



Chapter 15 Landscape and Visual

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15. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

15.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) sets out the methodology used to undertake the assessment (Section 15.3), describes the existing environment (Section 15.4), examines the predicted impacts of the proposed development (Section 15.5), proposes mitigation and monitoring measures (Section 15.6 and Section 15.7 respectively), and identifies residual effects (Section 15.8). This chapter should be read in conjunction with the following Chapters, and their appendices, which present related impacts arising from the proposed development:

- Chapter 4: Description of the Proposed Development
- Chapter 6: Population
- Chapter 7: Human Health
- Chapter 8: Biodiversity
- Chapter 16: Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 17: Material Assets and Land: Agricultural properties
- Chapter 18: Material Assets and Land: Non-Agricultural properties

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared by CSR was informed by a desktop study and a survey of the site and receiving environment in November 2025. The assessment is in accordance with the methodology prescribed in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition, 2013 (GLVIA) published by the UK Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, as well as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) standards and guidelines.

The LVIA is supported by the documents contained in Volume 3 and Volume 4 of this EIAR as outlined below.

Volume 3 of this EIAR:

- WCGW-ROD-HGN-S1_ML-DR-CH-200501 to 200546 (Proposed Greenway Layout).

Volume 4 of this EIAR:

- Photomontages.

15.1.1 Statement of Authority

This LVIA was carried out by CSR's Jamie Ball, BA LA, MILI. Having graduated in 1998 from the University of Gloucestershire with a BA Hons in Landscape Architecture, Jamie has gained over ten years' experience specifically in LVIA. He has worked on the Landscape and Visual assessment for a range of developments throughout Ireland, including multiple infrastructural and recreation/tourism projects.

Oversight of the chapter was provided by Declan O' Leary, B. Agr Sc. Land. Hort., Dip LA, CMLI, MILI, Managing Director of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds. Declan is CSR's Principal Landscape Architect, fronting the Landscape Architecture team and heading all Landscape Planning & Architecture aspects, with a particular focus on Landscape & Visual Assessment. He has 30 years' experience in impact assessment of a wide range of project types, including recreation / tourism developments.

15.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

15.2.1 Planning Policy

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (hereafter referred to as the Development Plan) contains a number of policies and objectives relating to landscape and visual amenity, including designations and scenic routes. It also includes reference to the Clare Landscape Character Assessment which was undertaken in 2003.

Landscape

Co. Clare's landscapes are categorised into areas which have similar characteristics, for which similar planning policies are applicable. 'Chapter 14 Landscape' of the Development Plan notes that the approach builds on the Landscape Character Assessment of County Clare. The 'Living Landscapes' approach sets out three main categories, recognising that the different parts of the County have different potential. The Development Plan also notes that the landscapes are not constant but seen as alive and continually changing. The three categories are listed below:

- **Settled Landscape** – areas where people live and work.
- **Working Landscapes** – intensively settled and developed areas within settled Landscapes or areas with a unique natural resource.
- **Heritage Landscapes** – areas where natural and cultural heritage are given priority and where development is not precluded but happened more slowly and carefully.

The landscape categories listed above are illustrated in Plate 15-1, below.

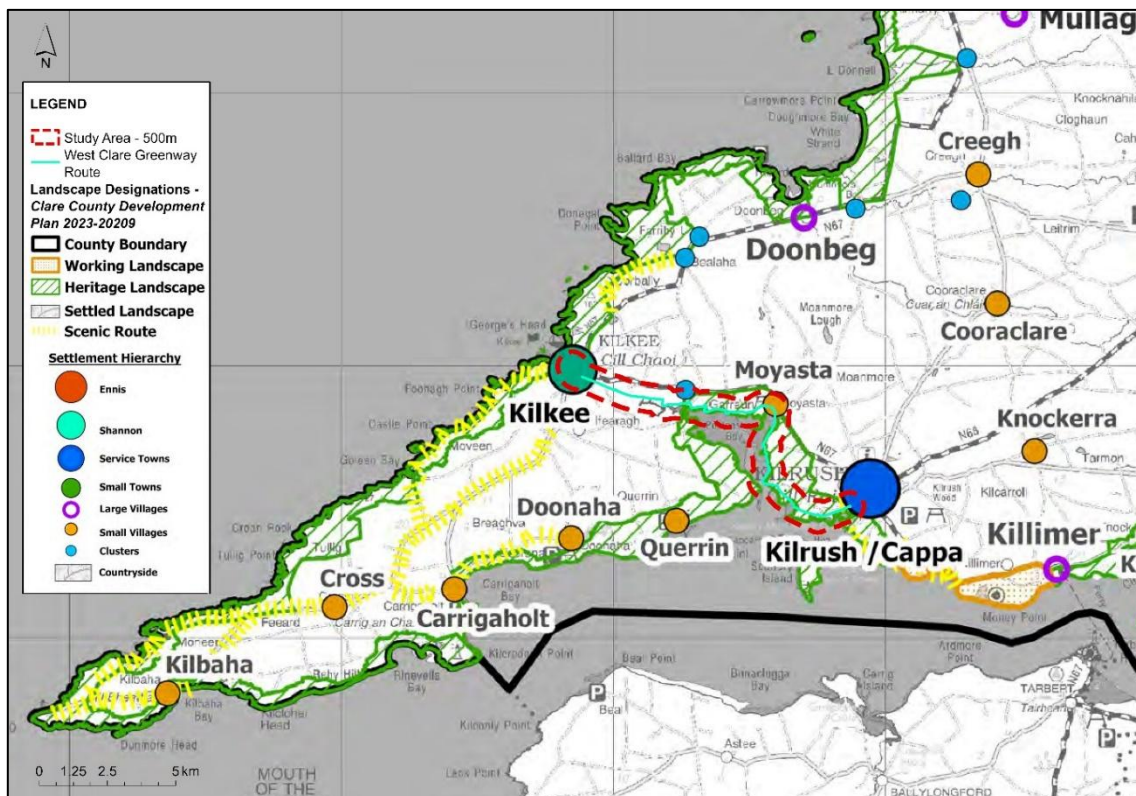


Plate 15-1 Extract of Map C Landscape Designations Vol 2 of the CDP 2023-2029 (Source: Clare County Council 2023)

The figure above shows that the study area for the proposed development includes areas of Heritage Landscape by Poulnasherry Bay, Moyasta and Kilrush, as well as Settled Landscape elsewhere in the study area.

Policies associated with Settled Landscapes are as follows:

Policy CDP14.2 Settled Landscapes:

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

'To permit development in areas designated as 'settled landscapes' to sustain and enhance quality of life and residential amenity and promote economic activity subject to:

I. Conformity with all other relevant provisions of the Plan and the availability and protection of resources;

II. Selection of appropriate sites in the first instance within this landscape, together with consideration of the details of siting and design which are directed towards minimising visual impacts;

III. Regard being had to the need to avoid intrusion on scenic routes and on ridges or shorelines. Developments in these areas will be required to demonstrate:-

a) That the site has been selected to avoid visual prominence

b) That the site layouts avail of existing topography and vegetation to reduce visibility from scenic routes, walking trails, water bodies, public amenities and roads.

c) That design of buildings and structures reduces visual impact through careful choice of forms, finishes and colours, and that any site works seek to reduce visual impact.'

Heritage Landscapes occur in four main areas of the County, with part of the study area from Kilrush to Poulnasherry Bay characterised as Heritage Landscape 3, Fergus/Shannon Estuary.

The Development Plan notes that these landscapes are envisioned as the most valued parts of the County, and they are important in sustaining natural and cultural heritage. However, the plan does note that these landscapes need to evolve to accommodate certain interventions – the renewal of existing houses, farms, roads, power lines and new facilities. The Development Plan also notes that uses within these landscapes are expected to include small scale employment, tourism, cultural and social services.

Policy CDP14.5 Heritage Landscapes:

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

'To require that all proposed developments in Heritage Landscapes demonstrate that every effort has been made to reduce visual impact. This must be demonstrated for all aspects of the proposal - from site selection through to details of siting and design. All other relevant provisions of the Development Plan and the RSES must be complied with. All proposed developments in these areas will be required to demonstrate;

I. That sites have been selected to avoid visual prominence

II. That site layouts avail of existing topography and vegetation to minimise visibility from scenic routes, walking trails, public amenities and roads;

III. That design for buildings and structures minimises height and visual contrast through careful choice of forms, finishes and colour and that any site works seek to reduce the visual impact of the development.'

Views and Prospects

Section 14.5 of the Development Plan contains a number of objectives in relation to scenic routes. Mapping of the county's scenic routes are included in Volume 2 and listed in Appendix 5 of the Development Plan and also mapped on the Landscape Designations map, Plate 15-1, above. There is a single short scenic route within the study area located on the western end of Kilrush town. However, where this scenic route does enter the study area, it is within an urban or suburban context.

Landscape Character Assessment of County Clare

Just as the landscape of County Clare continues to evolve, the landscape designations in the Development Plan have also evolved over the years. The Development Plan refers to the Landscape Character Assessment of Co. Clare (2004), hereafter referred to as the Assessment, having identified 26 No. Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which categorise the landscape into areas of uplands, lowlands and coastal areas. The Assessment also identified 21 No. Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and contains a description of each area and identifies characteristics, pressures and opportunities.

The County is divided into those 21 No. LCAs, with those within the southwest of the county illustrated on Plate 15-2, below. The vast majority of the study area lies within 'LCA 21, Loop Head,' with the eastern portion in the vicinity of Kilrush being in 'LCA 18, Shannon Estuary Farmland,' with the characteristics of these two LCAs described below.

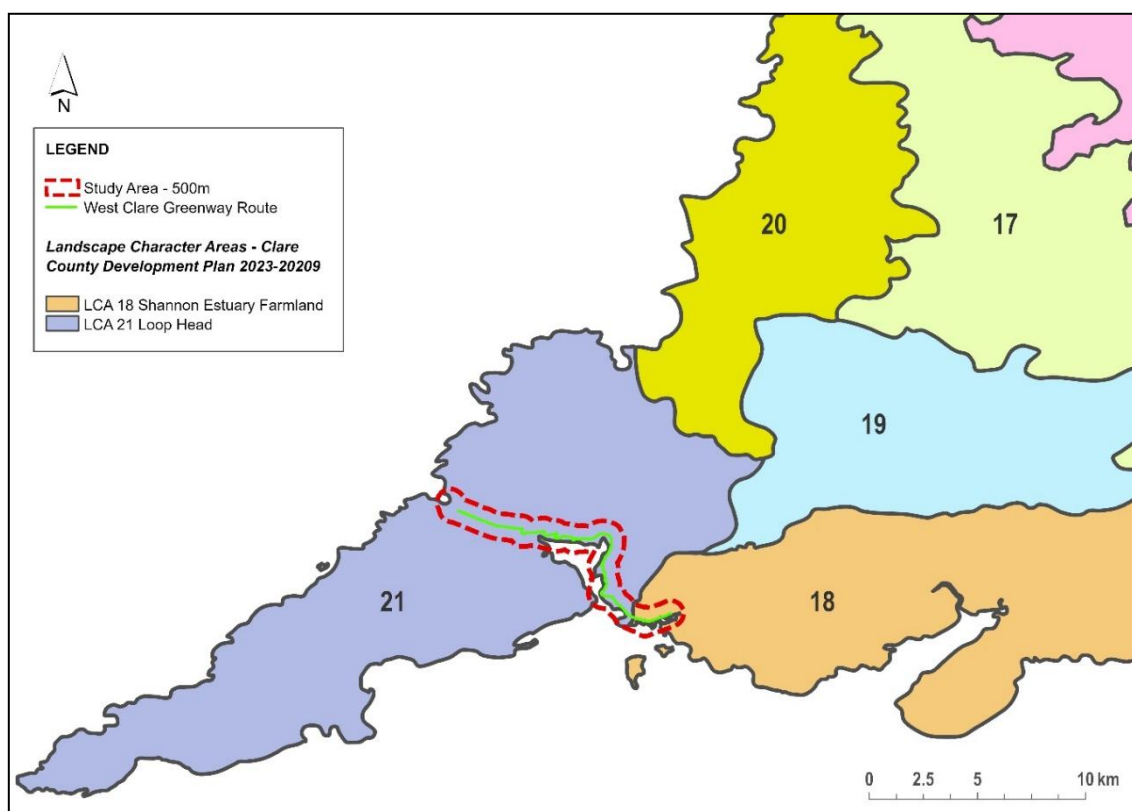


Plate 15-2 County Clare Landscape Character Areas (Source: Clare County Council 2023)

LCA 18 Shannon Estuary Farmland

This LCA stretches from Kilrush town to the east including the estuarine landscape along the Shannon estuary as far as Ballynacally in the east. The LCA includes the villages of Labasheeda and Kildysart. A small proportion of the study area (i.e. that in immediate vicinity to Kilrush) lies within this LCA.

The relevant characteristics to this area include:

- *'Views are afforded across the Shannon Estuary and across to Limerick from elevated areas and on the estuary shores.*
- *Scattery Island is an important historical and focal feature.*
- *The flat coastal fringe sloping down towards the sea.*
- *Vandaleur estate plantations, gardens and restored woodland recreation area.'*

Other descriptions relevant to the Kilrush area include the Scattery Island monastery which is recognised as a prominent landscape feature, and the open views across the estuary. The Landscape Character Assessment notes that the Kilrush area has a high proportion of holiday home development.

