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# 10 Landscape and Visual

## 10.1 Executive Summary

1. A number of submissions from third parties were received with regard to the landscape and visual assessment of the proposed Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. The submissions related to the significance of the landscape and visual impacts, including impacts on individual properties, undergrounding, the Derrynoose area, the Monaghan Way, transport routes and the landscape of the study area.
2. It is acknowledged by the Consolidated ES and its Addendum that the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector would inevitably have landscape and visual impacts. Significant consideration has been given to the effects on landscape character and visual impact of the development upon the landscape throughout all stages of the evolution of the project.
3. The process of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has found that there would be significant adverse impacts upon the landscape of some parts of the study area; these impacts are not designated landscapes. There would also be significant adverse effects on the visual amenity afforded from many locations from within the immediate area adjacent to the line route. However, it is considered that the landscape and visual resource of the wider study area would not deteriorate to a significant degree and the overall impact upon landscape and visual amenity in general is therefore restricted to those receptors within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.
4. In terms of undergrounding, it was stated by SEAT that *“No weighting was given to the fact that undergrounding would totally eliminate all of the landscape and visual impact issues”*. Undergrounding of the entire route was eliminated on the grounds of a balanced consideration of environmental, engineering and economic constraints. SEAT’s claim that undergrounding would eliminate all landscape and visual impacts issues is unfounded. Landscape and visual impacts would still result from an underground cable

through vegetation clearance along the length of the cable, the construction of sealing end compounds and/or substations and other ancillary works.

5. The Derrynoose area (with all settlements) was a key consideration in the routing of the proposed overhead line and siting of the towers. Mitigation in route selection, tower design and retention of existing vegetation has sought to reduce the landscape and visual effects, wherever possible. The impacts to the Derrynoose area have been fully assessed in the Consolidated ES and its Addendum.
6. The Consolidated ES, its Addendum and the Statement of Case (December 2016) contains full details on the impacts determined for each property located within 500m of the proposed overhead line and substation. All individual property receptors located within 500m of the overhead line have been assigned as having high sensitivity to the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector.
7. It has been determined that the proposed Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector will not have any likely significant effects on the Monaghan Way. Impacts to transport routes have been fully assessed in the Consolidated ES and its Addendum.
8. Overall, it is acknowledged the proposed Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector will have significant landscape and visual effects. However it will not affect designated landscapes and the overall impact upon landscape and visual amenity in general is restricted to those receptors within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.
9. As stated in the SONI's Statement of Case (December 2016):

*“When considering the site specific circumstances of the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector it is accepted that the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector produces some environmental impacts that are unavoidable. However, none are of such significance that they would either individually or cumulatively outweigh the overriding national and regional need for the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector and the benefits to be gained. The proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector is clearly acceptable in planning terms.”*

10. Further to this, as stated in the Department for Infrastructure's Statement of Case (December 2016), paragraph 5.4:

*"5.4 NIEA: Landscape Architects considered the proposal would have a significant visual impact on local environments but were satisfied that the proposed route had been determined through a process that avoided direct impacts on designated areas and areas with major environmental constraints. They considered that the proposed towers are sufficiently distant from identified views so as to not represent a major visual impact. They also recognised the inevitable loss of trees and hedgerows in accommodating the development but overall had no objection to the principle of the development subject to planning conditions to include the re-instatement of vegetation."*

## 10.2 About the Authors

11. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector was undertaken by an AECOM specialist, Karen Clifford. She is a qualified Landscape Architect with over 20 years of experience in the landscape profession having gained a Bachelor of Arts with honours degree in Landscape Architecture from Leeds Metropolitan University (1994) and a Graduate Diploma of Landscape Architecture at Leeds Metropolitan University in 1997. She is a Chartered Landscape Architect and member of the Landscape Institute.
12. Ms. Clifford has practised both in the private and public sectors, with over 10 years' service in local authorities. She has undertaken LVIA's and landscape mitigation design for a number of major infrastructure projects, power generation and transmission and renewable energy developments in the UK, Ireland and overseas. Her recent project work includes technical review for a portfolio of wind farms, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and mitigation design for linear infrastructure including highways and overhead transmission lines.
13. At the Public Inquiry, Ms. Clifford will be assisted by Mr Joerg Schulze. He is a Senior Landscape Architect with over 13 years' professional experience

working for clients in the private and public sector. He has extensive experience in preparing and managing LVIAs and masterplanning for major infrastructural developments as part of the EIA process and according to international best practice guidelines.

