

## Chapter 15

## Architectural Heritage

### 15.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential impact on architectural heritage of the proposed Dursey Island Cable Car and Visitor Centre. The history of the proposed development location is summarised and the historic buildings and other structures in the vicinity are identified and described. Where it is assessed that there could be a significant impact, mitigation measures are proposed.

The location of the proposed development is directly adjacent to the existing cableway, which straddles the Dursey Sound, connecting the easternmost tip of Dursey Island with the townland of Ballaghboy, on the western end of the Beara Peninsula in west County Cork. The proposed cableway will run parallel to the existing alignment offset by approximately 14m to the north. The end-to-end length of the proposed cableway will be approximately 375m which is slightly shorter than the length of the existing cableway. A comprehensive description of the proposed development is detailed in Chapter 4 of this EIAR.

### 15.2 Methodology

The architectural heritage impact assessment involves the following:

- Identification of buildings and other structures in the vicinity of the proposed development;
- Assessment of the architectural significance of those buildings and structures; and
- Assessment of the anticipated effects of the proposals on their character.

The emphasis of this assessment is on buildings and structures that are still standing. Where a building or other structure has been destroyed, it no longer has architectural significance on the landscape, though it may leave traces that fall within the ambit of the archaeological and cultural heritage impact assessment (presented in Chapter 14 of this EIAR). It may also have had an importance that remains through the historical record, though this is not of concern to the present task. For a structure to have architectural significance, it need not necessarily be intact; ruins, or even fragments of buildings, may be of importance.

The identification of buildings and structures to be considered in this assessment was based, in the first instance, on an analysis of current Ordnance Survey (OSi) maps. The potential for any building or other structure in the vicinity of the proposed works to have special architectural significance was also gauged through examination of the following sources:

- Cork County Council (2014). *The Cork County Development Plan 2014 - 2020*
- Smith (1750). *Pre-Ordnance Survey Map of County Cork*
- Bath (1811). *Pre-Ordnance Survey Map of County Cork*
- Ordnance Survey six-inch maps of 1842 and 1930s
- Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1903
- Records of Protected Structures for County Cork

Any buildings on or close to the proposed development that were identified on the earlier Ordnance Survey maps were then checked against the current Ordnance Survey maps to ascertain which were still extant.

A walkover survey of the site of the proposed development was then carried out in order to identify those structures noted in the desktop survey, and to assess their architectural quality. Any structures of potential architectural significance not identified during the desktop study were also recorded during the walkover survey.

Any buildings/structures of architectural significance identified in the vicinity of the proposed development were examined to assess the potential effects of the works, and to consider potential for mitigation measures, where necessary. In each case, the structures identified were rated in accordance with the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) classification system, wherein a structure is rated as being of International, National, Regional or Local interest, or, if a structure is of no special interest, the NIAH includes a category of "Record only"<sup>1</sup>.

The legislation related to the protection of architectural heritage assets is set down in the Planning and Development Act 2000. This legislation defines 'architectural heritage' as structures which are of special interest under the headings of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. Wherever the phrase 'special architectural interest' is used in this report, it should be understood to refer to special interest in one or more of these eight respects.

### 15.3 Description of Receiving Environment

The site of the proposed development takes in areas on the mainland (Beara Peninsula, west Co. Cork) and on Dursey Island (townland of Ballynacallagh). The mainland and the island sides of the site are separated by Dursey Sound, a narrow tidal channel with strong currents. The land on either side of the Sound slopes towards the sea, with thin soils and jagged exposed rock with bedding planes rising almost vertically in numerous places. At the coast, there are low rocky cliffs. At its narrowest, the Dursey Sound is approx. 200m wide, while the cable car runs for a distance of just over 370m.

Historically (over at least the past two centuries or so), the land in the vicinity of the proposed development has not been cultivated. No field boundaries are present in the vicinity of either end of the proposed cable car route, nor are they depicted on the first edition OSi map, dating from the early 1840s. A field system does exist on the southern coast of the Beara Peninsula, approaching within approx. 140m of the base of the existing cable car. On the island, the nearest fields are more than 700m away from the existing cable car infrastructure. This was also the case in the 1840s, as shown on the Ordnance Survey map.