LCA 21 Loop Head

The vast majority of the study area lies within this LCA, which extends from just west of Kilrush town to the tip of Loop Head. It encompasses Poulnasherry Bay and the coastline west to Carrigaholt and Loop Head, as well as the land on the northwestern coastline, including the settlements of Kilkee and Doonbeg. The topography of the peninsula is generally flat with a number of long low ridges and some hills. Poulnasherry Bay is noted as a historically productive area for oysters and the Assessment notes the remains of fish traps in the bay. Other features relevant to the study area include the open nature of the landscape and extensive views, with relatively little tourism development, apart from Kilkee.

The key characteristics are described as:

- *'Flat peninsular farmland – very distinctive ladder fields, estuaries, salt marsh and mudflats, sand and boulder coves, shelving, coastal rocks, vertical cliffs.*
- *Coast becomes increasingly dramatic towards Loop Head with high cliffs, arches, stacks and rocky inlets. More sheltered bays are typically on the southern side of the peninsula.*
- *The presence of the sea is always apparent and the character of the land reflects the mood of the weather and the storminess of the seas.*
- *The area is remote and feels remote and detached, with peaceful rural unspoilt qualities*
- *Settlement is more concentrated along the southern peninsula, increasing again towards Kilkee.'*

Forces for Change identified by the Landscape Character Assessment, which are relevant to the study area, include:

- *Insensitive tourism development.*
- *Large scale development.*
- *Agricultural change and removal of field boundaries.*
- *Vertical development such as wind farms and masts.*
- *Dereliction of traditional cottages – particularly in the Doonbeg vicinity.*
- *Depopulation.*
- *Wind farm and forestry applications close to Srag Bog.*
- *Increasing pressure from new development, for example residential and tourism development at White Strand Killard.*

However, the Landscape Character Assessment makes no reference to the disused railway line in this area, nor its associated infrastructure, which has historical and cultural heritage

relevance. Rather, these are covered below, in the West Clare Municipal District Settlement Plan.

West Clare Municipal District Settlement Plan

The West Clare Municipal District Settlement Plan is contained within Volume 3d of the Development Plan.

According to the Settlement Plan, of the three aforementioned settlements in the LVIA, Kilrush is designated as a 'service town'; Kilkee as a 'small town' and Moyasta as a 'small village.' However, only those aspects of the plan that are of potential relevance to landscape or visual context, character, sensitivity, susceptibility and/or effects will be addressed here.

Service Towns

In Section 1 (Pg 19) of the Settlement Plan, it references Kilrush in detail. Those sections of Section 1 that are of relevance to the Study Area, as well as potential relevance to landscape & visual receptors, are as follows.

Location & Context:

"Kilrush is identified as a Service Town in the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy for the Southern Region due to its role as an important service centre and driver of growth in West Clare. Situated on the Wild Atlantic Way and on the Shannon Estuary, Kilrush is set in a rich agricultural hinterland within a dramatic coastal landscape. It owes its historic fabric and architectural character to its association with the Vandeleur family and its function as a seaport and market town.

"However, the role of the town as a seaport declined due to the tidal nature of Kilrush creek and the development of the pier at Cappa [...] Today Kilrush is a bustling market town. The town serves as the main retail, administrative and service centre to both local residents and the wider community in West Clare.

"It is well served by national (N67 and N68), regional (R483 and R473) and local routes which link the town to the Key Town of Ennis, the Loop Head Peninsula, the Shannon Estuary, the rest of County Clare and the Mid-West region [...] The importance of the estuary to the local economy of Kilrush and its broader hinterland cannot be under-estimated. It is also a natural resource of rich biodiversity and educational value which must be protected."

Tourism:

"...Kilrush marina is a significant natural tourism and leisure resource located within walking distance of a vibrant town centre. The opportunity for an integrated approach to the comprehensive development of the marina area offers great potential for the town. In order to ensure effective environmental management and the creation of a vibrant Kilrush harbour and marina area, specific objectives are set out below.

"...The development of the West Clare Railway Greenway along the line of the old West Clare Railway as a proposed recreational route, in particular between Kilrush and Kilkee, is supported in this plan. The benefit of linking Kilrush and Kilkee will include the enhancement of existing linkages between the towns in terms of tourist facilities and the expansion of the tourism base as well as the creation of green infrastructure linkages."

Transport, Active Travel and Connectivity:

"Enhancement of and provision for green infrastructure such as walking and cycling routes would promote active recreation and sustainable travel in the town and its environs. There is an opportunity to develop walks, cycle and recreational routes from the town..."

General Objectives:

“To enhance the comprehensive green infrastructure network for Kilrush town in consultation with the key stakeholders and the public. To identify, protect and enhance existing green infrastructure resources and plan for future green infrastructure provision. This could include the development of a park within the town which would include a playground, age-friendly and ability-friendly amenities etc. to promote multifunctional use.

“To prioritise the development of the West Clare Railway Greenway and facilitate an initial Kilrush to Kilkee pilot project in line with Strategic Priority 15 ‘Prioritise the development of the West Clare Rail Greenway’ of the County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030.

“To support the development of appropriate micro enterprises along the West Clare Railway Greenway route, subject to proper planning and sustainable development and screening for appropriate assessment.”

Small Towns:

In Section 2 (Pg 44) of the Settlement Plan, it references Kilkee in detail. Those sections of Section 2 that are of relevance to the Study Area, as well as potential relevance to landscape & visual factors, are as follows.

Location & Context:

“Kilkee is identified in the Clare settlement hierarchy as a Small Town and its role as an important service centre and tourism resort is recognised. The town is a popular, well-established Victorian seaside resort situated on the picturesque Moore Bay on the Wild Atlantic Way. The original core of the settlement is home to some fine Victorian buildings dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries.

“The town also has a concentration of pubs, restaurants, hotels and visitor accommodation, take-away outlets, shops, and a number of tourism related retail outlets. There are a number of unused buildings throughout the town centre which provide opportunity for appropriate redevelopment which would assist to further enhance the character of the town.

“...There was significant growth in Kilkee in the 1990s and 2000s, primarily tourism related developments in the form of holiday homes, apartments, hotels and serviced accommodation and tourism related leisure facilities. There is a large influx of tourists during the summer season, when the population of the town increases from around 1,000 to 15,000, making Kilkee one of the country's largest seaside holiday resorts [...] Furthermore, the reliance on the tourism industry, which at present is seasonal in nature, has resulted in the town being seasonally quiet, which can have a negative impact on the character of the area.

“The seasonal change in population also places a considerable strain on the town's infrastructure and, as with most seaside resorts, the town experiences extremes of seasonality. It is therefore important to ensure that future development is balanced and contributes to a thriving community which can support a range of services which are viable on a year-round basis.”

General Objectives:

“To make provision for the sustainable growth of Kilkee by providing for a permanent resident population through the allocation of land within the town for the appropriate provision of permanent private, social, and affordable housing, employment, services and recreational / open space.

“To support the development of the West Clare Railway Greenway.”

Tourism:

“In terms of sports and activities, Kilkee is a ‘Gateway to the Ocean’, a best in practice example of access for all to water-based activities such as those on Kilkee beach and in the wider bay

area. *The Atlantic Coast EuroVelo cycle route runs the total length of the Clare coastline including Kilkee and the Loop Head peninsula. Among its many attractions, the beach, cliff walks, and the natural beauty of the town is one of the most attractive aspects of Kilkee.*

Small Villages

In Section 4 (Pg 243) of the Settlement Plan, it references Moyasta. Those sections of Section 4 that are of relevance to the Study Area, as well as potential relevance to landscape & visual, are as follows.

Location & Context:

“Moyasta is situated on the N67, northeast of Poulnasherry Bay and centred on the old railway station. The village consists of a school, public house and contains a small number of dwelling houses. Bus Eireann runs daily bus services to Ennis, Kilrush and Kilkee. There is an existing public footpath from the national school to the centre of the village, which also passes over the old West Clare Railway line.

“Moyasta adjoins the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (pSPA). Future development must ensure that there are no adverse effects on the site integrity of the SAC and SPA, or the integrity of any other European site as a result of the proposed development.”

General Objectives:

“To make provision for the continued development of Moyasta train station and the West Clare Railway as an important tourism asset for the village and larger west Clare area, including the development of the West Clare Railway Greenway.”

“To support the provision of infrastructure to allow for future growth of the village.”

Tourism:

“Moyasta is well positioned on the N67 National Road from Kilrush to Kilkee on the Wild Atlantic Way and the Shannon Estuary Way driving routes. The surrounding landscape is relatively flat, with good views of Poulnasherry Bay on the approach to the village from the southeast and from within the village. In addition to compliance with the policies and objectives set out in Volume 1 of this Plan, any development proposals on areas identified for tourism shall consider the following:

“TOU1, TOU2 and TOU3 West Clare Railway and Station

“The West Clare Railway is a major part of west Clare's history and although much of the structure is dismantled, Moyasta Junction has been developed as a tourist facility. It includes the fully restored ‘Slieve Callan’ steam engine. It is a specific objective of the Plan to facilitate the development of the West Clare Railway as an important tourism and recreational product for the area. The railway lands are located both to the west and east of the N67, with lands to the west located adjacent to a designated SAC. It is essential to achieve a balance between the development of the station and the implications for traffic safety and natural heritage.

“These lands have been zoned for tourism purposes solely to accommodate development associated with the West Clare Railway line and proposals for other forms of tourism development on these lands will not, generally, be acceptable to the Planning Authority. Development on the tourism lands to the west of the N67 must not encroach on the adjacent SAC. Future development proposals on this site must also be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment.”

Summary of Planning Policy and Objectives

There are a number of points raised in the current development plan which have implications for identifying landscape constraints on the proposed development. These include:

- The Development Plan has policies which are supportive of new off-road walking and cycling trails, and in particular of the development of the West Clare Railway Greenway.
- The Development Plan is also supportive of the further development and enhancement of Loop Head and the Kilkee area as a tourist destination, referring to cycling and niche tourism.
- A single short scenic route within the study area, albeit within an urban/suburban context of Kilrush.
- The Study Area includes areas of Settled Landscape, as well as an extensive area of Heritage Landscape to the east along Poulmasherry Bay, Moyasta and Kilrush.
- The Landscape Character Assessment notes the open and expansive nature of the landscape Character in the vicinity of Kilkee and Loop Head, the remote character of parts of the study area, and the views to the sea.
- In relation to Kilrush, the general objectives of the Settlement Plan include prioritising the development of the West Clare Railway Greenway and support the development of appropriate micro enterprises along the West Clare Railway Greenway route.
- In relation to Kilkee, the general objectives of the Settlement Plan include supporting the development of the West Clare Railway Greenway.
- In relation to Moyasta, the general objectives of the Settlement Plan include for “the continued development of Moyasta train station and the West Clare Railway as an important tourism asset for the village and larger west Clare area, including the development of the West Clare Railway Greenway.”

15.3 Methodology

15.3.1 Study Area

According to Section 5.2 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition 2013): *“The study area should include the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it, which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner.”*

The study area extents for this LVIA derives from the nature of both the site and the proposed development, which generally following the old West Clare Railway corridor between the settlements of Kilrush and Kilkee. It also encompasses the wider surrounding landscape, including the existing N67 to the north, and the coastline along the Shannon Estuary to the south, as shown below in Plate 15-3.

Given the nature and location of the proposed development, there is a notably low capacity for potential significant impacts to arise beyond 500m from the site. An emphasis will be placed on receptors within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development, as these are more likely to have the capacity to experience significant visual effects.

15.3.2 Survey methodology

A site survey of the proposed development and its surrounding was undertaken in November 2025 to gain an understanding of the existing baseline to help inform this LVIA. These findings are described in section 15.4 Receiving Environments of this LVIA.

For the purpose of this assessment, the site survey and later assessment of the proposed development have been undertaken following the proposed route in a west-to-east direction, starting off from Kilkee and ending at Kilrush.



Plate 15-3 Study Area for LVIA

15.3.3 Assessment Methodology

Ireland is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention (ELC). The ELC defines landscape as ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’. This definition is important in that it expands beyond the idea that landscape is only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity. It encourages a focus on landscape as a resource in its own right - a shared resource providing a complex range of cultural, environmental, and economic benefits to individuals and society.

It is also important to note that this definition of landscape applies not only to all types of rural landscape, marine and coastal landscapes (seascapes) but also to the landscape of villages, towns and cities (Section 2.5, LI, IEMA, 2013).

Guidelines

The *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 (abbreviated to GLVIA 2013)* notes that as a cultural resource, the landscape functions as the setting for our day-to-day lives, also providing opportunities for recreational and aesthetic enjoyment and inspiration. It contributes to the sense of place experienced by individuals and communities and provides a link to the past as a record of historic socio-economic and environmental conditions. As an environmental resource, the landscape provides habitat for fauna and flora. It receives, stores, conveys, and cleans water, and vegetation in the landscape stores carbon and produces oxygen. As an economic resource, the landscape provides the raw materials and space for the production of food, materials (e.g. timber, aggregates) and energy (e.g. carbon-based fuels, wind, solar), living space and for recreation and tourism activities.

The GLVIA (2013) notes that landscape is not unchanging. Many different pressures have progressively altered familiar landscapes over time and will continue to do so in the future, creating new landscapes. For example, within the receiving environment, the environs of the

proposed development have altered over the last thousand years, from wilderness to agriculture and settlement or townscape.

