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## 1.1 Introduction

Landscape Character Assessment is a process of assessment, which focuses on characterisation i.e. the discernment of the character of the landscape based on its land cover and landform but also on its values such as historical, cultural, religious and other understandings of the landscape. It concentrates on the distinctiveness of different landscapes and an understanding of how different kinds of development can be accommodated within them.

Landscape Character Assessment included the preparation of this Landscape Strategy. This draft strategy aims to provide an explanation of Cork County's landscape by way of describing what the landscape actually entails, while highlighting how areas within the county have their own distinctiveness and character. It also aims to provide a better understanding and appreciation of the county's landscape and of the importance of managing development into the future.

Due to the expanse and variety of Cork County's landscape the focus of the overall evaluation was of the 16 landscape character types identified.

The Draft Landscape Strategy for Cork County incorporates for each of the 16 landscape types:

*1) An evaluation of each Landscape Character Type in terms of;*

Landscape Value- the environmental or cultural benefits, including services and functions, which are derived from various landscape attributes.

Landscape Sensitivity- the measure of a landscape's ability to accommodate change or intervention without suffering unacceptable effects to its character and values.

Landscape Importance- importance of a landscape rated as Local, County, or National.

*2) A description of the landscape type, its key characteristics and the pressure for change within the landscape type.*

*3) A number of recommendations for each landscape type.*

This document forms the basis of identifying the sensitivity of Cork's various landscapes to development having regard to the character and values associated with each of the landscape character types.

## 1.2 Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

The Landscape Character Assessment for County Cork was based on the methodology principles defined by 'The Landscape and Landscape Assessment Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities', which was published by the Department of the Environment in 2000. Landscape Character Assessment is a GIS based multi-criteria evaluation.

The assessment methodology has three main stages: Landscape Character, Landscape Value and Landscape Sensitivity (Figure 1).

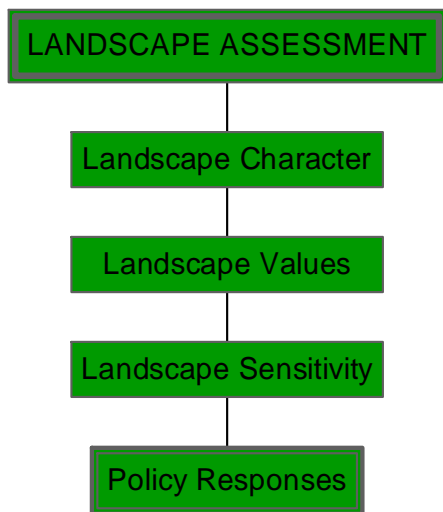


Figure 1.

Key concepts of Landscape Character Assessment

### 1.3 Landscape Character

The Landscape Character stage entails the identification of physical and visual characteristics of the county. Landscape characteristics were mapped and organised into datasets. Similar characteristics of the landscape are assigned to the following spatial units: Landscape Character Types (LCT) and Landscape Character Areas (LCA). Landscape

Character Areas represent smaller physical units with more detail in their physical description. Landscape Character Types are bigger, generic units with similar physical and visual characteristics. The physical characteristics concern physical elements and components that are principally based on landform and landcover. LCT and LCA boundaries and their descriptions are the results of the first stage of the Landscape Character Assessment and external consultants, MosArt, carried out this stage.

Cork County is divided into 16 Landscape Types (*Map 2*). Some of the Landscape types have sub-divisions marked with letters (a,b,c). Landscape types represent generic areas of distinctive character based on large-scale characteristics. Landscape Character Types are sub-divided into 76 Landscape Character Areas (*Map 1*) that present geographically similar complexes.

The source of data used was based on the Cork County Council desk and Site Survey data, OSI data, Geodirectory data and Corin data. Collected data was organised into a Landscape Character Assessment database. Landscape Type and Landscape Area Profiles include sets of attributes that were used for the spatial analysis.

### 1.4 Landscape Value

The assessment methodology for Landscape Value was based on the particular assessment of Natural Value (NV), Scenic Value (SV) and Cultural value (CV). The result of the analysis of NV, SV and CV, provides the Overall Landscape Area Value (*Map 3*). Generally, value represents aesthetic, ecological, historical, socio-cultural, religious and other characteristics of the LCA. These characteristics were categorised into three groups: Natural, Cultural and Scenic. For each group indicators and criteria were defined for their valuation.

*Natural value indicators* include: proposed Natural Heritage Areas, candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Areas of Geological Interest, landform and landcover characteristics.

*Scenic Value indicators* include: scenic landscapes and scenic routes.

*Cultural Indicators* include: Architectural Conservation Areas, Archaeological sites and Gaeltacht areas.

As a result the LCA were ranked into 5 categories: very low, low, medium, high and very high.

**Very low value:** Deteriorating landscapes without scenic quality and without any natural and cultural heritage elements.

**Low value:** Monotonous landscapes without particular scenic quality, local level of natural or cultural heritage

**Medium value:** Landscapes with positive characters and with local or county importance.

**High value:** Picturesque landscapes with scenic routes, natural and cultural heritage of county or national importance.

**Very high value:** Scenic landscapes with highest natural and cultural quality, areas with conservation interest and of national importance.

On the basis of Landscape Area Values the Landscape Type Values were defined. The overall value of the landscape types represents evaluation on a larger scale for the wider generic areas.

### 1.5 Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape Sensitivity was defined through a combination of the sensitivity of the landscape resource (Landscape Character Sensitivity) and Visual Sensitivity of the landscape. Generally, the assessment methods used were GIS based

multi-criteria analysis, which are accompanied by a decision support matrix.

*Landscape Character Sensitivity* identifies the possibility of a landscapes ability to accommodate change without adverse impact on its character. Landscape Character Sensitivity assessment of LCT is based on the evaluation of pressure types (forces for changes) and vulnerability of the landscape elements to these changes (Figure 2.).

*Visual Sensitivity* is about identifying the visual effect which some development pressure can have on the landscape. The Visual Sensitivity assessment method used is based on the visual value of the LCT and their importance.

Overall Landscape Type Sensitivity is the result of the assessment of Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity (Figure 3.).

Generally, sensitivity ranks from low to very high depending on the vulnerability of the landscape and ability to accommodate particular development pressure and by level of landscape type importance and value.

Landscape Character Types are ranked into 5 categories based on the sensitivity of the landscape: low, medium, high and very high.

**Low sensitivity landscapes** are robust landscapes, which are tolerant to change, and which have the ability to accommodate development pressure.

**Medium sensitivity landscapes** can accommodate development pressure, but with limitations in the scale and magnitude of the development. In this rank of sensitivity the landscape can accept some changes while others are more vulnerable to change. If pressure exceeds the landscapes limitation the character of the landscape may change.

**High sensitivity landscapes** are vulnerable landscapes with the ability to accommodate limited development pressure. In this rank landscape quality is at a high level with landscape elements, which are highly sensitive to certain types of change.

**Very high sensitivity landscapes** are extra vulnerable landscapes (for example, seascape area with national importance) likely to be fragile and susceptible to change.

