

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL

1 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1 My name is Raymond Holbeach and I am a Regional Director for RPS Planning & Environment with full responsibility for management of the RPS Belfast Office. I have over 18 years of experience in public and private sector environmental and landscape consultancy works. I have a BSc in Environmental Science and a Masters of Landscape Architecture. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect of the Landscape Institute, a member of the Irish Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. The RPS Belfast office is a registered practice with the Landscape Institute.

2 INVOLVEMENT IN THE CORRIB ONSHORE PIPELINE EIS

- 2.1 I have acted as Landscape Architect responsible for the assessment of the potential landscape and visual impact of the proposed Corrib Onshore Pipeline on the landscape and visual resources along the pipeline route and at the site of the proposed Landfall Valve Installation (LVI) at Glengad.

3 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 3.1 This evidence is based on the landscape and visual impact assessment included in Chapter 10 and Appendix I of the EIS.

4. ASSESSMENT APPROACH

- 4.1 The existing landscape and visual context of the study area was established through a process of desktop study, site survey work and photographic surveys. The proposed development was then applied to the baseline conditions to allow the identification of potential impacts, prediction of their magnitude and assessment of their significance. Following prediction of all significant landscape and visual impacts, mitigation has been identified to avoid, reduce and remedy potential significant impacts.
- 4.2 A review has also taken place of the County Mayo Development Plan 2008-2014 and other relevant statutory documents to establish if there are any relevant landscape and visual related designations that may influence the assessment within the study area. Details of these designations are outlined in Chapter 10 and Appendix I of the EIS.

5 SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

5.1 Existing Environment

- 5.1.1 The study area is located on the north western coast of Mayo County. The study area for the purpose of the landscape and visual appraisal covers the area of landscape and visual setting that has potential views of the proposed development. Due to the open nature of the landscape within the study area and the coastal setting the study area covers an extensive area. The juxtaposition of rounded uplands and coast results in a dramatic and overall scenic landscape.

5.1.2 The predominant landscape in this region is a gently undulating rounded grassland landscape that is extremely open due to the lack of topographical features and tall vegetation. The landscape has a smooth appearance that offers extensive and panoramic views along the coast and bays. High rounded upland hills of Dooncarton and Garter Hill sweep down to the coast in dramatic fashion and provide an attractive background for views across bays and inlets. Sruwaddacon Bay extends inland from Broadhaven Bay to Glenamoy River with a rocky shoreline that changes in appearance to sandy estuary at several locations. Duneland and sandy beaches are located west of Rosspport. Field systems are defined by a combination of ditches and post and wire fences, as hedgerows are almost completely absent. On the eastern end of Sruwaddacon Bay large tracts of commercial forestry are found that appear incongruous in this smooth and natural landscape. Farmsteads and rural housing are scattered throughout this landscape and increase in frequency around Rosspport, Aghoos and Pollatomish.

5.1.3 The landscape in the study area has been called Coastal Undulating Open Moorland Landscape Character Area and assessed as part of this landscape and visual impact assessment as of "Very Attractive" Landscape Quality as it is of high value nationally and can be described as highly scenic. This landscape character area also has been established as having a high sensitivity to change.

5.1.4 A series of scenic routes have been identified for protection in the County Mayo Development Plan. The County Road (L1202) around Dooncarton from the R314 at Barnatra to a point approximately 2 km west of the R314 at Bellagelly South where it overlooks Broadhaven Bay and Sruwaddacon Bay is designated as a scenic route. The R314 from Barnatra to Glenamoy is also designated as a Scenic Route.

5.1.5 A series of protected views are also designated along the scenic routes. The protected views are identified as "Highly Scenic or Scenic Views" in the Development Plan on Map 10 of the plan. Policy EH-VP 1 states "It is the policy of the Council to ensure that development does not adversely interfere with views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest when viewed from the public realm". A Highly Scenic View is located on the County Road north of Dooncarton overlooking Broadhaven Bay and east towards Rosspport and Sruwaddacon Bay. Two Scenic Views are also identified from the same County Road one west of Pollatomish looking east across Sruwaddacon Bay towards Rosspport and one east of Pollatomish also looking east across Sruwaddacon Bay.

5.2 Potential Impacts during Operational Stage

Landscape Character Impacts

5.2.1 There is no requirement for permanent above ground facilities along the route, with the exception of the landfall valve installation and markers along the route. These marker posts will be placed at field boundaries, road crossings etc to indicate the route of the onshore pipeline.

5.2.2 The completed Landfall Valve Installation and pipeline will be located within the Coastal Undulating Open Moorland Landscape Character Area. The Landfall Valve Installation will become a new but non-prominent feature of this landscape. The careful siting of the installation at reduced ground levels results in low levels of

change in landscape resource. The landscape in which the facility is located is expansive, a fact that also helps to reduce the potential landscape impact of the new features, as with distance from the site of the landfall installation the influence is significantly reduced by the lack of any prominent features and it will be lost in the wider landscape. The disturbed ground at the LVI and along the pipeline route will be reinstated with the same vegetation that pertained before the development construction activities. The time span for vegetation to fully recover in disturbed areas will be short term in duration (one to seven years) and will vary depending on the vegetation type. Improved and semi-improved grasslands areas will generally re-establish to a level not discernible from adjacent grass areas within one year.

