



REMEDIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT (rEIAR)

Ros an Mhíl Deep Water Quay

Chapter 13 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

October 2025

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13. Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

13.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the landscape and seascape context of the study area in which the development at Ros an Mhíl is located and assesses the effects of the development works on the receiving environment in terms of both landscape/seascape character and visual amenity. The works undertaken prior to the expiry of the 2018 planning permission are included to facilitate the assessment of cumulative effects.

The assessment draws considerably on the Landscape and Visual Impact assessment contained in the 2017 EIS undertaken for the Ros an Mhíl deep water quay as part of the original planning application.

13.2 Methodology

Landscape and visual impact assessments are related but are different concepts. Landscape (or Seascape) Impact Assessment is about the appraisal of *components* of the landscape or seascape including fabric and *character* and how changes may affect these. The fabric comprises features such as vegetation, landform and built elements. Character is the distinctive pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape or seascape. An evaluation of these features and the overall character will highlight the quality and principal sensitivities of the landscape/seascape and measures its ability to accommodate the type of change associated with the development.

The Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) considers the visual amenity of the site and the surrounding area and identifies sensitive visual receptors and the approximate extent of visibility of the development. Visual impacts are the effects on visual receptors of the changes in available views through intrusion or obstruction and whether opportunities to enjoy views are improved or reduced.

13.2.1 Guidelines and Best Practice

This landscape and visual impact assessment report has been prepared in accordance with the following references:

- The Institute of Environmental Assessment / Landscape Institute publication entitled 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (3rd Ed 2013).
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Environmental Assessment Handbook—Guidance on the Environmental Impact Assessment Process Appendix 2: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (5th Ed 2018)
- Environmental Protection Agency document entitled 'Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements' 2022

13.2.2 Study Area

According to Section 5.2 of the GLVIA (2013) *“The study area should include the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it, which the Proposed Development may influence in a significant manner.* Following a desktop review, a field survey and a review of a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), it is considered that the deep water quay works is difficult to discern beyond approximately 5km and is not likely to give rise to significant landscape or visual effects beyond approximately 2km. In the interests of a comprehensive appraisal, a 5km radius study area has been used in this assessment. However, the particular focus is on receptors within 2km, except where iconic or designated scenic viewpoints exist at greater distances out to 5km and visibility of the deep water quay is more likely.

13.2.3 Desk Study

Initially, a desk study was undertaken to assemble relevant information on landscape/seascape fabric, character and the overall visibility of the development site on the surrounding area. The following outlines the documents that were referenced and the resources utilised for the desk study. Information collated in the desk study was confirmed by field studies:

- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028
- GIS datasets, aerial imagery, OSI Discovery Series mapping, historic mapping
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Rossaveel Harbour Deep Water Quay Development (Mott MacDonald, 2017)

13.2.4 Assessment Criteria

13.2.4.1 Landscape/Seascape Effects

When assessing the potential effects on the landscape/seascape resulting from a development, the following criteria are considered:

- Landscape/seascape character, value and sensitivity;
- Magnitude of likely effects; and
- Significance of landscape effects.

The sensitivity of the landscape/seascape to change is the degree to which a particular receptor (Landscape/Seascape Character Area (LCA) or feature) can accommodate changes or new features without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. Landscape/seascape value and sensitivity are classified using the criteria derived from GLVIA as indicated in **Table 13-1**.

Table 13-1: Landscape/Seascape Value and Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape/seascape character exhibits a very low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscape/seascapes, protected at an international or national level (World Heritage Site/Marine Park), where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the landscape/seascape character exhibits a low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscape/seascapes, protected at a national or regional level (National Parks), where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape/seascape character exhibits some capacity and scope for development. Examples of which are landscape/seascapes, which have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value and use.
Low	Areas where the landscape/seascape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated landscape/seascapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where landscape/seascape management relate to enhancement rather than protection.
Negligible	Areas of landscape/seascape character that include dereliction and industrial uses where there would be a reasonable capacity to embrace change or the capacity to include the development proposals. Management objectives in such areas could be focused on change, creation of landscape/seascape improvements and/or restoration to realise a higher value.

The magnitude of a predicted landscape/seascape effect is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the development. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct physical effect resulting from the loss of landscape/seascape components and/or a change that extends beyond the proposal site boundary that may have an effect on the landscape/seascape character of the area. **Table 13-2** shows how to interpret the magnitude of landscape/seascape impacts.

Table 13-2: Magnitude of Landscape/Seascape Effects

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale with the loss of critically important landscape/seascape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the landscape/seascape in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of important landscape/seascape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the landscape/seascape in terms of character, value and quality.

Sensitivity	Description
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale involving the loss of landscape/seascape characteristics or elements that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to changes in landscape/seascape character, and quality.
Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape/seascape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape/seascape elements or the addition of new features or elements.
Negligible	Changes affecting small or very restricted areas of landscape/seascape character. This may include the limited loss of some elements or the addition of some new features or elements that are characteristic of the existing landscape/seascape or are hardly perceivable

The significance of a landscape/seascape effect is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape/seascape receptor and the magnitude of the effect. The significance of landscape/seascape effects is arrived at using the following matrix:

Table 13-3: Landscape/Seascape Effect Significance Matrix

Scale/ Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Very High	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Minor
High	Profound-Substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-Imperceptible
Medium	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
Negligible	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

13.2.4.2 Visual Effects

As with the landscape/seascape effect, the visual effect of the deep water quay is assessed as a function of sensitivity versus magnitude. In this instance the sensitivity of the visual receptor (viewer), weighed against the magnitude of the visual effect. Unlike landscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape context of the viewer, the likely activity they are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape. A list of the factors considered by the assessor in estimating the level of sensitivity for a particular visual receptor is outlined below to establish visual receptor sensitivity at each VRP:

Susceptibility of Receptors - In accordance with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (“IEMA”) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (3rd edition 2013) visual receptors most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are;

- Residents at home;
- People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;
- Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;
- Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area; and
- Travellers on road rail or other transport routes where such travel involves recognised scenic routes and awareness of views is likely to be heightened.