### 10.3 Policy

14. The opposing Statements of Case and representations raise no policy issues related to landscape and visual.

### 10.4 Guidance

15. The opposing Statements of Case and representations raise no guidance issues related to landscape and visual.

### 10.5 Further Environmental Information for the Purposes of the Inquiry

16. It is not necessary to introduce new information to address any point made by third parties or the Department and its consultees in relation to landscape and visual.

### 10.6 Assessment of Landscape Effects

17. In the SEAT Statement of Case, Page 21, Paragraph 124 states:

*“The chapter on above is damning in terms of the impact on local landscape. Note the executive summary “The route of the proposed overhead line was selected based on the results of a number of alternatives studies which examined the environmental, technical and economic constraints present between various route corridors, line route options, and design details.”*

#### **Response**

18. It is acknowledged by the Consolidated ES that the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector would inevitably have landscape and visual impacts. Significant consideration has been given to the effects on landscape character and visual impact of the development upon the landscape throughout all stages of the evolution of the proposed development.

19. An in-built and robust degree of mitigation of the landscape and visual impacts of proposed development has been achieved through the process of consideration of alternatives, route selection and tower type summarised below. Adherence to the Holford Rules and other line routing environmental guidance has influenced the development of the proposal.
20. The process of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has found that there would be significant adverse impacts upon the landscape of some parts of the study area; these impacts are not designated landscapes. There would also be significant adverse effects on the visual amenity afforded from many locations from within the immediate area adjacent to the line route. However, it is considered that the landscape and visual resource of the wider study area would not deteriorate to a significant degree and the overall impact upon landscape and visual amenity in general is therefore restricted to those receptors within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.
21. The route determined was selected by consideration of alternatives detailed in Chapter 4 of the Consolidated ES and subject to a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA in accordance with best practice guidelines:
  - Route selection was the primary means of mitigation;
  - The preferred route was designed to keep the line as straight as possible, reducing the overall length of the line and to avoid the use of angle towers;
  - The Holford Rules were applied to ensure optimum route identified;
  - Areas of designated landscape were avoided wherever possible;
  - The Construction Environment Management Plan (the CEMP) and replacement planting along the Overhead Line (OHL) corridor will mitigate plant losses;
  - Landscape proposals for the substation site have been prepared to enhance the biodiversity of the area, ameliorate landscape and visual effects of the development in the receiving environment. Finishes to the infrastructure including lighting and colour facades have also been considered in mitigation adverse effects;

- Tree protection plans and replacement planting schemes will be provided for discharge of planning conditions; and,
  - Tower selection sought to identify preferred tower by design to reduce visual intrusion.
22. Further to this, as stated in the Department for Infrastructure's Statement of case, paragraph 5.4:

*"5.4 NIEA: Landscape Architects considered the proposal would have a significant visual impact on local environments but were satisfied that the proposed route had been determined through a process that avoided direct impacts on designated areas and areas with major environmental constraints. They considered that the proposed towers are sufficiently distant from identified views so as to not represent a major visual impact. They also recognised the inevitable loss of trees and hedgerows in accommodating the development but overall had no objection to the principle of the development subject to planning conditions to include the re-instatement of vegetation."*

23. SEAT statement of case paragraph 126 page 22 : paragraph 126 makes the following point that the CES finds:

*"Note also the following statements:*

*"After construction, the towers and overhead lines would remain as significant visual elements in the landscape".*

*The landscape assessment indicates that there would be significant adverse impacts upon the landscape of some parts of the study area. There would also be significant adverse effects on the visual amenity afforded from many locations from within the immediate area adjacent to the line route".*

### **Response**

24. The quotations provided by SEAT above are extracts from Section 13.7 Conclusions, Chapter 13 Landscape and Visual of the Consolidated ES (Page 524, Paragraph 841). SEAT has chosen not to quote the full paragraphs and has omitted significant parts of the conclusion of the landscape and visual assessment.
25. The full paragraph 841 reads (**emphasis** added to text that was not quoted):

*“After construction, the towers and overhead lines would remain as significant visual elements in the landscape. **Existing lines/poles along with the proposed overhead line route would, nevertheless, combine to reduce the quality of the existing landscape.**”*

