

# Cllr. Marcia D'Alton

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Pembroke Wood,  
Passage West,  
Co. Cork.

Planning Department,  
Cork County Council,  
County Hall,  
Cork.

6<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

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**RE: Planning Ref. No. 19/6783**  
**Applicant: Belvelly Marino Development Company DAC**

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Dear Sir/Madam,

As a public representative for Passage West/Monkstown and as a resident of Passage West, I wish to make a submission to the above planning application. Both at this stage and at any future operational stages, activity at Marino Point has significant potential to impact on Passage West.

Activities at Marino Point have always had a greater proportional impact on Passage West than on any other adjacent location. When Marino House was a family home and Marino Point was recognised as one of the most scenic locations in Cork Harbour, the waters around Marino Point were a playground for residents of Passage West. People from Passage West worked in Marino House. Access was always by water.

Almost five decades ago, planning permission was granted to NET (Nitrigin Eireann Teoranta) – not to IFI (Irish Fertiliser Industries) as stated in this planning application – for development of an ammonia and urea production plant. Although Cork County Council's Chief Planning Officer advised against it, the then County Manager acted against his recommendation in giving the development the green light. The planning permission was appealed, it went to oral hearing and permission was again granted by the Minister in 1975 although with the compromise that when the manufacturing activity ceased, the land would be returned to greenfield.

The NET manufacturing plant had impacts on Passage West not envisaged before its construction. From 1979, partly processed gas was flared off. With the tip of the flare at 78.5m and a flame height of 16.5m, the visual and psychological impact on Passage West was indescribable. Although expected to be largely hydrogen, unburned natural gas sometimes escaped unignited. The ammonia storage facility was the largest in Europe. The impact of ammonia leaks on the physical health of Passage West residents was an extreme concern. The impact of living in such close proximity to ammonia and dusty cargo handling was clearly visible in local schoolchildren, many of whom suffered chest and breathing complaints. This issue was resolved only when cargo handling became entirely enclosed.

In the late 1990s, the Seveso designation of what became the IFI plant precluded residential development in Passage West. The implications for the town were so significant at the time that they required Ministerial resolution.

It is of significant concern that although the current planning application constitutes little more than the long-desired clearing of redundant industrial infrastructure, it paves the way for down-the-line piecemeal industrial development. As yet, the nature and scale of this development is undefined. It is therefore not possible for us as residents to predict its impact. The only industry of which there is relative near-future certainty is the relocation of a fertiliser activity from Cork City Centre to Marino Point. It will be near-impossible to undertake accurate cumulative assessment of the entire Marino Point site if development proceeds in this way. I attended the pre-Christmas public consultation session organised by the Port of Cork in Passage West. Whilst I welcome the clearing of the former IFI site and understand the serviced sites approach being taken by the Belvelly Port Development Company, I ask that Cork County Council would remain alert to the sensitive nature of Marino Point's closest neighbours in Passage West.

I also welcome

- the installation of a new drainage network proposed in the planning application
- the inclusion of a tertiary treatment stage in the proposed wastewater treatment plant
- the proposed enhancement for tern nesting and the proposed protective timings of various construction activities so as not to impinge of bird nesting
- the proposals for assessing the building and condition of Marino House, its Orangerie and its associated RPS entries and the proposed feasibility study on the future use of Marino House
- the proposals for tree retention and new tree planting along the northern and north western boundaries.

Although Passage West is noted in the EIAR as being approximately 1 km from Marino Point, the Passage West shoreline and Greenway are in fact less than 500 metres from the jetty. As such, the visual, noise and lighting impacts are potentially highly significant.