Many of the drivers for change arise from the requirement for development to meet the needs of a growing population and economy. The concept of sustainable development recognises that change must and will occur to meet the needs of the present, but that it should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This involves finding an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental forces and values.

The reversibility of change is also described as an important consideration. If change must occur to meet a current need, can it be reversed to return the resource (in this case, the landscape) to its previous state to allow for development or management for future needs.

Climate change is one of the major factors likely to bring about future change in the landscape, and it is accepted to be the most serious long-term threat to the natural environment, as well as economic activity (particularly primary production) and society. The need for climate change mitigation and adaptation, which includes the management of water and more extreme weather and rainfall patterns, is part of this.

Key Guidance Documents

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity.

The methodology for assessment of the landscape and visual effects is informed by the following key guidance documents, namely:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA 2013).
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements. (EPA, 2022).
- TII (November 2024) *Environment Impact Assessment of Rural Cycleways (Offline & Greenway) – A Practical Guide PE-ENV-01109*.
- TII (December 2020) *Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of Specified Infrastructure Projects - Overarching Technical Document. PE -ENV-01101*.
- TII (December 2020) *Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of Proposed National Roads – Standard PE-ENV-01102*.

The GLVIA 2013 is authored by the Landscape Institute in the UK and the IEMA, which contains a network of members in UK and Ireland and internationally. The guidance was prepared within the parameters of relevant EU directives at the time and is updated, where necessary, by Landscape Institute bulletins online. The GLVIA 2013 is used internationally and is the industry standard for LVIA in Ireland.

The EPA guidance (2022) refers to the use of topic specific guidance and specifically references the GLVIA 2013 in relation to professional judgement. It recognises (at para 3.72) that:

“Some uncertainty is unavoidable in EIA, especially about matters that involve an element of judgement, such as assigning a level of significance to an effect. Such judgements should be

explicit and substantiated rather than presented as objective fact. This is best done using agreed referable approaches, e.g. the Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impacts Assessment provide guidance on what constitutes a severe visual effect”.

This assessment has also been carried out in accordance with the methodology and guidance set out in TII Publications as listed above. The methodology proposed for LVIA in the TII Guidelines has regard to and references GLVIA 2013 insofar as they are appropriate, proportional, and relevant to the delivery of Specified Infrastructure Projects in Ireland, including greenways.

Policy Documents

Other documents referred to include the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. References are also made to the ‘Landscape and Landscape Assessment –Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ document, published in 2000 by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Landscape and Visual Process

The GLVIA 2013 outlines the assessment process, which combines judgements on the sensitivity of the resource, and the magnitude of the change as a result of the proposed development. These are then combined to reach an assessment of the significance of the effect.

Another key distinction to make is that in the GLVIA methodology, a distinction is made between landscape effects and the visual effects of a proposed development.

‘Landscape’ results from the interplay between the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations of these elements and their spatial distribution create distinctive character of landscape in different places. ‘Landscape character assessment’ is the method used in LVIA to describe landscape, and by which to understand the potential effects of a development on the landscape as ‘a resource’. Character is not just about the physical elements and features that make up a landscape, but also embraces the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of landscape that make a place distinctive.

Views and ‘visual amenity’ refer to the interrelationship between people and the landscape. The GLVIA 2013 prescribes that effects on views and visual amenity should be assessed separately from landscape, although the two topics are inherently linked. Visual assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on the area’s visual amenity.

Establishment of Baseline

The process set out in the GLVIA 2013 and in the EPA (2022) involves the preparation of the baseline or receiving environment characteristics. This includes two stages, which are a desk-based study and a site visit/field study. These allow the assessor to establish the existing receiving environment and key landscape and visual characteristics and their sensitivities.

The desk-based study includes:

- Review of preliminary proposals and identification of preliminary study area
- Review of current County Development Plan within the study area, to identify relevant national and local designations and polices. This may include designations such as scenic routes, protected views and other landscape designations including any Landscape Character Assessments.
- Other information that may be consulted include aerial imagery, OSI Discovery series mapping, historic (6-inch and 25 inch) mapping and CORINE Landcover Maps (2018).

A site visit was then carried out, in November 2025, to review and/or confirm the findings of the desk-based study and provide a more detailed description of the landscape and visual character of the study area. Based on both the desk study and site visit, the assessor identifies landscape and visual receptors and their relative sensitivity.

Assessment of Effects:

Once the baseline is established, and the proposed development drawings and descriptions reviewed, the assessment process commences.

Use of 'Impact and 'Effect

Section 1.16 of the GLVIA (referring to the EIA Directive), advises that the terms 'impact' and 'effect' should be clearly distinguished and consistently used in the preparation of an LVIA.

'*Impact*' is defined as the action being taken. In the case of the proposed development, the impact would include the construction of the proposed buildings and associated boundaries and external areas, among other features.

'*Effect*' is defined as the change or changes resulting from those actions, e.g. a change in landscape character, or changes to the composition, character and quality of views in the receiving environment. This report focusses on these effects.

Methodology for Landscape Assessment

In Section 15.5 of this Chapter, the landscape effects of the proposed development are assessed. The nature and scale of changes to the landscape elements and characteristics are identified, and the consequential effect on landscape character and value are discussed. Trends of change in the landscape are taken into account. The assessment of the significance of the effects takes account of the sensitivity of the landscape resource and the magnitude of change to the landscape, which resulted from the proposed development.

Definitions and descriptions of sensitivity, magnitude of change and quality and longevity of effects are derived from the GLVIA 2013. The GLVIA 2013 does not set out specific definitions of descriptions used but contains widely used principles and case studies / examples that are intended to inform a professional's methodology, supported by their experience and judgements in relation to landscape and landscape change. These descriptions expand and complement the EPA guidelines as intended, in relation to topic-specific guidance.

Sensitivity of the Landscape

Sensitivity is a combination of landscape value as well as the susceptibility of the landscape to change:

- Landscape values can be identified by the presence of landscape designations or policies, which indicate particular values, either on a national or local level, in addition to a number of other criteria that are used to assess the value of a landscape.
- Landscape susceptibility is defined in the GLVIA as, "*the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline scenario and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.*" Susceptibility is a function of its land use, landscape patterns and scale, visual enclosure and distribution of visual receptors, scope for mitigation, and the value placed on the landscape. Susceptibility also relates to the type of development; a landscape may be highly susceptible to certain types of development but have a low susceptibility to other types of development.

With regard to landscape effects, a proposed development has the potential to improve the environment as well as damage it. In certain situations, there might be policy encouraging a type of change in the landscape, and a particular development may achieve this.

Landscape Sensitivity ranges from Low to Very High as outlined in Table 15-1, below.

Table 15-1 Categories of Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape exhibits a very strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics that combine to give an experience of unity, richness and harmony. The character of the landscape is such that its capacity for accommodating change in the form of development is very low. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national or international value and the principal management objective for the area is protection of the existing character from change
High	Areas where the landscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics. The character of the landscape is such that it has limited/low capacity for accommodating change in the form of development. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national, regional or county value and the principal management objective for the area is conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong. The character of the landscape is such that there is some capacity for change in the form of development. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principal management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change
Low	Areas where the landscape has few valued elements, features or characteristics and the character is weak. The character of the landscape is such that it has capacity for change; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes are generally unrecognised in policy and where the principal management objective is to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration or enhancement.
Negligible	Areas where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features or characteristics. The character of the landscape is such that its capacity for accommodating change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes include derelict industrial lands or extraction sites, as well as sites or areas that are designated for a particular type of development. The principal management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the landscape through development, repair or restoration.

Magnitude of Landscape Change

The magnitude of change is a factor of the scale, extent and degree of change imposed on the landscape with reference to its key elements, features and characteristics (also known as 'landscape receptors'). For the purpose of assessment, five categories are used to classify the landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment, from Very High sensitivity to Negligible. These categories are defined in Table 15-2, below:

Table 15-2 Magnitude of Landscape Change

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Change that is large in extent, resulting in the loss of or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape and/or introduction of large elements considered totally uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in fundamental change in the character of the landscape.
High	Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in alteration or compromise to key elements, features or characteristics, and/or introduction of large elements considered uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in a moderate to large change to the character of the landscape.
Medium	Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in moderate change to the character of the landscape.
Low	Change that is limited in extent, resulting in minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape
Negligible	Change that is very limited in extent, resulting in no alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context. Such development results in minimal change to the character of the landscape.

Methodology for Visual Assessment

In Section 15.5 of this chapter, the visual effects of the proposed development are assessed. Visual assessment considers the sensitivity of the viewers (i.e. groups of people) and the magnitude of the changes to the composition and character of views. The assessment is made for a number of viewpoints selected to represent the range of visual receptors in the receiving environment. The significance of the visual effects experienced at these locations is assessed by measuring the visual receptor sensitivity against the magnitude of change to the view resulting from the proposed development.

Sensitivity of the Visual Receptor

Visual receptor sensitivity is a function of two main considerations:

- *Susceptibility of the visual receptor to change.* This depends on the occupation or activity of the people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention or interest is focussed on the views or visual amenity they experience at that location. Visual receptors most susceptible to change include residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on the landscape (e.g. trail users), and visitors to heritage or other attractions and places of community congregation where the setting contributes to the experience. Visual receptors less susceptible to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes which would be more susceptible), people engaged in outdoor recreation or sports where the surrounding landscape does not influence the experience, and people in their place of work or shopping where the setting does not influence their experience.
- *Value attached to the view.* This depends to a large extent on the subjective opinion of the visual receptor but also on factors such as policy and designations (e.g. scenic routes, protected views), or the view or setting being associated with a heritage asset, visitor attraction or having some other cultural status (e.g. by appearing in arts).

For the purpose of assessment, five categories are used to classify visual receptor sensitivity. These categories range from Very High to Negligible and are described in Table 15-3, below.

Table 15-3 Categories of Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Viewers at iconic viewpoints - towards or from a landscape feature or area - that are recognised in policy or otherwise regarded as being of very high value or national value. This may also include residential viewers whose primary view is of very high value.
High	Viewers at viewpoints that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of high value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from houses or outdoor recreation features) and are valued by the local community. This would include tourist attractions, and heritage features of regional or county value, and viewers travelling on scenic routes.
Medium	Viewers at viewpoints representing people travelling at slow or moderate speed through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views. The views are generally not designated, but which include panoramic views or views judged to be of some scenic quality, which demonstrate some sense of naturalness, tranquillity or some rare element in the view.
Low	Viewers at viewpoints reflecting people involved in activities not focused on the landscape e.g. people at their place of work or engaged in similar activities such as shopping, etc. The view may present an attractive backdrop to these activities but there is no evidence that the view is valued, or that it is regarded as an important element of these activities. Viewers travelling at high speeds (e.g. motorways) may also be considered of low susceptibility.
Negligible	Viewpoints reflecting people involved in activities not focused on the landscape e.g. people at their place of work or engaged in similar activities, such as shopping, where the view has no relevance or is of poor quality and not valued.

Magnitude of Change to the View

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of the proposed development into the view, relative to the other elements and features in the composition (i.e. its relative visual dominance), the degree to which it contrasts or integrates with the other elements and the general character of the view, and the way in which the change will be experienced (e.g. in full view, partial or peripheral, or glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, the duration and the reversibility of the visual effects.

Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change to a view. These range from Very High to Negligible and are defined in Table 15-4.

Table 15-4 Magnitude of Visual Change

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Full or extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs highly valued features or characteristics, or the introduction of elements that are completely out of character in the context, to the extent that the development becomes dominant in the composition and defines the character of the view and the visual amenity

Sensitivity	Description
High	Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.
Medium	Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity.
Low	Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.
Negligible	Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.

In this case, a number of tools are used to assist in the assessment of visual effects. These include Photomontages, which are produced from selected viewpoints. Initial viewpoints for photomontages are selected during the desk study with the exact location confirmed in the field during the site visit. The completed photomontages are also used to assist in the assessment of visual effects.

Significance of Effects

In order to classify the significance of landscape and visual effects, the predicted magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape/viewpoint. The definitions used by the EPA (2022) provide a useful scale to describe the significance of the effects.

There are seven classifications of significance, namely:

- 1) imperceptible,
- 2) not significant,
- 3) slight,
- 4) moderate,
- 5) significant,
- 6) very significant,
- 7) profound.

Please refer to Plate 15-4 below.

Please note that the below graphic is a guideline only, and an element of professional judgment is also applied. The assessor also uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense, to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable. As the GLVIA 3rd Edition recognises (at para 2.23):

“...professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters, much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements.”