26. The full paragraph 844 reads (**emphasis** added to text that was not quoted):

*“The landscape assessment indicates that there would be significant adverse impacts upon the landscape of some parts of the study area. There would also be significant adverse effects on the visual amenity afforded from many locations from within the immediate area following the line route. **However it is considered that the landscape and visual resource of the wider study area would not deteriorate to a significant degree and the overall impact upon landscape and visual amenity in general is therefore restricted to those receptors/areas within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.**”*

27. No new issues concerning Landscape and Visual Impacts have been raised in the objectors' Statement of Case that were not already addressed in the Consolidated ES and by subsequent Addendum.
28. The likely impacts from the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector on the landscape character and the visual amenity have been assessed and duly reported.

## 10.7 Visual Impacts

29. SEAT statement of case paragraph 126 page 22: paragraph 126 makes the following point:

*“There are 427 houses within 500 metres of the line. All of these residences will have their landscape irreversibly damaged and their residences and properties significantly devalued. All for no reason, as undergrounding eliminates all landscape and visual impact issues”.*

30. The formatting of the SEAT submission could give the impression that the above paragraph is a quotation from the Consolidated ES. This is not the case and it is not a statement that SONI or its consultants agreed with. The above text would appear to be a statement by SEAT.
31. In his submission Mr Woods states: *“Visual impact alone would be extremely detrimental to our quality of life”.*



32. In her submission Mrs Mallon states: *“Landscape and visual – in sight of construction effects and concerned that rural setting will be destroyed”*.
33. In his submission, Mr Lennon raises the following concerns in a second letter: *“Proposed structure will be visible for miles for almost all directions; The visual impact from the most commonly used areas has not been assessed; and, The proposal ignores the natural contours of the land”*.
34. In his submission, Mr Benson raised concerns about the potential visual impact.
35. In his submission Mr Whyte raises concerns with regard to impacts on the “visual beauty of our rural countryside” addressed below.
36. In their submission the Armstrong family raise concerns with regard to visual impacts.

### **Response**

37. Concerns highlighted from individual residential receptors regarding the impacts on visual amenity to their properties from the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector in their individual Statements of Case, are addressed below.
38. The Consolidated ES, its Addendum and the Statement of Case (December 2016) contains full details on the impacts determined for each property located within 500m of the proposed overhead line and substation. All individual property receptors located within 500m of the overhead line have been assigned as having high sensitivity to the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector. Overall, 484 properties were assessed and the following assessment were made:
- 30 properties that experience a major adverse impact;
  - 221 properties that experience a moderate - major adverse impact;
  - 117 properties that experience a moderate adverse impact;
  - 31 properties that experience a minor moderate impact;
  - 72 properties that experience a minor adverse; and

- 13 properties that experience no effect.
39. Due to the characteristics of the drumlin landscape, in some instances, screening by topography, vegetation and adjacent buildings would reduce visual impacts for receptors. For 116 properties within 500m it was found that there would be no significant effects arising from the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector.
40. As stated above, paragraph 844 (Chapter 13 Landscape and Visual of the Consolidated ES (Page 525) states:
- “The landscape assessment indicates that there would be significant adverse impacts upon the landscape of some parts of the study area. There would also be significant adverse effects on the visual amenity afforded from many locations from within the immediate area following the line route. However it is considered that the landscape and visual resource of the wider study area would not deteriorate to a significant degree and the overall impact upon landscape and visual amenity in general is therefore restricted to those receptors/areas within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.”*
41. As stated in the SONI’s Statement of Case (December 2016):
- “When considering the site specific circumstances of the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector it is accepted that the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector produces some environmental impacts that are unavoidable. However, none are of such significance that they would either individually or cumulatively outweigh the overriding national and regional need for the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector and the benefits to be gained. The proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector is clearly acceptable in planning terms.”*
42. An explanation of the visual impact ratings for each degree of significance is provided in the Consolidated ES 13.6.1. Page 428, paragraph 5 by Table 13.6: Categories of Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect
43. Moderate Adverse is defined as causing a noticeable deterioration in the existing view. This will typically apply where removal of existing vegetation or boundary planting exposes the property to views, and where views are oblique or from rarely occupied rooms.