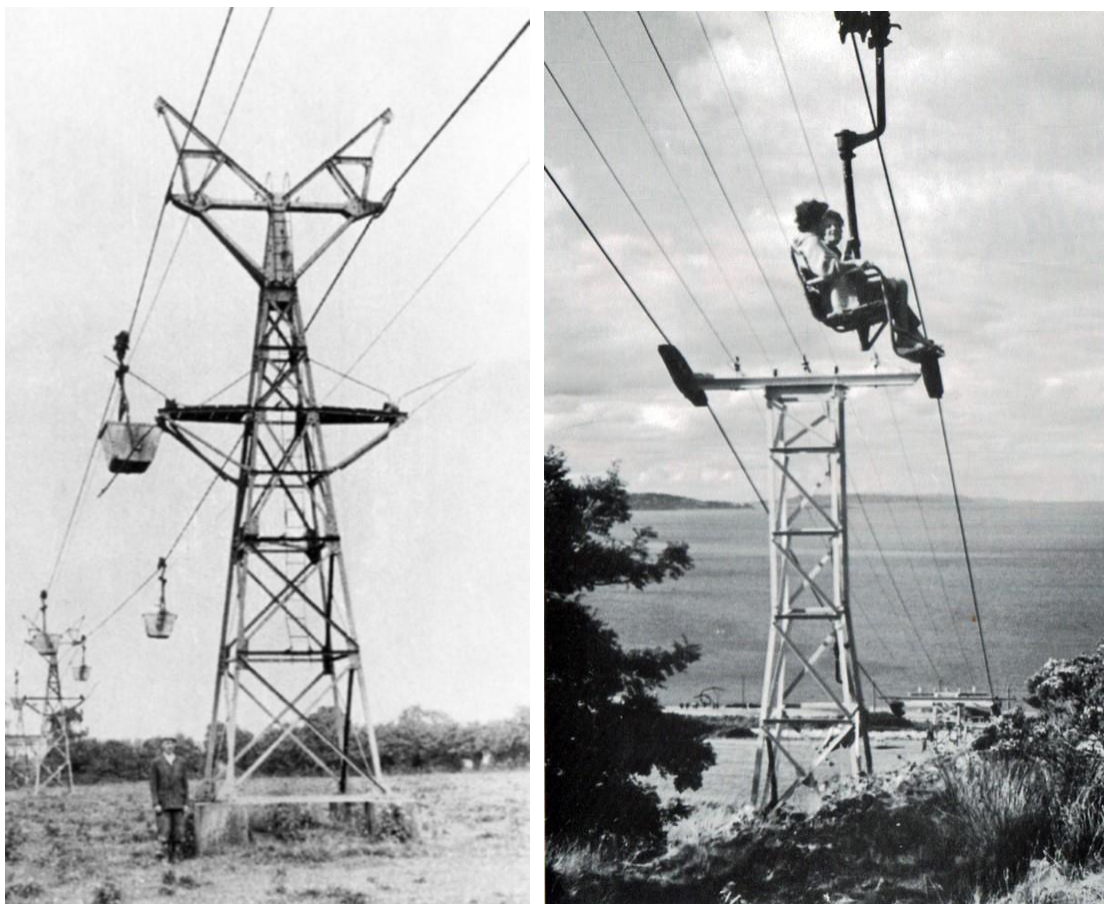
At present, there are no buildings in the immediate vicinity of the site of the proposed development. Nor were there on the historical Ordnance Survey maps. The nearest structure on the mainland - other than those associated with the cable car - is the slipway to the south-east, which is at a distance of about 90m in a direct line from the base of the existing cable car. On the island, the nearest structure is a small building associated with the island-side slipway, which is at a distance of about 160m. The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows no buildings closer than these - though a building is shown near the slipway on the island, at a distance of about 220m.

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<sup>1</sup> National Inventory of Architectural Heritage *NIAH Handbook* edition September 2017 p. 20

Neither Charles Smith's Map of County Cork(1750), nor Neville Bath's (1811) is large enough to show any meaningful detail of buildings in the vicinity, though both show a structure that is probably the ancient church on the island, about 370m south of the cable car landing point. Smith's map shows a structure further to the north, on the mainland, where a signal tower was to be built more than fifty years after his map was published, but it is not known what the building shown on the 1750 map may have been. The road leading to the cable car was laid out during the nineteenth century and for the majority of its length no road was shown on the first-edition Ordnance Survey map of 1842.

