

DREDGING FOR DINGLE'S FUTURE

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Dingle Fishery Harbour Centre is currently undergoing an extensive dredging operation. The work is being carried out under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The operation involves the dredging of the north/south section of the main navigation channel and an area between the breakwaters of the main quay head.

The current dredging works are being undertaken by an Irish engineering company by the name of L&M Keating Ltd. Keating have subcontracted parts of these works to other Irish and Dutch companies. Specific machines being used for this project are long-reach track machines, in use both onshore and offshore, on jack-up rigs which are in use on the water.

The soft dredged material is being carried ashore by barge, then unloaded to a bunded area, where it is stabilized prior to transport. It is then loaded onto trucks, which are washed before departing the bunded area, to be taken to a licensed disposal facility. The rock will also be transported directly from the foreshore offsite.

These dredging works are of the utmost importance to the port of Dingle if it is to continue to thrive as a marine facility, both for commercial and pleasure uses. On completion of the capital dredge programme, Dingle FHC will be less tidal affected having -3.1 meters of water below chart datum. The new turning basin will allow vessels of up to 110 meters enter the port where currently there is a 90m restriction.

Local marine sources have stated, "It's going to be beneficial for the larger vessels for example, the larger trawlers and ships taking stone from the local quarry." Arkil, a local quarry, recently won a lucrative contract supplying stone for use in the UK. The dredging work ensures this business can be sustained.

Local County Councillor Seamus Cosáí Fitzgerald says, "Cruise liners cannot come into the harbour at present but if they could drop their passengers in the town, it would be a big boost to the local economy." Because of all the improvements to the harbour, traffic has increased in number and in size. Therefore dredging of the harbour and the navigation channel must be carried out to ensure the safety of all marine traffic in Dingle harbour.

Down through the years, many improvements have been made to Dingle harbour. Dredging projects have been carried out on the channel, the western basin and the eastern basin. A visitor marina was installed in the western basin after the works were carried out while the eastern basin was fitted out to facilitate the mooring of local commercial craft. All these works have improved the harbour immensely and have generated great income for the local community, a prime example being the boat trips dedicated to viewing Fungi the dolphin.

Dingle is an extremely well situated harbour in that it is sheltered from all sides, with only a small opening to the south east. These characteristics make it an ideal harbour. Its only drawback is that it needs a dredged navigation channel because it is not a natural deep water harbour.

Dingle has always had very strong maritime heritage. As far back as the 16th Century, large numbers of fishing boats from Western European countries have fished off the west coast

of Ireland. Dingle harbour played a very important role in the marine trade between Ireland and the western European countries, most notably Spain and Portugal, importing wines and spirits while exporting salt fish and butter. The current dredging operation ensures the continuance of its maritime functions into the future.