Visual receptors that are less susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity include;

- People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; and
- People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not their surroundings and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life”. Recognised scenic value of the view (County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards etc.). These represent a consensus in terms of which scenic views and routes within an area are strongly valued by the population because in the case of County Developments Plans, for example, a public consultation process is required;

Views from within highly sensitive landscape areas. Again, highly sensitive landscape designations are usually part of a county’s Landscape Character Assessment, which is then incorporated within the County Development Plan and is therefore subject to the public consultation process. Viewers within such areas are likely to be highly attuned to the landscape around them;

Primary views from dwellings. A development might be seen from anywhere within a particular residential property with varying degrees of sensitivity. Therefore, this category is reserved for those instances in which the design of dwellings or housing estates, has been influenced by the desire to take in a particular view. This might involve the use of a slope or the specific orientation of a house and/or its internal social rooms and exterior spaces;

Intensity of use, popularity. This relates to the number of viewers likely to experience a view on a regular basis and whether this is significant at county or regional scale;

Connection with the landscape. This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the landscape i.e. commuters hurriedly driving on busy national route versus hill walkers directly engaged with the landscape enjoying changing sequential views over it;

Provision of elevated panoramic views. This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;

Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity. Receptors taking in a remote and tranquil scene, which is likely to be fairly static, are likely to be more receptive to changes in the view than those taking in the view of a busy street scene, for example;

Degree of perceived naturalness. Where a view is valued for the sense of naturalness of the surrounding landscape it is likely to be highly sensitive to visual intrusion by distinctly manmade features;

Presence of striking or noteworthy features. A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape feature such as a promontory headland, lough or castle;

Historical, cultural and/or spiritual significance. Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;

Rarity or uniqueness of the view. This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain landscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;

Integrity of the landscape character. This looks at the condition and intactness of the landscape in view and whether the landscape pattern is a regular one of few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;

Sense of place. This considers whether there is special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location; and

Sense of awe. This considers whether the view inspires an overwhelming sense of scale or the power of nature.

Those locations which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria are likely to be of higher sensitivity. No relative importance is inferred by the order of listing. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

The magnitude of visual effects is determined on the basis of two factors: the visual presence (relative visual dominance) of the development and its effect on visual amenity. The magnitude of visual effects is classified in **Table 13-4**, which is derived from the GLVIA.

Table 13-4: Magnitude of Visual Effects

Magnitude of Effect	Description
Very High	The proposal intrudes into a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most important noticeable element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene.
High	The proposal intrudes into a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual clutter disharmony is also likely to be generated, appreciably reducing the visual amenity of the scene.
Medium	The proposal represents a moderate intrusion into the available vista, is a readily noticeable element and/or it may generate a degree of visual clutter or disharmony, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene. Alternatively, it may represent a balance of higher and lower order estimates in relation to visual presence and visual amenity.
Low	The proposal intrudes to a minor extent into the available vista and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene.

Negligible	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not detract from, and may even enhance, the visual amenity of the scene.
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13.3 Baseline Environment

13.3.1 Landscape/Seascape Baseline

The landscape/seascape baseline represents the existing pre-works context and is the scenario against which any changes brought about by the incomplete deep water quay are assessed.

13.3.1.1 Coastline Characteristics

The coastal setting of west Connemara around Ros an Mhíl and An Cheathrú consists of a labyrinth of deep inlets, rocky coves and small islands. The shoreline generally rises in short steep cliffs or stony beaches, but the terrain above is only mildly undulating with low hills and small lakes.

Ros an Mhíl Harbour is on the southern side of a bay that is formed at the mouth of the Cashla River, which flows down from a steeper open landscape covered with blanket bog to the northeast. The narrow inlet in which the Ros an Mhíl Harbour is situated broadens to the south as it approaches the north-western corner of Galway with only the Aran Islands providing some enclosure from the Atlantic Ocean.

The coastline surrounding the Ros an Mhíl Harbour complex is comprised of small jagged rocky cliffs and occasional rocky outcrops. Above the shoreline the terrain rises at a moderate rate forming undulating hillocks and coastal spurs. The most prominent of these is Ros an Mhíl Hill, which rises approximately 40 meters above sea level immediately east of the site. Opposite this, the settlement of An Cheathrú Rua (Carraroe) is situated on terrain that rises approximately 60 meters above sea level, making it a prominent feature in this coastal landscape. **Figure 13-1** represents a typical view of the existing harbour area.



Figure 13-1: Rocky Shoreline View towards Ros an Mhíl Harbour and Ros an Mhíl Hill with Aran Islands in the Distance

13.3.1.2 Centres of Population and Houses

Ros an Mhíl (Rossaveel) is the nearest centre of population to the deep water quay. A relatively small linear settlement, Ros an Mhíl is situated along the R372 regional road immediately northeast of the development. An Cheathrú Rua (Carraroe) is situated on a coastal headland to the west of the development and is a much larger

[illegible]

13.3.1.3 Transport Routes

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13.3.1.4 Public Amenities and Facilities

This section of coastline, west of Galway City is a popular tourist area hosting numerous hotels, B&Bs, restaurants and pubs. The R372 which intersects the R336 northeast of the development, forms part of the popular ‘Wild Atlantic Way’ coastal driving route which sweeps around this coastline to the south and southwest of the deep water quay, until it rejoins the R336 regional road. **Figure 13-3** illustrates this driving route.

The settlement of An Cheathrú Rua is also a popular holiday destination. Several walking and cycling routes pass through Ros an Mhíl, many of which use An Cheathrú Rua as their hub. Ros an Mhíl harbour is very popular among tourists as it provides access to the Aran Islands via a ferry service.

