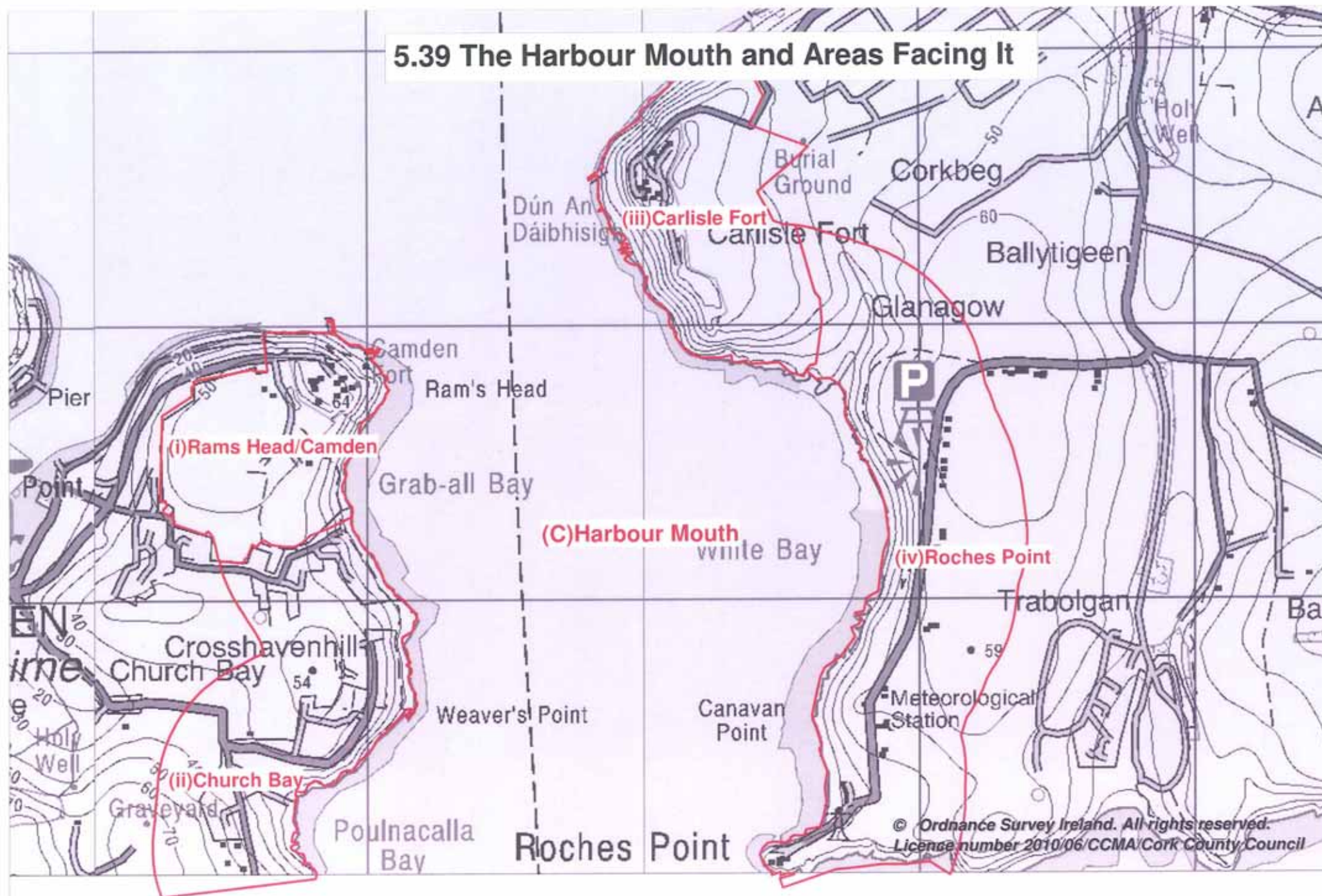


### 5.39 The Harbour Mouth and Areas Facing It



### C. The Harbour Mouth

The Harbour mouth is a visual unit, in that from most points adjoining it, the most prominent feature is the opposite headland. Extensive areas on both sides of the Harbour mouth have been designated scenic landscape in the 2009 and previous County Development Plans. The roads to Carlisle Fort and Roches Point on the E. side of the Harbour, and Camden Fort, Weavers Point and Myrtleville on the W. sides, are designated scenic routes.

