

An Analysis of the Visitor Carrying Capacity of the Monastic Enclosure, Skellig Michael



on behalf of the Office of Public Works

January 2023

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1.0 Introduction

This report considers visitor access to the monastic site on Skellig Michael, including impacts, evaluation of mitigation measures, residual impacts, and recommended actions (for location, see Figures 1 to 5).

2.0 General Access

Access is by way of boat from embarkation points such as Portmagee and Ballinskelligs. Currently the majority of boats embark from Portmagee. Travel time (which is weather dependent) is usually 50-60 minutes.

Boats arrive to the island between 09:00-12:30 and depart between 11:00-14:30. In general a visitor has 2½ hours on the island. Visitors disembark at Blind Man's Cove and travel along the lighthouse road on the south of the island to reach the base of the South Steps. The South Steps (c. 600) zig-zag upwards on the southern slopes to Christ's Saddle and onwards to the Monastery (Figures 2 and 3).

In the round, visitors are allowed c. 1 hour to ascend and descend from the Monastery, leaving c. 1 hour to view the monument and 30 minutes to have lunch. Guides are on site to provide safety and orientation information at the bottom of the South Steps and information about the monument at the Monastery. Visitor talks are usually provided in front of the monastic cells adjacent to St. Michael's Church.

Visitors take the opportunity to have a lunch break (either on ascent or descent) at the Wailing Woman, Christ's Saddle, or the upper terrace of the Monastery.

Visitors keep to the lighthouse road and steps between the pier and Monastery. In general, the short period available to visitors on the island does not allow for deviation from this prescribed route.

Approximate visitor numbers to the island over a 25-year period are shown in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 Visitors to Skellig Michael during the seasons 1987-2018.

Year	Visitor Numbers	Year	Visitor Numbers
1987	6,270	2003	10,620
1988	5,210	2004	10,060
1989	7,820	2005	11,900
1990	10,790	2006	11,070
1991	8,160	2007	12,030
1992	9,840	2008	10,330
1993	11,050	2009	10,650
1994	6,600 ^(a)	2010	12,350
1995	13,100 ^(b)	2011	9,900 ^(d)
1996	12,300	2012	11,530
1997	10,700	2013	13,221
1998	10,340	2014	15,180
1999	10,600	2015	12,254
2000	9,700	2016	14,457
2001	11,700	2017	16,752
2002	10,200 ^(c)	2018	16,096

(a) Island closed 4 days a week.

(b) Introduction of agreement; 4 extra boats.

(c) Late start on island, mid-June.

(d) Very late start on the island.

2.1 Season

The season generally extends from mid-May to the end of September. The season is advertised each year in the national press, both for opening and closure. Two websites (Office of Public Works [OPW], and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) also carry information relating to the Skellig Michael. The Monastery is open from 09:00 to 16:00 each day during the season.

2.2 Boatmen

Fifteen boats, licensed to carry 12 persons each, are currently approved by the OPW to land passengers on the island during the season. The boats are licensed annually by the Department of Transport for seaworthiness for transport of fee-paying passengers (between April and October each year).

2.3 Skellig Information

Information on the nature of the island, including “do’s and don’ts” while visiting, is made available on signage at embarkation points, on information leaflets distributed in West Kerry visitor outlets and on government websites. Leaflets are distributed to visitors by the boatmen as a condition of the landing permit.

2.4 Weather

Weather conditions play a significant role in determining access to the island. Annually, access is not reasonably possible between November to March. Seasonal conditions determine whether opening is possible in the months of April and October. Likewise, access during May-September is determined on a daily basis on analysis of swell height and orientation and wind speed forecasts.

The limit conditions for access to Skellig are stated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Weather limits to travel.

Wind Speed	Not more than Force 4 from the east or Force 6 from any other aspect.
Wave Height and Frequency	Generally not more than 2.5m and 10 second intervals.
Swell Orientation	Not more than 1m from the southeast or 3m from the west or north.
Critical Conditions	Easterly winds or swells from the southeast.

A season of c. 5 months (May-September) and a cap of 180 visitors per day points to a maximum potential visitor number of c. 25,000 visitors per season. The fact that the actual number of visitors each season is generally less than 70% of this maximum reflects the influence local weather conditions have on potential access.

3.0 Impacts

Potential impacts are considered in the first instance without the benefit of mitigation measures effected by OPW maintenance regimes and visitor management.

Visitors to the Monastery utilise the lower lighthouse road from the landing at Blind Man’s Cove to the base of the South Steps. The South Steps are taken to Christ’s Saddle to access the Monastery. Accessible parts of the Monastery include (a) the Upper Monks’ Garden, (b) the Inner Enclosure with the cells and churches,

and (c) the rock terrace to the west and north of the cells. Access is not currently allowed to (a) the eastern Lower Monks' Garden, and (b) the Small Oratory Terrace (see Figures 2 to 4).