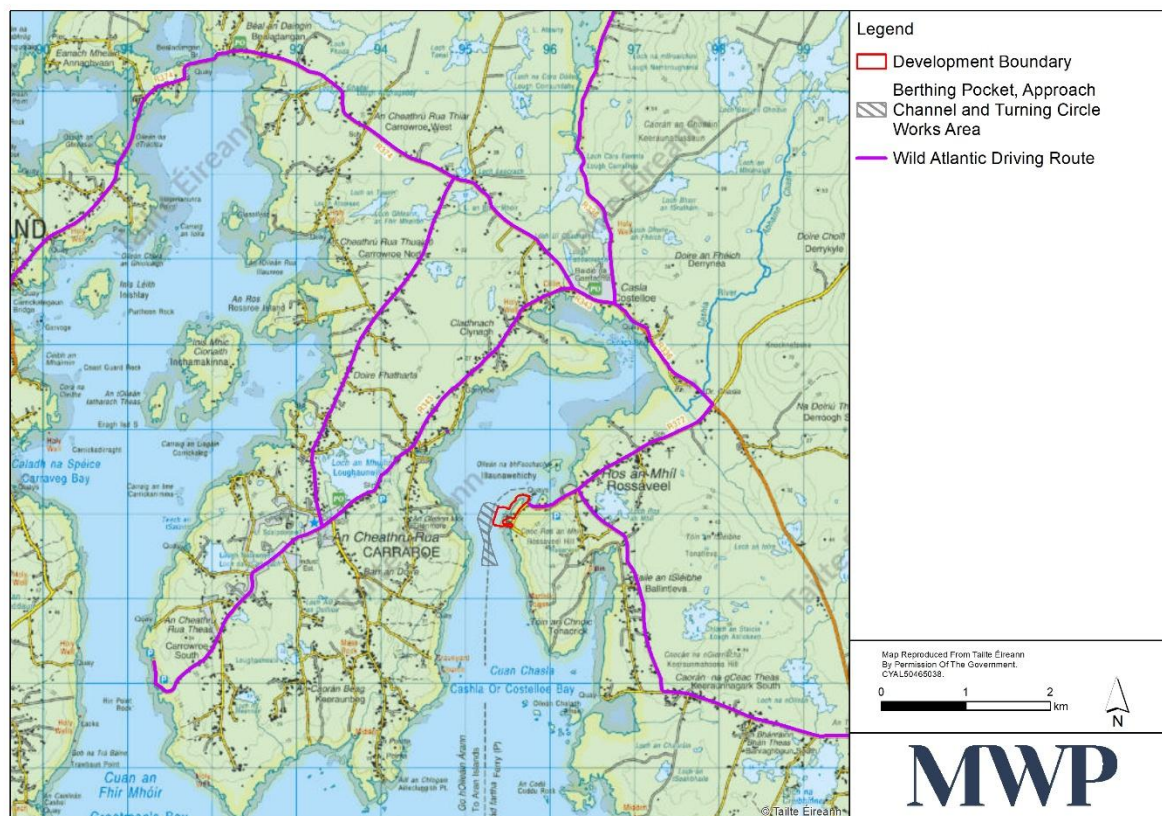


Figure 13-3: Wild Atlantic Way Driving Route

13.3.2 Landscape Policy Context and Designations

13.3.2.1 Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028)

A Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared as part of the Galway County Development Plan which subdivides the county into three regions and the coast. These landscape regions are then further broken down into ten separate landscape types. The deep water quay is located within a ‘Coastal Landscape’. This LCA is shown on the associated Development Plan maps to have a ‘Class 3 – Special: High sensitivity to change’ landscape sensitivity rating (the second highest out of four possible ratings) (see **Figure 13-4**). This LCA is described as “...highly distinctive, but very complex and varied, types of landscape that vary considerably between low and high tide”. The landscape comprises wetland and rocky outcrop in-between the many scattered residential dwellings. The landscape is developed yet not spoilt and the overall setting of the coastal inlet and Kilkieran Bay is quite scenic.

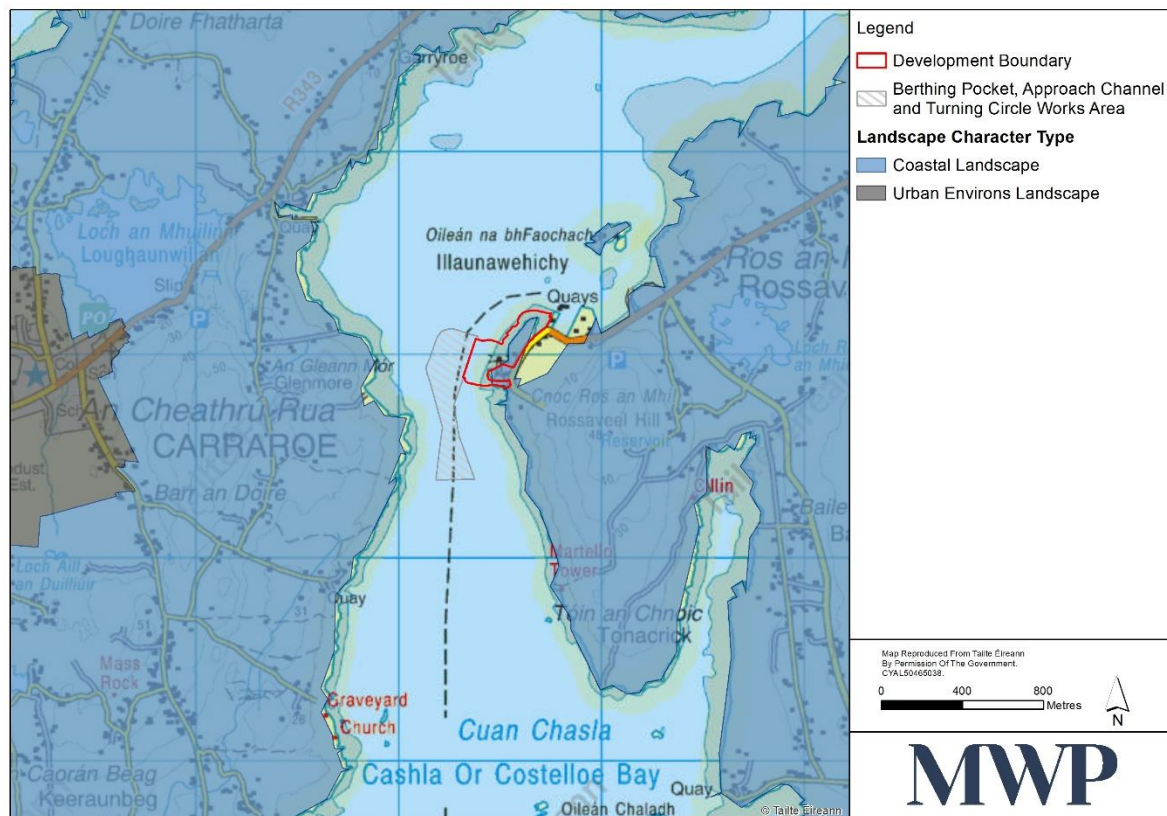


Figure 13-4: Excerpt from Landscape Character Type Map

13.3.2.2 Landscape/Seascape Value and Sensitivity

Landscape/seascape value and sensitivity are considered in relation to a number of factors highlighted in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013, which are set out below and discussed relative to the proposal site and wider study area.

Landscape/Seascape Quality (Condition)

This coastal landscape is relatively moderately settled with several settlement nodes and a high degree of one-off housing that is typical in Gaeltacht areas. However, this does not present as the degradation of a productive rural area as it might in other instances. Instead, there is a sense of harmony between the intricate coastal landscape and the vibrant community it supports through the marine industry, tourism and crafts. There is some agricultural activity in the area, but due to the exposed nature of this landscape much of the land is marginal for farming and is left in a more naturalistic state. There is generally a subtle transition between farmed and fallow areas.