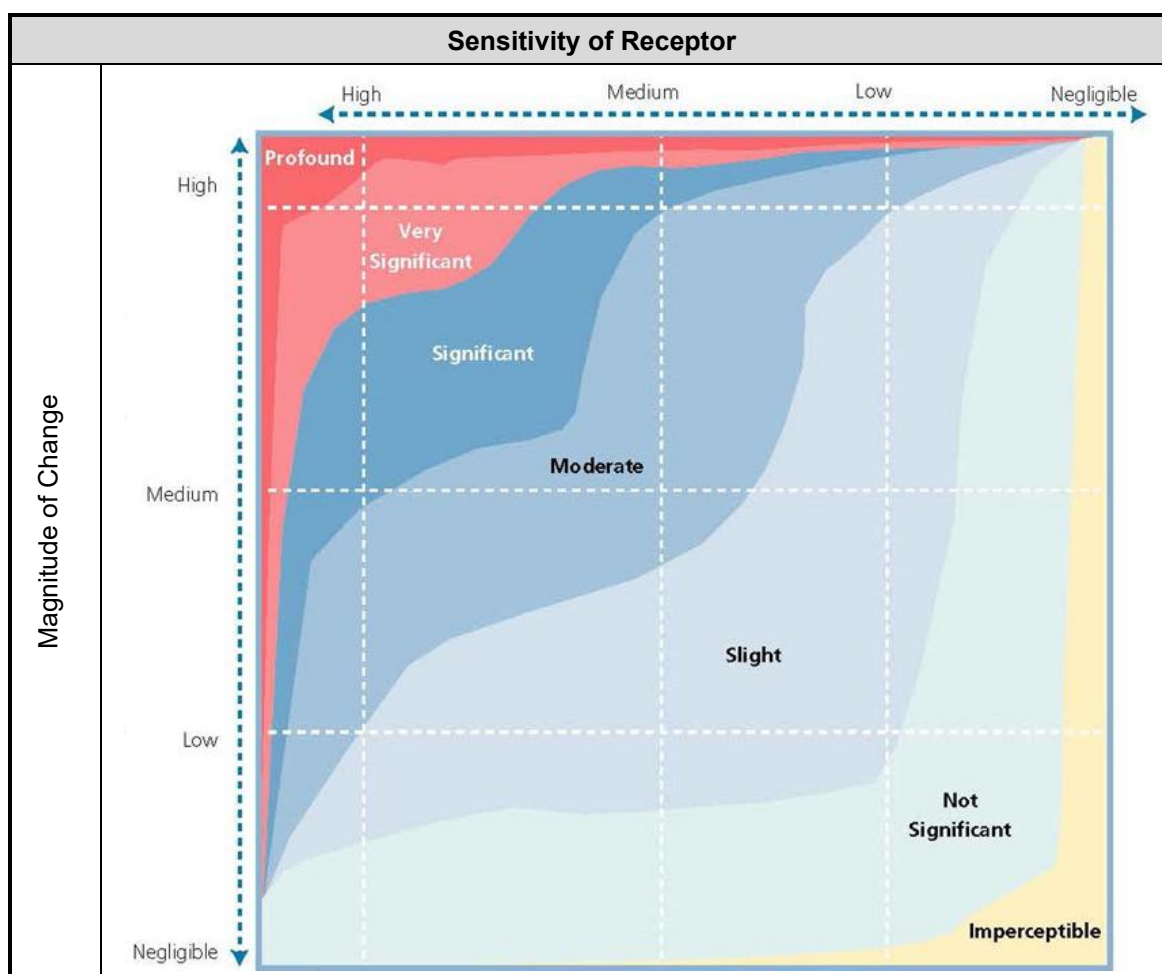


Plate 15-4 Significance of Effect (Source: EPA 2022)

Quality and Timescale

In accordance with the EPA (2022), the predicted impacts are also classified as beneficial, neutral, or adverse.

“This is not an absolute exercise; in particular, visual receptors’ attitudes to development, and thus their response to the impact of a proposed development, will vary. However, the methodology applied is designed to provide robust justification for the conclusions drawn.”

These qualitative definitions are included in Table 15-5.

Table 15-5 Quality of Effect (Source: CSR based on GLVIA 2013)

Sensitivity	Description
Adverse / Negative	Scheme at variance with landform, scale, pattern. Would degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of valued features, elements or their setting or cause the quality of the landscape (townscape) view to be diminished.
Neutral	Scheme complements (or does not detract from) the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape (townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality.
Beneficial / Positive	Improves landscape (townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.

In accordance with the EPA (2022), Impacts/effects are also categorised according to their longevity or timescale as in Table 15-6.

Table 15-6 Duration of Effect (Source: EPA 2022)

Definition of duration of effects	
Duration	Description
Temporary	Effects lasting one year or less
Short Term	Effects lasting one to seven years
Medium Term	Effects lasting seven to fifteen years
Long Term	Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years
Permanent	Effects lasting over sixty years

15.3.4 Difficulties Encountered

As the majority of the alignment of the proposed developed is located on private property (i.e. several kilometres of agricultural fields), the site visit was undertaken primarily from the surrounding public roads, as is standard practise in such contexts.

This meant that during the site visit, it was not always possible to assert the nature and scale of landscape character, fabric and quality on some sections of the proposed development, as well as some visual receptor's likely views towards the proposed development e.g., in the scenario where such views were limited to rear gardens or upper floors of a private property. Where this occurred, professional judgement was used, in keeping with best practice, to describe the likely visual effects from this receptor.

15.4 Receiving Environment

15.4.1 Landscape Character

The site, along with the wider landscape and townscape are described below in terms of its location and access, as well as its character in terms of landform, landcover, built and cultural heritage and land use, which contribute to the description of the overall character. The 'site' and immediate surroundings are described under separate headings below. The landscape across the study area is described below from a west to east direction.

Site Context and Access

Wider Landscape

The study area (as shown in Plate 15-3) consists of an area between Kilkee town on the west coast of Clare, to the town of Kilrush, on the Shannon estuary to the south. The towns are connected by the N67 road, which also passes through the very small village of Moyasta, which lies on the shores of Poulnasherry Bay. Local roads, often narrow and relatively tranquil, lead from the N67 to the coast, between Kilrush and Garraun (east of Kilkee). The study area also covers the shoreline of Poulnasherry Bay, which is a relatively enclosed bay.

Site and immediate surroundings

The proposed development largely follows the route of the old West Clare railway line with some localised diversions. It runs mostly across private agricultural lands that are not publicly accessible, in addition to sites at Moyasta and Kilrush where the two proposed trailhead carparks are proposed to be located.

Landform – Topography and Drainage

Wider Landscape

The landform of the study area, and indeed the wider surrounds, is mainly flat, largely between sea level and 20m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), sloping very gently towards the Poulnasherry Bay and River Shannon Estuary.

The topography of the study area varies from sea level to 10m AOD for much of the coastline along Poulnasherry Bay with a large flat plain in the vicinity of Moyasta. North and west of Kilrush there are some small hills (over 20 m AOD) and the land rises slightly near Kilkee. The N67 road is slightly higher elevation than the coastal area, between Moyasta and Kilkee.

The topography across the site is similarly of a relatively low elevation with much of its lands falling between 1-10m AOD, reflecting its proximity to Poulnasherry Bay, and with sections of the old railway line generally at a level gradient. Some more slightly elevated sections are located by Kilkee, at 11m AOD, and peaking at 18m AOD near to Lisdeen, as well as a short section by the L20161 Garraun just east of Blackwater Halt.

A number of streams and rivers are evident in the study area. These range from Moyasta, where a stream enters the bay, to further west towards Kilkee, with several draining from the north. Some small streams also flow into the western shore of Poulnasherry Bay. Several areas of mudflats and saltmarshes are also visible outside of high tide, along the Bay.

Site and immediate surroundings

Within the site, the proposed route crosses a small number of waterbodies including a stream at Lisdeen and over the mudflats and river at the northeast end of Poulnasherry Bay along the existing former railway bridge located west of Moyasta.

Landcover – Vegetation and Built Form

Wider landscape

Outside of the main settlements of Kilrush and Kilkee, where the proposed greenway would begin and end, the landcover within the study area is mainly agricultural pastureland, with some areas of saltmarshes and intertidal flats. These main landcover areas are shown in the Plate 15-5, below, illustrating the EPA Corine Landcover Map 2018. Another area of somewhat unusual type of landcover occurs in the intertidal area of Poulnasherry Bay, where areas of salt marsh are evident along the east and western shores of the bay, and the centre of the bay is noted as 'Intertidal Flats' on the CORINE (2018) landcover map as shown in Plate 15-5 below. Refer also to Figure 15.1 in Volume 3 of this EIAR.

The biodiversity features of the site are also worth noting. These include the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA), Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Poulnasherry Bay proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). These are described in Chapter 8 of the EIAR, Biodiversity.



Plate 15-5 EPA CORINE landcover Map (2018) (Source: //gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/)

Kilkee-Moyasta

Wider landscape

The areas of land within the study area between Kilkee and Moyasta is predominantly made-up of small to medium scale agricultural lands with a scattering of rural residents along the network of main and local roads or laneways. The worked agricultural lands are a mix of improved grassland and less productive/ marginal farmlands, many of which were waterlogged at the time of the site visit. The field boundaries are contained by hedgerows often made up of hawthorn, blackthorn, gorse or willow, while also being more open in other locations, with timber post and wire fencing.

Closer to the shores of Poulmasherry Bay are areas of unmanaged lands including areas of scrub, salt marshes and intertidal flats. Tree cover in this area is typically found closer to residences where it acts as shelterbelts, by the banks of river and streams and some small, isolated groups located along the L20161 Garraun Road at Garraun. There is a relatively high concentration of rural residential properties in the broader locality of Kilkee and Moyasta.

Site and immediate surroundings

This section of the site, similarly, crosses over a mix of land types and vegetation cover from open (marginal and improved) grassland to more enclosed sections contained by tall hedgerow and scrub along sections of the proposed route as it passes along the old railway line route or field boundaries. A short section of the proposed route passes through the northern end of a small, relatively young woodland at Garraun.

Near to the shores of Poulmasherry Bay, parts of the site pass through areas of scrub where the lands have been left unmanaged and near to its salt marshes. The route passes over the disused railway bridge at Moyasta, and into the old service yard. This is a large gravel hardcore area, containing some old rail tracks, some stored sleepers and an aged railway wagon. Part of this former yard area is encroached by grasses and scrub. Across the N67 from this area is the site of the proposed trailhead carpark at Moyasta, which is broadly continuous of the yesteryear railway-themed character of this small village.

Rural settlement patterns in this section include some individual and small groupings of rural residences located near to the proposed route wherever it comes close to an existing local road or laneway, as well as the small village of Moyasta containing a small cluster of houses and public house.



Plate 15-6 View from N67 at Lisdeen looking southwards towards the proposed route and surroundings.



Plate 15-7 View from Blackweir bridge looking northeast across Poulnasherry Bay towards the site.



Plate 15-8 View from local dead-end road looking south towards the site and Poulnasherry Bay.

Moyasta to Kilrush

Wider landscape

Landcover across this area has some similarities to that of the Kilkee to Moyasta section, with much being small-scale agricultural fields of improved grassland and more marginal grassland that are most prevalent to the southwest of Moyasta. Much of the eastern part of the study area falls across Poulnasherry Bay and the River Shannon Estuary, with the lands between the old railway line and shoreline containing a mix of salt margins, lagoons and inter tidal flats but also that of improved farmland extending out in places to the shoreline edges of these water bodies.

More apparent tree cover is largely curtailed to mature tree shelter belts around farmsteads and some younger plantations off the L6090 Carrowncalla at Carrowncalla North. Rural settlement patterns across this part of the study area are of more scattered individual farmsteads and single properties, with the proposed route occasionally passing near to a residence.

Site and immediate surroundings

This section of the site follows across the same landscape cover which in places includes following the old railway line or diverting along adjacent farmland. Some sections of the site's old railway line sections are contained by the line of scrub or trees either side. A section of the proposed route runs along grass and scrub next to the shingle shoreline north of Baurnahard point near Brews Bridge beach.



Plate 15-9 View from Shanakyle Road near graveyard looking westwards across the coastal farmland and beyond out to Poulnasherry Bay.



Plate 15-10 View from shingle shoreline at Brews Bridge beach looking west with the former railway line and site running along the grass embankment.

Urban Landcover - Kilkee and Kilrush

The most western and eastern extents of the study area fall with the urban extents of Kilkee and Kilrush.

At Kilkee, the study area includes much of the town's historic core, which is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) due to the rich mixture of vernacular and other architectural styles. The area of town nearer to the proposed route include a mix of modern housing and holiday accommodation. In order to access the proposed greenway at Kilkee, users will directly pass the modern housing developments at the Percy French Estate, passing the former railway station.

The proposed development starts/ends by the southwestern edge of Kilrush town, with the site of the proposed trailhead carpark being alongside Kilrush Marina. Here there are views across the bay to the south and looking east towards the distinct former mill building and church further within the town. The surroundings include a mix of established housing estates, mid-sized industrial units, the extensive marina, open space and farmland on the edges of the town. Further towards the town is a mixture of historic buildings, including the old railway station and former mill, which add historic character. The site of the proposed Kilrush trailhead car park is located within the western part of Kilrush's ACA.



Plate 15-11 Entrance to proposed route accessed via local road off the Percy French Estate.



Plate 15-12 Looking west near Kilrush Marina with the site of the proposed trailhead carpark to the rear side of the hedge in the right of the foreground.

Built and cultural heritage

Several parts of the study area contain interesting structures that relate to the former railway infrastructure, as well as built form in the towns of Kilrush and Kilkee and the village of Moyasta. Some of these structures are protected as Record of Protected Structures (RPS) within the current Clare County Development Plan, reflecting their historical importance.