#### Visual impact:

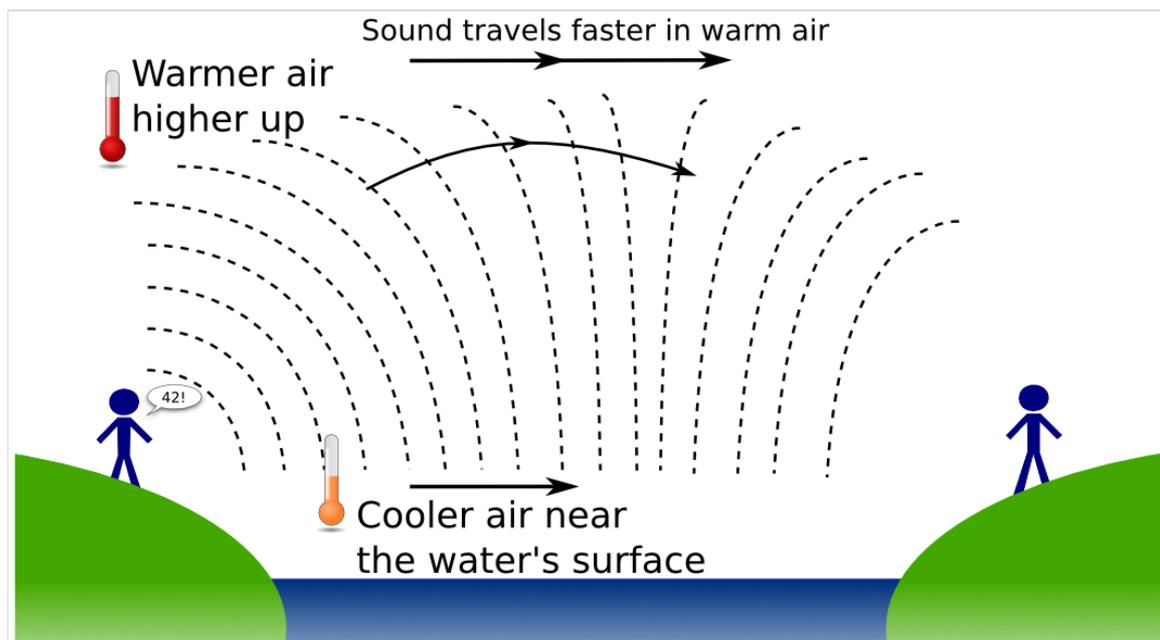
- Condition 27 of the NET planning permission (Planning Reg. No. 1523/74) was for a strip of land along the western frontage of the site to be reserved free from development. Condition 30 pertained to the protection of trees. Even in 1972 it was recognised that the visual impact of industrial development at Marino Point had the potential to be significant. It is critical that these conditions would continue to be respected.
- It is essential that a tree survey would accompany the proposals for tree retention. Although so many years ago now, a tree survey even formed part of the NET planning application in 1972. Moreover, it is important that personnel from Cork County Council with specific tree experience would confirm the tree survey on site and would continue to check on the welfare of trees for retention whilst the construction work is ongoing.
- Trees grow slowly. Many of those proposed for planting are bare-root saplings. I ask that Cork County Council would condition that root-ball trees of far greater maturity would be planted as part of the new screening.

#### Noise impact:

- The Marino Point jetty is immediately opposite the Passage West shoreline. Noise generated at the jetty or further inland travels unattenuated across the water to Toureen Terrace, the waterside Mariner's View apartments and Passage West town centre. The EIAR states that no particularly vulnerable noise receptors have been identified in Passage West. The PACE Centre (Passage West Association of Care for the Elderly) is on the Passage West waterfront in the former Town Hall. It shares that building with

the public library. Meditation and other community activities take place regularly at the PACE Centre. St. Mary's Church, Passage West is merely 570 metres from the Marino Point jetty. These are all sensitive receptors.