Scenic Quality

This area has a strong scenic quality, and this is evidenced by the 'Wild Atlantic Way' route splitting in several directions within the local area in order to bring users to various coastal vistas. A strong sense of 'traditional Ireland' is afforded along these sections of the coastal route in the form of coastal cottages, fishing boats and dry stonewall field boundaries. Within the upland areas to the northeast of the development, the vast open areas of blanket bog and lakes also represent a strong sense of tranquility and the naturalistic. The County Landscape Character Assessment describes the coastline surrounding An Cheathrú as having a "highly scenic identity". However, it is important to make the distinction that within the environs of Ros an Mhíl harbour, the landscape is

more utilitarian. This is an operational harbour with industrial buildings and associated gantries and cranes that supports the local fishing industry and the Aran Islands ferry.

Rarity and Representativeness

The intricate rocky shoreline along with the labyrinth of small-scale inlets and islands is synonymous with coastal Connemara, which in turn is representative of the image of traditional Ireland for many tourists. Thus, in the broad context this is a relatively unique landscape/seascape setting. In the regional context of west Connemara this landscape/seascape type is fairly typical except for the high degree of residential development. The Galway Landscape Character Assessment designates LCA 17 – Carraroe (Cashla Bay to Glencoh) as a landscape of the high sensitivity “with a coastal edge of Class 4 – Special”.

Conservation Interests

A number of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are dotted throughout however these are all located to the northwest and are outside of the study area. Effects on SACs and other designated sites such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHA's) are discussed in **Chapter 5 Biodiversity - Terrestrial** and **Chapter 8 Marine**.

Recreation Value

The surrounding coastline has a high recreation value as a result of its popularity among tourists. The ‘Wild Atlantic Way’ coastal route attracts a large number of international tourists and passes directly through Ros an Mhíl Harbour. Furthermore, Ros an Mhíl Harbour is an important tourist node as it provides access to the Aran Islands via its ferry service.

Perceptual Aspects

A strong sense of windswept tranquillity exists in the more upland areas to the northeast of the deep water quay where vast open bog lands occur. Although the coastline of the central study area is relatively densely populated, it retains some sense of remoteness coupled with a strong sense of community. Ros an Mhíl Harbour is a small but bustling harbour, which reminds visitors that this is a productive coastal area and not a nostalgic postcard.

Associations

Connemara and its surrounds have strong association with ‘traditional Ireland’ as it is one of the few remaining Gaeltacht areas in Ireland. A strong sense of cultural heritage prevails as many of the traditional crafts and industries are still thriving today. It is also the landscape that many tourists associate with traditional Ireland.

Summary of Landscape/Seascape Value and Sensitivity

It is considered that whilst the landscape/seascape contained within the study area has a relatively high degree of uniqueness and sensitivity (see **Figure 13-5**), Ros an Mhíl Harbour and its immediate environs are much more robust. On balance, the landscape sensitivity is judged to be Medium.

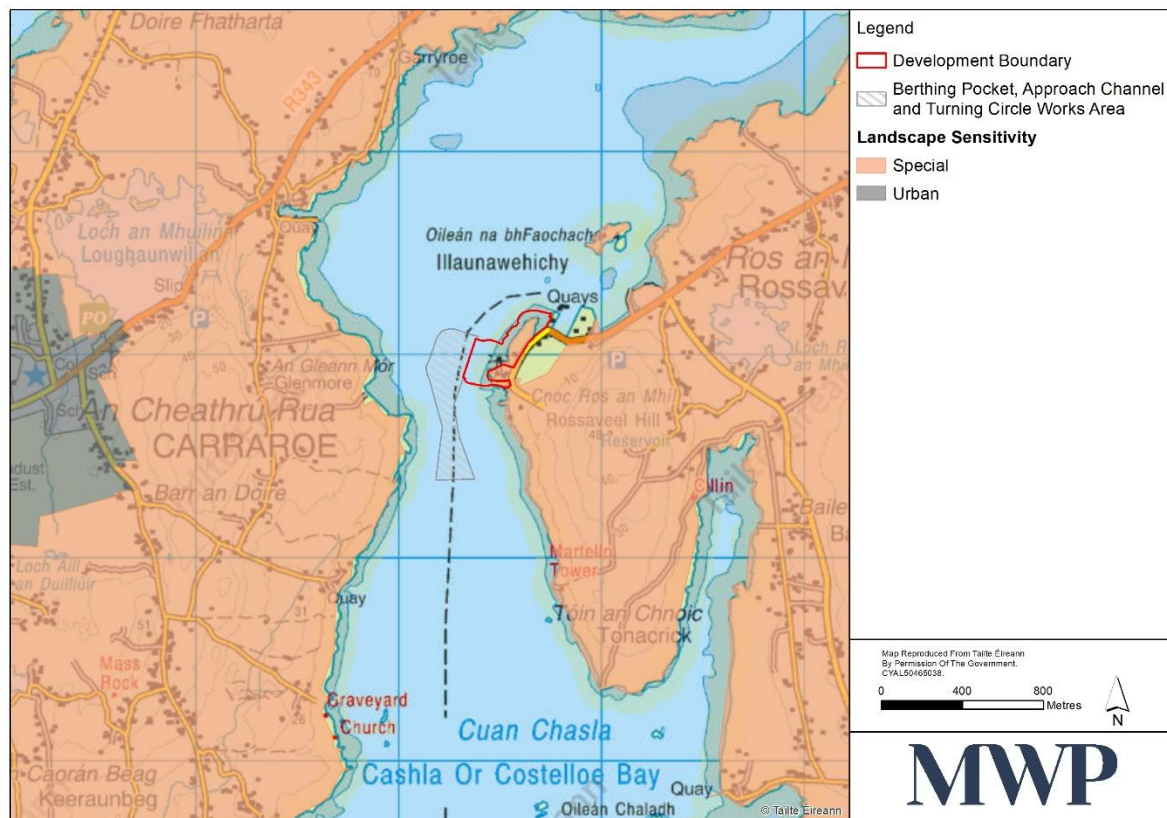


Figure 13-5: Excerpt from 2022 Landscape Sensitivity Map (Orange is a Special High Sensitivity)

13.3.2.3 Designated Views and Prospects

Views of recognised scenic value are primarily indicated within County Development Plans in the context of scenic views/routes designations, but they might also be indicated on touring maps, guide books, road side rest stops or on post cards that represent the area. In this instance there are a number of pull-in areas and promenades along the R336 coast road that are considered to be recognised coastal viewing locations that are not necessarily represented by designations contained in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.