There is a tourism basis for these designations. Given the concentration of sailing activity in Crosshaven, they are frequently seen from the sea. The principal set piece is the lighthouse and small village at Roche's Point. They are a particularly attractive feature viewed across the water, from the bay settlements south of Crosshaven. The important integrated holiday resort of Trabolgan is just outside the study area, but is also close to Roche's Point by land.

There is a substantial amount of holiday and other houses on the SW side of the Harbour mouth, around Church Bay. Other areas overlooking it remain rural, or are occupied by 19th century fortifications.

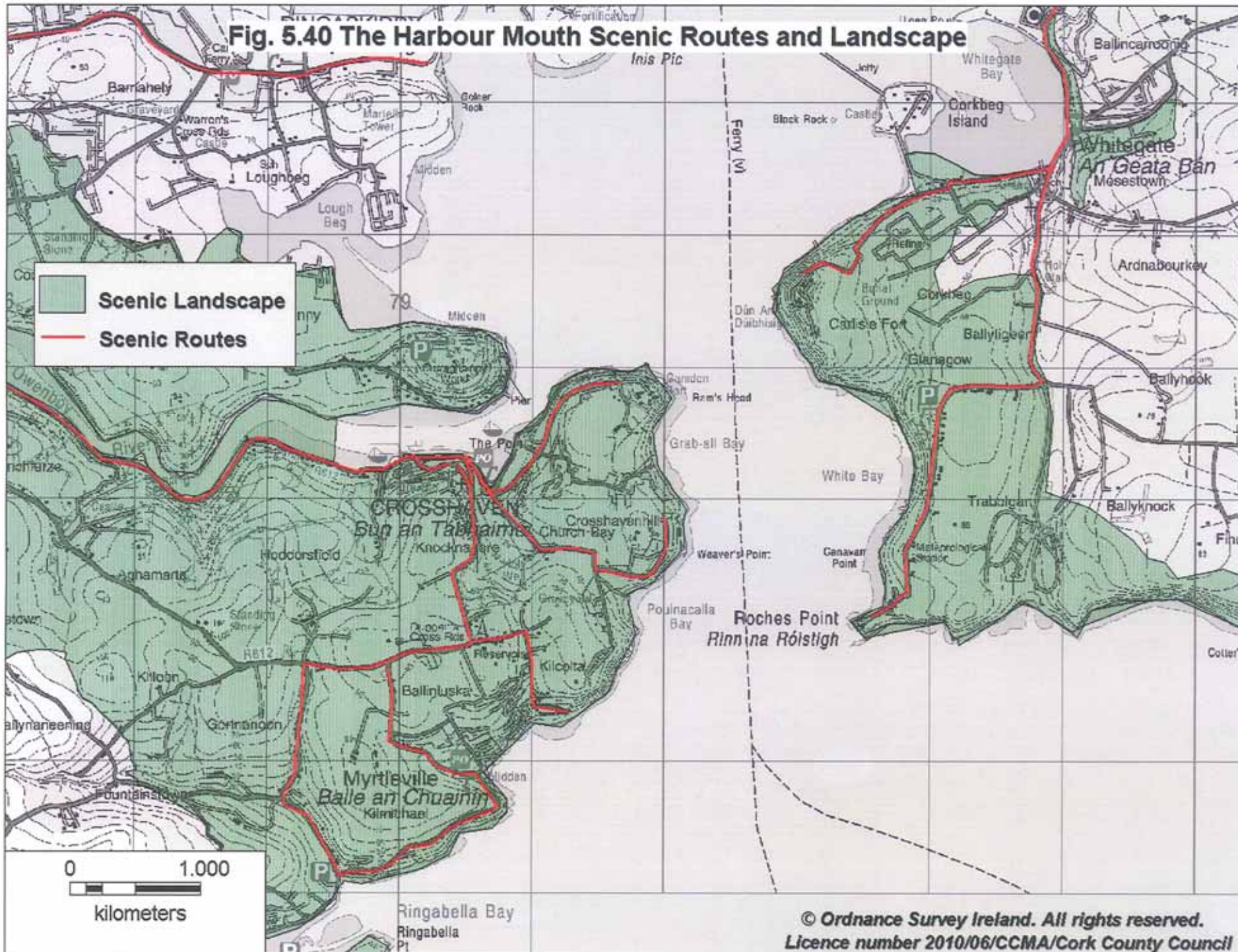
**Table 5.5 Estimated Employment and Population Densities in areas facing the Harbour Mouth**

