industrial archaeological interest in the succession of new berths and piers that were added to the harbour over the years, albeit that none of these added much architectural beauty to the place, with the exception of the Carlisle Pier and the Victorian building that once adorned it, the latter of which has since been demolished.

### **Scientific Significance**

The scientific significance of the harbour lies for the most part in the brilliant engineering concept and design of the structure by the distinguished Scottish engineer John Rennie. As noted previously, of equal impact was the efficient way the rock was quarried, delivered to site, cut and placed using only simple masonry techniques and lime-based mortars, to create massive and robust structures that rose from the sea bed with the capacity to withstand immense pressures from wind and wave. The early nineteenth century was a period of pioneering marine engineering, mainly led by Scottish engineers such as Rennie and his son, and several generations of the Stephenson family (father of the author Robert Louis Stephenson.) These engineering dynasties also built rock lighthouses far out to sea, sometimes on reefs that were totally submerged during high tides. Dun Laoghaire Harbour is a towering example of this important period in the history of European civil engineering.

The elder Stephenson was a lens maker who held the position of keeper of the Scottish lights, which carried the responsibility for the design and maintenance of land-based lights to warn shipping of hazards during darkness. It was Stephenson's vision to emulate Eddison and place lights on hostile reefs far out to sea that led to his innovative designs for rock lighthouses. The development of coastal warning lights was an equally significant scientific achievement and the Commissioners of Irish Lights are and remain a very important part of the history of Dun Laoghaire Harbour. Dun Laoghaire not only maintained its own lights at the entrance to the harbour, but was the main base for the Irish Lights that supplied and maintained light houses and lightships around the country. While lighthouses and light ships are no longer manned, the automated lights still require regular maintenance and servicing and the Irish Lights remains an important part of the harbour and a memory of its early and continuing scientific significance. The Commissioners of Irish Lights are now housed in a fine new building located beside the former coastguard cottages at the north west corner of the harbour.

Another important source of scientific significance found in the harbour is the anemometer. Anemometers, used to measure and record wind speed, are thought to date back to Renaissance Italy, but the first modern anemometer was constructed to the design of Professor John Thomas Romney Robinson of Trinity College Dublin. This was placed in a delightful Greek Revival structure erected on the East Pier and is the oldest surviving example of a modern anemometer which, after repair, still functions to this day. Other important scientific experiments took place in and around the harbour over the years, many concerned with submarine exploration, while the father of modern broadcasting Guglielmo Marconi made the first ever public broadcast

of a sporting event when he described the prestigious annual regatta of the Royal St George Yacht Club in 1898. Outside our higher academic institutions and the Birr Castle Demesne, it is hard to think of a place in Ireland of greater scientific significance than Dun Laoghaire Harbour.

### **Social Significance**

While the aesthetic, historical and scientific significance of the harbour are readily apparent and unquestionable, some aspects of the social significance are perhaps more subtle and nuanced. The vast numbers of people who use the harbour every day, both during summer and winter, for recreation is staggering. Particularly when you consider the relatively small public areas afforded by the two piers. While the use of the spread of water within the harbour is perhaps confined to the more privileged activities of sailing and motor cruising, the piers are fully accessible to the public who use them with relish for a range of activities. These include – walking, jogging and angling, or simply sitting, alone or in company, to enjoy the beautiful, eye-catching views. The range of views from the harbour is wide and varied from views out to sea; back to the town; or of the boats and activities within the harbour; the monuments and landmarks on the piers of the harbour; or the distant landmarks of Howth, Killiney, Sandycove, the Pigeon House chimneys and the Poolbeg Lighthouse on the South Bull; and the distant Dublin Mountains. These largely free and simple pleasures are a source of invaluable exercise and social interaction, the benefits of which are incalculable. Of less tangible and more poignant social significance is that of memory, recorded in the memorials of lives lost at sea and the efforts of those who endeavoured to save them and who sometimes perished in the attempt. This form of social significance is contemplative, verging on the spiritual, and for many another type of loss is mirrored in the now redundant and partially demolished Carlisle Pier, that was for many years the departure point for reluctant Irish immigrants.

This combination of aesthetic, historical, scientific and social significance, that is imbued within the historic fabric of Dun Laoghaire Harbour, make it a cultural landscape of immense significance to the Irish people, who value its importance without exception. Any threat to this significance will undermine a very important part of our history and how we understand ourselves in the early twenty-first century.

