

Slide 1

Cuskinny Marsh Amenity Area

Proposal for Improving pedestrian safety

This is a proposal to make the Cuskinny Amenity area near Cobh a safer place for pedestrians who use the area in large numbers relative to other stretches of country road in east Cork.

This is based on a presentation made by Jim Wilson to the Roads Committee of Cork County Council on Monday 19th December at County Hall Cork.

Jim would like to thank Cork County Council for giving him the opportunity to make this presentation. Jim would also like to thank BirdWatch Ireland, the Ronan and Bird families and the other members of the Cuskinny Reserve Management Committee.

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Slide 2



The map indicates the location of the stretch of road being discussed. Total length is one kilometre.

Slide 3



The green line in the image shows the stretch of road in question.

Slide 4



Cuskinny is a favourite recreational area because of its rural setting with few houses visible anywhere and beautiful scenery in the heart of Cork Harbour.

Slide 5



Cuskinny teems with wildlife and its benefit to the physical and mental health of the people of Cobh and the surrounding area should not be underestimated.

Slide 6



The north end of the stretch of road in question.

Slide 7



This image gives you an idea of the type of road we are talking about. It is newly resurfaced, great for walkers but also an invitation for cars to move at speed. The amount of traffic using the road is very small and therefore should be easy to make pedestrian friendly. Apart from the three residential properties along this 1Km stretch there are alternative routes for cars using this road and even with traffic calming measures the amount to time 'lost' by motorists using this stretch would be very small.

Slide 8



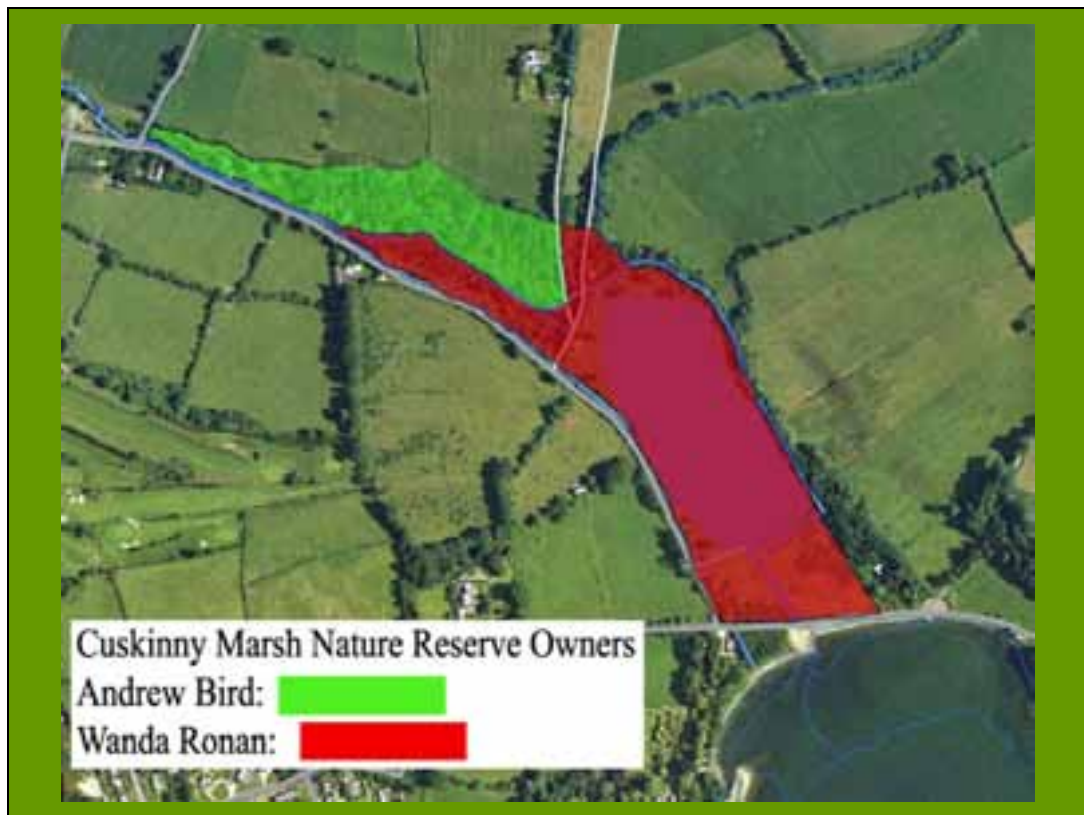
The area in question has been a nature reserve since 1990.

