

Chapter 11

Landscape and Visual

11.1 Introduction

The 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 August and October 2018. 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.

11.2 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.

As a cultural resource, the landscape functions as the setting for our day-to-day lives, also providing opportunities for recreation 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.

11.2.1 Forces for Landscape Change

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.

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 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.

11.2.2 Guidance

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 2013, published by the UK Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA).
- 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.

Use of the Term 'Effect' vs 'Impact'

The GLVIA 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 works, the impact would include the construction of the proposed development. '*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.

11.2.3 Assessment of Both 'Landscape' and 'Visual' Effects

Another key distinction to make in a LVIA is that between landscape effects and the visual effects of 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 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.

The assessment of landscape and visual effects included a desktop study, review of the proposed development drawings and visualisations, and a number of site visits which were carried out in November 2018 and January 2019.

11.2.4 Methodology for Landscape Assessment

In Section 11.4 of this report the landscape effects of the development are assessed. Landscape impact assessment considers the likely nature and scale of changes to the main landscape elements and characteristics, and the consequential effect on landscape character and value. Existing trends of change in the landscape are taken into account. The potential effect is assessed based on measurement of the landscape sensitivity against the magnitude of change which would result from the development.

11.2.4.1 Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource

Landscape Sensitivity: Landscape sensitivity 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. It also relates to the nature and scale of development proposed. It includes consideration of landscape values as well as the susceptibility of the landscape to the proposed 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, a number of criteria are used to assess the value of a landscape. Landscape policies are described in Section 11.3.

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 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.

For the purpose of assessment, five categories are used to classify the landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment.

Table 11.1 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 principle 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 principle 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 principle management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change

Sensitivity	Description
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 principle 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 principle management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the landscape through development, repair or restoration.

11.2.4.2 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'). Five categories are used to classify magnitude of landscape change.

Table 11.2 Magnitude of Landscape Change

Magnitude of Change	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 (i.e. landscape receptors), and/or introduction of large elements considered totally uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in fundamental change in the character of the landscape with loss of landscape quality and perceived value.
High	Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in major alteration or compromise of important landscape receptors, and/or introduction of large elements considered uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape with loss of landscape quality and perceived value.
Medium	Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration of landscape receptors, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape but not necessarily reduction in landscape quality and perceived value.
Low	Change that is moderate or limited in scale, resulting in minor alteration of landscape receptors, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape and no reduction in landscape quality and perceived value.
Negligible	Change that is limited in scale, resulting in no alteration to landscape receptors, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic of the context. Such development results in no change to the landscape character, quality or perceived value.

11.2.4.3 Significance of Effects

In order to classify the significance of effects, the predicted magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape/viewpoint, using the following guide, from the EPA Draft Guidance (2017).

There are seven classifications of significance, namely: (1) imperceptible, (2) not significant, (3) slight, (4) moderate, (5) significant, (6) very significant, (7) profound.

Table 11.3 Significance of Effect (Landscape)

		Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	Very High	Profound	Profound-Very Significant	Very Significant-Significant	Moderate	Slight
	High	Profound-Very Significant	Very Significant	Significant	Moderate-Slight	Slight-Not Significant
	Medium	Very Significant-Significant	Significant	Moderate	Slight	Not Significant
	Low	Moderate	Moderate-Slight	Slight	Not significant	Imperceptible
	Negligible	Slight	Slight-Not Significant	Not significant	Imperceptible	Imperceptible
	Negligible	Slight	Slight-Not Significant	Not significant	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

The matrix above is used *as a guide only*. 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.

Landscape effects are also classified as positive, neutral or negative/adverse. 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 if a development achieves the objective of the policy the resulting effect might be positive, even if the landscape character is profoundly changed.

11.2.5 Methodology for Visual Assessment

In Section 11.4.3 of this report the visual effects of the development are assessed. Visual assessment considers the changes to the composition character of views and the visual amenity experienced by visual receptors (groups of people). 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 development.

11.2.5.1 Sensitivity of the Viewpoint/Visual Receptor

Viewpoint 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 sensitive to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes), 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).*

Visual receptor susceptibility and value of the viewpoints which are assessed, are discussed further in Section 11.4.3. For the purpose of assessment, five categories are used to classify a viewpoint's sensitivity:

Table 11.4 Categories of Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Iconic viewpoints - towards or from a landscape feature or area - that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of national value. The composition, character and quality of the view are such that its capacity for accommodating change in the form of development is very low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change.
High	Viewpoints that that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from houses or outdoor recreation features focussed on the landscape). The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity for accommodating compositional change in the form of development may or may not be low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change that reduces visual amenity.
Medium	Viewpoints representing people travelling through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, i.e. viewing but not focused on the landscape which is regarded as moderately scenic. 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	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, or on heavily trafficked routes etc. The view may present an attractive backdrop to these activities but is not regarded as particularly scenic or an important element of these activities.
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.

11.2.5.2 Magnitude of Change to the View

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of 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.

Table 11.5 Categories of Visual Change

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

11.2.5.3 Significance of Visual Effects

As for landscape effects, in order to classify the importance of visual effects, the magnitude of change to the view is measured against the sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Visual effects are also classified as positive, neutral or negative. This is an inherently subjective exercise. Visual receptors' attitudes to development of various types varies and this affects their perception of the visual effects of development.

11.2.6 Quality and Timescale

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 development, will vary. However, the methodology applied is designed to provide robust justification for the conclusions drawn. These qualitative impacts/effects are defined as:

- Adverse – 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 the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape(townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality;
- Beneficial – 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.

Impacts/effects are also categorised according to their longevity or timescale:

- Temporary – Lasting for one year or less;
- Short Term – Lasting one to seven years;
- Medium Term – Lasting seven to fifteen years;
- Long Term – Lasting fifteen years to sixty years;
- Permanent – Lasting over sixty years.

11.2.7 Study Area

The main study area for both landscape and visual effects was determined through desktop study and site visits. Site visits were carried out in November 2018 and February 2019.

The study area is influenced by the likely landscape and visual effects, and is shown in Plate 11.1 below. The study area includes the eastern portion of Dursey Island, which will have visibility of the proposed development. On the mainland side, the study area includes the immediate vicinity of the proposed cable car station and visitor centre, as well as the approach road (and scenic route) R572 and part of Crow Head to the south.

It should be noted that this study area relates to the main elements of the development that are likely to have landscape and visual effects, and that other works including 10 no. proposed passing bays and 1 no. visibility splay along the R572, though not indicated below, are also included in this assessment.



Plate 11.1 Study area

11.3 Description of Receiving Environment – Policy Context

The following section includes policies and objectives from the Cork County Development Plan 2015-2021 (hereafter referred to as the 'Development Plan') which relate to the site, including policies relating to landscape character, value and scenic routes.

Chapter 13 Green Infrastructure and Environment contains relevant policies and objectives which are listed below. This chapter recognises the landscape of County Cork as a key asset and notes its importance in terms of tourism and recreation.