## 4. TWENTIETH-CENTURY INTERVENTIONS

### **General**

The pattern of encroachment into - and reclamation of - the watered area within the harbour has not been good. Almost all of the major interventions carried out since the construction of the harbour have had a detrimental impact on the historic character of the place. Of these the first major intervention and probably the least intrusive was the construction of the Carlisle Pier to create a more convenient landing place for passengers on what became regular daily sailings from Holyhead. Prior to air travel this provided the final link in a fast transport service from Dublin to London. Following the establishment of the British and Irish rail networks, the Royal Mail prided itself on its capacity to deliver mail from London to any town on or near the rail network within a single day.

### **Carlisle Pier**

The Carlisle Pier was constructed in 1853 as a simple berth from which to embark and disembark from the ferry. It consisted of a simple pier on which stood an equally plain, open, iron-framed shed. A spur leading off the main railway track was later turned onto the pier and into the shed, creating a convenient, covered transfer from train to ferry and ferry to train. The original historic shed was replaced in 1894 and this structure was subsequently engulfed within a crudely built, larger terminal building constructed around the 1950s. Following the opening of the new ferry terminal, constructed to accommodate a new generation of high speed ferries, the Carlisle Pier terminal became redundant and was demolished in recent years to some considerable controversy. While the removal of the unsightly 1950s structure was a visual benefit to the harbour, it was unfortunate that the protected historic shed was also demolished by the Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company. In the 1960s Berth Number One was extended at the south end of the east pier, in the form of a crude utilitarian concrete framed structure. Now much dilapidated, this unsightly accretion continues to detract visually from the historic character of the historic East Pier structure.

### **Ferry Terminal**

Probably the most significant intervention into the historic harbour is the now redundant ferry terminal which was completed in 1996. It consists of a long thin two storey structure projecting out into the harbour on a new pier at the end of which a high elevated walkway provided access to the high speed ferries that sailed between Dun Laoghaire and Holyhead up until 2014. The building at its public entrance area presents a mediocre composition with a half hearted attempt at local distinctiveness through the use of local granite mixed with imported foreign granite. These materials change to a crude form of faceted curtain walling with GRP cladding to the enclosed elevated walkways. A small circular tower provides a landmark of sorts, but this is over

powered by the elevated walkways that soar above the harbour walls creating a visual eyesore that detracts noticeably from the low horizontal forms of the harbour walls. While this building would be quite inoffensive in a typical urban setting, it is simply not good enough for such an important, beautiful and historic setting such as Dun Laoghaire Harbour. Equally damaging to the historic character and setting of the harbour is the significant area of landfill that accompanied the construction of the new terminal. This was required to create the extensive standage area required for cars and lorries embarking or disembarking from the ferries. The construction of the ferry terminal added the largest and most intrusive visual intervention to the harbour, while at the same time reducing the area of water and cutting off views of the harbour from the landward side. The recent addition of purple cladding to this now redundant structure, illustrates clearly just how visually intrusive the use of garish colours and inappropriate materials can be in an important historic place.

### **New Marina**

Completed in 2001, the new marina consisting of two new piers to provide sheltered moorings for yachts and motor launches, has also had a very damaging impact on the harbour. An increase in the number of moorings for leisure craft is an understandable and welcome requirement for a harbour. These additional facilities provide greater access for recreational sailing, not only from within the historic, long-established yacht clubs, but also from the more readily accessible sailing schools and less formal clubs that now operate from both sides of the west pier. It is however, the manner in which this marina was designed that has attracted such criticism. Following the unfortunate tradition of earlier interventions into the harbour, the design of these piers is crude and utilitarian. The use of geometric interlocking pre-cast concrete panels, coupled with the introduction of hundreds of tons of non-granite boulders stands out glaringly with no recognition of the local distinctiveness that permeates the older parts of the historic construction. Equally poor is the design and finishes to the one breakwater pier accessible to the public, where an attempt to expand the public realm has failed miserably. Concrete, cobble-lock paving and crude concrete walls and seats, introduce further expanses of alien material, forming areas that are unattractive and rarely used by the public. The effect of these two breakwaters and the floating pontoon moorings they protect, represent a considerable encroachment on the open watered part of the harbour, albeit that their visual impact, is somewhat less damaging than that of the ferry terminal.

### **Summary**

The recent record of intervention by the Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company, as represented by the construction of the ferry terminal and the new marina, and the demolition of the historic structure on the Carlisle Pier, does not engender

much confidence in their understanding of, and sensibility to, the cultural significance and historic qualities that make the harbour such a special place. The proposed new cruise berth represents a continuation of this short-sighted attitude and represents the greatest threat that the harbour has faced during its long and distinguished history.