Area	Population per km <sup>2</sup>	Jobs per km <sup>2</sup>
Ram's Hd/Ft Camden	25	>30
Church Bay	850	>30
Carlisle Ft/Ft Davis	>20	50
Roche's Point	70	.30



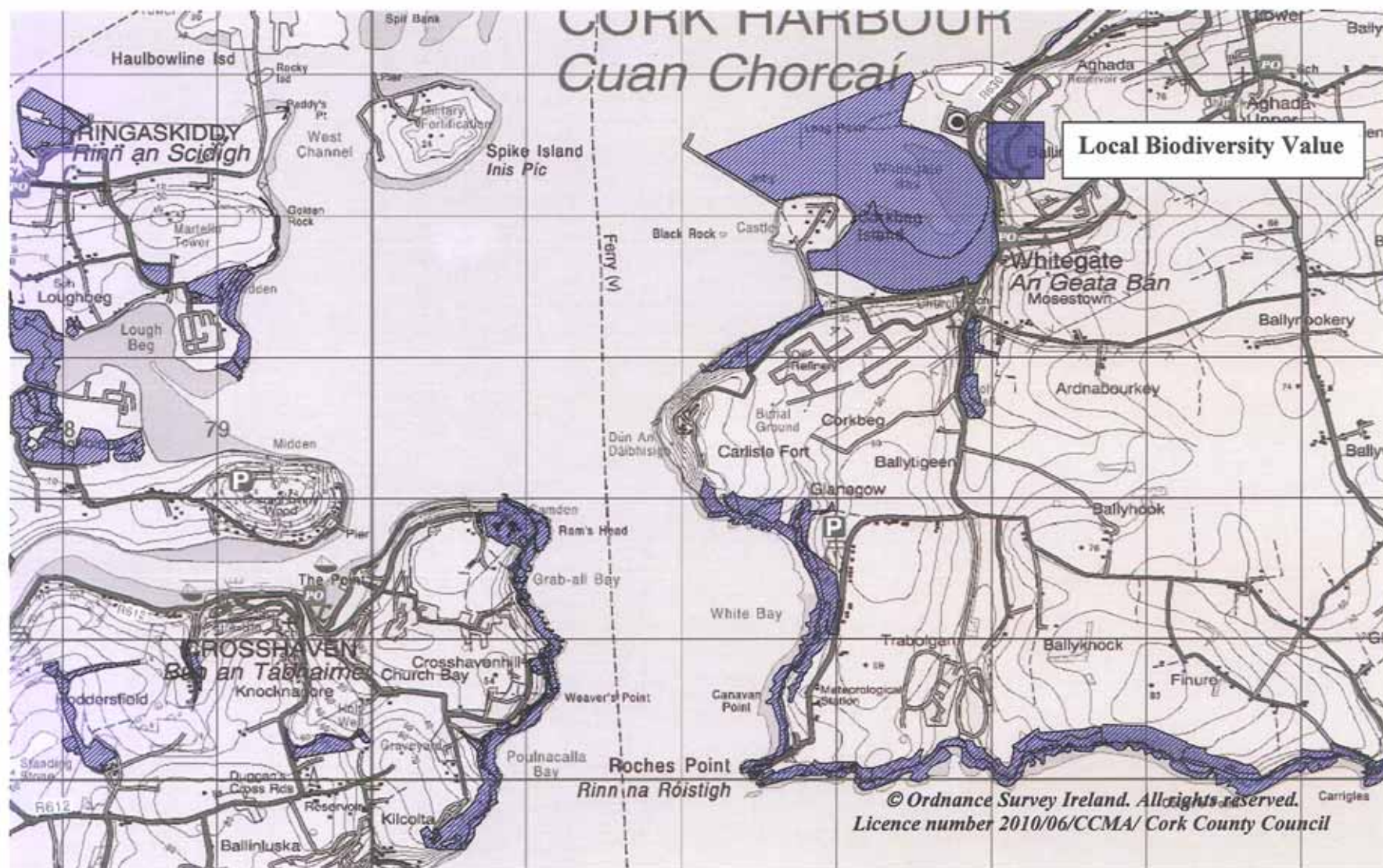


**Fig. 5.40 The Harbour Mouth Scenic Routes and Landscape**





## 5.41 The Harbour Mouth Areas of Local Biodiversity Value





**Fig 5.42 Ram's Head  
Fort Meagher/ Camden Fort**



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data, see inside of back cover

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### **(i) Ram's Head and Camden Fort/Fort Meagher**

Rams Head, at the eastern end of Crosshaven village, is occupied by Fort Camden /Fort Meagher, with sports pitches to the west, steep cliffs and a pedestrian access to the rocky/shingle shore via a winding well established track on the section of coast immediately to the south, and active agricultural lands to the SW. The fort is surrounded by a moat on the landward sides. In its current form, it dates mostly from c.1870, and many of its roofs are protected from shell fire by being covered by a thick layer of soil. Post 1870, the first base for firing guided torpedo was installed (to protect the Harbour entrance)

The Fort (as part of one of the Treaty Ports) was transferred to the Irish State in 1938, and from the Department of Defence to Cork County Council in 1986. A 2007 Report/Development Brief for the Fort by Brendan Kelleher outlined subsequent efforts to achieve a suitable use for the Fort. Following the 1986 transfer, Murray O'Laoire designed a set of illustrated and costed proposals (at c.£0.5m) for Bord Fáilte on interpretation of the heritage of the Fort. The Council was however unsuccessful in obtaining public sector tourism funding, as this was oversubscribed. The Council was then in negotiation with a French based operator of a chain of holiday villages, and also with a secondary private sector developer interested in providing a hostel. The latter resulted in a planning permission (now lapsed), but did not proceed because of a failure to meet a BES deadline. Discussions with the French holiday village operator included a preliminary sketch layout (reproduced as Figure 5.43 below). It was intended that