There is a series of designated protected views and scenic routes indicated on Maps 8.3 and 8.4 in Section 8 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 that are in the general locality of the development site. These are set out below and indicated on the following map excerpt (**Figure 13-6** and **Figure 13-7**);

- View 18 – Droichead Charraig an Lagáin;
- View 19 - Coral Strand; and
- View 26 – Spidéal Cósta.
- Maritime Scenic Route

None of the designated protected views have designated views in the direction of the development site. The designated Maritime Scenic Route however passes in close proximity to the development site.



Figure 13-6: Excerpt from Landscape Character Assessment 2022 Map 08 – Designated View Point Showing Designated View Points in the Vicinity of the development site

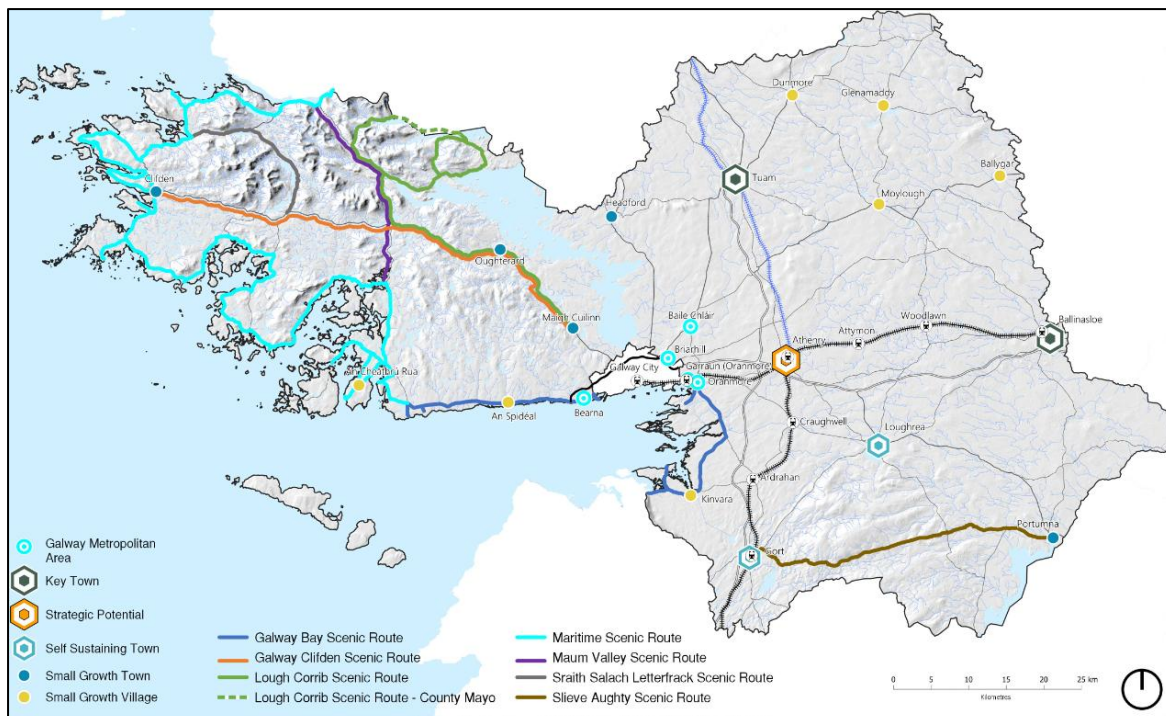


Figure 13-7: Map of the relevant scenic routes designated in the Ros an Mhíl area within County Galway.

The only planning objective relating to Protected Views and Scenic Routes is set out below:

Objective PVS-1 – Protected Views and Scenic Routes

Preserve the protected views and scenic routes as detailed in Maps 8.3 and 8.4 from development that in the view of the Planning Authority would negatively impact on said protected views and scenic routes. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan

13.3.3 Visual Baseline

Figure 13-8 provides an aerial photograph of the harbour development area in January 2023 prior to any works being undertaken.

Figure 13-9 provides an aerial view of the harbour development in March 2025. The development reclamation area west of the Údarás Warehouse is clearly visible along with the protective berm around the dredged and blasted quay wall trench (within the lagoon). At high tides (particularly spring high tides) much of the berm and some of the reclaimed areas become submerged by the sea. The inland areas to the southeast and north remain as they were and are characterised as an industrial and port area with warehouses, roads, parking and storage areas. While there was still some remaining natural vegetation among the infrastructure and commercial facilities, this was fragmented and limited in extent. The existing Údarás fisheries warehouse/workshop building and the Customs building are located immediately adjacent to the fisheries harbour development site.



Figure 13-8: Aerial View of Development Site in April 2022 (Prior to any Works)



Figure 13-9: Development site in March 2025 (Source: Google Earth Pro)

13.3.3.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

As part of the original planning application, a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map was prepared to illustrate the locations where the deep water quay is potentially visible (**Figure 13-10**). The ZTV map is based solely on terrain data (bare ground visibility), and ignores features such as trees, hedges or buildings, which may screen views. Whilst the ZTV map provides a starting point for desk-based selection of potential viewpoint locations, the main value of this form of ZTV mapping is to determine those parts of the landscape/seascape from which the development is definitely not visible, due to terrain screening within the 5km radius study area.