In cultural heritage terms the Monastery and two large, inscribed stone crosses within the Monastery are considered to be of very high importance. The access steps, monks' cemetery, and St. Michael's Church, are considered to be of high importance; while the paving in the Monastery is considered to be of moderate importance (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Importance	Feature of Interest
Very High Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monastery • Two large, inscribed crosses within the Monastery
High Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Steps • Monks' Cemetery • St. Michael's Church (2 phases)
Medium Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paving stones • Smaller crosses

Without visitor management and site maintenance, moderate to large magnitude impacts upon all of these features would be anticipated. These could include breakage of crosses, damage to drystone walls, and built terraces; removal of quartz pebbles from the graveyard; graffiti; and wear and loosening of steps and paving. Without mitigation this would result in moderate to profound impacts upon the Monastery and access steps.

4.0 Mitigation Measures

Current mitigation measures employed by the OPW during the open season include:

- Concerted and intense remediation works to rectify out-of-season effects upon the monument at the beginning of each season.
- Tightening and cleaning of the access steps following visitor departure (regularly during the season).
- Relocation of loosened stones within walls, cells and terraces of the Monastery (regularly during the season).
- Control of visitors to the Monastery by (a) filtering at the base of the South Steps, (b) direction at the entrance to the Monastery, (c) provision of guide talks, (d) monitoring of visitor activity while on site, and (e) protection of works areas during visitor periods.

The material effect of these actions is currently considered to reduce the potential impacts upon the monument from significant/profound to slight/moderate.

5.0 Evaluation of Mitigation Measures

To evaluate the effectiveness of current visitor management, detailed observations were made of the arrival and departure of visitors at Blind Man's Cove on 27th August 2022. This was followed by detailed observations of visitor activity and distribution at the Monastery on 28th August 2022. A summary of the findings is presented below (see also Photographs 1 to 8).

5.1 Visitors at Monastery

Observations were made on 28th August of the activities engaged in by visitors while at the Monastery. Observations on 27th August focused on the timing of visitor arrival/departure to the pier at Blind Man's Cove.

The Monastery is open to the public for a period of seven hours (09:00 to 16:00) each day during the season. Given a cap of 180 visitors per day, this allows for an average arrival of 25 visitors (two boats) per hour.

5.1.1 Monastery – Arrivals/Departures

A general pattern of arrivals to the Monastery between 09:00 and 12:00 and departures by 14:30 is apparent from examination of the data (see Table 5.1, Table 5.2, and Table 5.3) (see also Photographs 1 and 2). Some 36 visitors (three boats) arrive to the island each half hour between 09:00-12:00. An equal number of visitors depart each half hour between 11:30-14:30. There are no visitors on the island after 14:30.

From discussions with guides and OPW staff, the observations made above are common practice and represent the status quo in 2022. In general, therefore, it would appear that there are few visitors arriving to the Monastery after 13:00 each day, and that all visitors depart the Monastery before 14:00 any day during the open season.

5.1.2 Visitor Activity

On arrival to the Monastery, most visitors will attend a talk at St. Michael's Church (c. 20 minutes). If this is over-subscribed, visitors will disperse to the rock terrace to the rear and side (north and west) of the monastic cells or return to the Upper Monks' Garden, to view and photograph the seascapes (see Photographs 4 and 7). Following a talk, visitors will disperse to the areas above, to take in the views and have lunch. Formal talks (up to five per day) are provided by the guides at St. Michael's Church. Within the monastic site, the most popular area for lunch is in the upper terrace. On dry/sunny days most sit adjacent to the south facing walls. On wet/misty days many sit against the north facing wall for protection against the weather.

Access around the site may be significantly impeded if a large group is attending a talk at the cells. At such times, passage in front of St. Michael's Church is not possible, and access to Cell E, graveyard and viewing of the Small Oratory is not possible. Likewise, access to the cells (A, B, C and D) may be restricted.

5.1.3 Guide Talks

Three guides are on duty daily during the season. One located at the base of the South Steps, and two at the Monastery. The guides at the Monastery take turns to give short (c. 20 minute) talks about the monument to visitors (see Photographs 3, 5, 6 and 8).

The principal site used for talks is adjacent to St. Michael's Church, with the presenter facing visitors on the steps in front of the monastic cells. A satellite location is on the steps in front of Cell E. Attendance of visitors in excess of 50 at St. Michael's Church leads to visible dependence of visitors upon drystone walls and steps in this space. Such numbers also prevent movement in the cell enclosure and dissipation from the formal talks.