Slide 9



It is currently managed and promoted as a nature reserve by BirdWatch Ireland, Ireland's largest conservation organisation.

Slide 10



The reserve is managed in partnership with the landowners who fully support the area being promoted as a nature reserve for the enjoyment of all. The road in question runs along the western side of the reserve.

Slide 11



Cuskinny Marsh is famous for its dawn chorus. A rarely heard phenomenon within the built up and industrialised environs of Cork Harbour.

Slide 12



Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve, now well known in Ireland and beyond, because it is the home of the national live Dawn Chorus radio broadcast beamed live by RTE on the Mooney Show to Ireland and the world. We are now on our 9th live national broadcast from Cuskinny.

Slide 13



Cuskinny on the Mooney Goes Wild web page on the RTE website.

Slide 14



Over the years volunteers have been involved in making Cuskinny a first class amenity.

Slide 15



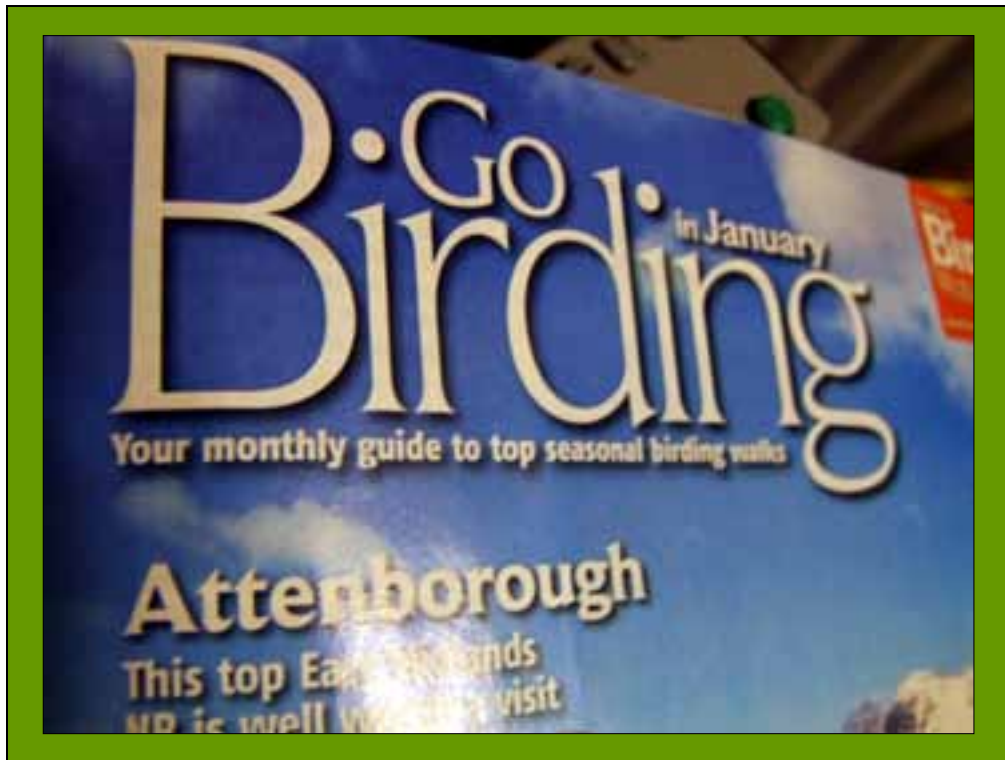
A brochure produced as part of a LEADER funded bird watching tourism initiative some years ago.