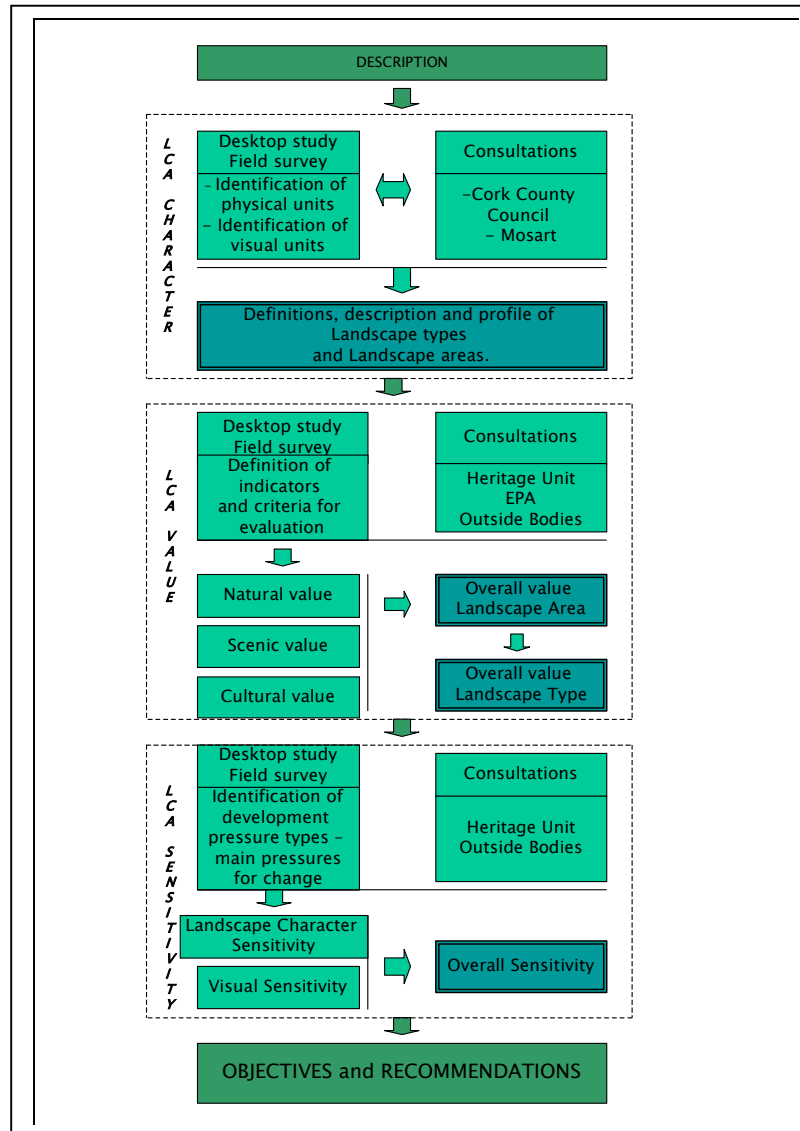
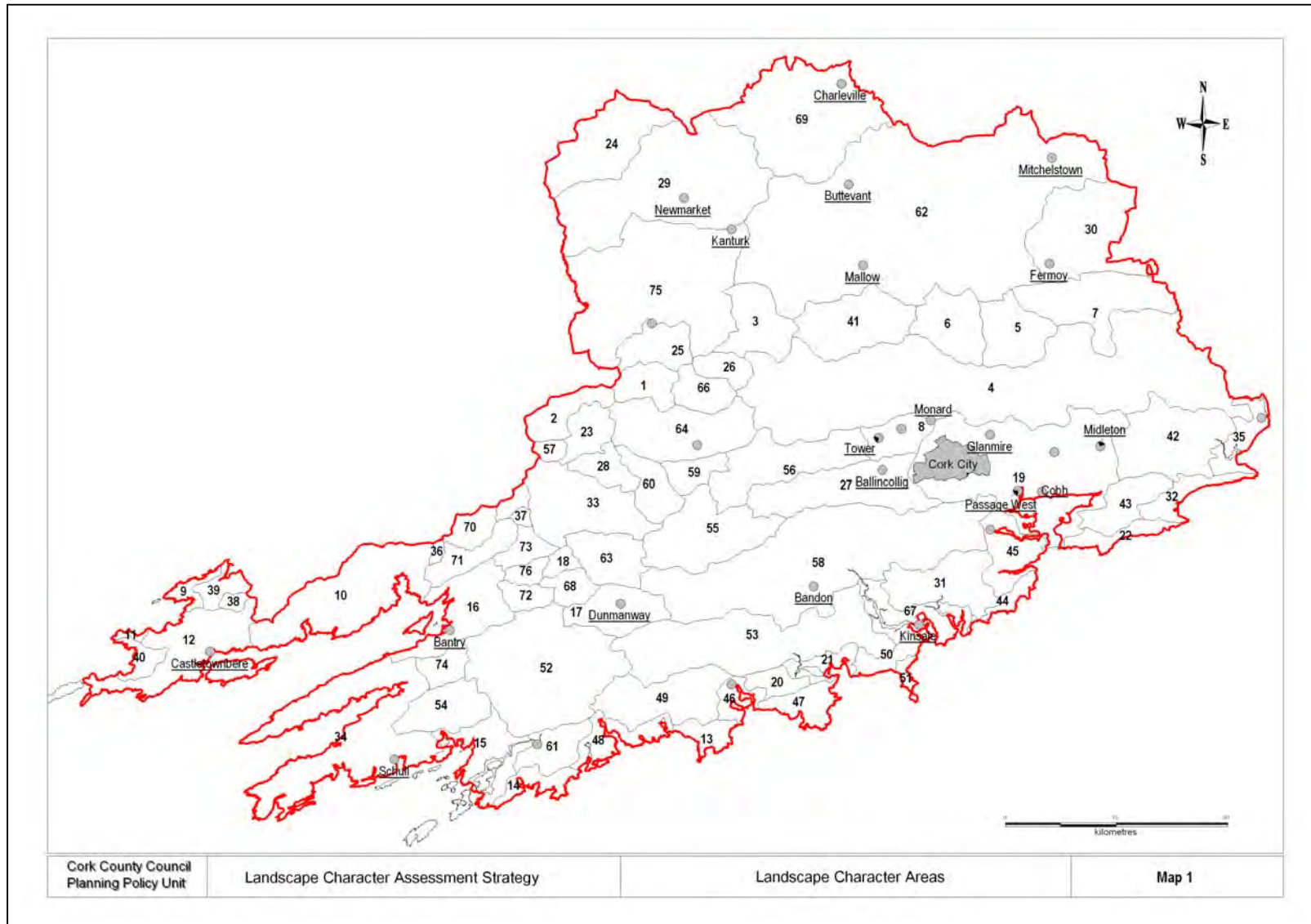
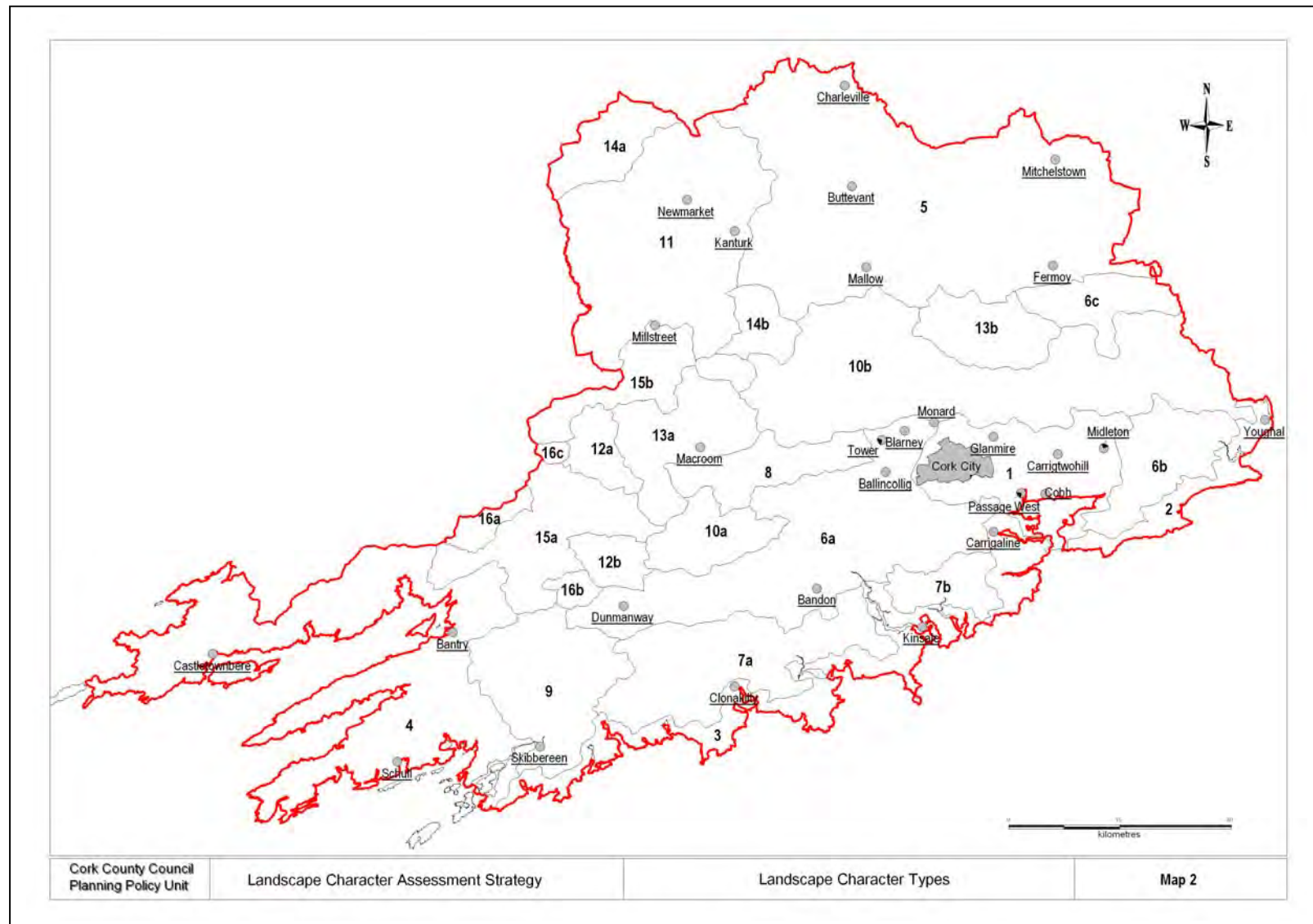