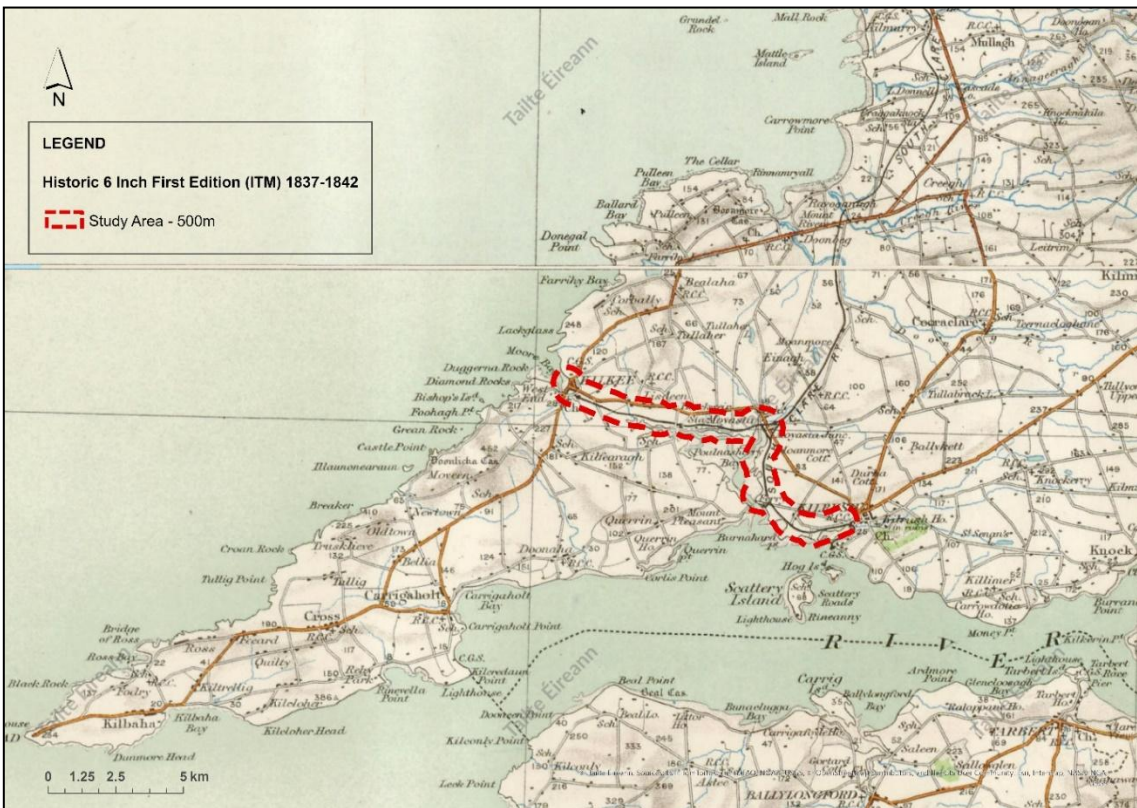


Plate 15-13 Historic 6 inch First Edition Colour Map 1837-1842 (Source: Heritagemaps.ie)

Wider landscape

Non-railway related heritage assets through the study area's rural landscape include a number of ringforts scattered throughout the surrounding farmland, which are identified on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). Blackweir Bridge, a c.1800 AD road bridge, is a designated RPS (Record of Protected Structure) and NIAH (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage) and provides the only public crossing over the estuary. The bridge is located approximately 65m south of the proposed route. However, at this location, the proposed development boundary incorporates a section of the roadside north of the bridge.

Within urban areas of the study area there's a mix of housing types, some of which share rich architectural and heritage values and are designated as RPS and NIAHs. These fall within part of both Kilkee's and Kilrush's ACAs.

Site and immediate surroundings

The study area, and particularly around the sections of the site where it follows the route of the old railway line, contain a number of structures of interest. This includes areas where the former line crosses local roads, where former station houses, and their gardens, sit adjacent to the former railway line. At Moyasta, the former railway station is evident, which houses the recently indefinitely closed West Clare Railway Museum. Also at Moyasta, the remnants of the former railway track, as well as older buildings and infrastructure, contribute much to the character of the small village. At Brew's Beach, there are the remnants of a railway bridge.

Within both the towns of Kilkee and Kilrush are still evident of its railway history with the presence of former railway stations, sheds and turning circles. Both former stations are now private residences, with Kilkee railway station located off Percy French Estate near the proposed development. The former Kilrush railway station is located on Frances Street, adjacent to the proposed Kilrush trailhead.

Further details on the heritage assets found throughout the area, as well as any potential impacts of the proposed development upon them, can be found within Chapter 16 of this EIAR, Cultural Heritage.



Plate 15-14 **Looking across the proposed trailhead lands with the intact trackway leading to the former Moyasta railway station**

Land Use

As previously referenced, land uses across the study area, including that of the site lands, is primarily agriculture, with much of the proposed route occupied by a mix of improved and marginal farmland used for grazing. This rural landscape supports a large scattering of rural dwellings located along the national and local road network, with the greatest clustering nearer to the two towns.

The towns of Kilkee and Kilrush are associated with tourism in the summer months in particular.

Kilrush also has water-based recreational activities and eco-tourism operating out of the Marina, including tours to Scattery Island, and is aided by its proximity to the Killimer-Tarbert ferry. Kilrush has been designated a heritage town by the tourist board, one of 15 in Ireland, partly due to it being an example of a landlord estate town; one with rich maritime history. Kilrush is the larger of the two towns and has larger retail, commercial and industrial land uses which are typically located to the town's northeastern end.

Kilkee's tourist attraction appears to be strongly related to the beach, cliffs, surfing and swimming related activities (outdoor as well as indoors, at Kilkee Waterworld).

Transport Routes

The N67 national road is the main transport corridor that connects the towns of Kilkee and Kilrush. A small section of the N67 at Moyasta separates the site of the proposed route (to the immediate west of the road) from the site of the proposed trailhead (to the immediate east of the road). Leading off of this main thoroughfare are various local roads and boreens and long private lanes along which are a relatively high concentration of rural dwellings.

A short section of the EuroVelo Cycle Route Section 22 falls within the study area. It approaches Moyasta from the east, along the L2036 that aligns the southern boundary of the proposed trailhead carpark. It then journeys along the N67, through Moyasta, for a further c. 3.8km. The EuroVelo Cycle Route then departs the N67 and continues south along the L2016 Garraun Road, passing through the site of the proposed development north of Blackweir Bridge. It then extends further south of the bridge beyond the study area, continuing around the Loop Head Peninsula towards Kilkee, having no further interactions with the site of the proposed development.

15.4.2 Views and Visual Amenity

Wider Landscape

There is one protected scenic route within the study area, which encompasses a very short section of the Shanakyle Road on the western end of Kilrush, marginally north of Kilrush Marina (refer to Plate 15-15). At this small section, views can be enjoyed looking southwards, downhill towards some foreground agricultural lands (including a section of the proposed development) and then across to the towns' marina and further southwest to the Shannon Estuary towards Scattery island. Visibility across the wider area is generally localised and contained by the low undulating hills combined with mid-height roadside hedgerows. Some more distant views are possible looking towards the estuary or of expansive agricultural lowlands experienced from local elevated points with open views.

Site and immediate surroundings

At the start/end of the proposed development at Kilkee, views are largely confined by the adjoining local road and the Percy French estate, with limited views beyond of the wider town's roofline. Views eastwards across the proposed route are varied as it passes over farmland, owing to a mix of hedgerows and treelines.

The most pleasant views along the site of the proposed development are those looking southwards towards Poulnasherry Bay. These views tend to face away from nearby rural residences and consist of the more naturalised, less managed coastal landscape. There are a number of points along the proposed development that are close to the bay's waterside edges, providing clear, open and expansive scenic views across Poulnasherry Bay. These locations include the crossing at Moyasta, along the former rail bridge, and Brew's Bridge beach.

At the site of the proposed development at Kilrush, the primary view is looking eastwards/inland towards the town, while visibility of the nearby marina to the south at this point is partially obscured by a hedgerow and the marina/yacht clubhouse.



Plate 15-15 View from Clare County Council's short scenic route along Shanakyle Road looking south in the direction of the site and Kilrush Marina.

15.5 Predicted Landscape & Visual Effects

15.5.1 Predicted Construction-phase Effects

15.5.1.1 Landscape Effects

Construction time is estimated to be of approx. 24 months duration and therefore is deemed to be 'short term' in duration, in accordance with Table 15-6, above.

Landscape Sensitivity

Owing to the variety and complexity of multiple factors set out in Sections 15.2 & 15.4, the Landscape Sensitivity of Receiving Environment entails the following:

1. The urban/suburban townscape fabric of Kilkee & Kilrush: **Medium-Low** Landscape Sensitivity.
2. Rural landscape fabric between the settlements (i.e. that of at least 90% of the Greenway): **Medium** Landscape Sensitivity.
3. Moyasta village: **Medium-low** Landscape Sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change & Significance of Effect

The main landscape effects associated with the proposed development entails the following key components.

The alignment of the proposed Greenway:

The proposed development comprises a mainline of 15.2 km in length. The cross section along much of the Greenway includes a 3m wide asphalt surface, with 1m verges and boundary treatments on either side. The initial footprint during construction will be approximately 7-10m wide to accommodate landscaping and planting, though the final greenway corridor will generally be 5m wide, fence to fence. Where there are local constraints such as existing railway bridges or embankments, the overall width narrows slightly.

As detailed in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, where the proposed Greenway is located along the route of the old railway, the embankments and ballast will be retained as a foundation where still in place. Excavation will generally be limited to topsoil stripping in adjacent areas where the route crosses agricultural lands, typically to a depth of approximately 120mm. Crushed rock sub-base material will be imported for a 150mm thick pavement base layer with a 20mm bitumen bound surfacing course to seal the pavement. Rest areas will also be provided along the route, in the form of small seating areas. At a minimum these will provide seating for four people and will include two Sheffield bike stands.

On balance, of the above factors, as well as those outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, the magnitude of construction-phase landscape impacts for these works are deemed to be High-Medium.

Thus, where these works are located in the aforementioned urban/suburban townscape fabric, as well as of Moyasta village and the rural landscape fabric between the settlements, they are predicted to result in a **Moderate** effect for construction-phase landscape impacts for these areas.

In all areas of the site of the proposed development, these works are predicted to have an **Adverse** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be short-term in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

Trailheads / Construction Compounds

Trailheads have been proposed to be constructed in Moyasta and Kilrush, located adjacent to the former Moyasta railway junction and in close proximity to the former Kilrush station house. Trailheads are provided to enable access to the greenway and provide ancillary facilities such as car parking, toilets, waste bins and picnic areas for users of the greenway. Controlled crossing will be provided for safe movement from the greenway into the trailheads. The trailheads will be utilised as construction compounds at the outset of construction works, including site clearance and ground preparation works. On completion of the greenway construction activities, works to complete construction of the trailheads will commence. The proposed construction activities at trailheads are outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR.

On balance, of the above factors, as well as those outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, the magnitude of construction-phase landscape impacts for these works are deemed to be High.

Thus, where these works are located in the aforementioned urban/suburban townscape fabric, as well as that of Moyasta village and the rural landscape fabric between the settlements, they are predicted to result in a **Moderate** effect for construction-phase landscape impacts for these areas.

In all areas of the site of the proposed development, these will have an **Adverse** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be short-term in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

Structures

Several new structures are proposed, to facilitate crossings of watercourses and roads. This includes 4 proposed river bridge crossings at Lisdeen (2 for the greenway and 2 agricultural crossings), retaining walls at Garaun and Moyasta, pedestrian footbridge at Moyasta, a cattle underpass at Carrowncalla South, a cattle overpass at Carrowncalla South, and several new culverts. The construction methodology for these is outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR.

Two existing bridges are proposed to be retained along the proposed development including the former railway bridge at Moyasta, and the existing L6090 Carrowncalla road bridge. As outlined in Chapter 4, works to existing bridges will include maintenance works and additional works such as construction of parapets and fencing. Other existing structures including culverts and pipe drains will also be retained where suitable. Moyasta Bridge was found to be covered in vegetation which will need to be removed using mechanical means (i.e. hand tools) only.

On balance, of the above factors, as well as those outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, the magnitude of construction-phase landscape impacts for these works are deemed to be High.

Thus, where these works are located in the aforementioned urban/suburban townscape fabric, as well as that of Moyasta village, they are predicted to result in a **Moderate** effect for construction-phase landscape impacts for these areas.

And where these works are located in the aforementioned rural landscape fabric (as is the case for the majority of the proposed structures to be constructed), they are predicted to result in a **Significant-Moderate** effect for construction-phase landscape impacts for these areas.

These will have an **Adverse** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be short-term in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

Drainage features

Drainage will mainly occur throughout falling to existing watercourses. Surface water runoff from the greenway will be collected from over-the-edge drainage ditches running alongside the greenway. Pipes, culverts and headwalls will be constructed as required by the detailed design. Permeable paving will be installed across the parking bays at the proposed trailheads.

On balance, of the above factors, as well as those outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, the magnitude of construction-phase landscape impacts for these works are deemed to be Medium.

Thus, where these works are located in the aforementioned urban/suburban townscape fabric, Moyasta village and the rural landscape fabric, they are, on balance, predicted to result in a **Moderate-slight** effect for construction-phase landscape impacts for these areas.