## 5. PROPOSED CRUISE BERTH

### **New Pier**

The proposed new cruise berth has been designed to run parallel to the existing redundant ferry terminal. It extends, on the northwest side of the terminal, some 435m into the harbour, falling just 221m short of the harbour mouth. Designed to accommodate cruise liners measuring up to 362m long and 72m high, it effectively cuts the harbour in two. The design of the new pier and the hard landscaping of the infra-structure that serves it, follows the same crude forms, materials and detail as used previously in the construction of the marina. Circular concrete columns support a deep, bland concrete slab, that is devoid of character with little in the way of relieving features or modulation. This utilitarian structure supports a 7m wide service and access road, projecting out into the middle of the water to convey passengers to and from awaiting coaches in the adjoining coach park. Located at the very end of this new pier, blocking the view from it, out to the harbour mouth is a “waste bin/skip temporary holding area”. It is risible that a new pier structure could be proposed to project 435m into the centre of a unique historic harbour, with a bin store forming the landmark at its most prominent seaward end.

### **Landside Infrastructure**

A large coach park is proposed for part of the former standage area to the car ferry. This will accommodate up to 34 coaches, in addition to a taxi and minibus drop off area. A timber fence of domestic scale and detail is proposed to separate the coach park from the roadway leading to the new pier, which replaces the unsatisfactory public space and seating area leading to the southern pier and breakwater of the marina. The ephemeral nature of the timber is in contrast to the robust permanence of the existing historic masonry structures, while the introduction of such an expansive area of this otherwise alien material is inappropriate to the historic character of the harbour. Replacing the former public seating area facing the accessible southern breakwater pier of the marina, a new, tiered seating area is proposed that steps down from the proposed new approach road. Again, extensive areas of timber cladding are proposed, in this instance to line the stepped seating and the deck of the proposed new, cantilevered walkway that links to the southern breakwater. This extensive use of timber is also out of character with the existing historic structures and their sense of local distinctiveness.

## 6. IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON THE HARBOUR

### **Visual Impact**

When large cruisers are berthed their nineteen-storey high bulk will overshadow half of the harbour while dividing it visually in two. This will change the character of the historic harbour beyond recognition and is equivalent to constructing a temporary building larger in volume than any yet constructed in Ireland. In the *Dun Laoghaire Harbour Heritage Management Plan of November 2011*, produced by Shaffrey Associates Architects, page 31 identifies and illustrates a total of twenty six *Cultural Heritage Views and Prospects*, that can be enjoyed from within the harbour and from the harbour walls. Of these, the fifteen views looking into the harbour will be changed utterly when a large cruise ship is berthed. Of these the greatest loss will be the wonderful view from within the harbour out through the harbour mouth, with the man-made circular pier ends framing the natural beauty of the open sea. Also illustrated in this section of the Heritage Management Plan, are some of the wonderful distant views of the harbour that exist. Many of these are listed as protected views in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Development Plan including those from Dun Laoghaire, Sandycove, Seapoint, Killiney Hill, Dalkey Hills and the Dublin mountains. Every one of these views will be compromised by the presence of large cruise ships in the harbour.

### **Heritage Guidelines**

The Architectural Heritage section of the Environmental Impact Statement submitted by the applicants makes reference to two documents – the Burra Charter published by the International Council on Monuments and Sites and the Architectural Heritage Guidelines, produced by the Department of the Environment. It is my opinion that these proposals do not reflect the principals nor guidelines contained in these two important documents. Neither does the concept, nor the design of the proposed new cruise berth reflect the principles set out in the *Dun Laoghaire Harbour Heritage Management Plan* of November 2011, commissioned by the applicant and produced by the architects of the scheme.

### **Environmental Impact Statement**

The Environmental Impact Statement, submitted in support of the proposed new cruise berth describes accurately the importance and unique qualities of the harbour and its associated buildings. In particular it notes the railway link to Dublin, with its very fine station building, as being one of the oldest railway lines in the world. It also notes that the Royal St George Yacht Club is the second oldest yacht club in the world and that the anemometer building is the oldest of its type in the world. There are, however, a number of confusing and inaccurate statements included in this EIS. In section 5.11.3.2 the *Architectural Heritage Description - Current Context* is described as follows:



*“The form of the harbour is generated by its two enormous arms and their sheer mass, which holds and encloses the great expanse of water. In a sense the strongest spatial quality is the mastering of water through mass (massiveness), rather than overcoming gravity or space. The ‘space’ created is water. The architecture of the harbour is primarily that of infrastructure-piers, slips: these read as a massive base, or landscape onto which the buildings, as objects, are placed. The buildings sit on the place as objects, rather than enclosing space; in the main they are pavilion buildings, providing shelter in space, rather than forming enclosure or streetscape.”*

This lengthy statement is barely intelligible and says little more than that the - *greatest sense of space is found in the expanse of water contained within the massive harbour walls, which are adorned with pavilion-like structures.* If these qualities are important to the harbour, the proposed subdivision of the water into two separate parts, and the overshadowing of important pavilion-like structures on the harbour walls by a fourteen-storey high cruise liner, can hardly be seen as having anything other than a very negative impact.