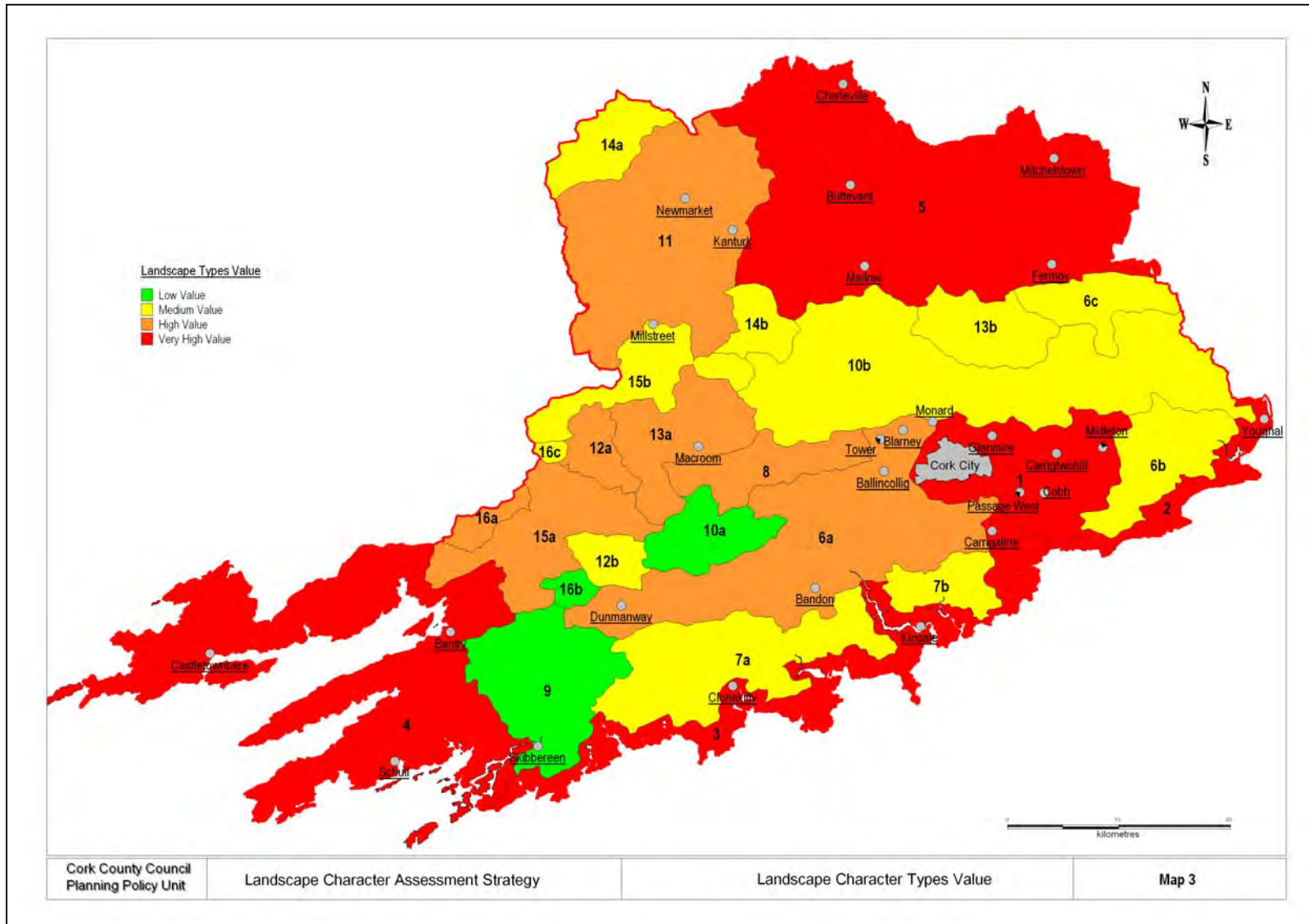
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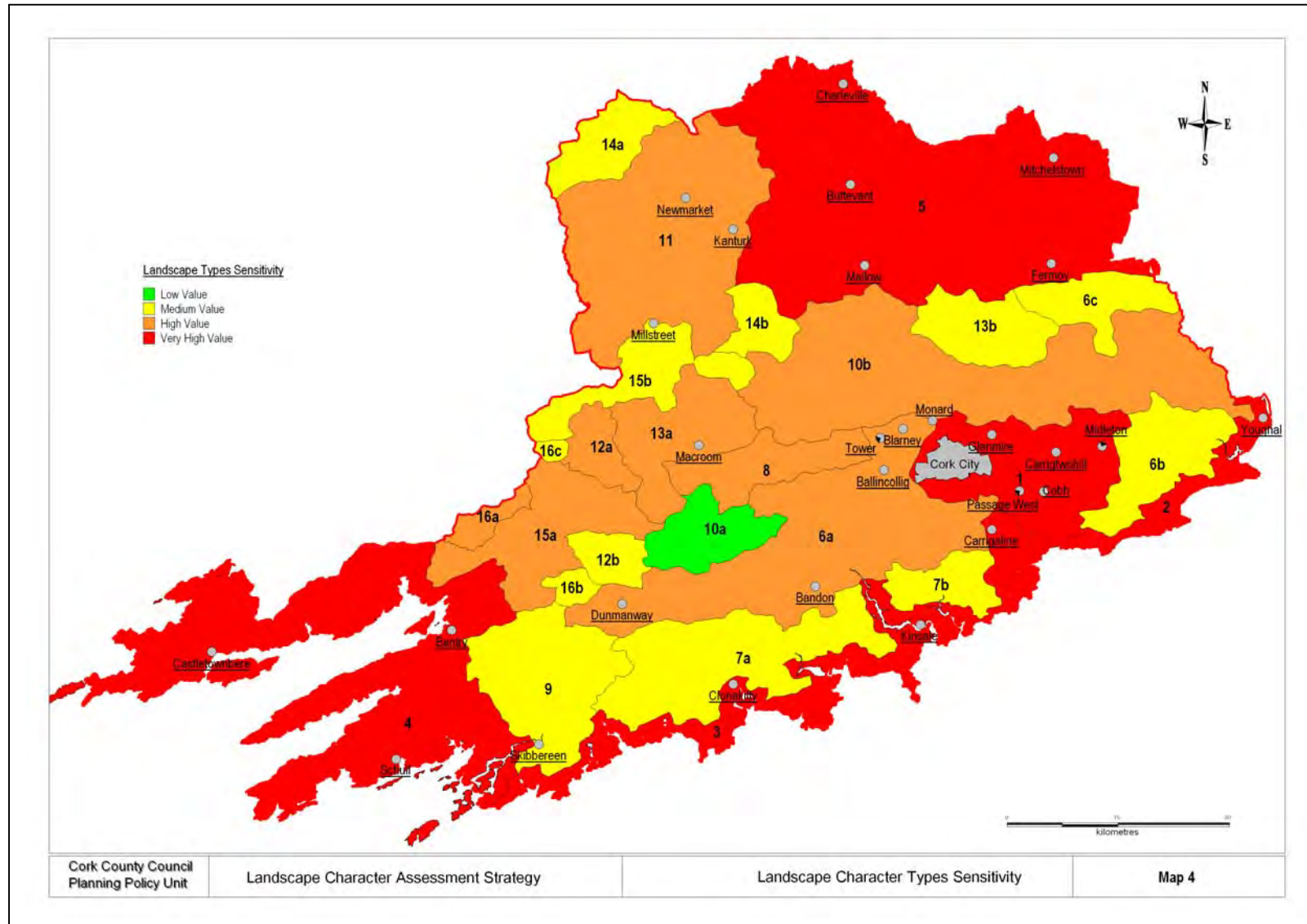
Methodology for the Landscape Assessment Process