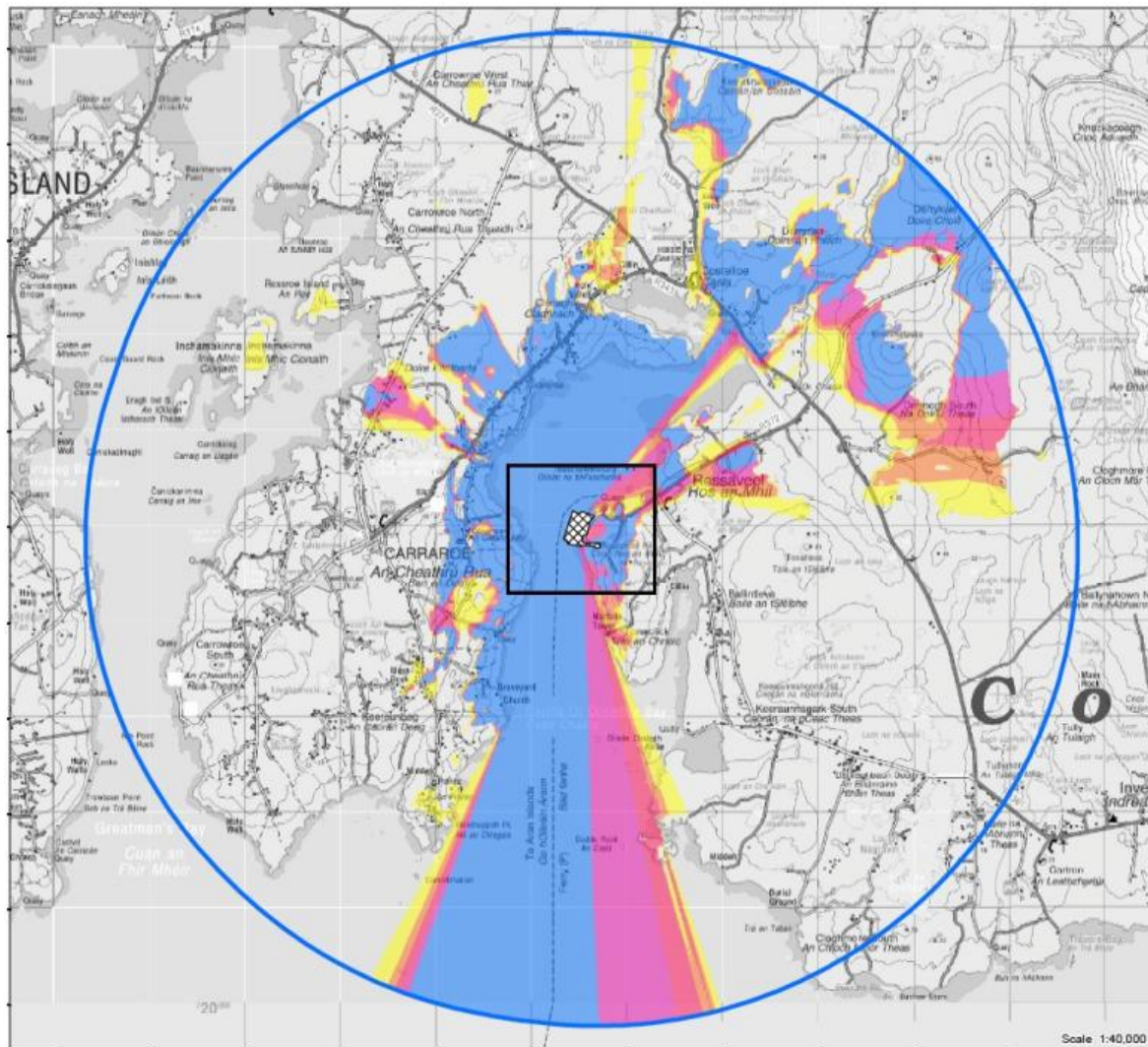


Figure 13-10: Bare-ground Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Map (Source LVIA Mott MacDonald, 2017)

The following key points are illustrated by the 'bare-ground' ZTV map;

- Full potential visibility coincides with the enclosed setting of the Cashla Inlet and tends to be contained by the low ridges that occur along An Cheathrú Rua Peninsula and Ros an Mhíl Hill;
- Open visibility towards the deep water quay is also afforded from Galway Bay at distances beyond 3km though much of this relates to a partial view of the development (pink pattern); and
- Sporadic patches of theoretical visibility are afforded from the higher slope sand ridges in the northeast of the study area around Derrykyle. Any views of the development from this area are beyond the existing Ros an Mhíl Harbour facility.

Viewshed Reference Points (VRP's) are the locations used to study the visual effects associated with a development. It is not warranted to include each and every location that provides a view as this would result in an unwieldy report and make it extremely difficult to draw out the key effects arising from the development. Instead, the selected viewpoints are intended to reflect a range of different receptor types, distances and angles. The visual effect of a development is assessed using up to 6 No. categories of receptor type as listed below:

- Key Views - from features of national or international importance;
- Designated Scenic Routes and Views (Maritime Scenic Route);

- Local Community views;
- Centres of Population;
- Major Routes; and
- Amenity and heritage features.

The Viewshed Reference Points previously selected for the assessment of the deep water quay are set out in **Table 13-5** and shown on **Figure 13-11**.

Table 13-5: Outline Description of Selected Viewshed Reference Points (VRPs)

VRP No.	Location	Direction of View
VP1	Ros an Mhíl Harbour immediately east of DWQ	West
VP2	Martello Tower south of DWQ	North
VP3	Local road at Derrykyle northeast of DWQ	South West
VP4	R336 (furnace Road) northeast of DWQ	South West
VP5	Local road at Sruthan northwest of DWQ	South East
VP6	Quay at Glann More west of DWQ	South East
VP7	Quay at Keeraunmore southwest of DWQ	East
VP8	Quay at Keeraunmore southwest of DWQ	North East
VP9	Keeraunbeg (Local cemetery) southwest of DWQ	North East