These will have an **Adverse** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be short-term in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

Fencing, Landscaping and Accommodation Works

A significant proportion of the proposed development will run alongside or through private farmland and will therefore need to be adequately fenced on both sides. Timber stockproof fencing with native vegetation are proposed for these areas. Where possible the route will follow the line of existing field boundaries, so existing fencing and hedgerows would already be present on one side and can be retained. Where the route follows the historical rail corridor, existing mature vegetation will be maintained where possible, while additional stockproof fencing will be required. Landowner access works have been agreed with landowners where

possible, where the proposed development passes through individual parcels of land, affecting existing farming operations.

In accordance with Chapter 8 Biodiversity of this EIAR, the proposed fencing and planted screening at sensitive bird sites will be the first works undertaken following site clearance, and only on the bay side. Subsequent planting will be carried out at a later stage during construction. This will ensure that the planted screening has as much time as possible to be established prior to opening of the greenway. The fencing on Moyasta Bridge will be a solid barrier of 1.1m high with an additional 0.3m perforated/ semi-transparent fence to a total height of 1.4m. The perforated section will be similar to that type used on the northern sections of the Dublin Port Greenway.

On balance, of the above factors, as well as those outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, the magnitude of construction-phase landscape impacts for these works are deemed to be Low.

Thus, where these works are located in the aforementioned urban/suburban townscape fabric, Moyasta village and the rural landscape fabric, they are, on balance, predicted to result in a **Slight** effect for construction-phase landscape impacts for these areas.

These will have an **Adverse** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be short-term in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

Clearance and Planting of Vegetation

Clearance of Vegetation

Vegetation clearance will be minimised where possible along the length of the greenway itself and will only be undertaken within the construction footprint to accommodate the greenway and 1m verges and boundary treatments on either side. The initial footprint during construction will be approximately 7-10m wide to accommodate landscaping and planting, though the final greenway corridor will generally be 5m wide, fence to fence. Existing boundaries such as hedgerows located adjacent to the proposed greenway will be retained and maintained as appropriate. All existing vegetation outside of the construction footprint will be retained. It is estimated that a total of 4.2km of habitat will be cleared to facilitate construction.

Planting of Vegetation

Planting of vegetation will be carried out in accordance with the Landscape Strategy outlined in Section 15.6.1 of this LVIA. This includes planting at sensitive bird locations as identified in Chapter 8 of the EIAR, Biodiversity, where vegetation will be planted along the bay side before the greenway is constructed to allow vegetation sufficient time to become established before the greenway is open to users, in order to avoid impacts to wintering birds. As the construction phase is estimated to be approx. 24 months duration, vegetation will have up to two growing seasons to establish at these locations before the greenway is open to users.

Indicative species, planting specification and arrangement is presented in the Landscape Strategy. Spacing, density and arrangement are specified to achieve screening effects at an early stage, before the vegetation becomes established. Mesh screening material (fabric or similar) will be attached to the fencing and at the early stages of planting to provide a screening effect prior to the vegetation becoming established. Mesh will be attached to the fencing as soon as the fencing is erected, this is required at all 'sensitive bird areas' on both sides of the greenway.

In addition, some supplementary planting will occur in areas of existing but sparse vegetation to increase its density and effectiveness as visual screening. Verges will be allowed to

revegetate naturally. Reseeding with commercially available grass seed or wildflower mixes will be avoided or alternatively use locally sourced seed.

Crucially, a total of 16.4 km of native vegetation will be planted, including new habitats and supplementary planting. As an estimated total of 4.2km of habitat will be cleared to facilitate construction, on balance, this represents a net gain of 12.2km of native vegetation/ habitat.

In summary, this is a rare yet substantial addition and improvement to the biodiversity of not just the study area, but the wider locality/county.

On balance, of the above factors (i.e. weighing up between the clearance and planting of vegetation), the magnitude of construction-phase landscape impacts for these works are deemed to be High.

Thus, where these works are located in the aforementioned urban/suburban townscape fabric, Moyasta village and the rural landscape fabric, they are, on balance, predicted to result in a **Moderate** effect for construction-phase landscape impacts for these areas.

These will have an overwhelmingly **Positive** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be short-term in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

15.5.1.2 Visual Effects

Visual Sensitivity

Sensitive visual receptors (i.e. people) are located within proximity to the proposed construction works. Visual change will be more susceptible or acute for receptors in those areas where the greatest intensity of construction works are proposed, namely Kilkee, Kilrush and Moyasta. This is owing to the greater number of visual receptors in proximity to the construction works at these locations, especially those living in proximity to the site of the two proposed trailheads which will be used as compound sites during the construction phase. Owing to the detailed nature, design and alignment of the proposed development, the less sensitive visual receptors will tend to be those people in rural settings. This is primarily owing to the offset/distances between the proposed development and that of the public realm and/or residences.

Magnitude and Significance of Visual Change

The magnitude of visual change during the construction phase in these areas is likely to be Moderate or High, on balance, depending on the nature of the construction activity in question.

Where these works are located in the aforementioned urban/suburban townscape fabric, as well as that of Moyasta village, they are predicted to result in a **Moderate** effect for construction-phase visual impacts for these areas.

And where these works are located in the aforementioned rural landscape fabric (as is the case for the majority of the proposed structures to be constructed), they are predicted to result in a **Significant-Moderate** effect for construction-phase visual impacts for these areas.

In all instance, these will have an **Adverse** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be short-term in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

15.5.2 Predicted Operational-phase Effects

15.5.2.1 Landscape Effects

Landscape Sensitivity

Owing to the variety and complexity of multiple factors set out in Sections 15.2 & 15.4, the Landscape Sensitivity of Receiving Environment entails the following:

- The urban/suburban townscape fabric of Kilkee & Kilrush: **Medium-Low** Landscape Sensitivity.
- Rural landscape fabric between the settlements (i.e. that of at least 90% of the Greenway): **Medium** Landscape Sensitivity.
- Moyasta village: **Medium-low** Landscape Sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change & Significance of Effect

The greatest change that operational landscape effects may have on the Receiving Environment pertain to those affecting its landscape character.

Unlike construction-phase landscape impacts, in this instance the 'sum of the parts' of the proposed development is best addressed as a whole, as they will be experienced as a whole by greenway and trailhead carpark users through their operational phase; all which work in unison to affect landscape character.

A crucial factor with the proposed development is that it is, in essence, a contemporary linear transport route connecting Kilkee with Kilrush that replicates and overlaps a historical linear transport route also connecting Kilkee with Kilrush. In that regard, the Greenway will be largely using the same linear infrastructure (i.e. chiefly that of brownfield embankments and several stone structures) that was constructed in the late 19th Century, but which has laid dormant and/or neglected/overgrown for decades.

Thus, the inherent landscape character of the study area is informed by this highly modified, manmade channel dissecting the south Clare countryside. In addition, these palpable, visible and muscular legacies of the original rail line will be restored to use - albeit a different use to that for which they were constructed - through the operation of the greenway.

Indeed, almost 60% of the Greenway will follow the same alignment as the original rail line (therefore it being a brownfield site), with almost 5% of the Greenway following directly adjacent to it (i.e. greenfield, typically in fields adjacent to the original alignment).

In addition, the operation of the two trailhead car parks, along with the maturation of 16.4km of native vegetation will serve to strengthen the landscape character of the receiving environment.

Other less important issues pertain to fencing and visual screening. These will mitigate the impacts of disturbance to wintering and breeding waterbirds from greenway users during the operational phase of the proposed development. Fencing will be installed on both sides of the greenway and is intended to prevent greenway users, and their dogs, from leaving the route and accessing surrounding habitats including farmland, Poulmasherry Bay, and natural habitats.

On balance, the magnitude of operational-phase landscape impacts for this area are deemed to be Medium-low. This will result in a **Moderate-slight** effect for operational-phase landscape effects for this area.

In consideration of the viability and benefits the proposed development is likely to bring to the landscape of this area over at least the next century, these will have a **Positive** Quality of Effect (refer to Table 15-5, above) and will be Permanent in duration, (refer to Table 15-6, above).

15.5.2.2 Visual Effects

Viewpoint list & titles

Based on the desk study, review of the proposed development, site characteristics and sensitivity, as well as visibility of the site from nearby receptors established during the site visit, a number of representative viewpoints (listed in Table 15-7, below) were selected to assist in the appraisal of visual effects. These are described and assessed below, along with photomontages prepared for each viewpoint (refer to Volume 4 of this EIAR).

Table 15-7 Viewpoint Selection

Viewpoint No.	Description
1	Local Road off Percy French Estate, Kilkee
2	Dough L6048
3	Lisdeen Recycling Centre
4	North of Blackweir Bridge
5	On Blackweir Bridge
6	Private Property*
7	Private Property*
8	Private Property*
9	N67 north of Moyasta
10	Moyasta
11	Private property*
12	Carrowncalla bridge
13	Carrowncalla South
14	Brews Bridge
15	Frances Street crossroads
16	Shanakyle Road

*As these four viewpoints are from private property and not from the public realm, they are not assessed as part of this LVIA, in accordance with best practice (i.e. as per GLVIA 2013, Section 6.15).

Assessment of Visual Effects

Each viewpoint is described below in terms of:

1. Baseline Photograph.
2. The existing (baseline) view.
3. An assessment of the Visual Receptor Sensitivity at that viewpoint (refer to Table 15-3, above, throughout).

4. The likely Magnitude of Visual Change, experienced from that viewpoint, as a result of the proposed development (refer to Table 15-4, above, throughout).
5. The likely significance of visual effect, experienced from that viewpoint, as a result of the proposed development (refer to Plate 15-4, above, throughout).
6. The likely quality of that visual effect (refer to Table 15-5, above, throughout).
7. The likely duration of that visual effect (refer to Table 15-6, above, throughout).