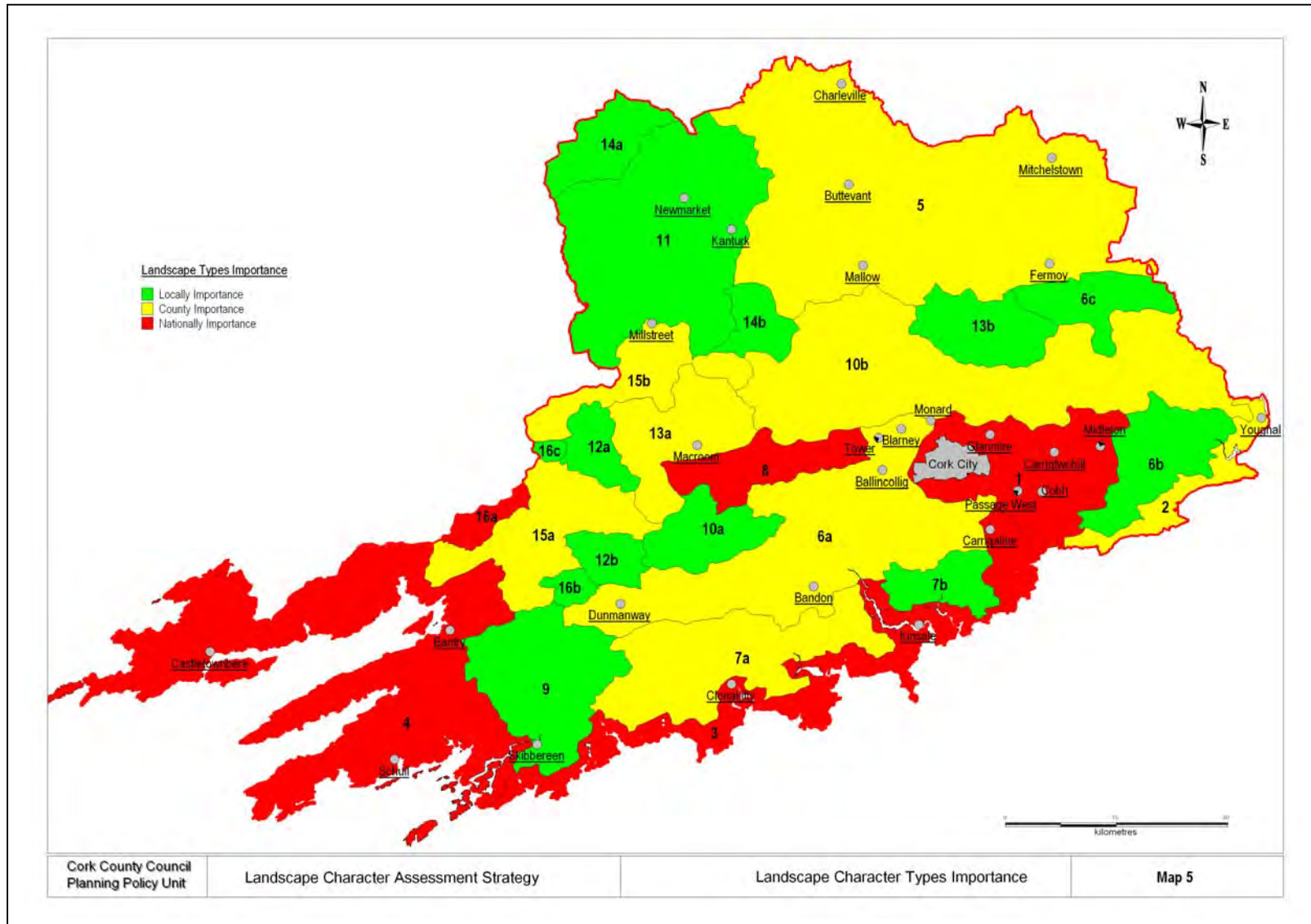














**Type 1: City Harbour and Estuary**



harbour. To the south of the city, the western side of the harbour supports major industrial development, while on higher ground telecommunication masts or water storage towers punctuate the skyline. The harbour includes large islands, which, along with much of the harbour shore, comprises landscape of fertile farmland which slopes gently to the sea. It comprises a mosaic of fertile fields of mixed use on brown podzols.

The rural areas around much of the greater harbour area are now characterised by a prevalence of infrastructure such as roads, bridges and electricity power lines and some urban sprawl. The narrow harbour mouth is defined by two hilltops with old military fortifications on their summits.

**Statutory Designations**

There are 14 proposed Natural Heritage Areas within this landscape character type, many of which are associated with the Harbour where there is a multitude of overlapping designations. It is a wetland of international importance for the number and diversity of bird species it supports. Over 20,000 birds of a wide variety of species regularly occur at this site making it one of the most important in the country.

*Landscape Value: Very High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Very High*

*Landscape Importance: National*

**Landscape Description**

The topography and landscape components in this area, primarily the River Lee as well as the vast open and natural harbour, have provided the opportunity for human settlement and the development of a city.

Overall, the landscape of the city and harbour area comprises a mix of rural and intensely urban areas, combined with a large expansive

Important protected habitats within this landscape type include tidal mudflats, saltmarsh, shingle beaches, reedbeds and wet grassland. There are also attractive fringes of broadleaf woodland in many areas around the estuary some of which are protected. Rock Farm Quarry on Little Island is of geological interest and hosts a number of rare plants and a diverse limestone flora. An important bat roost has also been identified within this landscape character type at Ballynaclashy House north of Midleton.

### Scenic Routes

There are 12 scenic routes within this landscape type.

### Landscape Character Areas

There is one landscape character area within this landscape type:

- 19 - Cork City and Harbour

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- This landscape comprises a mix of rural and intensely urban areas, combined with a large expansive harbour.

- The harbour includes large islands, which, along with much of the harbour shore, comprises landscape of fertile farmland of mixed use and mature broadleaf hedgerows, which slope gently to the sea.
- The harbour area also has a wealth of natural heritage, including a number of important habitats and wetland areas, which are of international significance due to the number and diversity of bird species they support.
- Fota Island contains a unique recreational, ecological and tourism value.

#### Built Environment

- The city docks area is characterised by tall cranes, warehousing, grain silos and large ships, while the wider harbour area comprises a mix of industrial, residential and recreational uses including marinas.
- Port facilities and related industries dominate much of the harbour area and to the south of the city, the western side of the harbour supports major industrial development.
- Telecommunication masts and water storage towers punctuate the skyline.

- The narrow harbour mouth is defined by two hilltops with old military fortifications on their summits. Attractive towns such as Cobh and Passage West/Monkstown, which contain Architectural Conservation Areas, contribute hugely to the rich built heritage of the area. The orientation of these towns towards the harbour and the existence of rows of terraced houses reflect their maritime heritage.
- The rural areas around much of the greater harbour area are now characterised by a prevalence of infrastructure such as roads, bridges and electricity power lines and some urban sprawl.
- The high quality vernacular built environment is portrayed by the high concentration of Protected Structures that are evident throughout the landscape.

#### Socio Economic

- This area has a strong economic base due to its strong urban character and diversity of economic activities.
- As a large population centre this area is not only important locally as a place to live and work but it also contributes

significantly at regional and national scale.

- It is also home to a number of prime industrial/enterprise sites including one of the largest concentrations of pharmaceutical industries in the world.
- The Deep Water Berth and Ringaskiddy Ferry Port contribute greatly to the economic success, particularly the commercial, industrial and tourism well being of the southwest region.

## Ecology

See Statutory Designations section above

## Pressure for Change

### Forestry

Strips of deciduous forestry are evident in all areas of the landscape and as one moves further inland, developments are usually well screened by this vegetation. In general there is huge competition for land in this landscape type, either for agricultural use or for development, thus there is little commercial forestry. Coillte have identified some areas of this landscape as sensitive to coniferous forestry.

### Climate

Climate change and rising sea levels will have an increasing effect on this coastal landscape. Global warming will make Ireland wetter during the winter and this natural process will make flooding more likely, assuming there is no human intervention.

### Population

Population increase is associated with this landscape type and this has been especially true in Metropolitan Cork. The reason for this is that Cork City is a central hub for employment, entertainment, education and retail.

The largest concentration of pharmaceutical companies in the country is located within this landscape. The harbour area accommodates nationally significant employment clusters at Ringaskiddy, Little Island and Whitegate in particular.

The City's economic impact lies far beyond the County of Cork and through the National Spatial Strategy's designation of Cork as a Gateway, the future intensification of employment in the area and the development of public transport will impact on the landscape of the area.

Each of the principal towns has numerous examples of sizable housing estates on the fringes of settlements. Many of these have an urban character and there is a general trend towards homogeneity in terms of their siting and design. Such development represents a particular force for change and may have an adverse impact on the quality and character of some of the areas most distinctive local landscapes.

### Agriculture

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area. Associated with the changes in the agricultural sector within the County as a whole is an increase in part time farmers and the accompanying decline in farm employment. This loss of labour is often particularly acute with regard to the traditional maintenance and management of key agricultural landscape features such as hedgerows and ditches. More recently, with the introduction of schemes such as the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), an attempt has been made to explicitly link farming activities to the environment. However it remains to be seen how successful the second REPS programme will be in retaining and maintaining existing natural landscape features.

If agricultural activity is not encouraged then further scrub invasion could damage landscape character by obscuring field patterns and distinctive landform.

However the surrounding agricultural lands have more potential for rural diversification due to their proximity to a large centre of population. The route that any future diversification may take will be a crucial factor in the altering of the landscape. The existence of the Metropolitan Green belt and the Rural Housing Control Zone supports the future of agriculture by helping to retain land in agricultural use and protect it from inappropriate development. Securing the Green Belt in agricultural use provides certainty for the farming community, which encourages investment and diversification in the agricultural industry.

### *Rural Housing*

The continuing population increase in Metropolitan Cork will exacerbate the demands for isolated dwellings in the countryside, large housing estates in rural villages and thus an increase in car dependency.

While most of this area is protected by the Green Belt and the Rural Housing Control Zone settlement policy the areas outside these

zones are under pressure from individual housing growth.

