

3.4.8 Portmagee

3.4.8.1 Context

Portmagee is a small coastal village set within a scenic landscape located on the R565 at the western end of the Iveragh Peninsula. It is approximately 16km southwest of Cahersiveen. The village is situated between Saint Finan’s Bay and Valentia Island, and is on both the Skellig Ring Tourist drive and WAW.

Portmagee is mainly a residential settlement which provides services and community facilities to the local community. For its size it has a broad range of services and facilities, however many of these are only open on a seasonal basis. In 2021 Portmagee received funding made available under the “Town and Village Renewal Scheme” by the Department of Social Protection and Rural Affairs. The funding was allocated for public realm improvements and undergrounding of utility wires, including the provision of EV charging, WiFi Access points and information points.

Social and community services in Portmagee include a Church, health centre, national school, Garda station, G.A.A. sports ground and community centre. Portmagee Community Centre and Junior Club Kenmare received funding under the Community Enhancement Programme Round 2 allocations in 2020.

The village has a small number of shops, a post office, public houses/restaurants and cafes. It also functions as a base for the local fishing fleet and has a modest tourism function.

The main attraction in the surrounding area is the Skellig Islands and the village serves as a departure point for tourists travelling to visit Sceilig Mhichíl. There is a hostel, as well as several bed & breakfasts and holiday home developments, in the village and surrounding area. As the village is set on the R565 main road linking Valentia Island to the Mainland, Portmagee also benefits from some passing trade.

3.4.8.2 Planning Considerations and Proposals

The development boundary for Portmagee defines the existing extent of the area where new development may be considered, whilst also allowing for some expansion for residential development to the west and south of the village core. During the lifetime of this Plan, development will focus mainly on these lands, located close to the village core.

While many residents will continue to commute to other centres for employment, it is important that Portmagee retains and further develops its social and economic infrastructure to function as a sustainable community. Increased local retail and commercial uses within the village core adjacent to existing uses would serve to achieve this. To facilitate this, lands have been zoned M2 (Village Centre) to facilitate village and mixed-use type development.

3.4.8.3 Population and Sustainable Land-Use Development

The first year the census returned a population for the village itself was in 2016, recording 123 people residing in the village. The population of the village in 2022 is 116 people. The village is located in the ED of Portmagee. The 2006 census showed 376 persons in this ED. The population in 2011 was 390, increasing in 2016 to 413 people, and in 2022 its population was 365. Housing developments in estates to the southwest of the village take the form of modern suburban type housing. These estates also contain holiday home developments. According to Census 2016, 34% of houses in Portmagee are Holiday Homes.

	2006	2011	2016	2022
Portmagee	n/a	n/a	123	116
Portmagee ED	376	390	413	365

Table 3.18: Population of Portmagee 2006-2022

3.4.8.3.1 Residential Development

Portmagee has not been given a specific population growth and housing target under the Core Strategy of the KCDP, consequently lands have not been zoned for R1 (*Proposed Residential*). However suitably located lands have been identified and zoned as R4 (*Strategic Residential Reserve*) to ensure that the long-term residential needs of the village can be met. These lands can be unlocked and developed when the wastewater infrastructure is upgraded. No lands have been zoned for proposed residential use or other flood vulnerable uses within identified flood zones - See Figure 3.100. Within the village centre (M2) and on lands zoned mixed use (M1) there are also opportunities for residential development. Given the level of existing holiday home development in the village, housing for permanent residents is encouraged.

3.4.8.4 Heritage

3.4.8.4.1 Built Environment & Heritage

The village has a small but strongly defined urban core centred along the waterfront. The village architecture is largely comprised of traditional 19th century two storey structures. The main street is linear and is open to the sea on the north side apart from a group of buildings at the eastern end. The western extremity of the street ends in a cul de sac. The village has a relatively compact urban core, however more recent developments including ribbon development along the approach roads has served to dilute the compact nature of the original settlement. Recent developments including holiday home developments to the southwest of the village, due to their uniformity and estate style layout sit uncomfortably next to the old waterfront area where a mixture of house sizes and colour add variety to the overall look of the area. The existing Main Street with its simple forms and broad palette of colours gives Portmagee its unique character. Small-scale residential development has occurred to the rear of some properties along the main street.