There are no protected structures in the vicinity of the cable car site, either on the island or on the mainland, and no structures at either location that are close to the site are included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.



**Plate 15.1      The Drogheda Aerial Ropeway (left) and Bray Head Chair Lift (right).**

### **The Dursey Island Cable Car**

The cable car that connects Dursey Island with the mainland was constructed in 1969. It appears to have been the first of its kind in Ireland, though not in Europe.

There have been other facilities of similar nature in this country, including the cement aerial ropeway outside Drogheda, which operated between 1938 and 1958, transporting limestone from quarries to a cement factory. Additionally, a chair lift operated in Bray between 1950 and 1970, bringing visitors from the seafront to the Eagle's Nest Hotel, high on the slopes of Bray Head. The Dursey Island Cable Car was the first true cable car in the country and was opened by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, in December 1969. It was constructed by British Chairlifts Ltd.

## 15.4 Inventory of Architectural Heritage

There are no significant structures of pre-twentieth century origin in the vicinity of the proposed development. The following sections represent an inventory of structures associated with the cable car site and the nearby slipways. There are no other structures of significance in the vicinity of the site.

### Cable Car Site - Mainland

The existing cable car infrastructure consists of two steel pylons (one each on island and mainland), the ropeway (including supporting and hauling cables), operating machinery on island and mainland, and the carrier cabin itself.

The supporting line structures (pylons) consist of lattice steelwork. Each has a frame ('eye') at the top through which the cabin passes.

On the mainland, there is a concrete landing platform, bounded by concrete walls and approached via concrete ramps bounded by steel railings. The concrete walls are painted. The platform serves as a waiting area and boarding/embarking area for those using the cable car.



**Plate 15.2** Mainland-side pylon (left) and landing platform (right).

The line station building on the mainland (Plate 15.3) provides office space for staff, along with a ticket office, and it also houses the machinery that operates the cableway. This building is constructed with concrete, is painted and has a roof of profiled steel.





**Plate 15.3 Mainland-side line station building**

The existing cable car site is approached via an access road that branches off the R572 regional road. At the mainland side of the site, the roadway broadens to become an informal car park. On the seaward side of the mainland site, there is a group of stone-faced walls and benches (Plate 15.4) that allow visitors to sit and watch the cable car and take in the view.



**Plate 15.4 Stone walls and benches on the mainland side of the site**

South-east of the cable car is a slipway (Plate 15.5). This consists of a concrete ramp that descends into the sea, alongside which a roadway runs down to a concrete quay to allow boats to tie up.



**Plate 15.5 Mainland-side slipway**

### **Cable Car Site – Dursey Island**

The supporting line structure (pylon) on Dursey Island (Plate 15.6) is similar to that on the mainland, also being constructed of lattice steel. Both pylons have their seaward legs encased in concrete to provide a platform of similar height to the ground on which the rear legs stand.

The ropeway cables are attached to an anchor point fabricated with steel I-beams in a triangular arrangement, for strength. This is fixed to a concrete platform. As noted above, the cables run around pulley wheels on this anchor point.



**Plate 15.6 Island-side pylon (left) and anchor point (right).**

The landing platform on Dursey Island is in the form of a ramp rising from the ground level at the rear. On either side and on the downhill end the ramp is partly faced with



dry-stone walling, with the stones generally set vertically, while parts of the ramp have been repaired with concrete blockwork, chiefly at the corners. The upper surface of the ramp is grassed. Passengers disembark onto a concrete platform adjacent to the ramp and this is guarded with tubular-steel railings.

At the landward end of the ramp there is a small line station building constructed of concrete and with a corrugated-steel roof.



**Plate 15.7** Island-side landing platform (left) and line station building (right).

A slipway is located to the south-west of the cable car on Dursey Island. The slipways on the mainland and the island allow for the movement of goods by boat, including goods that cannot be transported in the cable car, such as cars, groceries and building materials. In the past, cattle were transported one-by-one in the cable car but now they are moved by sea between the two slipways.