In particular there has been inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to main settlements. This type of development could have a negative impact on the vernacular landscape of this area.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development control, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### *Infrastructure*

The future reorganisation of port facilities will have a huge impact on the development of the docklands. CASP supports the relocation of port activities to the lower harbour to allow the redevelopment of the docklands.

Major road projects have been a feature of this landscape in the past. However with an ever increasing population plus the location of the airport and international ferry facilities, and the huge concentration of industry in the area, it is

envisaged that major infrastructural projects will also be a key force of change in the future.

### *Tourism*

The potential progress of tourism and the role it will play will be a significant factor in the future development of the area. CASP suggests that the harbours and coast are an under-appreciated resource, and there is considerable scope to further develop their tourist potential.

Significant numbers of tourists embark at the airport and ferry port, and together with business travel, they are a major contributor to the local economy.

The capacity of the harbour area to accommodate more marine leisure activities is currently being studied. However this landscape also has potential for recreational activities on land through coastal walks, urban attractions and cultural tourism. Overall this landscape offers a wide diverse range of activities

### *Natural resources*

There are 19 Quarries within this Landscape Character Type. The main quarries in the area are located at Carrigtwohill, Middleton and Rostellan.

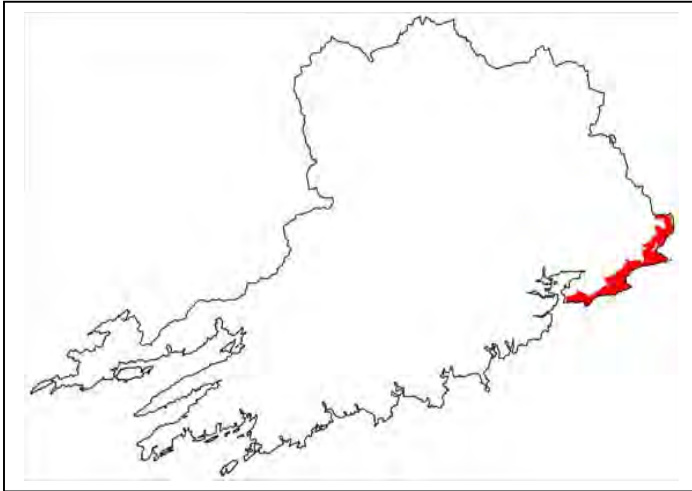


### Recommendations

- Protect the north and south ridges and hillsides around the city, to ensure the protection of the visual backdrop to the city. These ridges would be adversely affected by unsympathetic development thus interfering with views of special amenity value to the city and surrounding area.
- Promote sustainable growth in the existing main settlements of Cobh, Passage West, Carrigtwohill, and Midleton by encouraging new development, which respects the existing character of these settlements in terms of both scale and design.
- Maintain and enhance views of the harbour. Proposals for development in the harbour should respect the sensitivity of this landscape and in particular should have regard to its rich and diverse natural heritage and concentration of Natural Heritage Areas that are designated for protection and the relationship between these and the built environment.
- Proposals for medium and large scale business, retail and industrial uses, which may impact on the character of the harbour area, must consider the landscape implications at the outset and so a landscape scheme should be submitted with planning applications.
- Manage development that will adversely affect distinctive linear sections of the Lee River Valley, especially its open flood plains, when viewed from relevant scenic routes and settlements.
- Improve public access to the River Lee by enhancing it as a key recreational and amenity source.
- Recognise the potential constraints on development created by the River Lee flood plain and the value of this flood plain as an increasingly rare habitat.
- Carry out an appraisal to identify areas which could undergo a Seascape Character Assessment.
- Ensure that current quarrying sites undergo a rigorous monitoring regime to ensure that agreed mitigation measures are fully implemented.
- Require that new quarries undergo a landscape and visual impact assessment with appropriate restoration plan to respect the character of this landscape.
- Support the development of rural Cork's inland and coastal marine leisure facilities, where this is compatible with the long-term well being of this landscape character type.
- Promote the use of Spike Island as an amenity site.
- Protect the setting of existing promontories, which are part of the unique setting of this landscape type.



**Type 2: Broad Bay Coast**



the shore with low cliffs which give way to rocky shores on less exposed faces and then to beaches in bays, such as Ballycotton Bay and Youghal Bay.

Given the shelter provided by such promontories as Power Head, Knockadoon Head and that at Ballycotton from the prevailing winds and currents, long crescent shaped beaches have developed.

Inland, low broadleaf hedgerows define a mosaic of moderately sized fields. The fields are fertile, comprising mostly acid brown earths and brown podzolics. They are used mostly for dairy pasture but also some tillage. Isolated cottages, two-storey houses and farmsteads are scattered across the landscape, some on hilltops but mostly at lower altitudes between hills and around the bay areas. Towns and villages include Youghal, Shanagarry, Ballycotton and Garryvoe.

**Landscape Value: Very High**

**Landscape Sensitivity: Very High**

**Landscape Importance: County**

**Landscape Description**

This landscape stretches along the coast from the mouth of Cork Harbour in the west to the eastern boundary of County Cork at Youghal.

The coastline here sweeps in broad bays flanked by low promontories, having come under the influence of differential wave action between these projections and recessions of landform. The latter typically rise and fall in rolling barrel form, terminating abruptly along

**Statutory Designations**

This landscape area supports three Special Protection Areas, one Special Area of Conservation and six other areas that are proposed for protection as Natural Heritage Areas. Coastal habitats including freshwater marsh, sandflats and mudflats, shingle beaches and saltmarsh are the primary habitats of conservation value. The freshwater marsh at Ballyvergan is Ireland's largest coastal



freshwater marsh. This habitat is important for a number of breeding bird species including Reed Warbler, which has only commenced breeding in Ireland relatively recently. Cliffs and offshore islands are important for breeding seabirds including Cormorants, Black Guillemots, Gulls and Fulmar. Other coastal and estuarine habitats are important and support significant numbers of wintering birds. The Blackwater River and its associated woodlands and other habitats are the most noteworthy inland habitats within this area.

### Scenic Routes

There are 5 scenic routes within this landscape type.

### Landscape Character Areas

There are three landscape character areas within this landscape type:

- 22 - Power Head (Undulating Fertile Patchwork Coastline)
- 32 - Ballycotton Bay (Composite Fertile Patchwork Coastal Bay)
- 35 - Youghal Bay (Composite Mosaic and Marsh Estuary)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- The coastline sweeps in broad bays flanked by low promontories, terminating along the shore with low cliffs, and a combination of rocky shores and long crescent shaped bays, such as Ballycotton Bay and Youghal Bay.
- Inland, moderately sized fertile fields bounded by low broadleaf hedgerows, are used mostly for dairy pasture but also some tillage.

#### Built Environment

- Isolated cottages, two-storey houses and farmsteads are scattered across the landscape.

#### Socio Economic

- Towns and villages include Youghal, Shanagarry and Ballycotton.

#### Ecology

- The freshwater marsh at Ballyvergan is Ireland's largest coastal freshwater marsh and is important for a number of breeding bird species including the Reed Warbler.

- Cliffs and offshore islands are important for breeding seabirds including Cormorants, Black Guillemots, Gulls and Fulmar. Other coastal and estuarine habitats are important and support significant numbers of wintering birds.
- The Blackwater River and its associated woodlands and other habitats are the most noteworthy inland habitats within this area.

### Pressure for Change

#### Forestry

Deciduous trees are present on lower ground where shelter from windthrow is provided. There is very little coniferous forestry plantation within this landscape type which is probably due to the demand for lands for housing, tourism related developments and agriculture. Thus the demand for lands for other activities will ensure that forestry will not be a major force for change within this landscape type in the near future.

Any coniferous forestry plantations on the higher grounds and some of the more visible low lands would look conspicuous in the landscape and would impact hugely on the relatively strong patchwork fields. Deciduous

trees are a feature within the landscape as they help form field boundaries and their continuation will be important in retaining this landscape's character.

Where forestry is proposed, special care should be given to layout and species selection, as due to the tame nature of the landscape, plantations would be clearly visible for lengthy distances. Deciduous plantations should be encouraged where possible and their layout should respect the relatively strong field pattern.

### *Windfarms*

This area is regarded as a "Strategically Unsuitable Area" for windfarm developments. The tame nature of this landscape would not lend itself to windfarm development. Such developments in this area would dominate the surrounding landscape.

### *Climate*

Climate change and rising sea levels will have an increasing effect on this coastal landscape. Global warming will make Ireland wetter during the winter and this natural process will make flooding more likely, assuming there is no human intervention.

### *Population*

Much of this landscape type is within commuting distance of Cork City, which is a central hub for employment, entertainment, education and retail. Thus population increase on the basis of the above is evident in most areas but especially in the Power Head landscape character area.

The Ballycotton Bay landscape character area is dominated by tourist related development and it is difficult to ascertain from a visual assessment if the majority of houses are for temporary or permanent occupancy. It is clear however, that an increase in population is evident during the summer months.