Section 5.11.4 Assessment of Significance fails to describe in sufficient detail the different criteria under which significance is understood within the Burra Charter and the Special Interest Criteria of the DAHG/NIAH. Furthermore, several of the assessments are incorrect in stating that five of the categories - *archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific and social,* are of only regional importance. A more comprehensive assessment of significance is included in section (3) of this report, which presents a compelling case for a higher designation for these five categories. In section 5.11.7.1 it is noted that the visual impact of both the proposed new 435m long pier and the existing high level linkspan structure of the Ferry Terminal, will be some how ameliorated by the presence of a cruise ship in dock. This suggests that unsightly infrastructure rising to between three and five storeys above sea level, will be improved by the arrival of a temporary floating structure rising to some fourteen storeys in height. Cruise ships, generally dock during the day and sail by night, which ensures that the greatest visual impact will be during times of daylight. The report also suggests that the overflow coach park on the Metals *“may”* impact on the character of this area. We contend that it will most certainly change the historic character of this area while also preventing its use as a pedestrian and cycling route.

In section 5.11.7.2 *Ameliorative Remedial or Reductive Measures,* the report claims that the impact of the development will be ameliorated by *“high quality design”*, it also claims that the *“Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company has a good record in delivering projects of high quality.”* Both the drawings of the proposed cruise berth and its associated infra-structure, and some of the recent projects of the Harbour Company, such as the marina and the Carlisle Pier, would contradict these claims.

Section (6) of the EIS makes further incorrect claims. These are as follows: *“There will be no significant impact from the proposed development on traffic in the vicinity of the harbour.”* The transporting of thousands of passengers from the ship to Dublin City and surrounding counties, necessitating a thirty-four berth coach park, with additional overflow coach parking elsewhere,

indicates otherwise. *“The proposed berthing facility is in keeping with the general nature of the harbour structures and therefore would not be considered to be inherently negative.”* This statement is incorrect. The appearance of a concrete road supported on concrete piers, of the proposed new pier, is in stark contrast to the historic harbour structures, which are constructed in load-bearing granite masonry. At the shore end of the east pier, the unsightly Berth Number One illustrates this contrast very convincingly. *“In relation to the berthed cruise ships, the experience of the general public from the publicly accessible areas is likely to be rather positive. The arrival of large cruise ships on a temporary ‘visiting’ basis is on balance assessed as a positive (visual) impact.”* We would contend that the arrival of a ship larger than any building ever constructed within the state, would dwarf the scale of this important late-Georgian, harbour and would therefore have a very negative impact, on this unique historic place.

### **Conclusion**

The visual and physical impact of the new pier and its adjoining infra-structure is considerable. When not occupied by large cruise liners it will present as an unsightly visual barrier, stretching out and to effectively divide approximately two thirds of the water area contained within the harbour. This will destroy the sense of space presented by the harbour as it stands, which is one of its greatest attractions both from the land and from the two great enclosing piers. It is not clear how the temporary bin and skip storage area will be managed, although its presence in the middle of the harbour is offensive with or without ships in the berth. When occupied by one of the larger liners, the effect will be similar to that of a building of greater volume than any ever constructed on this island, temporarily located in the middle of the harbour. What is equally concerning is that the new berth would stand beside the now redundant ferry terminal, the future of which is uncertain. As is the sterile hinterland that will surround both piers in the empty standage area of the ferry terminal and the equally sterile and infrequently used coach park of the new cruise berth. A more sensible solution would be to target smaller ships that could bring the ferry terminal back into to regular use, while living the largest cruises to occupy some of the new cruise berths recently approved in Dublin Port.

## 7. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Dun Laoghaire Harbour defines the town of Dun Laoghaire and its hinterland in a way that is unique in Ireland and rare internationally, it became the catalyst for Ireland's first railway line and the thriving Victorian seaside town that sprang up around it.

Constructed from granite quarried locally, the harbour extended out into Dublin Bay, in the form of two elegant, almost embracing arms, it is a magnificent example of early nineteenth-century engineering and innovative construction.