VP No. 1 - Local road off Percy French Estate, Kilkee
<p>Existing View</p> <p>By way of context, this location is close to the dead end off the Percy French Estate, along the route of the former rail line. This is a quiet residential street, accessed off Percy French estate, on the eastern outskirts of Kilkee.</p> <p>In this view, the residences backing on to the north (i.e. left) of the road are within the Kilkee Bay Apartments development, which are not accessed along this road. To the south (i.e. right) of the road are two residences. Between these residences, and further east, is a low treeline, some disparate fencing and tape, and an unsightly white container, in a poor state of repair. Numerous street lighting poles and pylons are visible, as well as overhead powerlines.</p> <p>Overall, the scene lacks coherency in built design or an appreciable urban/suburban fabric, marked by an unappealing transition between town and country at this location.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered Medium-Low visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>Approx 50m east of this location, the proposed greenway will begin/end, requiring the removal of the large container. Beyond proposed bollards and greenway signage, a warning surface treatment will run for the first few metres of the Greenway, which will appear as a 3m-wide, asphalt surface with suitable markings. A 1m-wide, maintained grass verge will align to either side of the Greenway, at which point there will be a 1.4m-high timber post and tension mesh fence.</p> <p>Outside of this fence - set to the outside of both grass verges – a native hedgerow will be planted, running along the same lines as that of the original vegetation aligning the former rail line. Pedestrians and cyclists may also be visible along this shared track.</p> <p>Being just one of several elements visible in this scene, the proposed development is likely to have the effect of an upgrade to the quality of the public realm at this location, while not detracting from the inherently weak visual amenity of the town edge at this road end.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Low.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Slight.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Beneficial</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 2 - Dough L6048
<p>Existing View</p> <p>By way of context, this local rural road is located within 1km east of Kilkee and accordingly has numerous residences along it. In the foreground, to the rear of the cottage (on the west/left of view) and aligning with the double agricultural gates (to the east/right of the view) in the foreground, is the location where the former rail line traversed this road at a level crossing.</p> <p>Further beyond this point, numerous residences are visible largely in a linear/ribbon development, along with several utility poles and overhead powerlines. The distant, low hills on the skyline allow for marginally greater visual amenity than the foreground and mid-distance. While there are numerous residences visible from this location, the scene is of a palpable rural scenic quality.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered Medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>The proposed Greenway will traverse this local road in the foreground. To the left (west), the Greenway will emerge to the rear of the original railway cottage. To the right (east) of the L6048 crossing, the greenway will be aligned to the south of an existing private residential driveway, along the former railway corridor alignment, with no predicted impact on this existing residential access.</p> <p>A warning surface treatment will run for the first few metres of the Greenway, which will appear as a 3m-wide, asphalt surface with suitable markings. The proposed greenway will continue eastwards from this junction, following through existing agricultural land along the former railway corridor. Also (partially) visible in the foreground will be the proposed 1.4m-high timber post and tension mesh fence running 1m to either side of the Greenway, as well as a proposed native hedgerow to the outside of these fences. To the front of these, a farm gate will be re-introduced to the field boundary along this road.</p> <p>At rural local road crossings such as this, the Greenway design will slow cyclists approaching the road (i.e. with warning signs, warning surface treatment and tactile blisters, where applicable), and with bollards to prevent motor traffic access to the Greenway. Greenway users crossing the road will give-way to road traffic. Road markings and signage will be provided, such as in the foreground of this view, so that traffic is aware of the Greenway crossing and can drive with extra care.</p> <p>While the proposed development will be prominent in the foreground, it will not necessarily be uncharacteristic in the context. Similar to the former rail line at this junction, it will be linear, low-lying and largely unobtrusive in nature. Overall, the proposed development is not predicted to noticeably reduce the inherent visual amenity as this setting.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Medium.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Moderate.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Neutral</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 3 - Lisdeen Recycling Centre
<p>Existing View</p> <p>By way of context, this location is along a short, local rural road that terminates at the Lisdeen Recycling Centre. As there are no residences along this road, the only visual receptors are those in vehicles accessing the recycling centre.</p> <p>This location is c.50m north of the entrance to the centre, at the location where the former rail line, and it's attendant level crossing, is located. This view is looking east, where a low linear embankment can be discerned that marked the alignment of the former rail line, which traverses marginal, low-lying fields. Utility poles and an overhead power line are visible in the mid-distance, while taller trees aligning the northern boundary of the recycling facility are visible to the south (i.e. right) of the view.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered Low visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>The proposed Greenway will traverse this local road in the foreground. At rural local road crossings such as this, the Greenway design will be the same as that set out in previous, similar viewpoint assessments in this chapter.</p> <p>Beyond the immediate foreground greenway signage, a warning surface treatment will run for the first few metres of the Greenway, which will appear as a 3m-wide, asphalt surface with suitable markings. Beyond this warning surface treatment, a bench and bike rack will be located, while further beyond this will be a landowner crossing of the Greenway, with the required gates to either side of the crossing.</p> <p>A 1m-wide, maintained grass verge will align to either side of the Greenway, at which point there will be a 1.4m-high timber post and tension mesh fence. Outside of this fence, a native hedgerow will be planted, running along the same lines as that of the original vegetation aligning the former rail line. Pedestrians and cyclists may also be visible along this shared track.</p> <p>While the proposed development will be visible in the foreground, it will not be wholly out of character with the utilitarian context of this road. Similar to the former rail line at this junction, it will be linear, low-lying and largely unobtrusive in nature. Overall, the proposed development is predicted to marginally increase visual amenity at this location. This is owing to the introduction of an effective linear thicket of native vegetation, which upon maturation, will screen the proposed greenway (and it's ancillary structures) but not screen any views of inherent visual amenity.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Medium.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Moderate-Slight.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Positive</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 4 - North of Blackweir Bridge
<p>Existing View</p> <p>By way of context, this location along this local rural road is at a point where it is sloping southwards towards the estuary at Poulmasherry Bay and Blackweir Bridge over it. There are five such residences near this location along this road, all of whom enjoy partial views of the estuary, and the lowland pastoral network further south, attained mostly above / through intermittent vegetation.</p> <p>Further south/downhill traditionally marked a level crossing of the former rail line, adjacent to the former Blackweir Station and a railway cottage to the east (i.e. left) of the road. Indeed, the original railway corridor to the east of this local road has been converted to a private residence and the original railway corridor and platform incorporated into a private garden.</p> <p>Overall, the scene is of a palpable rural scenic quality.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered High-medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>Further downhill, the proposed Greenway will traverse this local road. To the southwest (i.e. right), Greenway will be visible in the short-term from this location, and the adjacent residence to the west of this viewpoint, as it will align to the north of the existing mature trees. At this location, the proposed development will incorporate additional structural accommodation works to lower the level of the greenway, requiring retaining walls to support it. The retaining wall will be aided with sufficient native hedgerow screening so as to provide while privacy to the residential home facing the greenway..</p> <p>After crossing over the road, aside from some modest signage, the greenway is unlikely to be visible from this location, owing to the presence of intervening structures and vegetation.</p> <p>At rural local road crossings such as this, the Greenway design will slow cyclists approaching the road (i.e. with warning signs, warning surface treatment and tactile blisters, where applicable), and with bollards to prevent motor traffic access to the Greenway. Greenway users crossing the road will give-way to road traffic. Road markings and signage will be provided, such as in the foreground of this view, so that traffic is aware of the Greenway crossing. However, such elements are unlikely to detract from the inherent visual amenity of the setting, while the primary source of such visual amenity will remain the more distant estuary.</p> <p>While the proposed development will be partially visible further downhill, including the partially visible proposed vegetation to the immediate north of Blackweir Bridge, it will not be uncharacteristic in the context. Similar to the former rail line at this junction, it will be linear, low-lying and largely unobtrusive in nature. Overall, the proposed development is not predicted to noticeably reduce the inherent visual amenity at this setting.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Low.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Slight.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Neutral</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 5 On Blackweir Bridge
<p>Existing View</p> <p>By way of context, this location is approx. 200m south of VP4 and therefore entails much of the same visual and landscape setting.</p> <p>However, this view is from Blackweir Bridge and is looking northwards, uphill towards the location of VP4. There are five residences north of the bridge along this road, but the visual receptor context in this instance is that of bridge users travelling northwards. The built intensity in this scene is well developed, for such a rural context as this, with at least five building partially visible in the fore to mid-distance. The presence of these buildings, along with supporting structures (e.g. walls, piers) and mature planting result in views being 'canalised' along the roadway corridor. It is also worth noting that the visual receptor sensitivity along the bridge also encompasses commanding and aesthetic, open views of the aforementioned estuary. Thus, this is reflected in the assessment of its sensitivity.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered High-medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>The only aspect or element of the proposed development that will be discernible from this location will be some Greenway signage and bollards, which will be partially visible over 50m from this location. Even if observed, these elements will have no material effect on the inherent visual amenity of the setting.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Negligible.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Not Significant.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Neutral</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

As referenced in Table 15-7, above, as Viewpoints 6, 7 & 8 are from private property and not from the public realm, they are not assessed as part of this LVIA, in accordance with best practice (i.e. as per GLVIA 2013, Section 6.15).

VP No. 9 - N67 north of Moyasta
<p>Existing View</p> <p>This location is c. 50m north of the N67 bridge over the stream at Moyasta settlement, and c. 130m north of the village centre, by the north-eastern shore of Poulnasherry Bay.</p> <p>By way of context, near to the shores of Poulnasherry Bay, parts of the site pass through areas of scrub where land has been left unmanaged. The route passes over the disused railway bridge at Moyasta, and into the old service yard. This is a large gravel hardcore area, containing some old rail tracks, some stored sleepers and an aged railway wagon. Part of this former yard area is encroached by grasses and scrub. Thus, this raised hardcore area and embankment to its west (i.e. right of the view), which leads to the (out of sight) bridge, screens view of the Bay from this location.</p> <p>Meanwhile, in the foreground, the tarmac of the N67 is apparent, as is a narrow <i>cul de sac</i> road and low stone wall, along with low and infrequent vegetation. The overall scene is that of a highly modified, manmade landscape in the fore- to middle-ground. In addition, this view is chiefly representative of road users - rather than that of residents.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered Medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>Located from c. 50m to over 200m away, the chief element of the proposed development that will be discernible from this location will be that of the native hedgerow aligning the Greenway. This hedgerow will help visually anchor the Greenway into the landscape fabric and its naturalistic tones will aid in its visual absorption within and between areas of unmanaged, scrub to either side of the Greenway corridor. Indeed, to the viewer, this native hedgerow is likely to appear as an inherent element of the landscape, reflective of similar-scaled hedgerows about the study area.</p> <p>While the Greenway surface/tarmac will not be visible from this location – owing to the presence of the hedge – those Greenway users (e.g. walkers, runners, cyclists) are far more likely to be visible. Indeed, the only aspect of the Greenway infrastructure that will be faintly discernible from this location may be the distant, balustrade aligning the small section of bridge, further west of the railway carriage, and almost 300m away. Upon this distant balustrade top, a single or double strand of steel wire will be installed to deter raptors from perching. Even in the unlikely event of it being noticed, the balustrade (and/or steel wire) will have no material effect upon the pre-existing scenic quality of this setting.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Low-negligible.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Not Significant.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Positive</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 10 - Moyasta
<p>Existing View</p> <p>This location is from the small settlement of Moyasta, where the N67 traverses it, and is located adjacent to Keogh's pub. Above a low, painted, block wall, a small field lies between the former rail line to the north (i.e. left) and the L2036 local road to the south (i.e. right). Beyond the field (i.e. it's eastern end) is the former station house building marking the location of the now closed West Clare Railway museum, at the location along the rail line where it split into two lines, serving either Kilkee or Kilrush. In that regard, this small village has a strong railway heritage, and therefore industrial heritage associated with it.</p> <p>The foreground field is in effect, surrounded by brownfield arterial, industrial or residential development. Both 38kV and a 110kV powerlines, and their associated utility poles, are visible before and beyond it. In consideration that this is on the side of a busy national road, the scene is not one of distinct or memorable visual amenity to a passersby. However, it does provide more visual amenity to the residents along the L2036 overlooking this small field.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered Medium-low visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>In the foreground, the proposed greenway will travel south adjacent to the N67 for approximately 215m, and separated from the road by a 1m-wide grass verge, before rejoining the original railway corridor in a field approx. 150m to the south of Garrihy's pub.</p> <p>In the foreground field, beyond the same low wall, a large trailhead carpark is proposed; one of two such carparks proposed across the proposed development. It will entail 94 parking spaces, a small public toilet block, numerous bike stands, a coach set down area and quality landscape design (i.e. trees, grass and groundcover). Due north (i.e. out of the frame), traffic calming measures will be provided on the National Road at this location along with a zebra crossing facility to provide access between the trailhead carpark and the greenway facility.</p> <p>The proposed development will introduce substantial visual change to the foreground of this view. However, visual change is not tantamount to visual impact or effect, as context remains key. Within a small field surrounded by brownfield arterial, industrial or residential development, and within a small village and by the side of a busy National Road, the proposal may be interpreted as a suitable and appropriate infill development. It is likely to upgrade the sense of place, purpose and identity of the village, escalating it to become the pivotal location/stop-off location between Kilrush and Kilkee. Furthermore, the proposal will be compatible with the objectives of the aforementioned settlement plan in relation to Moyasta. However, these positives are likely to be offset by the loss of visual amenity experienced by residents, located alongside this small field.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered High.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Moderate.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Neutral</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

As referenced in Table 15-7, above, as Viewpoint 11 is from private property and not from the public realm, they are not assessed as part of this LVIA, in accordance with best practise (i.e. as per GLVIA 2013, Section 6.15).

VP No. 12 Carrowncalla bridge
<p>Existing View</p> <p>The context of this view is the terminus of a quiet, local road (L6090 Carrowncalla) that terminates at Poulnahserry Bay. This road is approx. 1.5km in length, with numerous residences aligned along it - the last of which is located approx. 80m east of this location, along the alignment of the former rail line.</p> <p>A large drainage canal is visible to the northeast of this view (i.e. right), which is understood to have been constructed in the late 1800s to assist with reclamation of /the drainage of low-lying farmland further east and northeast of the canal, between it and the current N67.</p> <p>The scene is one of a highly modified, utilitarian landscape with limited aesthetic or naturalistic values. Indeed, the primary source of visual amenity is 'out of frame', being low-lying views of Poulnahserry Bay, whose shore is within 25m to the west, northwest and southwest of this location.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered Medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>By way of context, from Moyasta (i.e. VP No.11) the greenway will head south along the original railway corridor for approximately 780m before crossing the former canal channel via a new bridge approx. 600m north of this viewpoint. It will follow along the western edge of the canal to the end of this local road (L6090 Carrowncalla). The greenway will cross over the existing Carrowncalla bridge, which is 'out of frame' directly east of this location. The greenway will share the L6090 Carrowncalla for 80m from this viewpoint, before sharply arcing southwards where it rejoins the original railway corridor.</p> <p>The Greenway will align the western (i.e. left-hand) side of the canal. Beyond proposed bollards and Greenway signage, a warning surface treatment will run for the first few metres of the Greenway that will have a wider, splayed width with suitable markings, before proceeding northwards as a 3m-wide, asphalt surface. A 1m-wide, maintained grass verge will align to either side of the Greenway, at which point there will be a 1.4m-high timber post and tension mesh fence. Outside of this fence, a native hedgerow will be planted, running along the same lines as that of the original vegetation aligning the former rail line. Walkers, runners and cyclists may also be visible along this shared track. In addition, an agricultural gate and fence will be located to the western side/end of the Greenway.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Medium.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Moderate-slight.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Positive</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 13 Carrowncalla South
<p>Existing View</p> <p>This location is along a local road (Carrowncalla South/ Pella Road) that terminates at Poulnahserry Bay, approx. 300m west of this location/further along this road. This road has numerous residences aligned along it - the last of which is located approx. 50m to the rear of this view. It is worth noting that the alignment of the former rail line is located c. 160m east of this viewpoint (i.e. behind this viewpoint).</p> <p>In this scene, the local road extends westwards while in the foreground, an entrance avenue to a farm premises angles sharply northwards (i.e. rightwards). The paucity of high roadside embankments and/or mature vegetation allows for extensive, open views out over the surrounding countryside.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered Medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>To the immediate south (i.e. left) of the view, the proposed Greenway will chiefly take the form of a native hedgerow, followed by a 1.4m-high timber post and tension mesh fence. While some glimpses of the Greenway surface may be visible, this will be less the case in the decade following the establishment of planting, as the native hedgerow matures. Indeed, it is likely that the most noticeable elements of the Greenway from this location will not be its attendant infrastructure, but whatever walkers, runners or cyclists may be moving along it. Crucially, the proposed development will not inhibit more distant views over the landscape, while its native hedgerow will assist in knitting it into the inherent landscape fabric of this setting.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Medium.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Moderate-slight.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Positive</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 14 Brews Bridge
<p>Existing View</p> <p>The context of this view is that of a popular and well-used local amenity along the eastern shore of Poulnasherry Bay. While there are two residences in the immediate vicinity, Brews Bridge tends to be a location that local people drive to (i.e. to the foreground car park, which marks the terminus of the local road), from where they explore and enjoy the shore.</p> <p>The embankment of the former rail line is apparent to the north (i.e. left) of the foreground carpark, while the hard core/shingle car park is delineated by a concrete post-and-rail fence. Two residences are partially visible in the vicinity. However, the main sources of visual amenity at this location are to the southwest or west (i.e. out of frame)</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered High-Medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>Approx. 35m southth of this viewpoint, beyond proposed bollards, a warning surface treatment will run for the first few metres of the Greenway that will have a wider, splayed width with suitable markings, before proceeding southeast as a 3m-wide, asphalt surface. A 1m-wide, maintained grass verge will align to either side of the Greenway, at which point there will be a 1.4m-high timber post and tension mesh fence. Outside of this fence - set to the outside of both grass verges – a native hedgerow will be planted. Pedestrians and cyclists may also be visible along this shared track. In addition, in the immediate foreground, the car park will be re-tarmacked.</p> <p>Overall, in light of the more muscular infrastructure of the raised embankment and former railway bridge as well as two, partially visible residences and the large foreground carpark, the presence of the proposed Greenway is quite unlikely to draw attention to itself. Indeed, even if noticed, the Greenway is likely to contribute to the pre-existing tone of valuable civic amenities created by this bay side car park.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Low.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Slight.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Positive</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 15 Frances Street crossroads
<p>Existing View</p> <p>This view is that experienced from the grotto at the crossroad of Frances Street with Pound street, Pella Road and Shanakyle Road. This view is experienced by numerous residents at this crossroads, and this junction is heavily used for road users exiting/entering Kilrush from/to the west.</p> <p>In this scene, beyond the junction is a small pastoral field, made visible owing to a low roadside wall and lack of roadside vegetation. The field itself is of limited visual amenity. The views beyond this field are rich and appreciable, being chiefly that of Kilrush harbour and marina, with more distant residential development discernible south of the harbour.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered High-medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>In the foreground field, beyond the same low wall, a large trailhead carpark is proposed; one of two such carparks proposed across the proposed development. It will entail 157 parking spaces; 2 No. small public toilet blocks, numerous bike stands, a coach set down area, high quality landscape design (i.e. trees, grass and groundcover), pathways and street furniture.</p> <p>The proposal will introduce substantial visual change to the foreground of this view. Within this small field, surrounded on most sides by brownfield development, the proposal may be interpreted as a suitable and appropriate development for the western edge of Kilrush; a car park and greenway user facilities of high-quality design and specification that would serve the town, the marina as well as the Greenway.</p> <p>However, these positives are likely to be offset by the loss of visual amenity experienced by residents who overlook this small field, as well as pedestrians and road users, whose harbour views will be curtailed as a result of the proposed development. However, during quieter times of the year (e.g. October-March), when both the tourist industry and Greenway users are far less apparent, the comparative lack of cars and coaches in the car park will likely allow for largely unobscured views of Kilrush harbour and marina.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered High.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Significant</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Neutral</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