The tourist industry also extends to the Youghal Bay landscape character area and large tourist related schemes are evident in Redbarn. The presence of Youghal town provides a centre for employment and a stable economic generator that helps balance the temporary nature of the tourist industry.

It is envisaged that further demand for housing due to the tourist industry and commuter living will raise the population of this landscape in the future. This population increase will have to be managed in a sustainable manner in order to preserve the existing tourism economy.

### *Agriculture*

Agricultural practice has helped preserve the relatively strong field boundaries. The promotion of agriculture as the major landuse will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy.

A decline in agricultural activity will have a detrimental affect on the character of the landscape and there would be a danger that the well-defined and continuous field pattern could be disrupted.

### *Rural Housing*

Rural housing is very evident in this landscape and due to the tame and flat nature of the land, any structures like a one-off house become more prominent in the landscape. The windblown nature of the seaward side of the landscape does not help when trying to lessen the visual impact of dwellings.

Ribbon development is evident in most parts of the landscape and it is clear that there is a high demand for housing in the area

While some of this area is protected by the Rural Housing Control Zone settlement policy the areas outside the RHCZ are under pressure from individual housing growth.

In particular there has been inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to settlements. This type of development could have a negative impact on the vernacular landscape of this area.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### *Infrastructure*

The area around Youghal will experience significant infrastructural changes in the future due to its strategic location on the Cork – Waterford “Euro Route”. The extension of rail facilities to Youghal will also have a considerable impact on the immediate landscape.

The rest of the landscape contains no major roads or other main transportation routes. However it is envisaged that further growth in the tourist industry and population increases may lead to significant infrastructural projects in the future, thus this may be a force of change.

### *Tourism*

The tourist industry has long been associated with this landscape due to the natural beauty and plentiful supply of beaches. This landscape continues to be under pressure for tourist related development and caravan parks, hotels and holiday homes are the main developments that are sought in this landscape type.

Tourist influxes during the summer months create pressure on public infrastructure and roads in a number of locations and can interfere with the residential amenity of the local population. However the economic benefits are substantial and the influx of people can create a sense of energy that in turn can make towns and villages more desirable places to live and visit.

Further tourist related development in the future would have to take account of the visual affects it will have on this landscape and also the stress it will place on public infrastructure and local communities during the peak season. Water pollution, sewerage run-off, air pollution, reduced road capacity, visual obtrusiveness and reduction of the residential amenity of the local population could all be consequences of unplanned tourist developments.

However the tourist industry should also act as an incentive to protect and maintain the key characteristics of this landscape e.g. beaches, Scenic Routes and Scenic Landscapes as designated under the County Development Plan.

### **Recommendations**

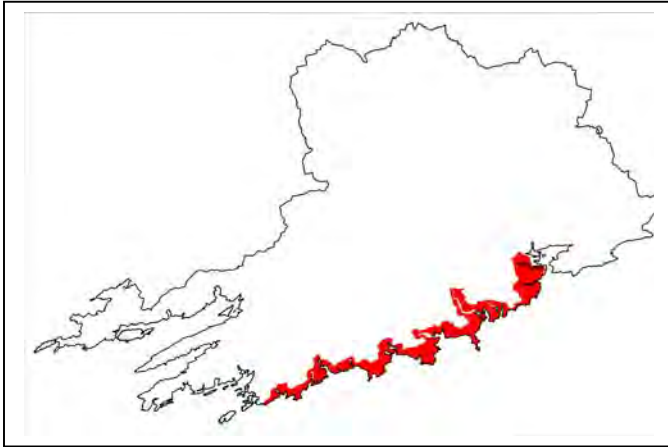
- Continue to promote tourism in this area while also continuing to protect and maintain beaches, scenic routes and scenic landscapes as designated under the County Development Plan.
- Recognise the importance of the coastal areas in this landscape for their scenic, recreational and cultural values.
- Protect the setting of existing promontories which are part of the unique setting of this coastline.
- Encourage the development of this landscape as a nature/tourist resource by creating a way marked drive along the coastline.
- Ensure that new tourist facilities such as hotels, holiday homes and caravan parks will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere or detract from environmentally sensitive coastal areas. Appropriate location and an

- integrated landscape scheme will help to integrate the site with the surrounding landscape.
- Carry out an appraisal to identify areas which could undergo a Seascape Character Assessment.
  - Protect the unique character of coastal villages by preventing large-scale development which would undermine the attractiveness of this coastal landscape.
  - Protect the elevated ridges and prominent hilltops which form part of the setting of this coastal landscape and ensure that development will not disrupt disproportionately the integrity of distinctive primary ridgelines when viewed from relevant scenic routes and settlements.
  - Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.
  - Promote agricultural land use as this will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
- Protect the freshwater marsh at Ballyvergan which is Ireland's largest coastal freshwater marsh and is important for a number of breeding bird species.
  - Support the development of rural Cork's inland and coastal marine leisure facilities, where this is compatible with the long-term well being of the environment.
  - Have regard to the coastline's rich and diverse natural heritage and the concentration of NHA's and SAC's that are designated for protection.





**Type 3: Indented Estuarine Coast**



immediately to the north and inland which rise and fall with the topography, and stony or sandy beaches. The coastline is punctuated by a series of these promontories, such as Old Head of Kinsale, Seven Heads, Galley Head and Toe Head, which recede to bays, such as Kinsale Harbour, Courtmacsherry Bay, Clonakilty Bay and Rosscarberry Bay.

In terms of landcover, fertile soils predominantly of brown podzolics allow the undulating landscape to be farmed relatively intensively. Fields of moderate size gently rise and fall with the topography, creating a patchwork further articulated by bounding broadleaf hedgerows of generally low height as well as post and wire fencing. Patches of rush are also found, indicating wet ground conditions. Occasional swaths of coniferous plantation rise to the crests of the low hills that enclose the shallow bays.

***Landscape Value: Very High***

***Landscape Sensitivity: Very High***

***Landscape Importance: National***

**Landscape Description**

The indented estuarine coast landscape type stretches from Baltimore in the west to the mouth of Cork Harbour, in the east. This landscape comprises gently undulating topography incised by shallow river estuaries or ‘drowned’ valleys formed by glacial activity. The shoreline comprises low but steep cliffs of purple mudstone and siltstone to the south forming promontories and sandstone

Of cultural note is the Old Head of Kinsale, the prominent form of which is associated with a key point in sixteenth and seventeenth century Irish history and, indeed, that of England and Spain.

**Statutory Designations**

This is a long stretch of coastal land running west of the city to Castle Point near Mizen



Head. Its natural heritage value is evidenced by the fact that it contains 20 proposed Natural Heritage Areas, six Special Areas of Conservation and one Special Protection Area. A range of Irish coastal habitats is represented in these sites, including dunes, coastal heaths, freshwater marsh, mudflats, sandflats and reedbeds. Lough Hyne near Skibbereen was formerly a freshwater lake that is now marine in nature as a result in a rise in sea levels. It is an internationally important site supporting reefs, a rocky shore and coastal heath as well as a number of rare marine plant and animal species. The mudflats at Rosscarbery and Clonakilty are important wintering sites for coastal birds, while the Old Head and Sovereign Islands are important breeding sites for sea-birds. There are some small areas of woodland that are or were known sites for the very rare Killarney Fern. There are also two important Leisler's Bat Roosts found here, one of which was once the largest known Leisler's roost in the world.

### Scenic Routes

There are 26 scenic routes within this landscape type.

### Landscape Character Areas

**There are 11 Landscape Character Areas within this landscape type. They are:**

- 45 - Crosshaven (Incised Patchwork and Wooded Estuary with Mudflats and Islands)
- 44 - Robert's Head (Fertile Undulating Patchwork coastline)
- 67 - Kinsale Harbour (Incised Patchwork and Wooded Estuary with Mudflats and Islands)
- 50 - Garrettstown Strand (Fertile Rolling Patchwork Coastline)
- 
- 51 - Old Head Of Kinsale (Indented Fertile Patchwork Peninsula)
- 21 - Courtmacsherry (Incised Patchwork and Wooded Estuaries with Mudflats)
- 47 - Seven Heads (Fertile Rolling Patchwork Coastline)
- 46 - Inchydoney (Incised Patchwork and Wooded Estuary with Mudflats and Islands)
- 13 - Galley Head (Fertile Rolling Patchwork Coastline)
- 48 - Glandore (Incised Patchwork and Wooded Estuary with Mudflats and Islands)
- 14 - Toe Head/Lough Hyne (Indented Rugged Coastline of Marginal Farmland)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Stretches from Baltimore in the west to the mouth of Cork Harbour, in the east.
- The coastline is punctuated by a series of these promontories, such as Old Head of Kinsale, Seven Heads, Galley Head and Toe Head, which recede to bays, such as Kinsale Harbour, Courtmacsherry Bay, Clonakilty Bay and Rosscarberry Bay.
- Cutting their way into the landscape from these bays, the estuaries wind inland creating shallow tidal mudflat and occasional marshy areas.
- Fields of moderate size gently rise and fall with the topography, creating a patchwork further articulated by bounding broadleaf hedgerows of generally low height as well as post and wire fencing. Patches of rush are

also found, indicating wet ground conditions.