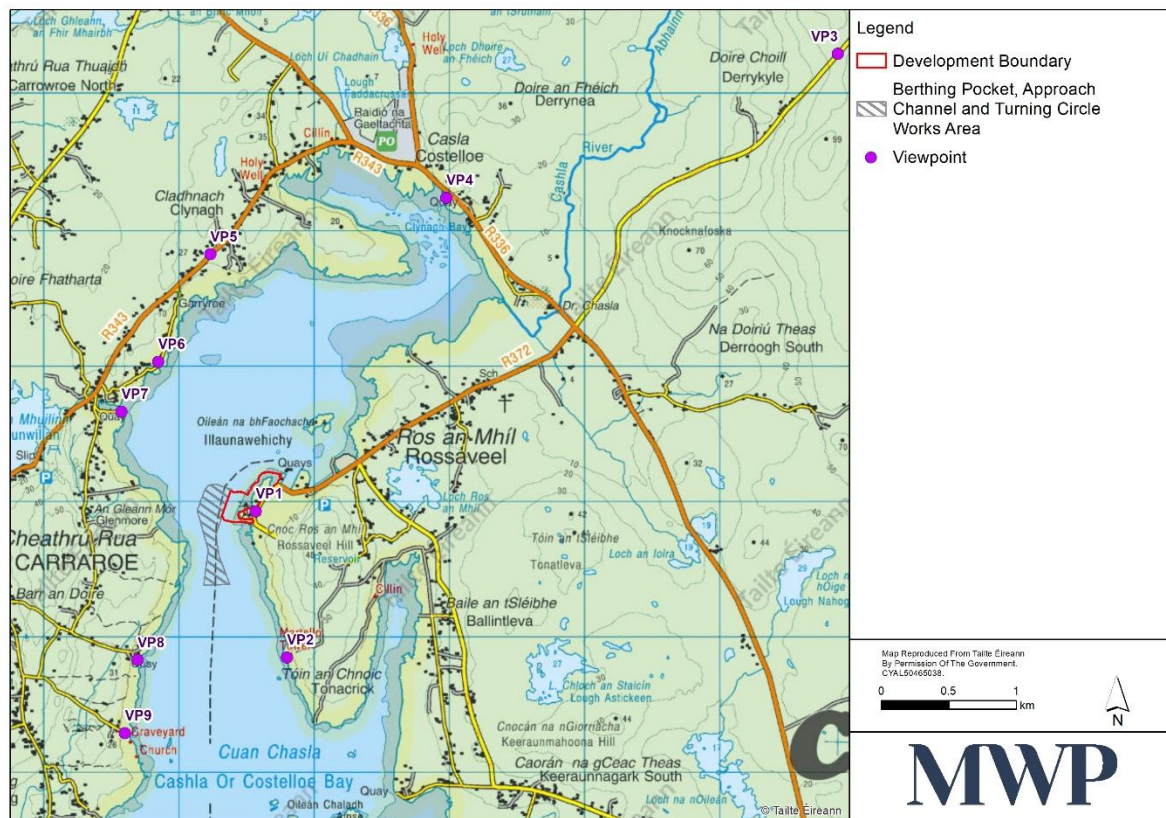


Figure 13-11: Viewpoint Locations – Ros an Mhíl Deep Water Quay

13.4 Description of Effects

13.4.1 Construction Activities

A total of 16 months of construction works were completed between January 2023 and the 20th May 2024.

The previous development works included:

- Mobilisation and development of the construction compound and facilities;
- Reclamation works – Rock fill material was imported to reclaim land from the sea and raise the ground level to the high-water mark (+5mCD). This reclaimed land was then used as a construction surface;
- Sequential construction and movement of the 20 drilling and blasting platforms over the quay wall and berthing pocket using imported quarry rock;
- Dredging works to remove the blasted seabed and construct the protective berm around the quay wall trench;
- Installation of 75m of rock armour revetments on the northern and southern ends of the reclamation area;
- Installation of the on-site concrete batching plant;
- Offsite manufacture and delivery of precast concrete caissons. 358 were manufactured and 92 were delivered to site;
- Offsite manufacture of the L-shaped blocks for wall and foundation beams;
- Installation of 48m of quay wall foundations.

Upon confirmation that the planning permission had expired and would not be extended, all construction materials, equipment and facilities were dismantled and removed from the site.

13.4.2 Mitigation Measures

The deep water quay development cannot be readily screened from view, nor is this considered necessary in the context of the existing harbour complex. Instead, visual assimilation is considered more appropriate in this case. The rocky sides of the reclamation area and protective berm (including some rock armour) helps to blend the development in with the rocky coastline and the other existing developments in the area. The siting is inherent to the appraisal of landscape/seascape and visual effects herein and thus, consequently no additional mitigation was required in this instance.

13.4.3 Landscape/Seascape Effect Assessment

13.4.3.1 Magnitude of Landscape/Seascape Effects

The development works adjacent to the existing harbour have transformed a 200m section of the rocky shoreline and reclaimed 2.4 ha of land from the sea. The reclaimed area and the protective berm around the quay wall trench extend into the Cashla Bay channel. When the works ceased in May 2024, the site was completely cleared of all equipment, facilities and materials and then fenced off. The reclaimed land remains unused and inaccessible and is partially inundated by very high tides.

All of the construction stage features and activities changed the site and added to the intensity and scale of activities associated with the existing Harbour facility. This activity would have reduced the overall sense of tranquillity within the Cashla Inlet, particularly within 1 km of the works. However, these construction stage works and associated effects were 'short-term' in duration (16 months), which substantially reduces the level of significance. They also take place in the context of a busy harbour facility where almost constant activity occurs.

The works completed to date contrasts in terms of form with the more naturalist sections of the rocky coastline to the south. However, the quay does not appear incongruous in the context of the surrounding harbour, which comprises of various man-made piers, jetties and breakwaters as well as substantial buildings and gantry structures. The installed rock armour to protect the quay at its northern and southern ends references the rocky shorelines of Cashla Bay and helps to blend the development into the more naturalistic sections of coastline in the vicinity. The location of the development works is immediately adjacent to the existing harbour and is the obvious location for an extension to this facility. Indeed, there are some outlying marine industry buildings and associated parking areas immediately adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the reclamation area and the development serves to consolidate the unutilised space between these and the main harbour.

The deep water quay represents an intensification of the built development at Ros an Mhíl Harbour and resulted in a short-term increase in the intensity of activity at the facility in terms of vehicle and vessel movements that changed the view of this area. These effects are consistent with normal activity at a busy harbour facility and do not appear as out of the ordinary.

Overall, it is considered that the development works to date represents a substantial physical change to a reasonable section of coastline and brought a short-term increase in the intensity of built development and activity at Ros an Mhíl Harbour. However, in terms of landscape/seascape character it represents a consistent extension of an established harbour facility and consolidates an area of underutilised shoreline that detracts from the integrity of the harbour. Taking these factors into consideration, the magnitude of the landscape/seascape effects is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

13.4.3.2 Significance of Landscape/Seascape Effects

This is a richly varied landscape/seascape area with strong heritage and cultural influences. The intricate rocky shoreline along with the labyrinth of small-scale inlets and islands is synonymous with coastal Connemara and relatively unique to this region. Indeed, the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 identifies the broader Landscape Character Area (LCA- 17) as being of high sensitivity. This area also contains a bustling and vibrant coastal community with a dense but dispersed local population that is typical of Gaeltacht areas. The existing Ros an Mhíl Harbour is an important hub for this community serving the local marine industries and as a point of transfer for goods and people passing between the mainland and the Aran Islands. This is also a popular tourist area that contains several sections of the Wild Atlantic Way. All of these factors were weighed in the consideration of landscape/seascape sensitivity and on balance a classification of **Medium** sensitivity was determined.

Determining the **magnitude** of landscape/seascape effect was also a matter of balancing what is a noticeable and permanent coastal structure that did generate increased levels of harbour activity during the construction works against the fact that this is the extension of an existing and well-established land-use. Whilst there was an increased level of development along this section of coastline and an intensification of activity, this did not alter the salient landscape/seascape character of the coastline in the vicinity of Ros an Mhíl Harbour. It is also considered that the previous works formed part of a process of consolidating an area of underutilised shoreline that currently detracts from the integrity of the harbour area. For these reasons the magnitude of landscape/seascape effects are deemed to be '**Medium low**'.