A number of objectives relating to the landscape and developments in general are as follows:

- a) *Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment.*
- b) *Landscape issues will be an important factor in all land use proposals, ensuring that a proactive view of development is undertaken while maintaining respect for the environment and heritage generally in line with the principle of sustainability.*
- c) *Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.*
- d) *Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.*
- e) *Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amounts of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.*

11.3.1 Landscape Character and High Value Landscapes

The Draft Cork County Landscape Strategy, produced in 2007, has informed the Development Plan policy, and the information in terms of landscape character areas and types are referred to within the Development Plan. This document identified 76 character areas in County Cork, but amalgamated these into 16 landscape character

types, which are a more general categorisation of the landscape based on similarities between the areas. Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are described in some detail in the Strategy, and detailed characteristics, opportunities and pressures are listed for each LCT.

The assessment also ascribes a landscape value to each character area, ranging from Low to Very High. Sensitivity of each LCT is also identified, ranging from Low to Very High. It should however be noted that as in Landscape and Visual Assessment, sensitivity is directly related to the type of development or change proposed.

Landscape Character Types which have a High or Very High Value, and High or Very High Sensitivity, and are also considered to be of County or National Importance, are classified as High Value Landscape (HVL). Figure 13.2 of the Development Plan contains an illustration of these areas, and indicates that the proposed development site is within an area of HVL. This is shown in Plate 11.2 below:

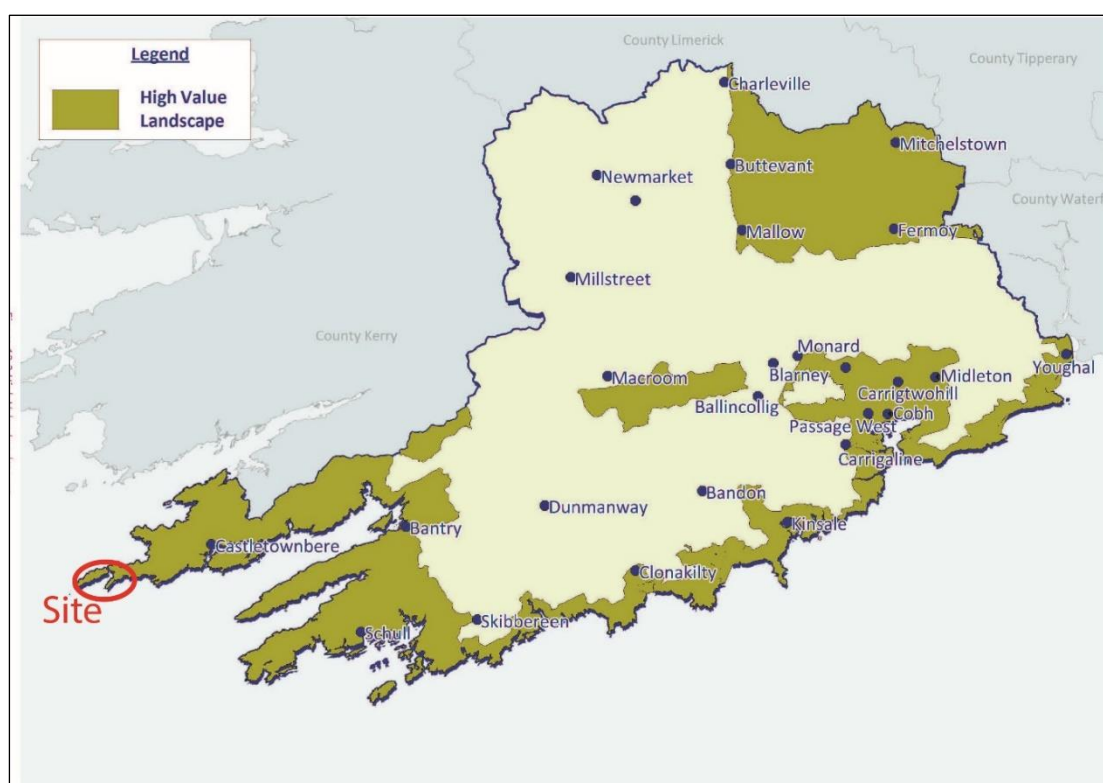


Plate 11.2 High Value Landscapes with site Source: Cork County Development Plan

The Development Plan notes that within these areas of HVL, considerable care is needed in locating large scale developments without them becoming unduly obtrusive. It notes that such developments should generally be supported by visual impact assessment and involve an evaluation of the visibility and prominence of the proposed development in its immediate environs and in the wider landscape.

The following objective is relevant:

GI 6-2: Draft Landscape Strategy: *Ensure that the management of development of the County will have regard for the value of the landscape, its character, distinctiveness and sensitivity as recognised in the Cork County Draft Landscape Strategy and its recommendations, in order to minimize the visual and environmental impact of development, particularly in areas designated as High*

Value Landscapes where higher development standards (layout, design, landscaping, materials used) will be required.

11.3.2 Landscape Character Type, Value and Sensitivity

The site of the proposed development, Dursey Island and the Beara Peninsula within County Cork, is part of the LCT 4. Rugged Ridge Peninsulas. This LCT also includes the Sheep's Head and Mizen peninsulas, which lie south west of Dursey and the Beara Peninsula. All are similar in that they are peninsulas divided by deep inlets and have characteristic mountainous 'spines or higher' rocky ground.

This LCT is assigned a Very High value, Very High sensitivity, and a National landscape importance.

This landscape type is described in the Strategy as a series of rugged peninsulas with mountainous peaks, such as Hungry Hill on the Beara Peninsula. Shorelines are also rugged, with rocky promontories and islands extending out into the sea. These peninsulas are described as a mix of moorland and more fertile patches of farmland and woodland with some conifer plantations on higher ground. Farmsteads tend to be scattered on lower ground and towns, villages and hamlets are found along the coast, including Castletownbere, Allihies and Eyerias.

The Strategy notes that within this landscape type, there are 35 scenic routes. Within this LCT, there are several distinctive landscape character areas (LCA). Dursey Island is a distinct LCA.

The Strategy notes that agriculture is likely to remain an important land use in the future. The Strategy also notes that this area is highly valued for tourism and recreation as a result of its scenic qualities and extensive coastline, but also its marine leisure, and notes that tourism is likely to be a significant factor in the future development of the area.

The relevant recommendations are as follows for the LCT 4 Rugged Ridge Peninsulas:

- Encourage sustainable tourism by maximising the potential amenity value of water bodies within this LCT
- Recognise the importance of retaining areas of coastline, estuaries and dunes for their scenic and ecological value
- Protect the setting of existing promontories which are part of the unique setting of this coastline
- Ensure that new development, including contemporary architecture, complements the local vernacular in terms of scale and character and complements the landscape setting
- Ensure that new development of any kind is sympathetic to the individual form and character of the island's landscapes and traditional building patterns

11.3.3 Views and Prospects

There are a number of scenic routes in the vicinity of the site, including the access road leading to the existing cable car station. The Development Plan notes that each scenic route was examined individually and their location was related to the landscape type that is traversed and the key features which make these routes attractive were identified. Those routes within High Value Landscapes are considered particularly important to protect. However, the Development Plan also states that while it advocates the protection of scenic routes, it also recognises that landscapes are living

and changing, and that this policy should not give rise to the prohibition of development, but that development along these routes, where permitted, should not hinder or obstruct these views or prospects and should be designed and located to minimise impact.