While the village is largely linear in nature there is also extensive areas of both developed and undeveloped land to the rear of roadside development. The creation of infill/backland development would provide for a more compact and sustainable urban form.

To ensure that the local character and sense of place are enhanced, new development should seek to reflect the traditional elements of the existing streetscape and reinforce the character of the village centre by extending the streetscape where possible to develop a stronger village form.

3.4.8.4.2 Natural Heritage & Archaeology

Valentia Harbour/Portmagee Channel is designated as a SAC. The village is located in an area rich in natural beauty and amenities. The mountains to the south provide attractive views from the village and form scenic backdrops against which the village is set. There are several walking routes identified in the vicinity of the village, including a SÍ na Sláinte. Hill walking and the surrounding natural heritage and amenities offer significant potential for Portmagee to increase footfall & overnight stays.

3.4.8.5 Economic Development

The village itself developed traditionally as a port and fishing (market) village serving the needs of a historically successful farming hinterland. The vitality of many of the village's small businesses is dependent on the spending power of customers from the rural areas, harbour related activities, and visitors.

Portmagee's pier has an important role in the continuing success of the marine – leisure, recreation and tourism sectors in the area. Support for the fishing industry remains the central focus of the pier. Fishing is a major source of income and direct employment for the area and also contributes indirectly, through fish exports and processing. Boat trips for Sceilg Mhichíl are on offer from the pier. Tourism is a significant part of the local economy, and the traditional

character and vernacular architecture of the village is an important part of the village's appeal.

3.4.8.6 Natural Environment & Recreational Amenity

Some small amenity areas are located adjacent to the harbour. Lands have been identified for community facilities, zoned S3, to the south of the Community Centre, where an amenity area could form part of an overall development that may also include a car park.

3.4.8.7 Water & Wastewater Management

Portmagee is served by a public water supply. Water availability is an ongoing issue during summer months. However, it is anticipated that water savings associated with ongoing leak detection may assist in ensuring that sufficient capacity will be available to cater for peak demand and targeted growth.

There is a primary settlement tank in the village. The treatment is by means of a septic tank and outlet into the bay. The system is currently inadequate and capital investment is therefore required to upgrade the system.

3.4.8.8 Flood Risk Management

The majority of the town of Portmagee is not usually at risk of flooding. There may be some seasonal tidal/coastal flooding along the waterfront. These areas are not zoned for highly vulnerable development. For further details see references in the SFRA.

3.4.8.9 Connectivity


The village is located on a busy regional route R565 and is the main vehicular entrance to Valentia Island via the bridge. The set-back along the waterfront provides limited parking. There is car parking adjacent to the Church and public toilets which is signposted for use by those visiting Sceilg Mhichíl. During summer months car parking in the village reaches capacity, leading to traffic management challenges. It is an objective of this plan, therefore, to provide a car

park to serve the village. Footpaths are required at a number of locations throughout the village to provide for connectivity between residential areas to the west and the east.



Image 3.99: View of Portmagee from Main Street

Overall Objectives	
Objective No.	It is an objective of the Council to:
KENMD-PE-1	Ensure that future development supports the existing role and function of the village as a rural service centre, fishing port and small tourist village having regard to the scale of the existing settlement and the setting of the village in an attractive rural landscape.

KENMD-PE-2	Facilitate the sustainable development of a park and playground within the village at an appropriate location.
KENMD-PE-3 	Seek the sustainable provision/improvement of continuous footpaths and walkways within the village.
KENMD-PE-4	Ensure that any future tourism developments are sensitive to the existing character of the village and should be appropriate in scale. Developments which are open on a year-round basis will be encouraged.
KENMD-PE-5	Promote the appropriate development of a niche tourism market, based on sustainable marine activity, sustainable marine and adventure/experience holidays.
KENMD-PE-6	Promote film tourism in the area in a sustainable manner.
KENMD-PE-7	Facilitate the Skellig Experience Centre in any sustainable improvement / re-development project.
KENMD-PE-8	Facilitate the sustainable development of new car parking facilities in the village at an appropriate location.