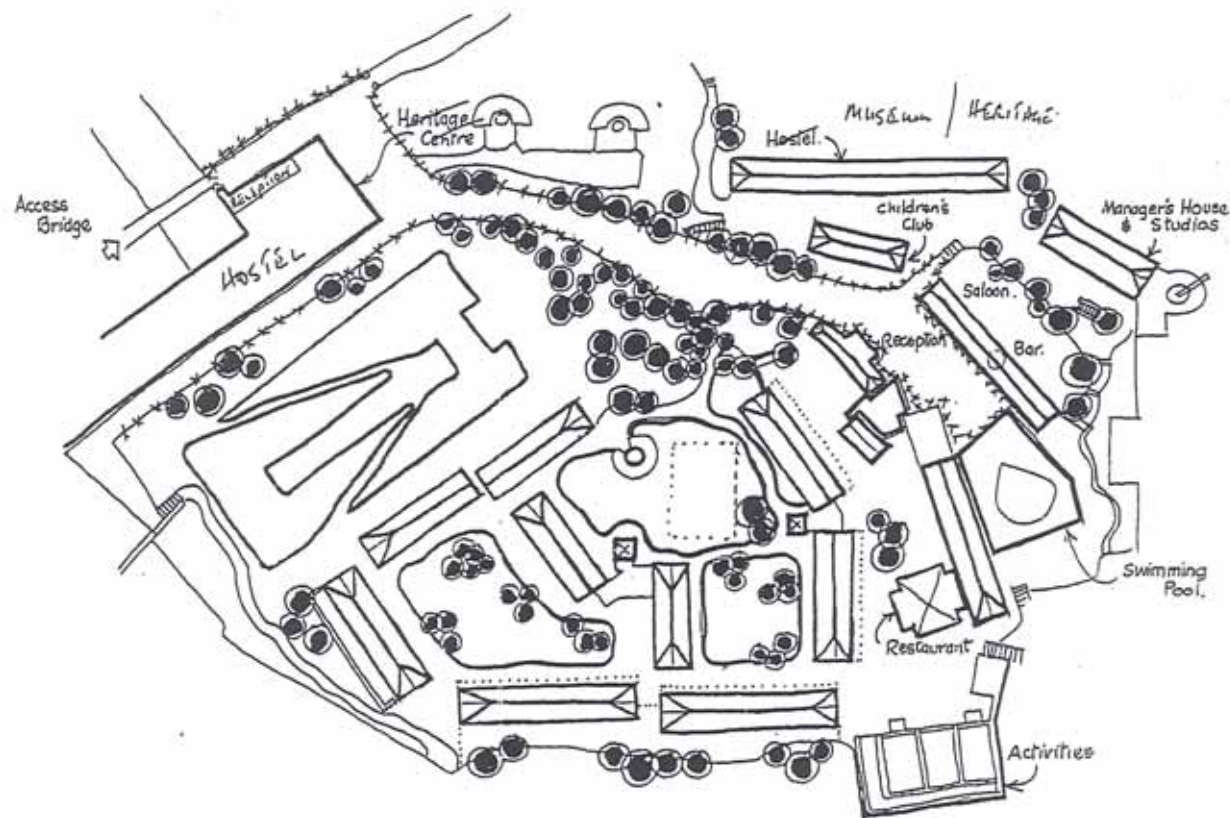
the project would proceed in collaboration with an Irish commercial partner, who was interested in the marine leisure potential of the lower levels of the Fort. Unfortunately, this ended in conflict and litigation, which precluded progress on this or any other proposal for the Fort for an extended period.

The Development Brief considered 4 scenarios:

- (1) disposal of the Fort and associated land outside it for appropriate tourism-related uses
- (2) separate disposal of land within and outside the Fort, for appropriate tourism-related uses
- (3) development on a partnership basis, with the property representing Cork County Council's equity
- (4) retention in public ownership

(1) was regarded (in 2007) as the most appropriate option, and a 2008 Architectural Heritage Appraisal Report by Jack Coughlan Associates, considered the effect of the uses of particular parts of the Fort specified under that option in the brief from a heritage viewpoint, and considered them acceptable.

The current (2005) LAP zoning designates the Fort as a Tourism Opportunity Site (X-02) to include holiday accommodation and water based activities. The lands to the south are zoned for passive open space (O-02) on this locally elevated prominent headland at the mouth of the harbour. The provision of additional sports facilities could be considered there provided they do not impact adversely on the setting.



## Eurovillage Camden.

Figure 5.43 Sketch Layout for Holiday Development in Camden Fort discussed between Cork County Council and Villages Vacances Francaise, reproduced from Brendan Kelleher, *Fort Meagher (Camden) – Opening a new dimension on Cork Harbour's coastal fortifications?* April 2007



Conditions for tourism investment in Ireland have obviously deteriorated since 2007, due to widespread oversupply. In the short term, option (4) may be the only one available. However, Crosshaven itself has little tourist accommodation, making it more difficult for it to attract sailing and other events<sup>16</sup>.

The Fort is in quite good condition, as documented in the heritage appraisal report, but was deteriorating quite quickly due to difficulty in fully controlling access. A large property known to be vacant is difficult and expensive to protect, even one designed as a military fortification. On the assumption that it will be some time before market conditions recover sufficiently for options (1)-(3) to be a serious possibility, a limited interim use is likely to be more effective in protecting the fabric of the Fort than an exclusionary approach, and would have positive benefits to offset the costs.