The following scenic route is also the main access road to the site:

S118 – Castletownbere via Cahermore to Garinish Point

This route is described in Table 5.1, Volume 2 of the Development Plan, as running through a High Value Landscape, adjoining the pNHA garnish Point and Kenmare River SAC. The overall landscape value is judged as Very High. The description of the features to be protected include the views of Bere Haven, Bere Island, Firkeel Bay, Dursey Sound and Island, the sea, Slieve Miskish Mountains and surrounding hills. It also noted that there is a sense of remoteness along the route, and that rural character is prevalent. The scenic route and the site location are illustrated in Plate 11.3 below:



Plate 11.3 Scenic Routes and site location (Source: Bing Maps)

The following policies are relevant:

GI 7-2: Scenic Routes: *Protect the character of those views and prospects obtainable from scenic routes and in particular stretches of scenic routes that have very special views and prospects identified in this plan. The scenic routes identified in this plan are shown on the scenic amenity maps in the CDP Map Browser and are listed in Volume 2 Chapter 5 Scenic Routes of this plan.*

GI 7-3: Development on Scenic Routes

a) *Require those seeking to carry out development in the environs of a scenic route and/or an area with important views and prospects, to demonstrate that there will be no adverse obstruction or degradation of the views towards and from vulnerable landscape features. In such areas, the appropriateness of the design, site layout, and landscaping of the proposed development must be demonstrated along with mitigation measures to prevent significant alterations to the appearance or character of the area.*

b) Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of developments along scenic routes which provides guidance in relation to landscaping. See Chapter 12 Heritage – Objective HE-4-6.

11.3.4 Implications of Landscape Policy

The Development Plan policy identifies a number of policies which indicate certain values to the site, and which should be considered as part of this Assessment. These include:

- The site is located in an area of high scenic quality and recognised in policy as a highly valued landscape. Designations include High Value Landscape which is the highest category of landscape designation within the County and denotes landscapes of a Very High value, Very High sensitivity, and a National landscape importance.
- A Scenic route (S118) is located in the immediate vicinity of the site and it the main approach road to the site.
- The scenic and ecological values of the coastline is recognised.
- The potential of tourism as a resource for the development of the area is recognised.
- The site is within the Beara Peninsula SPA and adjacent to the Kenmare River SAC. Dursey Island and the area to the north of the existing cable car station are within the Garinish Point pNHA.

11.3.5 Description of Site and Environs

The site and environs are described below in terms of its location and access, as well as its character in terms of landform, landcover, land use, cultural heritage, and overall character. Under each heading, the site and environs are first described, and then the wider context.

The extent of the site area, and further details of the proposed development are shown in the planning drawings. The study area is shown in Plate 11.1.

11.3.6 Site Location and Context

As illustrated in Plate 11.1, the site is located at the tip of the Beara Peninsula, in the south west of the County. Dursey Island lies across the narrow Dursey Sound.

The site consists of an existing cable car station, which includes a building and supporting structures on the mainland at Ballahgboy, as well as another on the eastern coast of Dursey Island. A car park is also located adjacent to the cable car station on the mainland. The cable car is used as a means of transport across the Dursey Sound, as shown in Plate 11.4 below:



Plate 11.4 Site location and context – looking across sea towards Dursey Island

11.3.7 Access and Location

The site is accessed from the R572 (also a scenic route) from Castletownbere, and the cable car is located at the end of this road. The cable car itself connects Dursey Island to the mainland. Dursey Island has one main local road.

11.3.8 Landform – Topography and Drainage

Site and Immediate environs

On the mainland (Ballaghboy) side, the landform is that of a rugged landscape of moorland and rock outcrops, sloping quite steeply towards the coast. The road approaching the cable car station skirts around the lower slopes of the peninsula. The car park and road are at a lower level than the cable car station and control building. Above this, the rugged ground rises to a ridge, as seen in Plate 11.5 below:



Plate 11.5 Steeply sloping topography towards cable car infrastructure on both sides of Dursey Sound

The landform on Dursey Island in the vicinity of the site is similar, though the slope is gentler to the south of the island, where the road is seen. A more dramatic slope lies to the north of the cable car landing. There is a small watercourse at the south-eastern boundary of the mainland side of the site, and the land drains towards the sea on both sides.

Wider Context

The landscape is well described by the term 'Rugged Ridge Peninsulas'. The tip of the Beara Peninsula and Dursey Island both fit this description. The landscape in the vicinity of the cable car station on the mainland is that of a rugged promontory, with a dramatic and indented rocky coastline. Dursey Island is similarly described, and considerable variations in topography are evident in the wider landscape both on Dursey Island and on the mainland.

11.3.9 Landcover – Vegetation and Built Form

Site and immediate environs

The landcover of the mainland site at Ballaghboy includes an existing hard surfaced car park at the end of the road, and the cable car control building itself. Below the car park is a small stone wall shelter with information signs. The steel lattice support structure for the cable car is located at a lower level, close to the coast. The land surrounding these areas is a mixture of coastal grassland, areas of heath and rock outcrops. Chapter 7 Biodiversity of this EIAR defines the habitat type at this location as dry-humid acid grassland, semi-natural grassland and heath.



Plate 11.6 Car park along the access road to the cable car



Plate 11.7 Cable car control building and landing, and view over car park and information signs at lower level



Plate 11.8 Coastal grassland, rock outcrops and disturbed ground below the cable car control building and landing platform

On Dursey Island, the landcover is similar. Areas of grassland, heath and rock outcrops are found in the vicinity of the cable car steel structure. A small building is located adjacent to the cable car landing point, and an informal car park is located next to this building. Plates 11.9 and 11.10 illustrate the landcover.

Dursey Sound is a narrow channel between the island and the mainland, and this seascape is also an important part of the character of the area.



Plate 11.9 Grassland, heath, and rock outcrops are found around the cable car landing and associated structures on both sides of the Sound, with some agricultural land (on the mainland)



Plate 11.10 Car park, cable car landing and associated building and support structures

Wider Context

On both sides of the Dursey Sound, landcover in the wider landscape is similar, consisting of rocky outcrops, areas of heath and grassland, with some of pockets of agricultural lands used for grazing. Roadways lead from both parking areas tend to be narrow.

On the Ballaghboy side, scattered dwellings and farm buildings are found along the roadside above, and agricultural lands are evident along the road (R572).

On Dursey Island, dwellings are less common and not found close to the cable car, a cluster of dwellings lies approximately 1 km to the southwest. Rocky coastlines, and the sea itself, are prominent elements in both areas. While some of the lands in the vicinity of the cable car station are used for grazing, improved agricultural land is not present in the immediate vicinity of the site, and is found, along with scattered dwellings, further to the south-west of the island as shown in Plate 11.11 below.



Plate 11.11 Scrub and rocky outcrops in foreground with agricultural lands and scattered dwellings in background

11.3.10 Structures and Cultural Heritage

Site and Immediate environs

The cable car itself and its history are a part of the area's cultural heritage. The buildings on both sites associated with the cable car are small buildings adjacent to the landing, which are raised concrete platforms surrounded by a wall (on the mainland site) and a railing on Dursey Island. The buildings are relatively recent and are not

architecturally remarkable. On both sides also are supporting structures (pylons) for the cable car, which are located close to the coastline. These are important and distinctive features of the area which are clearly associated with the cable car and its history, which itself is now a well-known feature of the area. These supporting structures on the island are shown in Plate 11.10 above. On Dursey, cultural heritage elements close to the site include a church which is found close to the slipway, and its information display tells the story of O Sullivan Bere as well as the Dursey Massacre, referring to events since 1300.