VP No. 16 - Shanakyle Road
<p>Existing View</p> <p>This view is from the roadside aligning Shanakyle Road, approx. 1km west of Kilrush town centre, and has been selected for being the 'worst case scenario' from the public realm along this road or from the nearby Shanakyle graveyard. Owing to a lack of roadside vegetation, combined with the comparative elevation of this viewpoint, there are extensive and appealing views of Kilrush Harbour and the wider Shannon estuary, as well as the western outskirts of Kilrush available from this roadside and graveyard. The proposed Greenway will run approx. 115m south of this location, further downhill, along the path of the former rail line, where a low, native treeline is visible before the waterfront.</p>
<p>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</p> <p>This is considered High-Medium visual sensitivity.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Visual Change</p> <p>The only aspect or element of the proposed development that will be discernible from this location will be the native hedgerow appearing beyond the aforementioned native treeline. Indeed, it is likely that the most noticeable elements of the Greenway from this location will not be its attendant infrastructure, but whatever walkers, runners or cyclists may be moving along it. Crucially, the proposed development will not inhibit more distant views over the landscape, while its native hedgerow will assist in knitting it into the inherent landscape fabric of this setting.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of visual change is considered Negligible.</p>
<p>Significance of Visual Effect</p> <p>The visual effect is considered Not Significant.</p>
<p>Quality of Effect</p> <p>Neutral</p>
<p>Duration of Effect</p> <p>Permanent</p>

Summary of Visual Effects

Please note that as in each and every case the duration of operational effects will be 'permanent,' this is not repeated in the below Table 15-8.

Table 15-8 Summary of Visual Effects and Quality of Effect

VP No.	Significance of Effect	Quality of Effect
1	Slight	Beneficial
2	Moderate	Neutral
3	Moderate	Neutral
4	Slight	Neutral
5	Not Significant	Neutral
6*	N/A	N/A
7*	N/A	N/A
8*	N/A	N/A
9	Not Significant	Positive
10	Moderate	Neutral
11*	N/A	N/A
12	Moderate-slight	Positive

VP No.	Significance of Effect	Quality of Effect
13	Moderate-slight	Positive
14	Moderate-slight	Positive
15	Significant	Neutral
16	Not Significant	Neutral

15.6 Mitigation Measures

15.6.1 Landscape Strategy

The following section should be read in conjunction with Chapter 8 of this EIAR, Biodiversity, and the Greenway Layout Drawings included in Volume 3 of this EIAR (Figures 4.1 – 4.46).

The proposed greenway has been designed to follow the route of the former West Clare Railway line where possible and follow existing field boundaries within adjacent agricultural lands so that existing fencing and hedgerows can be retained and supplemented as required to maintain a suitable boundary and visual screen.

Continuous timber post and tension mesh fencing (TII standard: CC-SCD-0320), or similar, is proposed along the length of the proposed greenway to segregate the proposed development from agricultural lands. Hedgerows will be planted alongside the new fencing. Proposed vegetation planting will be located on the outside of the fence line, which will ensure that there is minimal disturbance to the planting or damage to these habitats by greenway users.

As outlined in Chapter 8 of this EIAR, a number of areas along Poulmasherry Bay have been identified as sensitive bird areas. Visual screening at these locations is required to mitigate impacts to wintering birds, with planting to be maintained at a minimum 1.4m height during operation of the greenway. Landscape planting and fencing on the bay-side of the sensitive bird areas will be the first works undertaken following site clearance. This will ensure that the planted screening for wintering birds has as much time as possible to become established prior to opening of the greenway. Mesh screening material (privacy netting) will be attached to the fencing in these sensitive bird areas, where no existing screening is present. The purpose of the mesh netting is to provide a full level of screening while the landscape planting becomes established. The construction of the greenway is anticipated to take 16-24 months.

The fencing on Moyasta Bridge will be a solid barrier of 1.1m high with an additional 0.3m section of low permeability perforated fence to a total height of screening of 1.4m. The perforated section will be similar to that type used on the northern sections of the Dublin Port Greenway as shown in Chapter 8, Biodiversity. In addition, a single or double strand of steel wire will be installed along the parapet tops to deter raptors from perching.

Where no boundary is present, the standard planting proposal along the greenway will consist of a triple staggered row on each side of the greenway, outside the fence. The hedge will include both evergreen and deciduous species planted to a density of nine plants per linear meter, with a 70:30 ratio of evergreen to deciduous species. The hedges will be made up of species that are fast growing and tolerant to exposure along the coast.

In areas where some planting is present such a hedge with gaps, supplementary fencing and planting will be undertaken to ensure that adequate screening and stock proofing is provided. The supplementary planting will use the same species and ratios as the general planting specification and achieve the same nine plants per linear meter density where gaps in the vegetation exist.

The species listed below are examples of the species that can be used for the hedges. These species are native, tolerant to exposure and mostly fast growing.

- Evergreen:
 - Holly - *Ilex aquifolium*
 - Gorse - *Ulex europaeus*
 - Wild privet - *Ligustrum vulgare*
- Deciduous
 - Hawthorn - *Crataegus monogyna*
 - Broom - *Cytisus scoparius*
 - European Spindle - *Euonymus europaeus*;
 - Burnet Rose - *Rosa spinosissima* (*R. pimpinellifolia*)
 - Dog rose - *Rosa canina*
 - Grey willow - *Salix cinerea*
 - Hazel - *Corylus avellana*
 - Elder - *Sambucus nigra*

The final specification can include other species depending on availability and will be signed off by the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) in advance of ordering the plants. The causeway leading to Moyasta Bridge may not have space to place three rows of native hedging on each side. If this is confirmed by the landscape contractor, there will be an option to use non-native species such as *Eleagnus* to provide screening.

Verges will be allowed to revegetate naturally with locally occurring native species. Reseeding with commercially available grass seed or wildflower mixes will be avoided.

15.6.2 Construction Phase

Fencing and screen planting will be carried out along the length of the proposed greenway in accordance with the Landscape Strategy outline above.

Crucially, a total of 16.4km of native vegetation will be planted, including new habitats and supplementary planting. As an estimated total of 4.2km of habitat will be cleared to facilitate construction, on balance, this represents a net gain of 12.2km of native vegetation/ habitat. In summary, this is a rare yet substantial addition and improvement to the biodiversity of not just the study area, but the wider locality/county.

As noted in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, prior to any construction activities including site clearance and excavation works, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be produced by the successful contractor(s) for each element of the proposed development. The CEMP will set out the Contractor's overall management and administration of the construction project.

As noted in Chapter 4, before any works commence on site, the Contractor will also be required to prepare an Environmental Operating Plan (EOP) in accordance with the TII/NRA *Guidelines for the Creation and Maintenance of an Environmental Operating Plan*. The EOP will set out the Contractors approach to managing environmental issues associated with the construction of the road and provide a documented account to the implementation of the environmental commitments set out in the EIAR and measures stipulated in the planning conditions. Details within the plan will include:

- All Environmental commitments and mitigation measures included as part of the planning approval process and any requirements of statutory bodies such as the

National Parks and Wildlife Services as well as a method documenting compliance with the measures.

- A list of all applicable environmental legislation requirements and a method of documenting compliance with these requirements; and
- Outline methods by which construction work will be managed to avoid, reduce or remedy potential adverse impacts on the environment.

To oversee the implementation of the EOP, the Contractors will be required to appoint a person to ensure that the mitigation measures included in the EIAR, the EOP and the statutory approvals are executed in the construction of the works and to ensure that those mitigation measures employed are functioning properly throughout the duration of the construction phase.

15.6.3 Operational Phase

As referenced above, the greenway will be largely using the same linear infrastructure (i.e. chiefly that of brownfield embankments and several stone structures) that was constructed in the late 19th Century. Thus, these palpable, visible and muscular legacies of the original rail line will be restored to use - albeit a different use to that for which they were constructed - through the operations of the greenway. By following the original rail line along such distances, this also means that an equivalent length of greenfield development is not necessary to facilitate the proposed development.

In addition, the operations of the two trailhead car parks, along with the maturation of 16.4 km of native vegetation will serve to strengthen the landscape character of the receiving environment.

An outline Management and Maintenance Plan has been developed and is included in Volume 4 of this EIAR. A detailed Management and Maintenance Plan will be developed and implemented by Clare County Council and will include management and monitoring measures to ensure vegetation is appropriately maintained during operation of the greenway. This will allow for safe usage of the greenway as well as ensuring the effectiveness of the planting as a visual screen. This will include maintaining screening vegetation to a minimum height of 1.4m at bird sensitive locations as required in accordance with the mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 8 of this EIAR, Biodiversity. Boundary treatments will be identified in the plan and included in the schedule of monitoring and maintenance inspections to be developed as part of the plan. This will include inspection and maintenance of fencing along the greenway as required in accordance with the inspection schedule to be developed as part of the plan.

15.7 Monitoring

Monitoring of vegetation screening will be carried out in accordance with the Management and Maintenance Plan to be developed as outlined above. No other monitoring is anticipated with regards to landscape and visual amenity.

15.8 Residual Effects

15.8.1 Construction Phase

The landscape and visual construction-phase effects are the same as those effects identified above in construction-phase Landscape Effects (Section 15.5.1.1) and construction-phase Visual Effects (Section 15.5.1.2).

15.8.2 Operational Phase

The landscape and visual residual effects are the same as those effects identified above in Operational Phase Landscape Effects (Section 15.5.2.1) and Operational Phase Visual Effects (Section 15.5.2.2).

15.9 References

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029:
<https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/planning/plans/clarecountydevelopmentplan23-2029/>

Landscape Character Assessment of Co. Clare (2004):
<https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/planning/publications/default-2.html>

TII DN-GEO-03047 Rural Cycleway Design (Offline & Greenway) February 2025:
<https://publications.tii.ie/document/?id=2748>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (2022). Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Reports (EIAR). Environmental Protection Agency, Wexford: www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/guidelines-on-the-information-to-be-contained-in-environmental-impact-assessment-reports-eiar.php

Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition, London: Routledge: <https://landscapeinstitute.org/policy-practice/technical/assessments-standards/glvia3-panel/>

National Planning Application Map Viewer: www.myplan.ie

Heritage Maps: www.heritagemaps.ie