Slide 16

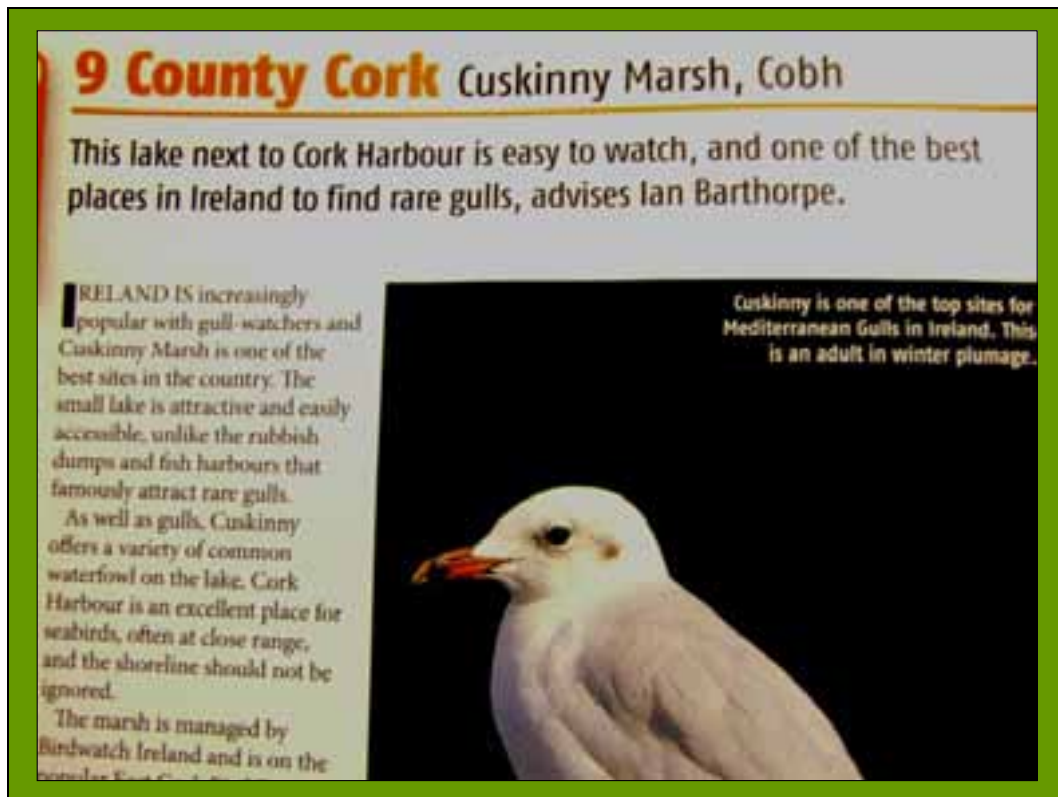


Cuskinny is part of the East Cork Bird trail, one of the first ever LEADER projects in east Cork and all the signs are still in place and providing valuable information on the birds and history of the 19 locations where the display boards were erected over 10 years ago.

Slide 17



Cuskinny featured in a British magazine 'Bird Watch', which has a monthly circulation of nearly 30,000 copies. It was in its winter guide to 'top seasonal birding (bird watching) walks'.



‘One of the best places in Ireland to find rare gulls’.

Nature related tourist activities are hugely popular and increasing in popularity all the time. Cuskinny is known internationally for its rare gulls and attract visiting bird watchers from abroad.

Slide 19



In that magazine it was the only Irish site selected in that edition.

Slide 20



There is a newly surfaced car park at the southern end of the reserve. As far as I know the car park land is owned by Mrs Wanda Ronan.

Slide 21



One of the most popular attractions at Cuskinny is the swan and duck feeding area which attracts a steady stream of visitors all year round.

Slide 22



The swans and ducks at the feeding area.

Slide 23



Education has always been at the heart of activities at the reserve at Cuskinny. Here retired Wildlife Ranger Pat Smiddy shows pupils from Scoil Iosaef Naofa in Cobh how birds are trapped and tagged as part of scientific research into the health of our environment.

Slide 24



A visit to the reserve by a school group is always a memorable experience – and not an X-Box or computer in sight!

Slide 25



Kids learning about their natural heritage, in this case bats, on a Tidy Towns promoted outing to the reserve at Cuskinny at night last summer.