This interim approach has been pursued during 2010. A local partnership project spearheaded by Crosshaven Tourism on behalf of the local community association was undertaken by FAS workers with funding from Cork County Council and active support from local businesses and other volunteers from the local community. The Fort (including an exhibition in restored rooms close to the entrance) was opened to the public at weekends during September 2010. It had a large number of visitors, as it was well promoted as part of Cork Harbour Open Day, and no doubt also reflecting its previous inaccessibility.

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<sup>16</sup> In addition to the tourism zoning of the Fort area, there is also a site with zoning for a hotel in the centre of Crosshaven, facing the square.

The basic difficulties involved in a more permanent reopening of the Fort are that there are areas within it which are currently unsuitable for public access for safety reasons, and which it could be very expensive to put into (and maintain in) a suitable condition. This applies particularly to areas around the pier. The second difficulty is that – even if the overall complex was put into good repair – some form of ongoing subsidy would be needed to keep it open and maintain it.

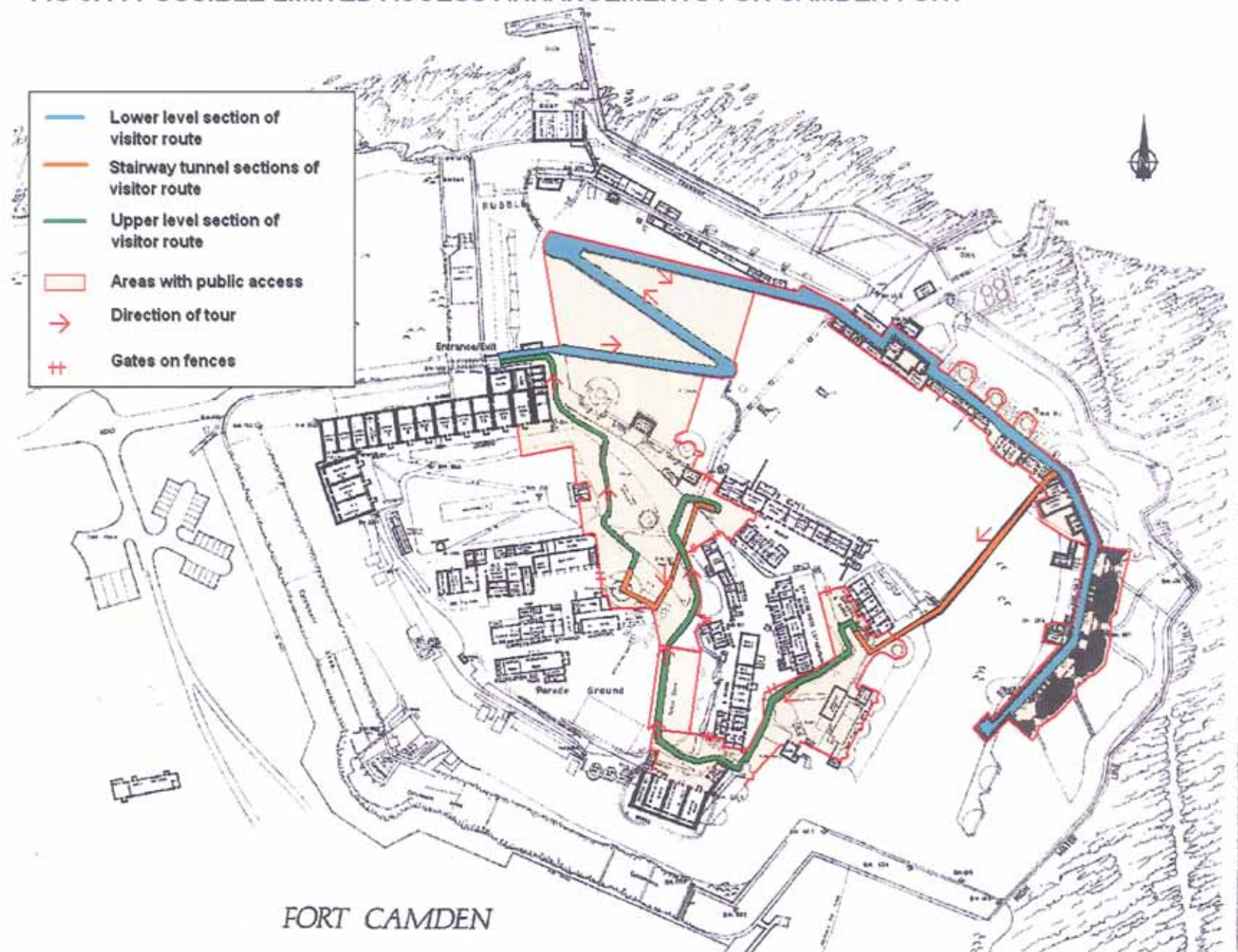
One approach to such resources issues is to seek them from a variety of sources, which do not require a direct financial return. Fort Dunree – an admittedly somewhat more manageable coastal fortification on Lough Swilly – has been open since the early 1990s, currently on a year round basis. In addition to income from entry fees and a small shop/cafeteria, resources have come from a major local industry, the International Fund for Ireland, LEADER, Donegal County Council, local ‘Friends of Dunree’, FÁS, and the Community Services Programme.