Visitor Occupancy

The Monastery compound is open between 09:00 and 16:00 each day. From observations made on 28th August 2022, the visitors accessed the compound between 09:30-14:00 and for a total of 4½ hours (see Table 5.4 and Graph 1). A peak occupancy of 63 visitors was observed on site at 12:05. To allow adequate visitor access to cells and free flow through the Monastery site it is estimated that the optimum number of visitors to the cell enclosure, at any one time, should not exceed c. 36 persons (i.e. passengers from three boats). The maximum number of visitors at the cell enclosure should not exceed 48 persons (i.e. passengers from four boats) at any one time. The estimated and observed exceedances of these limits are found to be moderately negative (see Table 5.5 and Graph 1).

A comparison with data from 2018 is valid here. On 29th September 2018 a peak usage of the Monastery of 111 visitors was identified at 11:30 on the day. A peak usage of 63 visitors on 28th August 2022 suggests a 43% reduction in the visitor number peak. However, this number in its own right is a 30% excess of the recommended maximum limit of 48 persons at the cell enclosure (see Graph 2). In addition, the exceedance of maximum limit is identified at 15% and exceedance of optimum level at 35%. Whilst materially improved since the assessment of 2018 (see 2019 report), the potential for negative impact remains. In this regard the potential remains to improve upon the slot system now in place, by way of staggering the arrival and departure times more broadly.

Table 5.1 Boats Arriving/Departing Skellig (Saturday, 27th August 2022).

Boat	Depart Portmagee	Arrive Skellig	Travel Time (minutes)	Time at Island (hour/min)	Depart Skellig	Arrive Portmagee	Travel Time (minutes)	Total Time (hour/min)
1	08:04	08:56	52	2:38	11:34	12:55	84**	4:54
2	07:40	08:59	79*	2:39	11:38	12:30	54	4:42
3	07:43	09:02	79*	2:28	11:30	12:25	57	4:44
4	08:52	09:45	53	2:45***	12:30	13:48	84**	5:02
5	08:40	09:48	68*	2:34	12:22	13:12	52	4:34
6	08:52	09:50	58*	2:29	12:19	13:22	77	4:44
7	08:58	10:30	92*	2:32	13:02	13:56	56	5:00
8	09:23	10:34	71	2:22	12:58	13:56	71	4:44
9	09:22	10:38	76*	2:29	13:07	14:15	70	4:55
10	10:00	11:11	71*	2:25	13:36	14:28	56	4:32
11	-	11:15*	-	2:15	13:30	-	-	-
12	-	11:21*	-	2:20	13:41	-	-	-
13	10:25	11:50	85*	2:28	14:18	15:08	50	4:43
14	10:00	11:52	112*	2:31	14:23	15:38	77	5:40
15	10:19	11:58	99*	2:29	14:27	15:18	53	5:01
Average Time			76 min	2:30			65 min	4:55

Notes: *Go around islands on approach to Skellig Michael. **Go around islands on departure from Skellig Michael. ***Delayed by passengers.

Table 5.2 Estimated Time Spent at Monastery Compound (Saturday, 27th August 2022).¹

Boat	Slot Time of Arrival at Skellig	Actual Time of Arrival	Estimated Time of Arrival at Monastery²	Estimated Time Spent at Monastery³ (hrs/min)	Estimated Time of Departure from Monastery⁴	Slot Time of Departure from Skellig	Actual Time of Departure from Pier
1	09:00	08:56	09:36	1:24	11:00	11:30	11:34
2	09:00	08:59	09:39	1:21	11:00	11:30	11:38
3	09:00	09:02	09:42	1:18	11:00	11:30	11:30
4	09:45	09:45	10:25	1:20	11:45	12:15	12:30
5	09:45	09:48	10:28	1:17	11:45	12:15	12:22
6	09:45	09:50	10:30	1:15	11:45	12:15	12:19
7	10:30	10:30	11:10	1:20	12:30	13:00	13:02
8	10:30	10:34	11:14	1:16	12:30	13:00	12:58
9	10:30	10:38	11:18	1:12	12:30	13:00	13:07
10	11:15	11:11	11:51	1:24	13:15	13:45	13:36
11	11:15	11:15	11:55	1:20	13:15	13:45	13:30
12	11:15	11:21	12:01	1:14	13:15	13:45	13:41
13	12:00	11:50	12:30	1:30	14:00	14:30	14:18
14	12:00	11:52	12:32	1:28	14:00	14:30	14:23
15	12:00	11:58	12:38	1:22	14:00	14:30	14:27

Notes

1. Monastery compound: includes upper monks' garden, monastery and upper terrace.
2. Assumed 40 minutes for pier arrival to monastery (including orientation talk at steps).
3. Estimated average time at monastery = 80 minutes (minimum 72 minutes, maximum 90 minutes).
4. Assumed 30 minutes from monastery to pier.

Table 5.3 Arrival and Departure Berthage at Pier (Saturday, 27th August 2022).