44. Major Adverse effect is defined as where the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector would cause a very noticeable deterioration in the existing view.
45. This will typically occur where the proposal would close an existing view of local landscape and the new proposals would dominate the future views.
46. A residual effect of Moderate adverse and above is significant.

#### Mr Woods

47. Mr Woods (receptor G42+) resides in the property adjacent to T71 – T72 which would experience a Moderate – Major Adverse effect which is considered significant (Volume 3 of the Consolidated ES).

#### Mrs Mallon

48. Mrs Mallon (receptor E4) would experience a Moderate - Major Adverse effect which is considered significant (as assessed in the Consolidated ES and its Addendum).
49. Rural setting has been considered in both the landscape and visual impact assessment. Section 13.3.1.3 Landscape Character of the Consolidated ES provides a description of the baseline of LCA 66: Armagh Drumlins and in page 101, para 88 details the Key Characteristics which include;
- *“Extensive area of rolling drumlins overlooked by the Carrigatuke Hills to the south and crossed by numerous, small winding river valleys.*
  - *Improved pasture separated by bushy hedgerows and tree belts.*
  - *Numerous scattered dwellings and farms connected by network of winding, hedge-lined roads.*
  - *Wooded historic estate and park landscapes.*
  - *Woodlands are almost all long-established broadleaved or mixed and most are associated with present or former estates.*
  - *Open views across landscape from higher points; intimate enclosed landscapes between hills.*
  - *Significant archaeological sites and numerous scattered raths”.*
50. Chapter 12 of the Consolidated ES Paragraphs 102-106 provide a Landscape Description of the area and paragraph 107 sets out the

Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change of LCA 66: Armagh Drumlins.

51. Armagh Drumlins LCA has been assessed as having a Moderate adverse effect which is considered significant.
52. The proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector would introduce large scale infrastructure which is uncharacteristic in the Armagh Drumlins LCA. The relatively small scale pasture fields and undulations in topography of the landscape would increase the awareness of the crossing, which would adversely affect the character of Armagh Drumlins LCA within a limited area closest to the line route.
53. The LVIA Chapter of the Consolidated ES along with addendum published, reports on potential effects in accordance with GLVIA and provides a robust assessment of the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector from a comprehensive range of receptors, including roads and commonly used areas.
54. Visual effects are assessed in Chapter 13 of the LVIA Chapter Section 13.2.6.10. These include assessment of settlements, transport corridors and residential receptors along with 34 Viewpoint assessments. The objection that most commonly used areas have been excluded from the assessment is unfounded.
55. Of the 34 viewpoints assessed, 22 viewpoints would experience significant adverse effects, which is representative of the visibility of the large infrastructure proposed within a predominantly drumlin landscape.
56. Mitigation in route selection, tower design and retention of existing vegetation has sought to reduce the landscape and visual effects, wherever possible.
57. Chapter 4 of the Consolidated ES, Routeing Section 4.3.6.6 Para 305, page 105 states:

*"Since it was noted that the landscape throughout the preferred route corridor is a drumlin landscape, it was recognised that line routeing should be undertaken with a priority to avoid higher land, where possible, and in particular the 'skylining' of towers, and to use corridors of lower land, where possible".*

Mr Lennon

58. Mr Lennon made the point that the proposal does not follow contours in the land. The mitigation by design is focussed on reducing the overall length of the final line, avoiding wherever possible elevated contours and on avoiding use of generally larger angle towers, keeping the line as straight as possible. It is acknowledged that due to technical and environmental constraints, including particularly the number of houses scattered throughout the study area, this was not always possible and the overhead line route has had to include deviations.
59. Based on the alternative options considered, the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector results in the least impacts to the landscape and visual resource of the study area for an infrastructure project of this nature.

Mr Benson

60. Mr Benson (receptor E7) would experience a Moderate - Major Adverse effect which is considered significant (as assessed in the Consolidated ES and its Addendum).

Mr Whyte

61. In response to Mr Whyte's objection that the proposal will "destroy the visual beauty of the rural countryside for miles along the connector" - Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES provides a robust assessment.
62. The proposal seeks to take the least environmentally damaging route through the landscape, with primary mitigation being achieved through Route selection as described by Chapter 4 of the Consolidated ES.
63. Although significant adverse effects on both the landscape and visual amenity are reported within the study area, the assessment finds that these would be limited to those receptors/areas within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.