- Land use in this landscape character type is typified by intensive dairying and tillage.

### **Built Environment**

- Farmsteads, houses and outbuildings are generally visible throughout the landscape due to the relatively low height of the hedgerows.
- Urban centres such as Rosscarberry, Clonakilty, Timoleague, Kinsale and Carrigaline tend to take advantage of the shelter afforded by the inlets.

### **Socio Economic**

- Land use in this landscape character type is typified by intensive dairying and tillage.

### **Ecology**

- The shoreline comprises low but steep cliffs of purple mudstone and siltstone to the south forming promontories and sandstone immediately to the north and inland that rise and fall with the topography, and stony or sandy beaches.

- Fertile soils predominantly of brown podzolics allow the undulating landscape to be farmed relatively intensively.
- Comprises gently undulating topography incised by shallow river estuaries or ‘drowned’ valleys formed by glacial activity.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Forestry*

Due to the windblown nature of this landscape the vegetation is low and forestry is contained mostly in sheltered valleys. Land is also valued highly for residential purposes, tourist related developments and agriculture thus resulting in the sparse occurrence of coniferous forestry. Due to the large number of scenic routes in this landscape it will be necessary to retain a reasonable number of views throughout the full rotation, for the benefit of road users therefore future plantations should take cognisance of this issue.

#### *Windfarms*

This area is regarded as a “Strategically Unsuitable Area” for windfarm developments. In many areas the tame nature of this landscape would not lend itself to windfarm development, as such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape.

Certain landscape character areas like Toe Head/Lough Hyne (Indented Rugged Coastline of Marginal Farmland) would not be suitable for windfarm development as it would clash with the rugged and wild landscape ideal that tourists wish to experience.

#### *Climate*

The impact of rising sea levels has already had an impact on Lough Hyne and the future implications for a further rise in sea level will be very pronounced in a landscape defined by its imminent proximity to the sea.

#### *Population*

While many of the areas along this landscape type are remote, the presence of a viable tourist industry has sustained and steadily increased the population. The population of tourist destinations like Baltimore increase up to 5 fold during the peak tourist season. Thus an increase in the tourist sector will be a major force for change in this landscape in the future.

#### *Agriculture*

Agricultural practice has helped preserve the relatively strong field boundaries in some landscape character areas. However it is important to note that the further west, the more marginal the land is and the less apparent

the field patterns become. The promotion of agriculture as the major landuse will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy.

A decline in agricultural activity will have a detrimental affect on the character of the landscape and there would be a danger that field pattern could be disrupted.

### *Rural Housing*

Rural housing is very evident in this landscape and due to the tame and flat nature of the land in some landscape character areas, any structures like a one-off house become more prominent in the landscape. The windblown nature of the seaward side of the landscape does not help when trying to lessen the visual impact of dwellings.

While some of this area is protected by the Green Belt and Rural Housing Control Zone settlement policy the areas outside the zones are under pressure from individual housing growth.

Ribbon development is evident in most parts of the landscape and it is clear that there is a high demand for housing in the area.

In particular there has been inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to

settlements. This type of development could have a negative impact on the vernacular landscape.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### *Infrastructure*

Tourist influxes during the summer months create pressure on public infrastructure and roads in a number of locations.

### *Tourism*

Due to the natural beauty and plentiful supply of beaches, this landscape continues to be under pressure for tourist related development. Caravan parks, hotels and holiday homes are the main developments that are sought in this landscape type.

Tourist influxes during the summer months create pressure on public infrastructure and roads in a number of locations and can interfere with the residential amenity of the

local population. However the economic benefits are substantial and the influx of people can create a sense of energy that in turn can make towns and villages more desirable places to live and visit.

Further tourist related development in the future would have to take account of the visual affects it will have on this landscape and also the stress it will place on public infrastructure and local communities during the peak season. Water pollution, sewerage run-off, air pollution, reduced road capacity, visual obtrusiveness and reduction of the residential amenity of the local population could all be consequences of unplanned tourist developments.

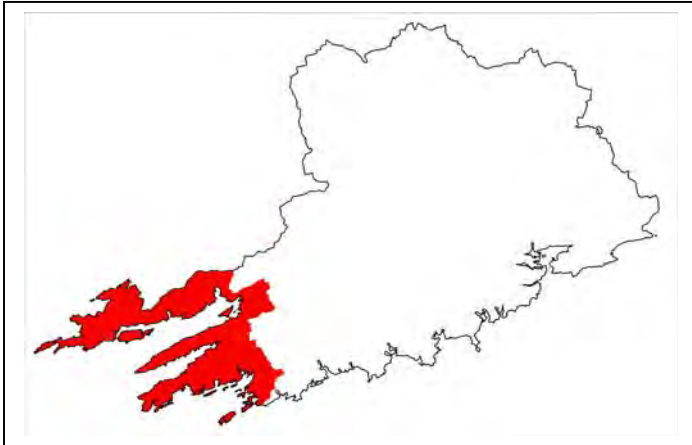
### **Recommendations**

- Recognise the importance of retaining undeveloped areas of coastline, estuaries and dunes for their scenic and ecological value.
- Protect the setting of existing promontories which are part of the unique setting of this coastline.
- Protect sea views from coast roads and recognise the importance of restricting development where it would be injurious to the character of the area.
- Develop the coast as a nature/tourist resource by creating a way marked

- drive along the coastline from Crosshaven to Baltimore.
- Ensure that new tourist facilities such as hotels, holiday homes and caravan parks will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere or detract from environmentally sensitive coastal areas. Appropriate location and an integrated landscape scheme will help to integrate the site with the surrounding landscape.
  - Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.
  - Encourage sustainable tourism by maximising the potential amenity value of water bodies within this LCT particularly in the coastal settlements of Garretstown, Crosshaven and Inchydoney.
  - Carry out an appraisal to identify areas which could undergo a Seascape Character Assessment.
  - Support the development of rural Cork's inland and coastal marine leisure facilities, where this is compatible with the long-term well-being of the environment.
  - Minimise disturbance of hedgerows in rural areas. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.
  - Protect the existing character and setting of villages and village nuclei, which are under pressure from population growth.
  - Continue to promote agriculture as a major land use in this LCT. This will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
  - Have regard to the coastline's rich and diverse natural heritage and the concentration of NHA's and SAC's that are designated for protection.



**Type 4: Rugged Ridge Peninsulas**



*Landscape Value: Very High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Very High*

*Landscape Importance: National*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type is located in the extreme southwestern corner of Ireland. The predominant components of this landscape type include rocky peninsulas such as Mizen Head, Beara and Sheep’s Head, separated by drowned valleys and relatively low-lying bays such as Bantry, Dunmanus and Roaringwater Bay. The high ridges and mountainous peaks of the peninsulas, such as Hungry Hill, are characterised by a jagged profile and include

the occasional corrie lake and steep pass while others, notably on the Mizen Head peninsula, are more rounded with occasional rock outcrops and streams. The same variety and ruggedness characterises much of the shoreline, with rocky promontories and islands extending out into the sea. The sheltered recesses of the bay areas typically comprise flatter terrain extending inland and rising to low ridges and hills, including drumlins within Bantry Bay. Roaringwater Bay includes many small islands, including Shirkin Island, while Bantry Bay includes the notably larger Bere Island and Whiddy Island. The exceptional depth of Bantry Bay provides a natural harbour, which can accommodate large ocean-going tankards, while large metal cylinders are a significant feature in this coastal landscape.

Typically the rocky peninsulas comprise a mix of moorland, some relatively fertile patches of farmland and woodland including some smaller patches of coniferous plantations on higher ground. Fields of regular shape are more prevalent inland on the flatter ground but become more irregularly shaped and less fertile on the slopes of the surrounding hills, and include patches of bracken, rush and scrub as well as a mix of broadleaf hedgerows and coniferous shelterbelts.



Farmsteads are scattered on lower ground and comprise small houses and outhouses, with towns, villages and hamlets located along the coast, with larger examples including Castletownbere, Bantry and Skull, and the villages of Allihies and Eyeries which provide a particular feature in the landscape due to the varied colour of their buildings. The combination of exceptionally mild microclimate in this area of Ireland and the fertile ground in the bays has resulted in cultivated exotic gardens, including the gardens on Garinish Island near Glengarriff, which are of international renown and adds to the natural beauty of the landscape. To the east and in bays offering shelter, the coastline is less rugged and predominantly fertile and given to dairying and some tillage.

### Statutory Designations

The western peninsular area of the county is of high ecological value and is by far the most heavily designated landscape in the County with 33 proposed Natural Heritage Areas, 13 Special Areas of Conservation and 2 Special Protection Areas with a great diversity of important habitats chiefly associated with the rocky coastline and the internal uplands.