Boat	Arrival at Skellig		Slot Time	Dwell Time (mins)	Departure from Skellig		Slot Time	Dwell Time (mins)
	On Berth	Off Berth			On Berth	Off Berth		
1	08:56	08:58	09:00	2	11:31	11:34	11:30	3
2	08:59	09:01	09:00	2	11:36	11:38 ¹	11:30	2
3	09:02	09:04	09:00	2	11:28	11:30	11:30	2
4	09:45	09:47	09:45	2	12:24	12:30	12:15	6
5	09:48	09:50	09:45	2	12:20	12:22	12:15	2
6	09:50	09:52	09:45	2	12:05	12:19 ²	12:15	14
7	10:30	10:32	10:30	2	13:00	13:02	13:00	2
8	10:34	10:36	10:30	2	12:45	12:58 ³	13:00	13
9	10:38	10:39	10:30	1	13:05	13:07	13:00	2
10	11:11	11:12	11:15	1	13:32	13:36	13:45	4
11	11:15	11:18	11:15	3	13:09	13:30 ⁴	13:45	21
12	11:21	11:24	11:15	3	13:38	13:41	13:45	3
13	11:50	11:51	12:00	1	14:00	14:18 ⁵	14:30	18
14	11:52	11:55	12:00	3	14:21	14:23	14:30	2
15	11:58	12:00	12:00	2	14:25	14:27	14:30	2
				Avg. 2 mins				Avg. 6.5 mins

Notes

1. Delayed by two passengers.
2. On berth early and waiting on swimmer.
3. On berth early; early departure.
4. On berth early; early departure.
5. On berth early; early departure.

Table 5.4 Number of Visitors at Monastery Compound, Sunday, 28th August 2022.¹

Time	No. of Visitors		Comments
	In ²	Out ³	
09:30-09:35	0	0	
09:35-09:40	5	0	
09:40-09:45	17	0	
09:45-09:50	22	0	
09:50-09:55	29	0	Talk 1 at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
09:55-10:00	30	0	
10:00-10:05	34	0	Boat Group No. 1 (x 3) peak numbers. All visitors at talk.
10:05-10:10	34	0	
10:10-10:15	34	0	Talk 1 ends at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
10:15-10:20	34	0	Informal guidance at Cell E – Guide 1 and Guide 2.
10:20-10:25	26	8	Boat Group No. 1 (x 3) leave Monastery (10:20-10:50).
10:25-10:30	26	0	
10:30-10:35	26	0	
10:35-10:40	19	16	Boat Group No. 2 (x 3) arrive (10:35-10:55).
10:40-10:45	27	5	
10:45-10:50	27	5	Informal guidance at St. Michael's – Guide 1; and at Cell E – Guide 2.
10:50-10:55	28	0	Seven visitors in upper garden, balance at Cells.
10:55-11:00	28	0	
11:00-11:05	28	0	Talk 2 at St. Michael's Church – Guide 2.
11:05-11:10	28	0	
11:10-11:15	29	0	Boat Group No. 3 (x 3) arrive (11:10-11:35).
11:15-11:20	39	0	Talk 2 ends at St. Michael's Church – Guide 2.
11:20-11:25	53	2	Boat Group No. 2 (x 3) leave Monastery (11:20-11:50).
11:25-11:30	48	7	Visitors at St. Michael's Church and Cell E.
11:30-11:35	51	3	Informal guidance at Cell E – Guide 1 and Guide 2.
11:35-11:40	49	2	Ten visitors at lunch on upper terrace, balance at Cells.
11:40-11:45	36	13	Talk 3 at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
11:45-11:50	35	1	
11:50-11:55	45	1	Boat Group No. 4 (x 3) arrive (11:50-12:10).
11:55-12:00	51	3	Talk 3 ends at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
12:00-12:05	60	1	Boat Group No. 3 (x 3) leave Monastery (12:00-12:30).
12:05-12:10	63	4	Informal guidance at Cell E – Guide 1 and Guide 2.
12:10-12:15	51	12	Peak numbers of c. 60 visitors on site – Boat Groups 3 and 4 (x 6).
12:15-12:20	49	2	Te visitors on upper terrace, balance at Monastery and Cell E.