64. Although there will be a noticeable deterioration to the visual amenity, along the length of the OHL corridor, the visual beauty of the wider study area will remain intact.

Armstrong Family

65. The Armstrong Family (receptor E56) would experience Moderate Adverse effect which is considered significant (as assessed in the Consolidated ES and its Addendum).

## 10.8 Undergrounding

66. SEAT claim that undergrounding would eliminate all landscape and visual impacts and in their Statement of case, paragraph 125, page 22 states:

*“No weighting was given to the fact that undergrounding would totally eliminate all of the landscape and visual impact issues”.*

**Response**

67. Undergrounding of the entire route was eliminated on the grounds of a balanced consideration of environmental, engineering and economic constraints.
68. There would inevitably be landscape and visual effects arising from undergrounding impacts arising from sealing end compounds or substations and vegetation clearance and along the length of the underground cable. SEAT's claim that undergrounding would eliminate all landscape and visual impacts issues is unfounded.
69. A full description of the consideration of the alternatives is provided in Chapter 4 of the Consolidated ES and Chapter 10 of the Consolidated ES Addendum.

## 10.9 Impacts to Derrynoose

70. Mr McNally raises a number of concerns including:

*“Towers in close proximity to my home will be overbearing and adversely affect the residential amenity of my dwelling.*

*Derrynoose is a rural rolling drumlin landscape. Proposal will be out of character for area.*

*Derrynoose will be visually impacted; and,*

*Derrynoose – will blight our beautiful landscape ... planting pylons through our countryside in Derrynoose it totally inappropriate ... and ... out of keeping with the established land use of Derrynoose”.*

71. Mr and Mrs Lennon have concern regarding visual impacts around Derrynoose. The objection is focused on the effect arising from the proposal from Derrynoose and Listrakelt to the border and in particular that the OHL:

*“occupies a ridge line, will be visible from several historical viewpoints, including Man O’ War. (these are addressed by Culture and Heritage) and furthermore state the OHL “does not minimise visual intrusion” and “is detrimental in terms of visual impact”.*

72. The point is made in Mr and Mr’s Lennon’s statement of case, that

*“Damaging visual impact is not a series of isolated adverse impacts”.*

73. Mr Kelly raises concerns that the pylons will be visible from the Man O’War from Dooskey in Co. Monaghan and viewpoints in Derrynoose.

### **Response**

74. Mr McNally (receptor J6) would experience Moderate Adverse effect which is considered significant (as assessed in the Consolidated ES and its Addendum).
75. In response to Mr McNally’s concerns regarding the proposal being out of character with the area, Derrynoose is located in Armagh Drumlins Landscape Character Area (LCA) which has been assessed within Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES.
76. Paragraph 108 of Section 13.3.1.3 Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES recognises the pastoral landscape and rolling drumlins landscape of this LCA and finds that the landscape just north of the border :

*“is more intimate with more pronounced drumlins, mature hedgerows and mature trees. Within this area there are some very attractive valleys views of which are restricted due to topography and vegetation and their visual influence is reduced.”*

77. Armagh Drumlins LCA has been assessed as having a Moderate adverse effect which is considered significant. This arises due to the relatively small scale pasture fields and undulations in topography which to some extent are compromised by the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector landscape which increases the awareness of the crossing, within a limited area closest to the line route.
78. Regarding the settlement of Derrynoose Section 13.6.2.1 para 424 page and 489 of the Consolidated ES recognises that the town has High sensitivity to the proposed overhead line route. There are predicted views throughout the settlement. The overhead line visual impacts have been assessed as Major Adverse during construction, Moderate - Major Adverse in the winter year of commissioning remaining Moderate - Major Adverse in summer 15 years after commissioning.
79. Viewpoint 27 looks across the settlement from an elevated position to the east and the OHL would introduce a new feature within the local landscape setting and a noticeable deterioration in the view. It is confirmed that the assessment of impact from Viewpoint 27: Derrynoose Road reported in Section 13.9.9. of the Consolidated ES finds that the visual impacts will be Major adverse during construction and Moderate to Major adverse in the winter year of commissioning and in summer 15 years after commissioning, which is considered significant.
80. The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) acknowledges the relationship between the perception of landscape character and the experience of visual receptors which include residents, visitors, people in their workplace, users of recreational facilities, people travelling through an area and other groups of viewers.
81. The LVIA Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES and its Addendum reports on potential effects in accordance with GLVIA and provides a robust assessment of the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector from a



comprehensive range of receptors, including landscape character areas, settlements, roads and commonly used areas to form an understanding of the effects. The landscape and visual assessment of effects is not a series of isolated adverse impacts as claimed by Mr and Mrs Lennon.