- Intensification of use of the Marino Point jetty is already causing concern with regard to noise impact. As described in the Planning Statement, Cork County Council issued a Section 5 declaration in 2018 permitting modifications to the cargo handling system at the jetty and the storage of certain dry bulk cargo. The Section 5 declaration process does not involve public consultation. During the Christmas period, the Spanish ferry (the *Kerry*) was docked at the Marino Point jetty. During the early hours of the morning, her generator was clearly audible from my home at the back of Pembroke Wood, almost 1.5 km from the jetty as the crow flies.
- Sound travels faster over water. Although Chapter 12 of the EIAR predicts that noise from construction activities at Marino Point either on their own or in combination with noise from the fertiliser-related facility, there is no evidence to indicate that the very different behaviour of sound over water has been taken into account in arriving at this conclusion. The EIAR shows that a pneumatic hammer will be used in the jetty area. It is near-impossible to envisage how this will not have a significant impact on Passage West.
- Moreover, the proposals indicate that similar machinery will be used along the shoreline adjacent to the Belvelly Channel SPA/SAC. The EIAR predicts that in a worst case scenario, the increase in noise experienced in the SPA/SAC may be in excess of 10 dB. Whilst this sounds like very little, the reality is that noise is measured on a logarithmic scale and an increase of greater than 10 dB is massively significant. I ask that Cork County Council would require a noise curtain/barrier to be used on the shoreline between such machinery and the SPA/SAC.
- I ask Cork County Council to please not grant permission for any further intensification of use of the existing jetty without first allowing a process of public consultation. It is good to see life at the jetty but the consequential impacts must be planned appropriately. The little diagram below (ref. <http://inspiringscience.net/2013/08/14/no-secrets-by-the-lakeside-how-water-affects-sound/>) shows in a very simple way how the cooler air temperature close to the water's surface helps sound waves to travel faster. Much of the noise arising from ships is of low frequency. The EIAR itself states that "*higher frequencies attenuate more rapidly than low frequencies*". Our noise measuring/monitoring procedures rarely allow for this yet the impacts on adjacent residents can be significant.



- The EIAR considers that noise monitoring during construction will not be necessary. On the contrary, I ask that Cork County Council would consider it vital and would condition any grant of planning accordingly.
- The EIAR proposes that a complaints procedure would be established whereby all reported complaints would be investigated and logged. Experience to date in Ringaskiddy is that complaints made by residents to the Port of Cork often seem to go nowhere. When a call is made to Port Ops, a similar complaints procedure may result in the call being logged but residents report to me that there is no further follow-up. I therefore ask that Cork County Council would prevent against a repeat in Passage West and would condition a complaints procedure whereby the Belvelly Port Development Company would be obliged to take charge of negative experiences reported, would be obliged to follow-up both with action and with the complainant and would be obliged to report regularly on their handling of complaints to Cork County Council.
- It is proposed that a Site Liaison Officer would be appointed. I ask that this appointment would include liaising with Passage West residents.

### Community Gain

The planning application states that in making the Section 5 declaration, Cork County Council confirmed that there is a continued industrial use of the Marino Point site outside that associated with the MarinoChem operations.

In this regard I ask Cork County Council to note that IFI ceased operating in 2002. There has been no industrial activity on the site since that time. Renewed industrial activity at Marino Point is a very new experience for both local residents and adjacent protected wild areas.

A condition of the planning permission associated with the ammonia/urea manufacturing facility was that it was to be returned to greenfield use when the fertiliser operation ceased. On the 7<sup>th</sup> February 1977, a bond was put in place to assist with the cost of site clearance. Cork County Council has stated to me that they cannot find this bond although documentation of the time indicates clearly that it was stored for safe keeping by Cork County Council. Were the Minister's compromise relating to a return of the Marino Point site to greenfield upheld as was committed to in 1975, any further industrial activity subsequent to the ammonia/urea manufacture would not be permitted.

In view of the fact that the above was the expectation of the local community, it would be reasonable for Cork County Council to require a significant element of community gain to be associated with any industrial development at Marino Point. I ask that this would be conditioned accordingly.

Yours faithfully,




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Marcia D'Alton  
Independent Member, Cork County Council