Wider Context

There are numerous cultural heritage features on the island, both in terms of monuments to see, including the Signal Tower, as well as the history associated with the island. The Beara-Breifne Way trail starts from Dursey Island and it runs past the cable car station on the mainland side to connect to Garinish Point. This trail is related to the story of O Sullivan Bere and the historic march to Leitrim.



Plate 11.12 Ruins of monastic chapel and graveyard on Dursey Island

11.3.11 Land Uses

Site and Immediate vicinity

The main existing land use on the site can be described as transport, with a strong tourism dimension. The cable car connects Dursey Island with the mainland for locals but is a popular tourist attraction. Recreation is also a key land use, as the Beara-Breifne Way runs adjacent to the site on both the island and mainland sides. Grazing is also a land use observed adjacent to both the mainland and Dursey Island site.

Wider Landscape

In the wider landscape, agriculture is also a key land use, while tourism remains an important land use. Numerous tourist destinations are found in close proximity (within a number of kilometres) of the cable car station, and the route is along the Wild Atlantic Way, and the Beara-Breifne Way walking trail. On Dursey Island, agriculture is the main land use, but the entire island is a popular tourist destination especially for walkers.

Visual Amenity

Both sites – on the mainland and on Dursey Island, are highly scenic. There are spectacular, often panoramic views of the rugged landscape and rocky coastline and the sea, from both sides of Dursey Sound. The R572 leading to the mainland station is a Scenic Route.

Views towards Dursey Island from the cable car park and landing are extensive, and views are across Dursey Sound to the island, as well as towards Crow's Head to the southwest, as shown in Plates 11.13 and 11.15 below:



Plate 11.13 Scenic views across Dursey Sound towards Dursey Island from the mainland site



Plate 11.14 Scenic views across Dursey Sound towards the Skelligs from the mainland site



Plate 11.15 Scenic views from Dursey Island to Crow's Head

Views to the northwest are also available and in clear weather, the Skellig rocks can be seen from the mainland side. Views from Dursey Island across the Sound are similarly scenic, with views across Dursey Sound to the mainland, as well as view to Crow Head, as illustrated in Plates 11.9, 11.11, 11.12, 11.14 and 11.15.

11.3.12 Summary of Landscape Values

Policy clearly states that the landscape is highly valued for its character, scenic qualities and views, in the Landscape Strategy and the Development Plan. It is designated as High Value Landscape which denotes high landscape value, sensitivity and importance. The road which accesses the cable car station is also a Scenic Route.

However, landscape values of a site can be identified both through formal designations which infer landscape value, as well as values which are not enshrined in policy but are evident on the site.

These can be categorised in two ways – values which should be conserved, and those that provide opportunity for enhancement. The values to be conserved indicate those aspects of the receiving environment which are valued and sensitive and could be negatively impacted on by the proposed development. These values are generally of significance and should be considered the potential landscape and visual constraints to the proposed development.

These values are listed below. Criteria which denote landscape value which should be conserved, include:

- *Landscape Quality*: The landscape appears to be in good condition and in general, high quality and relatively intact. Some interventions in and around the site, such as the car parking area and the area around the existing cable car building and platform, are not of high quality and detract from the surroundings.
- *Sense of Wildness/Naturalness*: The site and surrounding landscape does have a very strong sense of wildness, and of naturalness. These diminish somewhat in the vicinity of the buildings and car park but the wider vicinity of the mainland site, and the whole of Dursey Island, has a strong sense of wildness and naturalness. The journey itself in the cable car also allows the experience the sense of wildness and naturalness. There is a remote character to the area, in particular the island.
- *Cultural /Heritage Value*: The areas has a strong sense of history and a number of built heritage features. Information boards recount the history of the cable car, of Dursey Island and important events. Walking trails with historic connections such as the Beara Breifne Way reinforce this strong sense of heritage and history.
- *Aesthetic Quality*: The area has a very strong scenic value, with panoramic views from the island and the mainland, of the rugged landscape, rocky shores and the sea itself.
- *Public Accessibility and Recreation Value*: Accessibility by the public is a key feature of both areas, the waymarked trail Beara-Breifne Way runs adjacent to both sites. The area is highly valued for recreation, in particular walking and hiking.

The landscape value of the sites and surrounds are considered to be High to Very High. This is defined as follows, based on guidance set out by the Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Assessment Landscape Institute (GLVIA) 2013;

A landscape whose values are clearly recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national or international value and the principle management objective for the area is protection of the existing character from change.

11.3.13 Zone of Visual Influence and Potential Visual Receptors

In general, the views of the proposed development site are most evident looking across Dursey Sound, from both the island and the mainland, as well as other views over the sea. There are also likely to be some views towards the proposed development from the wider landscape.

In general, views of both cable car landing places, and views of both support structures, are visible from the same locations. The views of the cable car station on the mainland are somewhat less obvious but visible from Dursey Island. Plate 11.16 indicates the likely zone of visual influence, where the existing cable car structures are visible and are likely to be views where the proposed development is likely to be visible.



Plate 11.16 Predicted Zone of Visual Influence (Source: Bing Maps)

11.3.13.1 Potential Visual Receptors

Potentially sensitive visual receptors include local residents, which would be of high sensitivity, as well as tourists, and those involved in recreation along the walking and hiking trails or engaged in boating or sailing for recreation. Those travelling on the local road which is a scenic route are also of high sensitivity. Less sensitive visual receptors include those involved in work such as agricultural activities.

Potential visual receptors include viewers from local house clusters, roads, the cable car stations and areas close to the shore, as well as the scenic route leading to the cable car station and various locations along waymarked walking trails (Beara Breifne Way). There are a high proportion of sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the site.

11.3.13.2 Mainland Views

Views will be available from a short section (approximately 500m) of the R572 approach road and scenic route to the site of the proposed development on Dursey Island, but views of the development on both sides of the Sound will be available from approximately 300m along the road. Views further away on the approach road are hidden by the topography.

Other views of the proposed development from the mainland include views from the visitor car park, as well as from the cable car itself, and from the Beara-Breifne Way from the ridge above the cable car station. In the wider landscape, views from the local road and Beara-Breifne Way at Ballynacarriga, leading to Crow Head, and viewers from the Beara Breifne Way at Crow Head will also have visibility of the site.

11.3.13.3 Dursey Island Views

Views from Dursey Island are restricted to the area on the eastern part of the island, in the vicinity of the cable car, and from the slipway to the south of the island and from the Beara Way to the northwest of the cable car landing. Only a very short section of the local road, in direct proximity to the island landing point, has any visibility of the cableway. Views from the Beara Way are elevated, and the cableway is, therefore, clearly visible.

The views towards the proposed development of the cable car are of very high scenic quality.

11.4 Description of Potential Effects

11.4.1 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

Though the proposed development is described in detail in Chapter 4 of this EIAR, the main components of the development that are particularly relevant to landscape and visual effects include:

- The removal of the existing cableway structure, existing mainland visitor car park and both existing cable line station buildings;
- The retention of some existing cable car infrastructure on the mainland;
- A new cableway system, with supporting line structures;
- A mainland drive station and an island return station;
- Construction of an interpretive centre, ticketing area, shop and cafe on the mainland including a terrace overlooking Dursey Sound;
- A split-level visitor car park on the mainland with approx. 100 spaces and retention of a small existing residents' car park on the island; and,
- Road improvement works including the widening of the carriageway at 11 locations and further road improvements to include pavement and verge works at a number of other locations along the R572 approach road.