Slide 26



Research is another important aspect of the reserves activities and students from UCC have been using the reserve for studies, including PhD research. Here a trap for insects is being set up.

Slide 27



Guided walks at Cuskinny, with even minimal advertising always attracts a good crowd showing the large public desire for places like Cuskinny. This picture illustrates the need for traffic calming measures to avoid accidents.

Slide 28



Another group on a blind bend.

Slide 29



Not even Cuskinny escapes the ever present rubbish dumping and periodic clean-ups are always well supported.

Slide 30



St. Mary's Primary School in Cobh has adopted Cuskinny as its An Taisce Clean Coast area and pupils and teachers have visited the reserve and the strand on both clean up outings and nature walks. This is at the swan feeding area. Other schools on the island visit Cuskinny during the year.

Slide 31



Tidy Towns clean up with a walker and cyclist in the background.

10,000 - 15,000
Visitors
per annum
(minimum)

It is estimated that Cuskinny receives a minimum of 10,000 – 15,000 visitors per year and there are no signs warning motorists of pedestrians or any traffic calming measures. Pedestrians should be able to walk country roads in relative safety and not playing second fiddle to cars, especially in areas like Cuskinny, where a significant number of motorists expect you to jump into a ditch when they approach and think you should not be on the road at all unless you are in a car.

Slide 33



Currently the speed limit in the area in questions is 60 Km per hour. This is way too fast, especially with a number of blind bends along the road.

Slide 34



The Beware of Horses sign is the only sign warning motorists to beware on this stretch of road. I have spoken to a number of people who walk to area regularly and they all support the suggestion of traffic calming and warning signs. Some have stopped walking this stretch of road as they now think it is too dangerous.

Slide 35



This is at the swan feeding area, which is not far from one of the blind bends.

Slide 36



This is the same bend looking from the other side with no indication that people will be parking cars and on the road just around the bend. The recent resurfacing of the road has only encouraged motorists to drive faster along this road.

Slide 37



Another one of the blind bends.

Slide 38



Looking south along the road at Cuskinny.

Slide 39



An early morning jogger in the peaceful setting of Cuskinny Marsh.

Slide 40



Because the cost of creating a walkway off the road would probably be prohibitive road markings like the ones I created on this image above would go a long way towards protecting the pedestrian. Cars could drive in the pedestrian 'lane' but if they meet a pedestrian they have to go around them rather than force the pedestrian onto the verge. I just made this up as an idea and not sure if anything like this would be possible or not.

Slide 41



Another version of the same thing. Making it a bit clearer to the motorist that pedestrians have the right of way (as they should anyway).

Suggestions

- Ideally a foot path along one side of the road
- Make the road a pedestrian priority area
- Traffic Calming measures on the bad bends and start and finish.
- Reduce the speed limit within the area

These are just my thoughts on the matter and I am open to all suggestions.



There is an economic benefit to be gained by promoting Cuskinny as a pedestrian priority area. Walking holidays are very popular and staff at the tourist office in Cobh says they are regularly asked about places where people can go for a country walk on the Great Island (Cobh). Currently there are none as far as I am aware. SECAD have been involved in promoting community walking trails around the harbour and Cuskinny would fit nicely into the category. Investment in setting up the pedestrian priority area would be minimal and the potential return both socially and economically would be great.

Slide 44



The newly surfaced car park at the southern end of the reserve would be a great starting and finishing point for walkers on the island and a number of walks (short/medium/long) could be established and promoted. I proposed this to Cobh Tourism staff recently and they said it would be a fantastic asset to tourism in the area.



Short Walk Route

A proposed walking route based at Cuskinny. This and the following two routes are purely hypothetical but I just wanted to throw out the idea in the hope the council and other stakeholders would consider the idea. Where there is a will there is a way.



Long Walk Route

Slide 48



This photo was not staged. The photographer was taking a shot of the mallard on the wall and two walkers were passing by. An idyllic scene and hopefully one that can be secured into the future through pedestrian-friendly traffic management in the Cuskinny area.

Slide 49



View at sunset from the Car Park at Cuskinny looking out Cork harbour.