The sense of *local distinctiveness* in Dun Laoghaire is all-pervading and no structure represents this better than the grey/brown Leinster granite of the stone used to construct the harbour, which grows seamlessly from the exposed granite of the adjoining shoreline.

Few functional structures ever constructed in Ireland have had such a wide influence on their surroundings, while at the same time providing such an attractive focal point and distinctive landmark.

Driven by commercial and humanitarian impulse, the history of the harbour has been told in the scholarly publications of several eminent authors from Peter Pearson to John de Courcy Ireland. It was also praised by numerous contemporary topographical writers during the nineteenth century.

Intended originally as a harbour of refuge, the local citizens were quick to appreciate the amenity value of the harbour, for walking, angling and sailing. The relatively small public area provided by the two piers, is one of the most popular and densely used places in Ireland.

Of the twenty nine protected structures in the harbour, two of the three yacht club buildings are amongst the oldest of their type in the world. The anemometer on the East Pier is also the oldest of its type in the world.

This combination of aesthetic, historical, scientific and social significance, imbued within the historic fabric of Dun Laoghaire Harbour, make it a cultural landscape of immense significance to the Irish people and an historic place of international cultural significance.

The twentieth-century accretions into the harbour from Berth Number One, to the ferry terminal to the marina, have been of poor quality design, with little attempt to reflect local distinctiveness or the historic character of the place.

The steady diminution of the spread of water within the harbour has been most damaging as have the impacts of the visually intrusive ferry terminal,

which on its construction blocked many historic views out into the harbour from the shoreline.

The proposed new cruise berth if constructed will be the largest intervention ever carried out in the harbour since it was constructed, projecting some 435m out into the water effectively dividing the harbour into two halves.

The design of the new pier is crude and utilitarian, with little finesse nor reference to the historic character or local distinctiveness of the historic structures. The design and detail of the associated access road, coach park, timber fence and timber decked seating area, are equally poor in concept, detail and choice of materials.

The pier is effectively a 7m wide road that will be used to transfer passengers too and from cruise ships to the floor, its utilitarian purpose and complete disregard for aesthetic impact is perhaps best illustrated by the proposal to locate a “bin/skip temporary holding area” at the termination of the new pier.

The scale of the thirty-four berth coach park and the impact of the overflow coach parking on the historic coal harbour and “metals” are quite inappropriate and will have a detrimental impact on the setting of the harbour.

Of twenty six *Cultural Heritage Views and Prospects*, within the harbour that are illustrated in the *Dun Laoghaire Harbour Heritage Management Plan of November 2011*, no fewer than fifteen will be changed utterly when a large cruise ship is berthed.

Distant protected views of the harbour identified in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Development Plan will also be compromised when large cruise ships are in the harbour.

The largest cruise liners will have a greater volume than the largest building yet constructed in Ireland, including sports stadia. They will have a profound adverse impact on the scale and historic character of the harbour.

The Architectural Heritage section of the Environmental Impact Statement submitted by the applicants makes reference to two documents – the Burra Charter published by the International Council on Monuments and Sites and the Architectural Heritage Guidelines, produced by the Department of the Environment. It is my opinion that these proposals do not reflect the principals nor the guidelines contained in these two important documents.

Neither does the concept, nor the design of the proposed new cruise berth reflect the principles set out in the *Dun Laoghaire Harbour Heritage Management Plan of November 2011*, commissioned by the applicant and produced by the architects of the scheme.

The recent record of intervention by the Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company, as represented by the construction of the ferry terminal and the new marina, and the demolition of the historic structure on the Carlisle Pier, does not engender

much confidence in their understanding of, and sensibility to the cultural significance and historic qualities that make the harbour such a special place.

The proposed new cruise berth represents a continuation of this shortsighted attitude and represents the greatest threat that the harbour has faced during its long and distinguished history.

A more sensible solution would be to abandon this proposal and to target smaller ships that could bring the ferry terminal back into regular use, while leaving the largest cruises to occupy some of the new cruise berths recently approved in Dublin Port.

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*James Howley is a director of Howley Hayes Architects, a practice recognised for its work in both contemporary design and sensitive conservation. The practice is currently responsible for the conservation, adaptation and reuse of many historic buildings and places of national and international cultural significance. James Howley is a board member of the Buildings of Ireland Charitable Trust, and the author of The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland. He is a grade 1 accredited, conservation architect and in 2001 was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland in recognition of his contribution to – design, scholarship and conservation. He is regularly invited to address conferences and to contribute articles to journals and books on architectural topics.*