82. Mitigation in route selection, tower design and retention of existing vegetation has sought to reduce the landscape and visual effects, wherever possible.
83. Chapter 4 of the Consolidated ES Routeing Section 4.3.6.6 Para 305, Page 105 states:
84. *“Since it was noted that the landscape throughout the preferred route corridor is a drumlin landscape, it was recognised that line routeing should be undertaken with a priority to avoid higher land, where possible, and in particular the “skylining” of towers, and to use corridors of lower land, where possible.*
85. Mitigation has been primarily achieved through routeing, tower selection and retention of vegetation wherever possible. Topography and vegetation including hedgerows along road corridors and field boundary trees contribute to screening of the proposal. As stated in Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES (Section 13.7 Conclusions, Page 524 Paragraph 836):
- Based on the alternative options considered therefore, the Proposed Development would result in the least impacts to the landscape and visual resource of the study area, for an infrastructure project of this nature.*
86. Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES page 525, Section 13.7 Conclusion para 844, below, finds that there would be significant adverse effects on the visual amenity afforded from many locations from within the immediate area adjacent to the line route. In summary, however:
- “it is considered that the landscape and visual resource of the wider study area would not deteriorate to a significant degree and the overall impact upon landscape and visual amenity in general is therefore restricted to those receptors/areas within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.”*
87. Effects on Derrynoose have been addressed by earlier paragraphs 78 and 79.

88. The Man O' War has not been specifically assessed but is located in Landscape Character Area (LCA) 68: Carrigtuke Hills and sensitivity of hill tops with views within this character area is considered within Section 13.3.1.3, page 435, para 124. LCA 68: Carrigtuke was assessed as having a Medium sensitivity to change, Negligible magnitude of change arising from the Tyrone- Cavan Interconnector and Minor adverse effect which is not considered significant.
89. Viewpoint 25: Lagan Road, west of Keady is located on Lagan Road, a minor elevated road, along a ridgeline. The view is of an open landscape with long panoramic views across the distinctive drumlin countryside, similar to the aspect from Man O'War. Hedges and mature trees are common features scattered across the landscape following roadsides and field boundaries.
90. The proposed overhead line route sits in the distance, across the drumlin countryside that forms the focus of the view. Visible towers from this location are 86 – 99. By necessity, from Tower 93 the line route starts to rise up the valley side to avoid the wetland areas of Fergort Lough and Listrakelt to the west. The line route would be elevated in the landscape, running along a linear drumlin, but when viewed from the west, higher ground to the east would keep it off the skyline.
91. Towers 93 - 99 would break the horizon across this long panoramic view. The distant drumlin landscape that sits behind the line route provides a backdrop to the view and for the majority of towers lessens the amount of tower that appears above the horizon. The visible overhead line and associated towers would be viewed from an elevated position and as a new feature within the local landscape setting.
92. The sensitivity of the viewpoint is High. Moderate adverse effects are predicted during construction which would reduce to Minor- Moderate adverse in year 1 and summer 15 years after commissioning which is not considered significant.
93. The effects on setting of archaeological assets have been assessed by Consolidated ES Chapter 12 Cultural Heritage. Section 12.7 Conclusions

(page 413, para 163 -164) finds *“The Proposed Development will impact the setting of several archaeological sites and built heritage features. The setting of heritage assets is largely reliant upon long distance views, and therefore mitigation measures such as screen planting are not appropriate as they would adversely affect the context of the sites and therefore there will be no reduction in the significance of impact upon individual sites.*

94. *The overall significance of impact is considered to be moderate adverse due to impacts upon the setting of designated sites within the wider area.”*

## 10.10 Visual Impact on Roads

95. In their submission, Mr and Mrs Lennon state that:

*“the CES fails to adequately appraise the visual impact from the most commonly and heavily used routes in the area, some of which are in ROI.”*

