

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 20 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 UK and Irish 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 in 2010 through a process of desktop study, site survey work and photographic surveys to update the baseline described in my 2009 statement. The proposed development was then applied to the updated 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, above those identified in my statement of 2009, which may influence the assessment within the study area. Details of all relevant designations are outlined in section 1.3.3 of Appendix I of the EIS.
- 4.3 A lighting design has been completed by Kevin Cleary of Kevin Cleary & Associates Ltd that appraises the lighting aspects of the proposals. I have liaised with Kevin Cleary with regards to the potential impact of lighting on visual amenity.

5 SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

5.1 Existing Environment

5.1.1 The study area is located on the north western coast of County Mayo. The study area for the purpose of the landscape and visual assessment 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 its coastal setting the study area covers an extensive area. The juxtaposition of rounded upland 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 As part of my landscape and visual impact assessment the landscape in the study area has been classified as Coastal Undulating Open Moorland Landscape Character Area and assessed 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 and their location is indicated on Map 10 of the 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.

5.1.5 A series of protected views are also identified along the scenic routes in the County Mayo Development Plan. The views are protected under Policy EH-VP 1 and the locations of "Highly Scenic or Scenic Views" are indicated on Map 10 of the Development Plan. 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 As stated in my 2009 statement there remains no requirement for permanent above ground facilities along the route, with the exception of the LVI and markers along the land based section of the route. These marker posts will be placed at field boundaries, road crossings etc to indicate the route of the onshore pipeline. No markers will be located within the tidal Sruwaddacon Bay.

Visual Impacts

5.2.2 An assessment of all residential properties as described in my 2009 statement has been updated in 2010 to establish all 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 Appendix I figures 1.2a – 1.2c of the EIS.

5.2.3 With regard to visual impacts during the operational stage the 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 only above ground operation stage components of the proposed development will be the 0.5m high marker posts along the land based route of the underground pipeline and the LVI at Glengad that has been carefully sited at reduced ground levels.

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 were outlined in my 2009 statement but are now updated to include:

- i) Temporary vegetation removal and reinstatement
- ii) Temporary ground disturbance –temporary stockpiles, material storage, land based pipeline excavations and site compound construction
- iii) Temporary movement of construction related traffic in the landscape and
- iv) Temporary tunnelling site compound at Aghoos (approximately 26 months) and temporary site compounds at Glengad.

Landscape Character Impacts

5.3.2 In summary, construction activity related to the LVI at the headland at Glengad, the land based sections of the pipeline and tunnelling for the pipeline under the Bay from Aghoos will all be 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 high landscape sensitivity. Overall, the predicted magnitude of change in landscape resource during the construction phase 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 to short term 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 a scenic route. 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 Substantial Negative reducing to no significant impact during the operational phase. The visual impacts will be temporary to short term in nature.
- 5.3.5 An assessment of all residential properties as described in my 2009 statement has been updated in 2010 to establish all properties with a potential view of the proposed development during the constructional stage. The predicted constructional stage visual impacts for residential properties are illustrated in Appendix I figures 1.3a – 1.3c of the EIS. The viewer sensitivity is high for all these residents while 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 land based section of the pipeline route and tunnelling takes place at Aghoos. The impacts will however be temporary to short term in nature.

Indirect, Cumulative and Interaction Impacts

- 5.3.6 Indirect landscape and visual impacts will result from the mitigation for the LVI at a reduced ground level that will result in excavation of soils and bedrock that has been mitigated by noise attenuation measures and a Traffic Management Plan. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has direct interaction with the ecology section of the EIS and liaison has taken place with the ecologist with regards to mitigation measures. The provision of noise barriers can create visual impacts while mitigating noise and liaison with the noise consultant has taken place to ensure that potential impacts have been assessed. When cumulative impacts are considered the combination of the proposal with the existing Gas Terminal, peat removal and deposition at the Srahmore Peat Deposition site will result in minor temporary/short term visual disturbance as result of construction activities.

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 section 1.5 of Appendix I 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 to short term in duration substantial visual impacts have been predicted for a number of properties with views of both the construction of the LVI and the pipeline. Temporary 3m high 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 colour of buildings and structures within the site compounds at

Glengad and Aghoos should be carefully selected to reduce visual impact. Lighting of temporary working areas and site compounds during periods of darkness will be minimised. The use of appropriate lighting and non-transparent fencing will reduce light spread.

To minimise lighting spill from the Aghoos tunnelling compound, the following measures will be taken:

- Carefully selected lanterns for light control and containment performance
- Lighting will be directed towards the interior and baffle plates will be positioned behind the lights along the site perimeter
- Surfaces within the compound will be of a dark colour, where possible
- Lighting will be switched off when not required
- Green lighting will be used on high structures, e.g. crane at the starting pit, to minimise potential impacts to birds.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposed LVI at Glengad and pipeline when completed will not adversely interfere with views and prospects protected in the County Mayo Development Plan due to the LVI 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 LVI following reinstatement. Regular visits by maintenance vehicles to the LVI will occur but such activities will only cause low levels of magnitude of change in visual resource and will be temporary in nature. Following decommissioning of the LVI and the subsequent reinstatement of the site no residual impacts will occur. Overall the proposed development when completed will have no significant landscape or visual impacts.