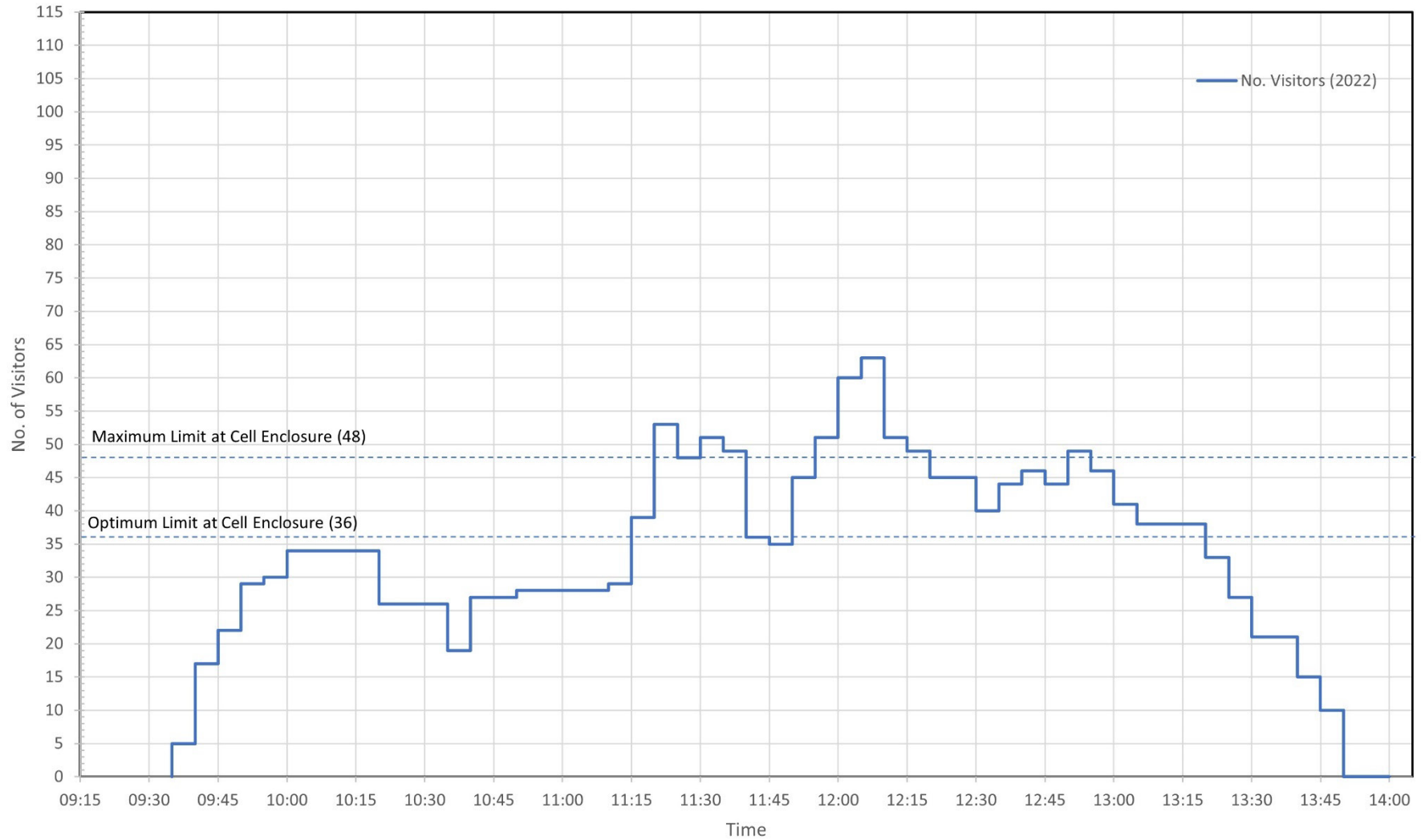
Time	No. of Visitors		Comments
	In ²	Out ³	
12:20-12:25	45	4	Talk 4 at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
12:25-12:30	45	0	Visitor in need of assistance at Cell E.
12:30-12:35	40	0	
12:35-12:40	44	3	Boat Group No. 5 (x 3) arrive (12:35-13:00).
12:40-12:45	46	7	Talk 4 ends at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
12:45-12:50	44	9	Boat Group No. 4 (x 3) leave Monastery (12:40-13:00).
12:50-12:55	49	7	Guide 2 provides assistance to visitor en route from Monastery to Pier.
12:55-13:00	46	5	
13:00-13:05	41	5	
13:05-13:10	38	3	Talk 5 at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
13:10-13:15	38	0	Boat Group No. 5 (x 3) only at Monastery (including boat guides x 2).
13:15-13:20	38	0	
13:20-13:25	33	5	Talk 5 ends at St. Michael's Church – Guide 1.
13:25-13:30	27	6	Boat Group No. 5 (x 3) leave Monastery (13:20-13:55).
13:30-13:35	21	6	
13:35-13:40	21	0	
13:40-13:45	15	6	
13:45-13:50	10	5	
13:50-13:55	0	10	
13:55-14:00	0	0	

1. Three guides on island on 28th August 2002. One guide provides orientation at bottom of South Steps. Two guides in Monastery Compound.