11.4.2 Design Rationale

Chapters 3 and 4 of this EIAR sets out the design evolution and approach, which was initially set out in the design brief as follows:

- *The development shall have “a design led integrated approach” [...] “having regard to the unique and sensitive site context”*
- *It shall advance “integrated and innovative design solutions that will be specific to the site.”*
- *The “external finishes and layout [of all structures] shall be sympathetic [and] in harmony with the surrounding landscape”*
- *All structures shall be “capable of withstanding a severe marine environment with minimal yearly maintenance”*
- *The site shall be “Fully landscaped [and] low maintenance”*

Several alternatives were considered for the scheme, with five options being initially produced as outlined in Chapter 3. The preferred scheme, Option 3A, further evolved and included issues arising from discussions with CCC's Project Steering Group, Failte Ireland and various scheme consultees.

The design seeks to replace the cable car and buildings and provide additional buildings and car parking on the mainland side, with a waiting, lookout area and limited parking on the island side. The proposal will replace basic, shed like structures with contemporary architectural buildings, with greater durability and a high quality appearance. Due to the location of the cable car, and the exposed nature of the location, the buildings and car park are not easily screened. Key aspects of the architectural design are as follows:

- The cableway will be supported by two pylons of functional tubular steel construction. Two passenger cabins will operate on the cableway.
- The proposed mainland buildings are low buildings which are set into the landscape and the proposed island station is a simple building. Materials used include robust contemporary and natural material which will weather well, and include cut stone, concrete and oxidised metal.
- The mainland side of the proposed development includes several buildings linked by courtyards with an outdoor terrace and viewing areas to maximise views.
- The car park is designed on two levels to minimise visual impact and rock cutting.
- Natural stone paving, stone faced car park and retaining walls, are features of the landscape design, while reinforced grasscrete car parking spaces and suitable vegetation will combine to create a character which fits in with the surrounding landscape.

11.4.3 Predicted Landscape Effects – Construction Phase

11.4.3.1 *Landscape Sensitivity*

The landscape sensitivity of the area including both the mainland site, island site, and surrounds, is considered to be High to Very High, and described in some more detail in the following paragraphs.

11.4.3.2 *Magnitude of Change*

The construction phase will involve demolition of station buildings, platforms and ropeways. Earthworks will be undertaken on the mainland site including excavation of rock and cutting of areas to facilitate the car park and visitor centre. Demolition of the cable station on the island and minor earthworks will be undertaken during this phase. During construction stage, there will be machinery working and entering and exiting from the mainland side, and noise and dust are likely to occur. There will also be works carried out along the R572 to construct the passing bays and visibility splay. As stated in Chapter 13 of Volume 2 of this EIAR – Air Quality and Climate – the sensitivity of the area to dust soiling as a result of the construction phase, under a worst case scenario, is considered to be low.

The construction phase is expected to last 18 months and this will result in **Short term, Slight, to Moderate adverse landscape effect** on both the mainland and the island site.

11.4.3.3 Predicted Landscape Effects – Operational Stage

Landscape Sensitivity

The site is located at the very tip of the Beara Peninsula, and on Dursey Island, in a relatively remote, rugged and highly scenic landscape and seascape, with a strong sense of naturalness.

The Draft Landscape Strategy ascribes a Very High value, Very High sensitivity, and a National landscape importance to the Landscape Character Type in which the site is located. The road to the site (R572) is a scenic route and the road on Dursey Island part of the Beara Breifne Way. Policy documents acknowledge the scenic and ecological values of the coastline, as well as the potential of tourism in the development of the area. The landscape sensitivity of the area including both the mainland site, island site, and surrounds, is considered to be High to Very High.

Magnitude of Change

The operational stage of the proposed development will result in the construction of a new cable car and associated equipment, to replace the existing cable car. Some of the infrastructure associated with the old cable car is to remain, as it is seen as part of the area's heritage and character. On the mainland side, an interpretative centre, ticket office and gift shop is also proposed along with a café building, and a cable car station, increasing the built form and the extent of this considerably compared to what is there at present. A larger car park is also proposed. Part of the development will utilise the existing car park hard surface, but some areas of heath will be removed for the development. Access is proposed to the slipway below from the development, and access to the Beara-Breifne Way will still be possible. The existing access to the Beara-Breifne way which runs to the north of the proposed development to Garinish Point is to be retained, and hikers will not be obliged to pay an entrance fee

Localised change in landscape character is likely, though over a limited area, including the site of the proposed development, and the eastern end of Dursey island, where the proposed development introduces a large element of built form into a relatively unchanged, remote and rugged landscape.

The magnitude of change of the development, on the mainland side, is considered Medium:

Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration of landscape receptors, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context

The magnitude of change on the Island side is considered Low. Passing bays on the R572 on the approach road to the site are considered to have a Low magnitude of change;

Change that is moderate or limited in scale, resulting in minor alteration of landscape receptors.

Significance of Effect

The introduction of elements into a scenic landscape of high sensitivity are likely to result in effects on the landscape fabric but also on the landscape character. The significance of the effect on the landscape character of the study area on both sides of Dursey Sound, while relatively localised, is considered to **be Slight to Moderate**. The proposed development will cause a localised change in character due to the size and

scale of the proposed development in this setting. The effects range from neutral to adverse in quality.

Adverse effects on the landscape character include a considerable increase in the hard surface footprint and built form on the mainland area, the removal of the open and expansive nature of the existing parking area/viewing area, with an emphasis on vehicular circulation, and the removal of areas of rock, heath and acid grassland habitat. These reduce the sense of naturalness and remoteness in the vicinity of the site.

The majority of the effects are considered neutral in quality –

Neutral - Scheme complements the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and maintains landscape quality;

These include the provision of a new cable car, retention of the existing mainland pylon and some of the infrastructure, and creation of access to the slipway and the reinstatement of part of the heath where the existing cable car building and hard surface is to be removed. The high quality design of the proposed buildings and their low form which assists integration into the landscape, reflects the unique landscape setting, and is seen as a neutral quality.

Measures included in the design that are proposed to reduce adverse effects, are described in Section 11.5 below.

11.4.3.4 Visual Effects

Visual Effects - Construction Stage

Visual effects during construction stage include demolition and construction works, earthworks. Earthworks will be undertaken on the mainland site including excavation of rock and cutting of areas to facilitate the car park and visitor centre as well as road improvements and passing bays. Visual effects are likely to be Short term, Slight adverse effects.

Visual Effects – Operational Stage

Visual effects were assessed based on site visits, study of the drawings, and assisted by the preparation of photomontages.

A number of photomontage locations were chosen based on the site visit, characteristics of the proposed development and the likely visibility. These are listed below in Table 11.6 below and included as Figures 11.2-11.21. A viewpoint location map is also included in Figure 11.1 of this EIAR.