When the magnitude judgement of **Medium-low** is coupled with the earlier sensitivity judgement of '**Medium**', the overall significance of landscape/seascape effect is deemed to be **Moderate-slight**.

Table 13-6: Summary Table of Landscape/Seascape Effect of the Development.

Impact	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Effect Magnitude	Significance of Visual Effect
Landscape/Seascape Impact	Medium	Medium Low	Slight to Moderate

13.4.4 Visual Effect Assessment

The significance of visual effects is a function of visual receptor sensitivity and visual effect magnitude. This relationship is expressed in the same significance matrix and applies the same definitions of significance as used earlier in respect of landscape effects. As part of the original 2017 assessment, nine viewpoints were used in the assessment of visual effects and these represented a range of viewing angles, distances and visual contexts. The majority were selected from the opposite side of the Cashla inlet with the clearest views of the deep water quay were afforded across open water.

Tables 13-7 provide an assessment of the visual effects at the 9 No. VRP's.

Table 13-7: Summary Table of Visual Effects of the Development

Viewpoint	Location	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Effect Magnitude	Significance of Visual Effect
1	Immediately adjacent from R372 (60m east)	Low	Medium	Slight
2	1km south along the coastline at Martello Tower	Medium-High	Low	Slight
3	Distant inland view from north-east along R372 (5.8km from site)	Medium	Low	Slight
4	2.74km north north-east view from R336 along the coastline just east of Costelloe village	Medium	Negligible to Low	Imperceptible
5	1.7km directly north of the site across the bay along the R372 regional road	Medium	Negligible to Low	Imperceptible
6	Coastal view from the Sruthán road across the bay. Located north 1km northwest of site	Medium	Negligible to Low	Imperceptible
7	View from Sruthan Pier 500m northwest of site across the bay	Medium	Low	Slight
8	1.16km south-west of site across the bay at the coast near Keeraunmore	Medium	Medium to Low	Slight
9	Trá na Reilige Beach 1.7km south-west of the site across the bay	High	Low	Slight

The **sensitivity** of visual receptors (people and groups of people at particular locations) is generally considered to be **medium to high** in this coastal area, which hosts several sections of the Atlantic Way tourist driving route. Local residences are also generally oriented to take in the richly diverse coastal vistas on offer. Though the existing

harbour facility at Ros an Mhíl hosts an array of utilitarian structures and almost constant movement of vessels and machinery (day and night) it is not considered a detractor from visual amenity. Indeed, it adds to the richness and vibrancy of this settled and productive coastal area.

The highest magnitude of visual effect (medium) was attributed at VP1, which lies immediately adjacent to the deep water quay. This was on the basis that it represents the greatest degree of visual change from a relatively undeveloped section of shoreline to a large incomplete engineered platform that partially obstructs the view of the water. However, in the case of VP1, the 'Medium' magnitude of effect is balanced against a 'Low' visual sensitivity rating due to the utilitarian nature of the existing harbour setting.

At the remainder of viewpoint locations, the **magnitude** of visual effect was generally considered to be **low or negligible**. Again, this is on the basis of a noticeable increase in the level of construction activity associated with the harbour development balanced against the fact that it is an extension and consolidation of the existing harbour facility. The most notable issues being that the reclamation area and protective berm jut out slightly into the bay, thereby narrowing the channel. However, the rocky berm and edge of the reclaimed area, along with the installed rock armour do not contrast significantly with the rocky shoreline that extends on either side and help to assimilate it with the adjacent rocky shoreline. In the case of VP8, from near the mouth of the Cashla inlet, the quay partially obstructs views of the water further up the inlet and may give a sense of foreshortening this waterway. This was considered to result in a 'Medium low' magnitude a visual effect. The same effect occurs in relation to VP9, but to a lesser degree and at a greater distance. Nonetheless, VP9 has a higher sensitivity rating (high) owing to its location at a graveyard overlooking the mouth of the Cashla Inlet.

Due to the distance of most views, the rocky nature of the incomplete works and the extent to which the development forms an extension of the existing neighbouring port and commercial facilities, the significance of the visual effects of the development are considered **slight to imperceptible**.

13.4.5 Effect Summary

Due to the balance between the relatively high sensitivity of this landscape/seascape area versus the relatively low degree of effect arising from the deep water quay, the highest overall significance of visual effect is deemed to be **Slight** (VP1). The landscape/seascape effect is also considered to be **Moderate-slight**. Visual effect significance at all of the other viewpoints is in the range of **Slight to Imperceptible**.

Table 13-8: Summary Table of Overall Landscape and Visual Effects of the Development

Impact	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Effect Magnitude	Significance of Visual Effect
Landscape/Seascape & Visual Effects Combined	Low-High	Medium Low	Slight to Imperceptible

13.5 Remedial Mitigation and Residual Effects

There were no visual mitigation measures required for the previous works and there is no subsequent need for any remedial mitigation of visual effects.

The incomplete deep water quay is well assimilated into the existing Ros an Mhíl Harbour and this is reflected in the findings of this Landscape/Seascape and Visual Effect Assessment. It is not considered that this development

has given rise to any significant residual seascape/landscape or visual effects which would be out of character with the existing operations at Ros an Mhíl Harbour.

Table 13-9: Summary Residual Landscape and Visual Effect Table for the Development

Impact/Activity /Receptor	Quality of Effect	Post-Mitigation Significance Rating	Remedial Mitigation Measures	Residual Significance Rating
Landscape Impact	Neutral - Negative	Moderate to Slight	None	Moderate to Slight
Visual Impact	Neutral - Negative	Slight to Imperceptible	None	Slight to Imperceptible

13.6 Cumulative Effects

The main consideration in terms of cumulative effects for the deep water quay is the existing Ros an Mhíl Harbour. The relationship with the existing harbour has been a key consideration throughout this landscape/seascape and visual effect appraisal. Thus, cumulative effects have been addressed. In summary, it is considered that the development represented a noticeable increase in the level of activity during the construction phase that would have been seen as part of the same visual envelope of the overall Ros an Mhíl Harbour activities. The nature and scale of the development reflects the nature and scale of the existing harbour and it is also considered to consolidate a derelict area of underutilised reclaimed shoreline between the main harbour and several outlying industrial buildings. For these reasons, it is not considered that the incomplete deep water quay contributes to significant cumulative effects in this landscape/seascape and visual context.

13.7 Conclusion

The works completed to date have been assessed, and it is concluded that the only remedial work required is to complete the quay wall development. No significant landscape or visual effects are considered to have occurred or are occurring as a result of the development.