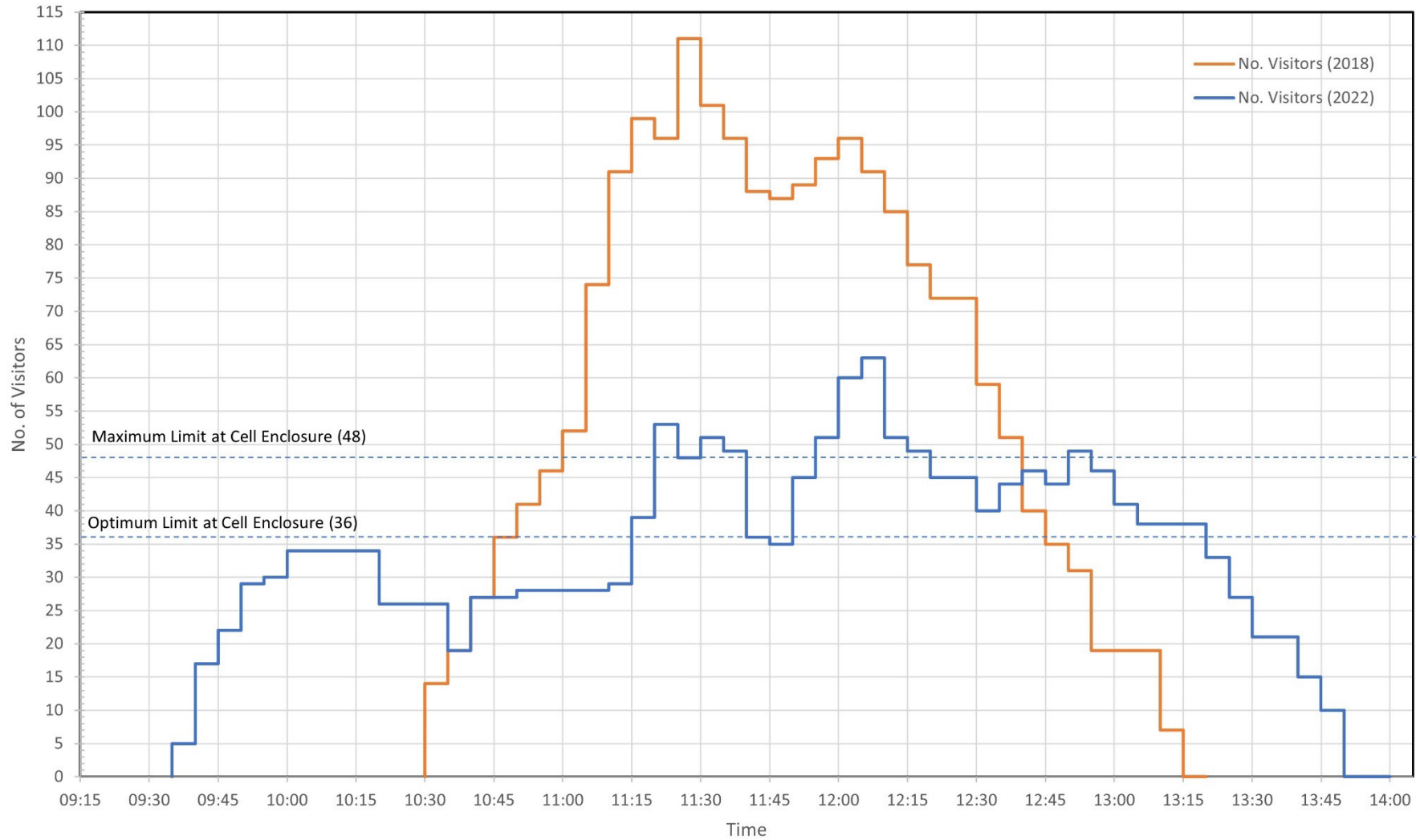
Table 5.5 Monastery Compound: Observed Occupancy.

Date	Opening Hours	Visitor Use (<i>in toto</i>)	Peak Usage	Exceedance of Maximum Limit	Exceedance of Maximum Limit as %	Exceedance of Optimum Limit	Exceedance of Optimum Limit as %
28th August 2022	09:00-16:00	4hr 30min	63 @ 12:05	45min	15%	2hr 00min	35%

Graph 1. Visitor Numbers at Monastery Compound (Sunday, 28th August 2022).



Graph 2. Visitor Numbers at Monastery Compound (Saturday, 29th September 2018 versus Sunday, 28th August 2022)



5.2 Observations at Landing, Blind Man's Cove

Detailed observations were made of boats arriving and departing the pier on Saturday 27th August 2022 (see Photographs 1 to 3).

Observations identify that the boats arrive between 09:00 and 12:00; and leave between 11:30 and 14:30 (see Table 5.1 and Table 5.3).

The short length of the pier and one set of steps at the landing accommodate one boat at any time. This has a significant effect upon the length of time taken for landings, departures, and length of time available to visitors on the island.

