

SHANNON FOYNES PORT COMPANY MASTERPLAN 2041

Briefing Note

The Shannon Foynes Port Company has just published its port development plan for the period to 2041. Shannon Foynes accounts for about 37% of Ireland's bulk traffic, principally because of the specialised facilities at Moneypoint, Aughinish and Tarbert. It handled about 22% (9.9 million tonnes) of total goods traded into and out of ports in Ireland in 2011.

The Masterplan identifies a number of challenges to be addressed, including:

- A continuing trend towards larger ships requiring deepwater ports
- Increasing integration of maritime transport into the door to door global logistics and supply chain
- Intensified inter-port competition due to improved landside connections, principally road improvements
- Growth opportunities associated with the energy industry.

The Masterplan looks at a range of growth scenarios and projects that total tonnage throughput on the Shannon Estuary will rise from 9.9 million tonnes in 2011 to between 11.7 (baseline scenario) and 20.0 million tonnes (high line scenario) in 2041. A major part of the growth is likely to be focussed on Foynes which is projected to grow at between 5 and 8% per annum, rising from 1.6 million tonnes in 2011 to between 4.1 and 5.5 million tonnes by 2040.

In order to accommodate the increased throughput at Foynes, an estimated 127 additional hectares of land will be required under the high growth scenario for port operations by 2041. Additional berthing facilities will be needed in the medium term and it is also proposed to develop deepwater berthage facilities to provide capacity to handle very large Panamax and post-Panamax ships. The preferred location for this development is likely to be Foynes Island which is not owned by the port but had an operational fuel jetty until the late 1970s.

Limerick Docks is expected to maintain its existing cargo throughput and has the potential to grow significant new business. Some 15 hectares of land in port ownership has been identified as surplus to current operational

requirements. Four sites within the port have been identified as available for alternative use and the Masterplan envisages either sale of these sites for commercial development or alternatively the promotion of a Marine Energy Park to provide a research cluster, to develop ground breaking renewable energy and energy efficiency projects and to provide prototype demonstrator sites promoting renewable energy and educating the public.

The port company will continue to support and service the existing private facilities at Moneypoint, Aughinish and Tarbert and facilitate their expansion and diversification, as required. The Masterplan also identifies the potential to develop the Shannon Estuary as an Ocean Energy Hub providing a land base to access and service offshore wind and tidal energy generating platforms. There is likely to be substantial growth in this sector as the EU and the Irish Government continues to promote the development of alternative energy to replace fossil fuels.

The Masterplan identifies a need to improve road access to the port, particularly the upgrading of the N69 road along the Estuary road and the provision of a link road between the N69 and the N21 (Limerick – Tralee) road. The N21 link road is identified as a longer term objective, given that some of the required improvements on the N21 (such as the Adare Bypass) have been deferred. It also identifies reinstatement of the Limerick – Foynes rail freight line as an objective, pointing out that this could be quickly achieved when required. A preliminary estimate suggests that reinstatement could be implemented within 6 -12 months at a cost of €10 million. In the meantime the Masterplan calls for a minimum investment to be made to protect the permanent way and for a continuing inspection and maintenance regime to ensure that the line does not further deteriorate.