Table 11.6 Viewpoint locations

Viewpoint Number	Description
1	View from end of local road on Beara-Breifne Way at Ballynacarriga, Crow Head
2	View from R472 and scenic route at Ballaghboy
3	View from R472 and scenic route at Ballaghboy
4	View from open landscape and Beara-Breifne Way to north of mainland site
5	View from ridge to north of mainland site at Ballaghboy

Viewpoint Number	Description
6	View from Beara-Breifne Way and ridge northwest of Dursey Island site
7	View from Beara-Breifne Way and local road south of Dursey Island Site
8	View from Beara-Breifne Way and local road south of Dursey Island Site
9	View from Bear-Breifne a Way and local road south of Dursey Island Site
10	View from pier south of Dursey Island Site

These represent viewers on the mainland, including on the R572 scenic route approaching the site of the existing cable car and proposed development, including views near residential receptors. A view from the local road and Beara-Breifne Way at Crow Head is also included. Views from the Beara-Breifne Way and landscape to the north of the island which are accessed only by pedestrians and hikers are included.

Views from the Dursey Island side include views from the local road and Beara-Breifne Way in the vicinity of the proposed development, as well as a view from the Beara-Breifne Way on the ridge north of the proposed development. A view from the slipway is also included.

Each photomontage is described in terms of the existing view, and proposed view. The visual receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of change are described in each case, which combine to give the significance of the visual effects.

Viewpoint 1 - View from end of local road on Beara-Breifne Way at Crow Head

Existing View

The existing view shows a view from the end of the local road which is also the Beara-Breifne Way at Crow Head. In the foreground are sloping fields, and the sea. There is a view across the sea towards Dursey Sound, with Dursey Island and Lamb's Head on the mainland side, clearly visible. There are few man-made elements in the view, with the landscape on both sides of the Sound composed of rugged terrain, some only some fields and some scattered dwellings visible on the mainland side. The existing cable car pylon is visible on the mainland, but the island pylon is less distinctive seen against the backdrop of the landscape. Wooden electricity poles are also visible, and the cable car station on the mainland is just discernible against the skyline.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors include hikers along the Beara-Breifne Way, those using the local road and the view is considered highly scenic. These are considered to be of High sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed development is visible in the view, and while more the elements are of greater size and scale than the existing, they still occupy a limited proportion of the view, and blend in well with the landscape colour and texture. The mainland cable car station protrudes slightly above the skyline, but does not obstruct the overall view. The retaining wall is somewhat visible but blends relatively well into the landscape.

The magnitude of change is considered to be Low –

Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context

The predicted visual effect is considered **Slight, neutral** effect.

Viewpoint 2 - View from R572 at Ballaghboy

Existing View

This view represents one of the first locations where the site of the proposed development on both sides of the Dursey Sound, comes into view. The existing view shows a view towards Dursey Sound, a shed to the left in the foreground and the road sloping downhill away from the viewer, with two other dwellings and partly screened by the sloping topography. The mainland cable car platform and building are also partly visible to the right of the view. Across the Sound, Dursey Island is clearly visible. The existing cable car pylons on both sides are visible but blend in well against the landscape. The building and parked cars on the island are visible.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors include those walking and driving the scenic route, and the view is considered highly scenic. Viewers would be considered of High sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the proposed cable car station and parking area and replacement cable car pylon on Dursey Island are visible. The largest structures, the cable car building and pylon, are larger and more visible than the existing structures, but are set into the landscape and blend in well. The mainland visitor centre and cable car station are only partly visible, with the topography and dwellings screening some of these elements. The proposed pylon is more visible than the existing.

The magnitude of change is considered Low:

Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context

The visual effect is considered **Slight, neutral effect**.

Viewpoint 3 - View from R572 at Ballaghboy

Existing View

The existing view shows a closer view than Viewpoint 2, along the R572 as one approaches the mainland site. The view shows the road in the foreground, the land on one side slopes towards the Sound. In the middle ground, the rough grassland and heath with rock outcrops is visible, with the car parking area at a lower level, and the cable car platform and building partly hidden by the topography. Beyond this, Dursey Sound and Dursey Island are visible. The existing pylons are visible but inobtrusive, and the island parking area and cable car building are visible but in no way obtrusive.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors include those walking and driving the scenic route, and the view is considered highly scenic. Viewers would be considered of High sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the proposed development on the mainland side is clearly visible. The car park is one of the main elements visible, appearing as a large area of hard surface, with the stone retaining walls also a noticeable feature. The car park and proposed buildings take up a larger footprint compared to the existing view, and introduce an element of enclosure to a previously open view. The visitor centre and cable car buildings partly obscure views across the Sound.

The magnitude of change is considered Medium –

Partial intrusion of the development in the view

The significance of the effect is considered to be **Slight to Moderate**, while the quality of the effect is considered **Neutral to Adverse**. The extensive area of hard surface, car park, reduced vegetation and high walls appears as an adverse visual effect. This should be somewhat softened over time by the reinforced grasscrete surfacing on the car parking spaces. The buildings and pylon are considered to be of neutral quality, though distinctive, they blend in well in terms of materials and scale to the existing landform.

Viewpoint 4 - View from open landscape and Beara-Breifne Way to north of mainland site

Existing View

The existing view shows an open, simple and expansive landscape, with the landscape on both sides of Dursey Sound visible. The landcover of heath and rock outcrops in the foreground, on the mainland as well on Dursey Island, to the right, is distinctive and striking. A rock outcrop partly screens the existing cable car building and platform, and the pylon, cable car, and electricity poles are visible. In the distance, Crow Head is seen across the water.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors would include those walking and hiking on the Beara-Breifne Way trail, and the view is considered highly scenic. Visual receptors are considered of High sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the new cable car building and pylon which are the most obvious elements in the view, seen at relatively close proximity. The existing cable car building and platform are removed, with the machinery remaining and partly visible. The existing mainland pylon is partly obscured by the cable car building, and the cable car building is high but does not break the skyline. The pylon and cable car building on the Dursey Island are also visible.

The elements occupy a relatively limited proportion of the view, and though the cable car building restricts the views across to Crow Head, the remaining elements do not cause any obstruction and the simplicity of landcover and the open and expansive nature of the view, remain.

The magnitude of change is considered Low –

Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context

The significance of the effect is considered **Slight, neutral effect**.

Viewpoint 5 - View from ridge (and Beara-Breifne Way) to north of mainland site at Ballaghboy

Existing View

The existing view shows an elevated, panoramic view from the ridge to the north of the proposed development. (This is also close to the Beara-Breifne Way route to Garinish). The view shows the landcover on both sides of the Sound is similar. In the foreground, areas of heath with rocky outcrops slope away from the viewer, down towards the existing cable car platform and control building, with the pylons and electricity poles evident. Around the building, parked cars, fences and containers are evident, and these create a minor element of visual clutter. The main car park is hidden from view. Across Dursey Sound, Dursey Island is visible, with the pylon and cable car building and carpark, discernible but unobtrusive. The sea is one of the main elements in the view, and the top of Crow Head is just visible to the left of the image.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual Receptors would be those walking and hiking in the area, and those using the Beara-Breifne Way trail which is in close proximity. The view is highly scenic, and viewers are considered of High sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the development, including the lower tier of the car park, visitor centre and other buildings, and the cable car building to the right, though at a low level, are clearly visible from this view. The buildings and car park combine to create a considerably large spatial extent of hard surface. In contrast, the view of the proposed Dursey Island development shows though the pylon and building are of some height and visible, the development is of limited spatial extent and concentrated in one small area.