### **Response**

96. This challenge is unfounded. The transport network is included in the Overview of Study Area 13.4.1 d (Page 242 of the ES) of the Baseline Landscape Situation and an assessment of the road network is provided by 13.18 (pages 281-287) of the ES Assessment of Transport Corridors and Paths.
97. A comprehensive assessment of the transport network including A and B class roads, as follows; M1, N2, A28, A3, A29, A45, B115, B106, B3, R214, B34, B517, B45, B128, B28, B130, B210, B361, B32, R184 and R181 was undertaken. No residual significant adverse effects were predicted.
98. Recreational paths, cycle ways and local walks in the study area were assessed as follows; National Cycle route 91; National Cycle Route 95; Regional Cycle Route 11; The Ulster Way; River Blackwater Canoe Trail, The Monaghan Way and Beetlers Trail. No residual significant adverse effects were predicted.

## 10.11 Landscape Impacts and Visual Intrusion

99. In their submission, ABC Borough Council raise concerns with regard to: Towers will be visually intrusive:

- Visual intrusion cannot be adequately mitigated; and,
- Demonstrable harm to the wider rural landscape.

100. In their submission Mr Eagleson and Ms Drew raise concerns with regard to visual impacts:

- “Significant visual degradation of the area”; and
- “Beautiful countryside destroyed by the pylons”.

### Response

101. In response to the comment that the towers will be visually intrusive this is addressed in detail in the Consolidated ES, Chapter 13 Landscape and Visual (Pages 415 – 525).and the Consolidated ES Addendum, Chapter 1 - Introduction (pages 1 - 10), Chapter 5 - Cumulative Impact Assessment (pages 50 - 69), Chapter 6 - Transboundary Impact Assessment (pages 80 - 86).

102. Mitigation in route selection, tower design and retention of existing vegetation has sought to reduce the landscape and visual effects, wherever possible.

103. Chapter 4 of the Consolidated ES Routeing Section 4.3.6.6 Paragraph 305, states:

*“Since it was noted that the landscape throughout the preferred route corridor is a drumlin landscape, it was recognised that line routeing should be undertaken with a priority to avoid higher land, where possible, and in particular the “skylining” of towers, and to use corridors of lower land, where possible.”*

104. Mitigation has been primarily achieved through routeing and adherence to Holford Rules. Landscape areas of designation have been avoided. Topography and vegetation including hedgerows along road corridors and field boundary trees contribute to screening of the proposal.

105. Based on the alternative options considered, therefore, the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector results in the least impacts to the landscape and visual resource of the study area for an infrastructure project of this nature. Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES page 525, Section 13.7 Conclusion paragraph 844, finds that there would be significant adverse effects on the visual amenity afforded from many locations from within the immediate area adjacent to the line route: In summary, however., it is stated in that paragraph that:

*“it is considered that the landscape and visual resource of the wider study area would not deteriorate to a significant degree and the overall impact upon landscape and visual amenity in general is therefore restricted to those receptors/areas within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.”*

106. Further to this, as stated in the Department for Infrastructure’s Statement of Case (December 2016), paragraph 5.4:

*“5.4 NIEA: Landscape Architects considered the proposal would have a significant visual impact on local environments but were satisfied that the proposed route had been determined through a process that avoided direct impacts on designated areas and areas with major environmental constraints. They considered that the proposed towers are sufficiently distant from identified views so as to not represent a major visual impact. They also recognised the inevitable loss of trees and hedgerows in accommodating the development but overall had no objection to the principle of the development subject to planning conditions to include the re-instatement of vegetation.”*

## 10.12 Monaghan Way and Landscape and Visual Effects

107. In his submission Mr McNally raised concerns with regard to:
- Monaghan Way will be impacted at Crossbane;
  - Mr McNally’s objection centres on the introduction of unsightly visual impact on the drumlin topography;
  - Trimming and removal of vegetation for clearance of OHL;

- Sterilisation of a unique and beautiful landscape; and,
- Destruction of a scenic drumlin landscape.