If resources are not available on the scale needed for full access, at any rate in the short term, an alternative would be to settle for partial access, for part of the normal season for tourist attractions. There are a variety of ways in which this could be done, and the one outlined below is merely one possible application of this generic approach:

The Fort extends down to sea level, and up to the top of the hill, a necessity for such forts, as they could otherwise be open to fire from higher ground on the landward side. In Camden, this feature has resulted in two very long enclosed stone



FIG 5.44 POSSIBLE LIMITED ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR CAMDEN FORT



stairways ascending the hill, from sea to entry level, and these are amongst the most interesting features within the fort. A triangular route, from the entrance gate down to quay level, up one of the two stairs to hilltop level, and then back to the entrance gate could be created as a way of providing from limited access to the Fort. It should be safer to ascend than descend such a stair, providing potential visitors were advised in advance. Visitors would be kept on the pathway from the entrance gate down to the pier largely by existing walls and escarpments, and it would not be difficult to fence off the open quay areas, which are in poor condition. The stairs are underground (one ends in a spectacular open spiral staircase), again making it easy to ensure visitors stay on the desired route. Fencing issues would thus be largely confined to the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of the route, from the upper part of the Fort to the main gate. One possible arrangement is outlined in Figure 5.44.

If it is not practical to open the Fort to the public on a 10-6 basis during the tourist season, the alternative may be more controlled and intermittent access. As outlined near the beginning of this chapter, periodic guided visits at advertised times, some perhaps marketed as a bus tour, would represent a possible initial alternative. This would not provide a conventional fully maintained and accessible tourist attraction, but the element of adventure involved might compensate for this.

Partial opening of the Fort in this manner could maintain flexibility, as it should be compatible with works or active use of other parts of the Fort, or could serve as an interim solution which would not prejudice longer term options.

Reuse of the Fort to include some residential tourism or business accommodation faces a difficulty, in that it is accessed by a single entrance track road. If significant amount of accommodation were involved, most vehicles would need to be directed to the large car park beside the Fort, which includes an ample turning area for local bus service.

### *Other amenities*

There is a concentration of sports facilities located west of the fort. Crosshaven GAA grounds utilise the existing parking area, the facilities include a club house and large full size pitch to the rear. Crosshaven AFC are located west of the GAA comprising a club house, double tennis court and two playing pitches. These pitches are in good condition, and adjoin the village. Local clubs have indicated an interest in acquiring additional lands for playing pitches use including the former married quarters located to the rear of GAA pitches.

There is also an established walkway from Camden road which skirts the fort along the narrow access road parallel to GAA pitch and descends through undergrowth down to the shore, beneath the fort. The path is approximately 1-2 metres wide, with some evidence of maintenance. The path diverges in two with one route terminating on the rocky sandy shore beneath the Fort itself. The other connects to Graball Bay, and is identified in the LAP, with an objective to develop and maintain the amenity walk (U-05). Retention of lands S. of the Fort in public ownership helps preserve these routes, but the connection N of Graball is at risk of being broken by coastal erosion.