5.2.3 The pipeline route crosses an area of existing commercial forestry, therefore an unplanted wayleave strip will be a new feature in the landscape resulting from the construction phase. However, such strip clearings are a frequent feature of commercial forestry and despite this being a long-term feature no significant landscape impacts will result. Overall, following reinstatement and completion of construction activities there will be slight to no change in levels of landscape impact during the operational stage.

Visual Impacts

5.2.4 An assessment has taken place of all residential properties with a potential view of the proposed development during the operational stage. The predicted operational stage visual impacts for residential properties are illustrated in Chapter 10 of the EIS.

5.2.5 During the operational stage, the post construction reinstatement works will blend the disturbed areas into the surrounding landscape and no visible changes in visual amenity will occur from protected views, scenic routes or residential dwellings. The Landfall Valve Installation at Glengad will not be a prominent feature due to its location at a reduced level below existing ground level and will not be visible from the local road network. Stock proof fencing above ground and around the facility will be partially visible but similar to local field boundary fences (as illustrated in Photomontage Viewpoints 2 and 3 of Appendix I of the EIS) and such fencing will not result in any adverse visual impacts. Elevated views from Dooncarton will be available at a distance of approximately 1km looking down onto the Landfall Valve Installation from where the access laneway may appear distinctive from the adjacent vegetated areas however this view from Dooncarton is not readily available to members of the public and from this distance the LVI will be a minor feature in the wider expansive landscape. Following reinstatement and completion of construction activities there will be low levels of visual impact during the operational stage around the site of the Landfall Valve Installation. Along the route of the pipeline the reinstated fields and earth banks will result in no significant impact on the view for residential properties or from protected views or scenic routes (L1202).

5.3 Impacts during Construction Stage and Commissioning

5.3.1 Details of the proposed construction methods have already been provided in a separate Statement. The principal sources of landscape and visual impact during construction include:

- i) Temporary vegetation removal and reinstatement
- ii) Temporary ground disturbance –temporary stockpiles, material storage and site compounds and fencing

- iii) Temporary movement of construction related traffic in the landscape

Landscape Character Impacts

- 5.3.2 In summary, construction activity for the Landfall Valve Installation at the headland at Glengad, the pipeline and both crossings of the Bay are located within the Coastal Undulating Open Moorland Landscape Character Area and will result in high levels of change in landscape resource, albeit temporary in nature, due to the openness of this landscape.
- 5.3.3 This landscape character area has been identified as having a temporary high landscape sensitivity. Overall, the predicted magnitude of change in landscape resource is high. The predicted significance of landscape impact for Coastal Undulating Open Moorland Landscape Character Area will be Substantial Negative. The landscape impacts will however be temporary in nature.

Visual Impacts

- 5.3.4 The assessment of the existing visual environment and the impact of the proposed development and its various component parts on visual receptors has established that there will be potential visual impacts during construction that will affect protected views and views from the two scenic routes. The viewer sensitivity is high for both protected views. The temporary magnitude of visual impact is high. The predicted significance of construction stage visual impact for the “Highly Scenic View” and “Scenic View” from County Road L1202 is temporarily, Substantial Negative reducing to no significant impact during the operational phase. The visual impacts will however be temporary in nature.
- 5.3.5 An assessment has taken place of all residential properties with a potential view of the construction stage activities associated with the proposed development. The predicted construction stage visual impacts for residential properties are illustrated in Figure 10.3 Chapter 10 of the EIS. The viewer sensitivity is high for all these residents but the temporary magnitude of visual impact ranges from low to high. The predicted significance of visual impact for dwellings ranges from Substantial Negative to Moderate Negative as works progress along the pipeline route. The impacts will however be temporary in nature.

6.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

- 6.1 Mitigation measures have been recommended to ensure the physical and visual integration of the proposed development and associated features into the surrounding landscape. The implementation of the mitigation measures set out in Chapter 10 of the EIS will also ensure the restoration of existing vegetation cover, earth banks and existing landscape features.
- 6.2 Mitigation measures include:
- Although temporary in duration substantial visual impacts have been predicted for a number of properties with views of both the construction of the Landfall Valve Installation and the pipeline. Temporary screening to minimise visual intrusion from construction traffic and activities will be used at key locations where visual intrusion has been predicted. The use of green protective fencing will reduce the visibility of construction activities that take place in close proximity to dwellings.

- The existing access laneway to the Landfall Valve Installation is visually prominent when viewed from the elevated slopes of Dooncarton. This laneway will be allowed to revegetate naturally under the guidance of a landscape architect and the project ecologist.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposed Landfall Valve Installation and pipeline when completed will not adversely interfere with views and prospects protected in the County Development due to the Landfall Valve Installation being located at a reduced level and the pipeline being laid below ground. There will be no residual landscape impacts following reinstatement of excavated areas. No significant residual visual impacts are predicted for properties with a potential view across the pipeline or the Landfall Valve Installation following reinstatement. Overall the proposed development when completed will have no significant landscape or visual impacts.