**Plate 15.8** Island-side slipway

### **Cable Car**

The cable car is a modest-sized structure with sliding doors on one side and with paired horizontal windows facing the two landing platforms. A disused car is situated in a hen run associated with a private residence alongside the road that approaches the site.



**Plate 15.9 Existing cable car (left) and disused cable car (right).**

### **R572 Regional Road**

As noted above, the access to the cable car along the R572 uses a road that was laid out during the nineteenth century. As a result, there are few buildings along the road that date from the nineteenth century and those that can be traced back that far date from later in the century, not being shown on the first-edition Ordnance Survey map of 1842. Only one building in the vicinity of the road is included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (reference 20912605), a small house at Scrivoge which is not in the vicinity of any of the proposed passing bays along the route.

A number of passing bay are proposed along the route of the R572 and the majority will not impact upon any buildings other than the roadside walls which date from the late nineteenth century. There are structures in the vicinity of the proposed visibility splay at Bealbarnish Gap (Fig. 4.13 in Volume 3 of this EIAR) and the easternmost proposed passing bay (Fig. 4.14 in Volume 3).



**Plate 15.10 Three buildings at site of easternmost passing bay**

Near to the site of the easternmost passing bay there are three stone-built structures (Plate 15.10). Two are roofed with corrugated iron and appear to be agricultural buildings, while the third is an unroofed ruin, the gables of which suggest a possible house. None of these buildings were shown on the first-edition Ordnance Survey map of 1842, while only the ruined house appears on the 1903 edition. Two of these structures will be demolished in order to facilitate the construction of the proposed



passing bay. These buildings are not of significant architectural heritage importance and, therefore, significant adverse effects will not occur as a result of this element of the proposed works.



**Plate 15.11** Derelict house at second passing bay from the east

Near to the site of the second proposed passing bay from the east, there is a derelict building that appears to have been a house. This is single storey, though with rooms in the roof space, and there is a ruined outbuilding on the northern gable. The house is slated and gable ended. This house dates from the early twentieth century and was not shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1903.

## 15.5 Description of Potential Impacts

It is proposed to dismantle the majority of the existing cableway infrastructure, including the island-side pylon, the landing platforms and the line station buildings. The mainland-side pylon and operating machinery will be retained as features of interest in the proposed development. A new cableway will be erected, providing a greater capacity for movement of passengers. It is also proposed to construct new line station buildings on both island and mainland, as well as a mainland-side visitor centre, café and expanded visitor car park. Additionally, it is proposed to conduct road works on the principal approach road to the mainland side of the site, the R572, including construction of 10 no. passing bays and 1 no. visibility splay, and completion of a number of additional localised improvements to improve forward visibility. As noted above, there are some buildings near to these proposed passing bays, though they are not of heritage significance and would be classified under the terminology used in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as 'record only'.

It is considered that the proposed development will not have any significant adverse effects on any buildings/structures of architectural heritage significance.

## 15.6 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

While the Dursey Island Cable Car is not of significance in comparison with similar projects carried out over a very long period in other parts of the world, it has a significance in being the only cable car in Ireland. In view of this significance it is recommended that the existing cable car and its ancillary facilities be recorded through photographic and written description prior to removal and that an exhibition that

includes a history of the cable car together with drawings, photographs, newspaper articles and other mementoes be provided in the new Visitor Centre.

It is also recommended that should any of the vernacular structures alongside the R572 be demolished to facilitate the passing bay these should be recorded through photography and written description.

## **15.7 Residual Impacts**

The removal of elements of the existing cableway will be permanent. The provision of an exhibition and the retention of the mainland-side pylon and machinery will minimise this residual impact by allowing the memory of the original cable car to be preserved.

## **15.8 Difficulties Encountered**

No difficulties were encountered in the compilation of this chapter.

## **15.9 References**

Cairns, Henry, and Owen Gallagher, 2003, *A Pictorial History of Bray Co. Wicklow – volume 1: the seafront and environs*, Old Bray Society, Bray.

*Cork Examiner*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1969.

Hamond, Fred and Charles Friel, 2007, *An Industrial Heritage Survey of Railways in Counties Monaghan and Louth*, Monaghan County Council and Louth County Council.

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