The magnitude of change in the view is considered to be Medium –

Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context

The significance of the visual effect is considered Moderate to Significant. The quality of the visual effect has both beneficial and adverse aspects. The removal of the cable car buildings and hard standing area to allow for natural regeneration is considered a beneficial effect. While the buildings and some of the car park are set into the landscape, the increased visibility of the hard surfaced parking area and the considerable horizontal extent of hard surface and high walls in this view create an adverse effect. The overall effect is considered adverse.

Viewpoint 6 - View from Beara-Breifne Way and ridge northwest of Dursey Island site

Existing View

The existing view shows an elevated view from the Beara-Breifne Way at the ridge behind the cable car station on Dursey Island. In the foreground, an expanse of heathland slopes towards some cliffs and the existing pylon and cable car buildings and parking area are visible to the right of the image. Across Dursey Sound, the rugged landscape of the higher ground slopes to the sea, with agricultural fields on the lower ground. The cable car station and visitor car park are visible, as is the road and

scattered dwellings which run parallel to the coast. In the distance, the slopes of Lackacrouaghan and Loughanemore hills are visible.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

The viewers would include those walking the Beara-Breifne Way, and the view is considered highly scenic. The visual receptor sensitivity is considered to be High.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the replacement pylon and cable car station visible on the island to the right of the image. Across Dursey Sound, the proposed development is clearly visible and consists of a number of low buildings and a distinctive retaining wall. The spatial extent is considered medium in the context of the overall view, but the development is clearly visible as a new element in the view. The magnitude of change is considered to be Medium.

Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context,

The significance of the visual effect is considered to be **Moderate**, and the quality of the effect is considered to be have both neutral and adverse aspects. The mainland development does appear as a large area of unbroken hard surfacing, particularly the retaining walls, which has an adverse effect. The island development is considered to have a neutral effect. The mainland development is well set into the landscape, and the building form relates well to the landscape. The overall effect is considered **neutral**.

Viewpoint 7 - View from Beara-Breifne Way and local road south of Dursey Island Site

Existing View

The existing view shows the view along the local road and Beara-Breifne Way on Dursey Island. The view is relatively close to the existing cable car building and car parking area, which is visible at the end of the road. The existing pylon and electricity poles are also visible in the centre of the image. The land on either side of the road is rugged and open, with a covering of heath, and Dursey Sound and the mainland landscape which is also rugged and composed of rock outcrops with a covering of heath, are visible in the background. The existing mainland cable car station and parking area are visible, but not obtrusive. There are no other buildings visible on the mainland in this view, with the exception of a shed to the right of the image.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors include walkers, tourists, and local residents, and the view is considered highly scenic. Visual receptor sensitivity is considered to be High.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the proposed island cable car station is prominent in the view, visible at the end of the road. This building is considerably larger than the existing. The island pylon is also obtrusive from this view. The proposed mainland development is visible from this view and occupies a considerable proportion of the view. The retaining walls and buildings combine to create a large area of built form and hard surface from this view. The magnitude of change is considered Medium –

Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context,

The visual effect is considered to be **Moderate** visual effect.

The quality of the view contains both neutral and adverse qualities. The large expanse of built form and hard surface where there were no previous structures appears as a large element of hard surface in this view. However, the building form and use of metal materials provide a change of texture as well as fitting in to the landscape. The quality of the effect is considered **neutral**.

Viewpoint 8 - View from Beara-Breifne Way and local road south of Dursey Island Site

Existing View

The existing view shows a view taken further away from the proposed development, then Viewpoint 7, along the same local road on Dursey Island, from a slightly elevated location. This view shows a slightly elevated view, with the road and the open, sloping, heath covered landscape in the foreground. The existing cable car building and car parking area and pylon are barely visible to the left of the image, while across Dursey Sound, the rugged and rocky landscape of the mainland is visible, with the cable car building and adjacent parking area just discernible but not obtrusive. To the left of the image, the peninsula to the north is visible across the sea. The view is considered highly scenic.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors include walkers, tourists, and local residents, and the view is considered highly scenic. Visual receptor sensitivity is considered to be High.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the proposed island cable car station is less prominent in this view, than in View 7. Similarly, the proposed building is considerably larger than the existing which is barely discernible in this view. Both pylons are visible from this view. The proposed mainland development occupies a considerable proportion of the view, and the retaining walls and buildings combine to create a large area of built form and hard surface from this view. The magnitude of change is considered Medium –

Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context,

The significance of the visual effect is considered to be **Moderate**, visual effect.

The quality of the visual effect is considered to vary from neutral to adverse. The retaining walls, combined with the concrete building walls increase the spatial extent and have an adverse visual effect, creating an area of considerable spatial extent which is hard surfaced. The proposed low level, form and simple high quality buildings sit well into the landscape, both on the mainland and the building on Dursey Island. The effect is considered neutral.

Viewpoint 9 - View from Beara-Breifne Way and local road south of Dursey Island Site at Ballynacallagh

Existing View

The existing view shows a view, also from the local road and Beara-Breifne Way in the townland of Ballynacallagh, further from the proposed island development than views 7 and 8. This shows the road in the foreground curving around the hill, with sloping heath to the left of the narrow road. Beyond this, the rugged mainland landscape is visible, with the rugged heath covered rock on the higher ground, sloping to some agricultural land and scattered buildings along the road. The existing cable car station and platform and some buildings to the right of the image are the only buildings visible.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors include walkers, tourists, and local residents, and the view is considered highly scenic. Visual receptor sensitivity is considered to be High.

Magnitude of Change

The proposed view shows the island development is not visible from this location, with just the top of the island pylon visible behind the topography. The mainland site is almost completely visible in this view, and occupies a considerable extent of the view. The buildings are low, and well set into the landscape, and a mixture of materials are used. The proposed retaining walls and concrete walls combine to give a large area of hard surface visible from this location.

The magnitude of change is considered Low to Medium from this location, as the proposed development is at some distance from the viewer, the island development is hidden from view, and the mainland development occupies a smaller proportion of the view.

The significance of the visual effect is considered to be **Slight to Moderate**, effect. As is the case with views 7 and 8, the view has both adverse and neutral visual effects but considered neutral overall

Viewpoint 10 - View from pier south of Dursey Island Site

Existing View

The existing view shows the view from the pier on Dursey Island. This view is from a lower level and would be similar to views of those leaving the island by boat. The view shows the pier and rocky coastline in the foreground, while to the left, the sloping island topography partly screens the island pylon. A small stone building is seen on the left of the image. To the right of the view, Dursey Sound and the rugged mainland landscape is visible, including the cable car station and surroundings.

Proposed View

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors include walkers, tourists, and local residents and those using and operating and accessing boats. The view is considered highly scenic. Visual receptor sensitivity is considered to be Moderate to High.

Magnitude of Change

The island cable car building is partly hidden by the topography, and the pylon is visible. The mainland buildings, and retaining wall are visible but they occupy a small

proportion of the view. The low level and form of the buildings sit well into the landscape, the walls being the most obvious feature.

The magnitude of change is considered to be Low.