On the day a time-slot system of three boats at 30-minute intervals (arrivals and departures) applied. See Table 5.3 for arrival and departure time slots. Upon arrival, three boats at each time slot, two boats stood off to allow one boat to disembark. This activity occurred efficiently with average dwell time of two minutes for each boat the pier. It may be noted that many boats arrived early to the vicinity of the island (some up to 40 minutes early) and took the opportunity to take visitors around the island, before landing at the designated time slot. The majority of boats disembarked within minutes of the designated time, with boats arriving for the later time slots up to 10 minutes early at the pier. There were no general or observable delays to disembarkment.

The average dwell time of c. 6.5 minutes per boat on departure at the pier is notably longer than the dwell time of 2 minutes on arrival. There are a number of reasons for this. During the calm weather conditions on the day of observation, a number of boats took the opportunity to berth up for extended periods whilst waiting on visitors to return to the pier. Equally, it was noted that a number of boats, particularly in the later time slots, departed early (see Table 5.3). There were no general or observable delays to disembarkation.

The average residence time for all boats at Skellig was found to be 2.30 hours (2.15 minimum to 2.45 maximum), the majority of boats allowing the requisite recommended minimum residency time of 2.30 hours.

5.2.1 *Minimum Residency Time*

Based on discussions with OPW staff and guides who have long experience of welcoming visitors to the island, the customary recommended minimum residency time on the island for visitors is 2 hours 30 minutes. The reasoning for this is that (a) it is a long journey by sea and visitors need to steady themselves before they tackle a long climb, (b) weather conditions (wet/misty/foggy) will slow progress up/down steps and may disorientate visitors, (c) visitors need time to have a meaningful experience at the monument, (d) visitors need time to eat, and (e) should not have to dangerously rush through (up and down) the island in fear of being left behind by their boat.

The residency time of boats at the island ranged on the day of observation between 2 hours 15 minutes to 2 hours 45 minutes, the average residency being c. 2 hours 35 minutes. This suggests that current practice is meeting the minimum requirements of the OPW.

6.0 Residual Impacts

6.1 Current Practice

The arrival times (09:00-12:00) and departure times (c. 11:30-14:30) of boats have a direct relationship upon the arrival/departure of visitors to the South Steps and monastic site. It provides an explanation for the general absence of visitors at the monastic site between 14:30 and 16:00 each day. It also provides the appropriate explanation for the size of the visitor groups to arrive at intervals at the Monastery and the visitor numbers attending the formal talks at the monastic cells.

6.2 Residual Impacts

The current regime of maintenance activity and visitor management operated by the OPW has the potential to reduce the impact upon the monument of visitors from significant/profound to slight/moderate (see Section 4.0 above).

Observations on site suggest that there is the potential for visitor impact to increase to moderate/significant in regard to the visitor numbers attending the Monastery at any one time, particularly when the optimum limit of 36 visitors is exceeded.

6.3 Recommended Actions

To mitigate the potential impact of visitor activity upon the monument from potentially moderate/significant to negligible/slight it is recommended that the following actions are taken.

- (1) To utilise fully the Monastery open period of 09:00-16:00 each day by requesting the boat operators to stagger arrival/departure times more broadly between these hours. This would have the effect of reducing the numbers to arrive at the Monastery in line with the optimum limit of 36 visitors at the cell enclosure.
- (2) To ensure that a strict minimum 2 hours 30 minute visit period on the island continues to be provided to each visitor to the island.
- (3) That the services of three guides rather than two are provided at the Monastery enclosure. The additional guide to provide assistance to visitors between Christ's Saddle and the Monastery proper and to orientate visitors on arrival at the monks' upper garden.
- (4) That guides conduct regular monitoring and logging of (a) visitor numbers; (b) the number of visitors who arrive on the island relative to the number which reach the Monastery, and (c) visitor numbers at each talk.
- (5) That real time monitoring of visitor movement on the island is provided by video link to OPW HQ.
- (6) That the recommendations outlined above are reviewed at regular intervals to assess effectiveness and need for further intervention.

7.0 Report Preparation

This report was prepared with due reference to Environmental Impact Assessment criteria and practice, vis. *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR)* (EPA, 2022), and *Draft Advice Notes for Preparing Environmental Impact Statements* (EPA, 2015).

The author, Michael O'Sullivan MSc, LL.M, Dip EIA Mgt, HDipEnvEng, MIEMA, CEnv, has over 30 years' experience of impact assessment at sites of conservation value in Ireland, and has visited Skellig regularly since 1985. Similar reports were prepared in 2013 and 2019.

