

CAPITAL OF RAPID PROGRESS

The City of Tórshavn is investing big in extending the East Harbor while building a new golf course for the 2019 edition of the NatWest Island Games—soon even looking to attract investors to build a new international airport.

THINGS HAVE MOVED fast in the Faroese capital of Tórshavn since Mayor Heðin Mortensen took office just about a decade ago. Elected by an overwhelming majority of the popular vote for a third term in 2012, Mr. Mortensen has, in liaison with the City Council, worked out a city master plan that is set to become official policy in the near future.

A number of the investments identified in the master plan have already been voted through the Council. In the plan, a 25-year development program is outlined that envisions a spectacular future for what is one of the world's smallest capitals.

At Glyvursnes, an uninhabited area north of town, earthwork is scheduled to begin shortly to clear the way for a 18-hole golf course to be completed by 2017—ahead of the NatWest Island Games 2019, the hosting of which is expected to be awarded to the Faroe Islands later this summer (2014).

Mr. Mortensen has won the full backing of the Council to move forward with the 50 million DKK (6.7M EUR) golf course project, impressing the International Islands Games Association.



“This will be a lasting legacy for the whole of the Faroe Islands and their tourist industry,” IIGA Chairman Jørgen Pettersson said during the IIGA Committee’s visit to the Faroes last year, shortly before the Island Games kicked off in Bermuda. According to the IIGA, the 2015 edition of the games has been awarded to Jersey, while the Swedish island of Gotland is next, in 2017.

“Faroe Islands, one of the original members of the IIGA, very successfully organized the Games in 1989,” Mr. Pettersson noted.

The Island Games began in 1985 and the IIGA has developed into one of the world's largest multi-sport organizations. According to the organization, the number of competitors involved normally exceeds those in the Winter Olympics.

“The standard of sport within our Member Islands has developed in a way that has exceeded even the wildest expectations of 27 years ago,” Mr. Petters-

son added. “The NatWest Island Games has proven that international competition leads to improvements in more areas than sport.”

‘NOT THAT FRIGHTENING’: Rock excavated from the site of the golf course will be used for land reclamation in other development projects. As for a planned, very substantial extension of Tórshavn’s East Harbor, however, much more landfill will be required.

“We will need massive amounts of rock to fill this area,” Mr. Mortensen said of the harbor extension. “It will take many boat loads from the quarry at Glyvursnes.”

According to the Mayor, the 350M DKK (46.9M EUR) port development project is the result of a space squeeze at the East Harbor, and part of the city master plan.

“We receive some fifty cruise ship calls per year and according to our assessment that number could be at least doubled,” Mr. Mortensen said. “With better docking facilities, the Port could promote itself more confidently.”

The idea is also to make the city center more attractive for residents and tourists alike.

“We are looking to move the heavy road traffic associated with container shipping away from the city center. At the same time, the growing container shipping business requires more space, which they will get with this plan.”

The East Harbor development project includes two new container quays and large areas for storage and commercial



Mayor Heðin Mortensen; Partial view of Tórshavn (opposite bottom); Scene from National Day (Ólavsøka) celebrations (opposite top); Visualization of East Harbor extension (below).

buildings. It will see the current Faroe Ship base move to the adjacent extension. A new marina will also be part of the project.

“The Port of Tórshavn will be in a stronger position to meet future demand from merchant shipping, including business related to the offshore oil and gas industry,” Mr. Mortensen added.

Meanwhile, an even much larger project could be in the pipeline—a new international airport at Glyvursnes, with

an estimate price tag of 1.7 billion DKK (227.7M EUR). Not very much has been tabled in the Council as yet, but an area has been assigned, and the idea of seeking investors is being discussed as part of the future development of Tórshavn.

The total population of the Municipality is only 20,000 inhabitants with about two-thirds of the inhabitants living in Tórshavn itself.

Making reference to the Faroese Government’s recent decision to build

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Tórshavn is the main economic, political and cultural center of the Faroe Islands. Tórshavn has been the capital of the Faroe Islands since 850 A.D. and is the country’s largest population center.

Today, the Municipality has a population of around 20,000, more than 40 percent of the total population of the Faroe Islands.

The Municipality of Tórshavn encompasses the Tórshavn, Argir, Hoyvík, Hvítanes, Kaldbak, Kaldbakshotnur, Kirkjubøur, Velbastaður, Kollafjørður, Oyrareingir, Signabøur, Sund, Norðradalur, Syðradalur and the neighboring islands of Nólsoy, Hestur and Koltur.

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The Port of Tórshavn is the largest and busiest in the Faroe Islands, with harbors and terminals in Tórshavn, Sund and Kollafjørður.

A decision has been made by the port authority to substantially extend the East Harbor in Tórshavn

two underwater road tunnels at the cost of almost 2BN DKK (267.9M EUR), the Mayor commented:

“1.7 billion for an international airport with a 2.7 kilometer runway is not that frightening. Who knows, such an investment may even prove viable; and perhaps financing it won’t a problem.”