### **Response**

108. Chapter 13 of Consolidated ES provides a robust assessment of the landscape and visual impact arising from the proposal. The visual effects on the drumlin landscape are reported within Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES. Although significant adverse effects on both the landscape and visual amenity are reported within the study area, the assessment finds that these would be limited to those receptors/areas within close proximity to the towers and overhead line.
109. Undulating landform and intervening vegetation along with farm buildings and agricultural development restricts the impact of the proposal to the wider environment. The landscape would neither become sterile nor be destroyed.
110. Mitigation seeks to retain existing vegetation wherever possible and to create a scalloped edge of trimming for wayleaves along the OHL corridor. Physical effects are assessed as Moderate adverse for the section of OHL T93-102. With mitigation planting reaching maturity after 15 years however, these would reduce to Minor adverse which is not significant. Contrary to Mr McNally's objection, the landscape would not become sterile.
111. The effects of the Monaghan Way at Crossbane have been assessed by both the EirGrid EIS and SONI Consolidated ES and Addendum (Chapter 13 of the Consolidated ES and by Chapter 6 of the Consolidated ES Addendum (Page 84, Paragraphs 36-37)).
112. The Monaghan Way Passes through Viewpoint 31: Crossagh Road, which has been assessed as having a "Moderate Adverse" visual effect as reported in Chapter 13 of the Consolidated Environmental Statement (Page 514-515, paras 809-810), (i.e. a Significant visual effect as a result of the proposed Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector).
113. Para 808 describes *"Towers 90, 91 and 92 would be located behind the drumlin horizon and only the very tops of these towers would be visible. Towers 93 – 98 would be located on or near the drumlin horizon, appearing*

*to increase in size respectively. As the proposed overhead line route travels south, and closer to this location, tower 99 would break the horizon with half of the tower visible above the horizon. Towers 100 and 101 would not break the horizon and would be partially obscured by intervening vegetation and behind localised drumlin topography. “*

114. However, passing through this Viewpoint 31 location, the Monaghan Way is on road, and forms only a very small part of the long distance walking trail.
115. The majority of overhead line seen from the Monaghan Way will arise from the proposed North-South 400kV Interconnection Development including the short border oversail section at Crossbane.
116. The section of the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector located within the transboundary area (between Towers 106 and 107) is illustrated in the Consolidated ES Addendum (Figure 3.2 Viewpoint Location Plan - Transboundary Only).
117. An assessment of the transboundary visual impacts of the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector on the Monaghan Way was reported in Chapter 6 of the Consolidated ES Addendum (Page 84, Paragraphs 36-37).
118. This found that whilst the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector would be visible to users of the Monaghan Way within the transboundary section, the overall assessed visual impact *“when considering the entire section of the route (the Monaghan Way) that lies within the study area”* is not significant and the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector would not have *“the severe negative transboundary impact”* on the Monaghan Way as Mr McNally contends would occur.
119. The area between Towers 107 and 110 (which includes Lemgare Rocks) does not form part of the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector planning application but forms part of the proposed North-South 400kV Interconnection Development planning application. The area is located entirely in the Republic of Ireland, and consideration of the visual effects of the proposed North-South 400kV Interconnection Development and the Monaghan Way (including the section at, and around Lemgare Rocks) were reported in the North-South 400kV Interconnection Development EIS

Volume 3C Chapter 4 (Human Beings: Tourism & Amenity (Page 14, Paragraphs 52, 53, & 60) and in the North-South 400kV Interconnection Development EIS Volume 3C Chapter 11 (Landscape) Page 43.

120. Accordingly, in the undefined area “close to Lemgare Rocks”, it is the proposed North-South 400kV Interconnection Development – and not the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector - which is the more relevant scheme proposal when considering the significance of visual impacts on users of the Monaghan Way.
121. It has been determined that overall there would be no significant landscape and visual effects on the Monaghan Way for the SONI application and the cumulative and transboundary effects have been appropriately assessed by the respective applicants. Further rebuttal on the tourism effects is provided in the Rebuttal Technical Report for Socio-economics.
122. Therefore, whilst the proposed Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector would be visible to users of the Monaghan Way within the transboundary section, the assessed visual impact is not significant and would not have “the severe negative transboundary impact” on the Monaghan Way that Mr McNally contends would occur.

## 10.13 Conclusions

123. In conclusion, nothing in the objectors’ Statements of Case and representations serves to undermine the conclusions set out in the SONI Statement of Case and supporting Technical Reports. No new issues concerning Landscape and Visual Impacts have been raised in the Objector’s Statement of Case, which have not already been addressed by the Consolidated ES, its addendum and SONI’s Statement of Case.