Fig 5.45 Church Bay



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## (ii) Church Bay

Church Bay is a seaside residential area, extending from the main current site defending Cork harbour (the Fort at Dún Bhríde), through Poulmacalla Bay, Weaver's Point to Graball Bay. The main land uses are low density residential development, holiday homes and agriculture. Residential development is concentrated along Weavers Point road and Graball Bay, which are not linked by road way. A narrow overgrown cliff side path which is not signposted connects the two areas, and access along the rocky shoreline at low tide is also possible.

There are outstanding views of Roche's Point from this area. The field between Weaver's point and Graball is elevated, sloping and prominent, and forms a strategic gap which preserves the identity of the two coastal clusters.

The small rocky beach at Poulmacalla bay was, interestingly, well used when visited on a dry crisp day in January. There is a parking area along Weaver's Point road for ten to fifteen cars which also allows access to the beach. The cliffs are c.10 m high, and show some signs of erosion.

Residential development located along Weaver's Point Road is in a mixture of styles, with no strong defining character. A 19<sup>th</sup> century former signal tower on the seaward side of the road was referred to in a Bord Pleanála refusal reason as being '*a landmark building... of amenity, historical and architectural interest*' whose demolition would be contrary to the proper planning of the area. It was not however specifically listed in

the record of protected structures, and was demolished in 2008. The building is adequately recorded in planning applications in which its retention was proposed, and consideration should be given to seeking its replacement by a building of the same basic design.

In Graball Bay, as in other bay settlements around Crosshaven, there are areas in which small holiday homes were built in the middle of the last century on very restricted plots. These houses have a certain interest and character, but plot size makes satisfactory effluent disposal difficult, and the subsequent tendency for them to be extended or rebuilt as larger houses and to become permanent residences often makes this problem more acute.





Fig 5.46 Fort Davis / Carlisle Fort



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### **(iii) Carlisle Fort/Fort Davis**

Like Fort Camden, Fort Carlisle in its current form is the result of works carried out in the 1860s, and is on an even larger scale. The headland on which it is situated is broader than Ram's Head, and as the fortifications needed to cover the full length of the high ground behind it, Fort Carlisle itself is consequently longer and covers a much larger area. As a result, the landward ditch and rampart constructed at that time runs more or less N-S and is c. 1 km long. Earlier bastioned defences survive within this outer wall. As in Fort Camden, there are batteries both down near sea level, and at the higher levels of the Fort.

The Fort is located to the rear of the oil refinery, and the high ground on which it has been built screens the refinery and the associated zoned lands south of it from the SW and W. respectively. It has only basic road access, through the refinery area.

Fort Davis remains the property of the Irish Defence forces. It is used as a training facility and is not open to the public. Having regard to experience with other fortifications, it may be that from the point of view of the public sector as a whole, low intensity use by the Defence Forces may be a quite cost effective way of ensuring their preservation.





**Fig 5.47 Roche's Point**

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#### (iv) Roche's Point

Roche's Point is set in a rural landscape at the point where the Harbour breaks through the most southerly of the sandstone ridges to meet the open Atlantic. It possesses a sense of remoteness, far removed in spirit from the industrial nature of the western side of the harbour. The most notable features at Roche's point aside from the Coast guard station are the terrace of eleven coast guard cottages aligned in a slight curve, with direct views out over the water. The multi coloured approach to the painting of their plastered external walls is very effective in this coastal location. There is a shingle beach which can be accessed on foot in front of the Coast guard cottages. The Point is a popular fishing spot with good signage.

The setting for Roche's Point could be adversely affected by inadequate control of industrial development south of the Whitegate refinery, set too high within the valley there to be adequately screened, or by overdevelopment on the opposite headland, or by undue proliferation of single houses around it. All of these can be avoided with reasonable care.