Figures and Photographs

Figures

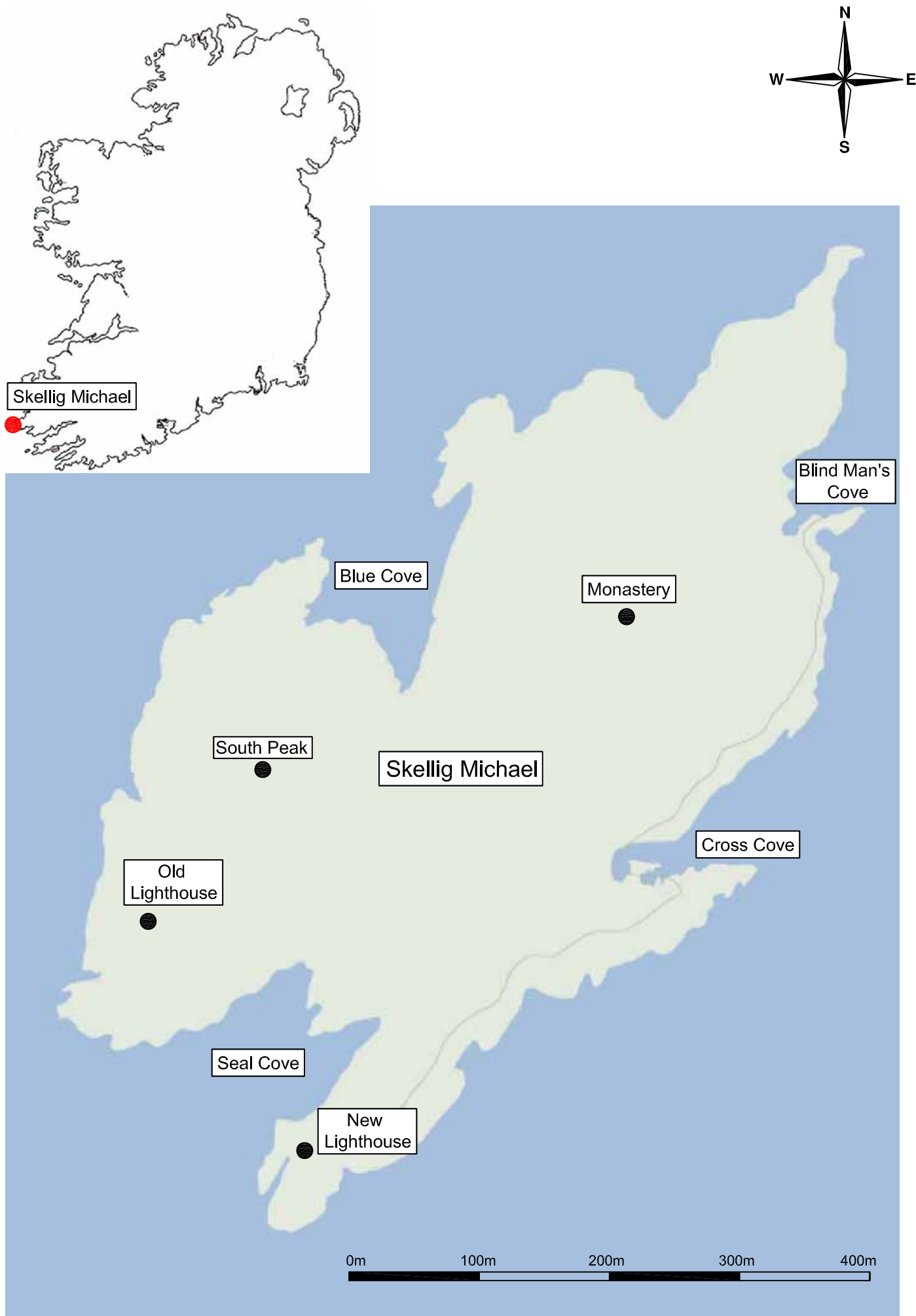


Figure 1 - Location Plan for Skellig Michael, with key features identified.



Figure 2 - The modern day access route, via lighthouse road and the south steps, to the Monastic enclosure.



Figure 3 - Key elements of the monastic enclosure. Access to the small oratory and the Lower Monks' Garden is currently not available to the public.



Figure 4 - Access route to Monastery through the Upper Monks' Garden.



Figure 5 - Core area of Monastery.

Photographs



Photograph 1. Visitors of Boat Group No. 3 arriving to the pier at 11:23 on Saturday, 27th August 2022.



Photograph 2. Visitors of Boat Group No. 2 awaiting departure from the pier at 12:15 on Saturday, 27th August 2022.



Photograph 3. Guide Talk No. 1 at St. Michael's Church at 09:53 on Sunday, 28th August 2022.



Photograph 4. Visitors on Upper Monks Garden at 10:41 on Sunday, 28th August 2022.



Photograph 5. Informal orientation given by guides at St. Michael's Church and Cell E at 10:51 on Sunday, 28th August 2022.



Photograph 6. Guide Talk No. 2 at St. Michael's Church at 11:02 10:51 on Sunday, 28th August 2022.



Photograph 7. Visitors on Upper Terrace at 11:29 on Sunday, 28th August 2022.



Photograph 8. Guide Talk No. 4 at St. Michael's Church at 12:26 on Sunday, 28th August 2022.