The visual effect is considered **Slight**, and the effects are considered **neutral**.

Summary of Visual Effects

Table 11.7 below summarises the visual effects:

Table 11.7 Summary of Visual Effects

Viewpoint Number	Significance of Visual Effect
1	Slight, neutral effect
2	Slight, neutral effect
3	Slight/ Moderate, neutral to adverse effect
4	Slight, neutral effect
5	Moderate/Significant, adverse effect
6	Moderate, adverse effect
7	Moderate, neutral effect
8	Moderate, neutral effect
9	Slight/Moderate, neutral effect
10	Slight, neutral effect

Views from the mainland towards the proposed development

A selection of mainland views are represented by Viewpoints 1-5. Visual effects are considered Slight, neutral from 3 viewpoints, (1,2,4). From elevated views 3 and 5, View 3 is considered Slight/Moderate and neutral to adverse and Moderate/Significant, adverse from Views 5. Visual effects are relatively localised, the furthest mainland view taken is View 1 to the south of the development in Ballynacarriga.

Views of both island and mainland developments from the mainland towards the proposed development will be available from the southwestern part of the R572, as one approaches the existing cable car station, as well as from Crow Head to the south.

Views are available from the local road at Ballynacarriga, to the south east, leading to Crow Head, as seen in Viewpoint 1, and along the Beara-Breifne Way at Crow Head. These views however are at some distance, and the visual effect is considered to be Slight and neutral from this area. This would also be the case from the Beara Breifne way along Crow Head.

The whole development on both sides of the Sound is not visible from the R572 until relatively close to the cable car station, as shown in Views 2 and 3, so views are relatively localised in this area. These views range from Slight to Slight/Moderate as the development comes into view.

Other views from the mainland include Views 4 and 5, which represent those on foot, including those along the Beara-Breifne Way to the northwest of the proposed development and from the ridge directly north behind the development where there are extensive panoramic views. View 4 shows that for viewers along the lower levels to

the northwest, the setting of the building ensures that the topography screens the majority of the proposed development and, as such, this is also considered a Slight neutral effect.

The more elevated views include Views 3 and 5 where the visual effects are more pronounced. View 5 shows a considerable change in the view, and the extent of hard surface car park, buildings and walls is considered to have a Moderate/Significant, adverse effect. Similarly, view 3 which is slightly elevated, also shows the considerable extent of hard surface car park and area of walls, and is considered a Slight/Moderate, neutral to adverse effect.

It should be noted that in reality, all of these views are extensive and panoramic views, where views of the sea and landscape are extensive. The proposed development does not intrude on these extensive views.

Views from Dursey Island

The views 5-10 represent Dursey island views.

Views from Dursey Island area towards the proposed development are restricted to the area on the eastern part of the island, approximately 500m along the local road from the cable car station. These views show that the entire mainland development is clearly visible from these views. Visual effects on the island range from Slight and neutral (View 10) but the majority of views are considered Moderate and the effects range from neutral to adverse.

The site is clearly visible from the elevated views from the Beara-Breifne Way up to the ridge overlooking Dursey Sound (View 6) to the west of the proposed development.

It should be noted that to the west of View 9, as illustrated on viewpoint map, Figure 11.1 of this EIAR, the proposed development is hidden by topography. Views 7,8,9 show the changing views from the local road, where views are in the direction of both the mainland and island developments. Plate 11.17 below illustrates the point, approximately 500m southwest of the island cable station, where the development will not be visible due to topography and shown in outline.



Plate 11.17: Views of development screened by topography 500m south west of site (development outlined in white)

View 10 from the pier, is at a lower level and the mainland development occupies a lesser extent of the view. The appearance of the mainland station would be similar to the view from a boat leaving the island slipway, and boats crossing the Sound would experience views at a lower level, where the retaining walls and visitor centre walls would be in close proximity to the mainland slipway.

The island development, while visible, is relatively small in extent and confined to a small area while the mainland development has a considerable horizontal extent.

The walls of the visitor centre, car park and retaining walls combine to increase the horizontal extent of the development and hard surface, as visible in Views 7, 8 and to a lesser extent in View 9 and the horizontal extent of hard surface results in an adverse visual effect. View 6, an elevated view from the ridge, also shows the considerable extent of hard surfacing.

The mainland buildings are however set in well to the topography, with a low horizontal profile and a range of materials, including weathered metal, and the cable car building and café site well into the landscape, and these aspects have a neutral visual effect.

It should be noted that these views, and in views 7,8,9, there are wide ranging and extensive views of the sea, mainland and over to Crow Head. The developments do not affect these views.

11.5 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

11.5.1 Landscape Mitigation measures – Construction Phase

- Removal of cable car platform, building and hard surfacing, on the mainland side to be carried out, and the natural regeneration of area around the existing cable car station on the mainland side is to be facilitated. This is to be carried out by

appropriate storage of topsoil to avoid compaction during construction, and the soil re-spread following construction. No seeding other than a sowing of red fescue to re-establish surface covering is to be carried out.

11.5.2 Landscape Mitigation measures – Operational Phase

Measures included in the design are proposed to reduce adverse effects which include

- The proposed development has been designed to minimise cut and fill, and to sit the development into the landscape, working with the topography where possible.
- Proposed built form is low to blend into the landscape.
- Natural materials are proposed to be used to blend the buildings into the landscape.
- The new visitor car park is presented at two levels to minimise cutting and thus optimise integration in the landscape. The parapet style walls which are provided to screen vehicles will be finished out stone effect to reflect the local dry-stone walling styles. The parking spaces are to be finished out with a reinforced grass system which will have a softening green effect on these significant spaces.
- The landscape plan for the mainland site indicates a simple approach with minimal intervention, indicating surface treatments which will include natural stone paving, exposed aggregate, and native planting to the scheme.
- Further softening of the hard surfaced areas and car park with vegetation (small trees/shrubs, climbers etc. and walls can be explored at detailed design stage to further reduce the visual effects of the large areas of hard surface.
- The green roof to the energy building slightly reduces the hard surface area.

11.6 Residual Effects

The replacement cable car pylons and cable car, though visible, are of a simple, and contemporary design, with an emphasis on functionality, and have less of a visual effect than the built form and car park elements of the design.

The design approach aims to replace the low-quality shed-like buildings with buildings of a high-quality design and with contemporary and local materials which are suitable for this exposed landscape. These buildings on the mainland side are considerably larger than the existing mainland structures and occupying a wider horizontal extent which has an adverse visual effect from some views. However, the high-quality design and use of materials and the low-level built form and viewing areas are positive elements that correspond well to the topography.

In summary, the more elevated viewpoints close to the site on the mainland and on Dursey Island will experience pronounced residual visual effects. Residual visual effects from more distant and less elevated views will be much less pronounced.

The proposed development is an intervention in a highly scenic and sensitive landscape. A development of this nature is likely to result in a change to the landscape and to the views and there are both beneficial and adverse aspects to the visual effects. The visual effects range from Slight to Moderate/Significant visual effect in one view and the majority are neutral in quality. The high-quality design, use of materials and the low-level built form and viewing areas are positive elements that

correspond well to the topography. In general, the residual visual effects are relatively localised, and will not affect a wide area.

11.7 Difficulties Encountered

No particular difficulties were encountered during the completion of this landscape and visual impact assessment.