The wilder nature of the coastline of this part of the county is reflected in the habitats, communities and species that have been

recorded here. Important coastal habitats include reefs, sea cliffs, shallow inlets and bays, dunes and coastal heaths. There are a number of rare plant sites along the coast as well as important sites for breeding sea-birds, particularly Chough, Arctic and Common Terns. More marine species including Storm Petrel, Guillemot and Razorbill breed on the islands. Common and Grey Seal are also found along the coast. Important habitats in the uplands include blanket bog, heath, glacial lakes and upland grassland. Some of these sites also support notable plant communities and rare plant species. There are a number of important bat roosts. This part of the country is important for Lesser Horseshoe Bat, a species that has been identified as threatened and that requires special measures including the designation of its roost sites to protect it.

### Scenic Routes

There are 35 scenic routes within this landscape type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This Landscape Type includes 12 Landscape Character Areas

- 39 - Ardgroom (Rugged Ridge and Rocky Marsh with Hump-back Coastal Fringe)
- 38 - Glenbeg Lough (V-shaped Lake Valley)
- 11 - Reenmore Point (Coastal Rugged Ridge)
- 40 - Allihies (Coastal Jagged and Moorland Ridge with Planar Mosaic)
- 12 - Dursey – Bear Haven (Indented Rugged Peninsular Ridge)
- 10 - Adrigole – Glengarriffe (Indented Peninsula with Rugged Ridge and Valley)
- 16 - Bantry (Composite Bay and Lower Valley of Ridges and Drumlins)
- 74 - Shronagree Pass North (Rugged Ridge and Valley)
- 54 - Shronagree Pass South (Rugged Ridge and Valley)
- 34 - Sheeps Head – Mizzen Head (Indented Rugged Peninsular Ridge)
- 15 - Roaringwater Bay and Islands (Incised Patchwork and Wooded Estuary with Mudflats and Islands)
- 9 - Ballycrovane Harbour (Low Rocky Coastal Ridge)



## Key Characteristics

### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Rugged ridges stretching out towards the sea or forming peninsulas like fingers with relatively low lying bays between them.
- Submerged upland coast comprising of drowned bays or rias.
- Lofty ridges and peaks are characterised by a jagged profile while others like Mizen Head are more subdued and rounded, Hungry Hill is the most dramatic of these rugged mountains.
- The rocky peninsulas comprise of thin blanket peat accommodating open moorland of heather and wild grasses. Relatively fertile patches of farmland and woodland indicate glacial till locations.
- Drifts of bracken typically identify the interface of upper ground with thin blanket peats and fertile soils at lower levels. Broadleaves are located on the fertile low ground and smaller patches of coniferous plantations are found on the higher ground.

- Occasional clusters of small pasture fields located on the more fertile ground mark farming activity.
- Fields of regular shape are more prevalent inland on the flatter ground but become more irregularly shaped and less fertile on the slopes of the surrounding hills, and include patches of bracken, rush and scrub as well as a mix of broadleaf hedgerows and coniferous shelterbelts.
- The old oak woodlands in Glengarriff are believed to be ancient supporting an extraordinarily diverse range of invertebrate and other species.

### Built Environment

- Farmsteads are scattered on lower ground and comprise small houses and outhouses, with towns, villages and hamlets located along the coast, with larger examples including Castletownbere, Bantry and Skull.
- The villages of Allihies and Eyeries provide a particular feature in the landscape due to the varied colour of their buildings.

### Socio Economic

- Due to the extraordinary beauty of the landscape, tourism is an important industry.
- There is an oil refinery located on Whiddy Island.

### Ecology

See Statutory Designations section above

### Pressure for Change

#### *Windfarms*

Much of this LCT has high wind speeds, but also great landscape sensitivity, hence there are not strategic search areas, and much of the area is identified as “Strategically Unsuitable”.

#### *Climate*

Climate change and rising sea levels will have an increasing effect on this coastal landscape. Global warming will make Ireland wetter during the winter and this natural process will make flooding more likely, assuming there is no human intervention.

#### *Population*

Each of the main settlements have numerous examples of sizable housing developments. Many of these have an urban character and

there is a general trend towards homogeneity in terms of their siting and design. Such development represents a particular force for change and may have an adverse impact on the quality and character of some of the areas most distinctive local landscapes.

Population decline in more rural areas is a major issue in the far western parts of this landscape. While it is important to reverse decline and stabilise the population it is also important to ensure that development supports the linguistic, cultural and rural heritage of the area.

### *Agriculture*

Agriculture will continue as a major land use and it will be necessary to secure agriculture where it has the capacity to remain strong and viable. Agriculture in the Bantry area must be supported and encouraged to develop so it continues to play an important role as a basis for a strong and diversified rural economy. The links between traditional employments and the significant and developing sectors such as tourism, enterprise, local services and other sources of off-farm employment, will be important to the support of a strong rural economy.

### *Rural Housing*

This landscape is valued for its traditional vernacular buildings and the exceptional vernacular quality and setting of individual buildings and farmsteads.

The greatest pressure for new residential development is for isolated dwellings in the countryside therefore it is important to ensure that new development does not have a negative impact on the vernacular landscape.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development control, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### *Infrastructure*

This LCT is heavily dependent on road transport and, in particular the private car. The road network in the area is generally poor. Most roads are narrow with poor vertical and horizontal alignment, and improved sections of road are isolated rather than continuous.

### *Tourism*

The area is highly valued for its tourism and recreation, due mainly to its scenic amenities, extensive coastline and marine leisure, which attracts large numbers of domestic and international visitors. This in turn creates a huge demand for associated developments such as second homes and holiday homes.

The potential progress of tourism and the role it will play will be a significant factor in the future development of the area. CASP suggests that the harbours and coast are an under-appreciated resource, and there is considerable scope to further develop their tourist potential.

### *Natural resources*

Though not the major force it was long ago, the extractive industries make an important contribution to the economy of this LCT. Of particular note is the large quarry near Derrylough on the south side of the Beara Peninsula.

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage sustainable tourism by maximising the potential amenity value of water bodies within this LCT particularly in the coastal settlements of Schull, Baltimore and Crookhaven.

- Recognise the importance of retaining undeveloped areas of coastline, estuaries and dunes for their scenic and ecological value.
- Protect the setting of existing promontories which are part of the unique setting of this coastline.
- Protect sea views from coast roads and recognise the importance of restricting development where it would be injurious to the character of the area.
- Develop the coast as a nature/tourist resource by creating a way marked drive along the coastline between Baltimore and Castletownbere. .
- Ensure that new development, including contemporary architecture, compliments the local vernacular in terms of scale and character and compliments the landscape setting.
- Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.
- Continue to promote agriculture as a major land use in this LCT. This will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
- Ensure that new tourist facilities such as hotels, holiday homes and caravan parks will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere or detract from environmentally sensitive coastal areas. Appropriate location and an integrated landscape scheme will help to integrate the site with the surrounding landscape.
- Ensure that new development of any kind is sympathetic to the individual form and character of the islands' landscapes and traditional building patterns.
- Continue to promote the Gaeltacht on the island of Cape Clear as a cultural resource.
- Protect the existing character and setting of villages and village nuclei which are under pressure from population growth.
- Support the development of rural Cork's inland and coastal marine leisure facilities, where this is compatible with the long-term well-being of the environment.
- Protect the elevated ridges and prominent hilltops such as Hungry Hill which form part of the setting of this coastal landscape and ensure that development will not disrupt the integrity of distinctive primary ridgelines when viewed from relevant scenic routes and settlements.
- Protect the scenic rocky promontories of Mizen Head, Beara and Sheeps head.
- Have regard to the coastline's rich and diverse natural heritage and the concentration of NHA's and SAC's that are designated for protection.



**Type 5: Fertile Plain with Moorland Ridge**



***Landscape Value: Very High***

***Landscape Sensitivity: Very High***

***Landscape Importance: County***

**Landscape Description**

This landscape is generally referred to as the “Golden Vale” and occupies a substantial proportion of northeast Cork. This is a low lying landscape, which comprises an extensive area of predominantly flat or gently undulating topography along the River Blackwater, and which is contained in its periphery by low ridges. The latter include the southern slopes of

the Ballyhoura and Galtee Mountains to the north, the northern slopes of the Nagles to the south and the western ridges of the Knockmealdown Mountains. The bedrock of the plain comprises mostly of limestone while sandstone typically forms the underlying geology of the peripheral ridges. Lower ground comprises brown earths and the occasional gley while brown podzols are located at slightly higher levels.

These physical conditions create a fertile and verdant landscape well suited to intensive farming. It is this activity and the planar landform, which give the landscape its characteristic rectilinear mosaic of large sized fields. This mosaic is articulated by the field boundaries comprising mostly mature broadleaf hedgerows but also scrub species such as gorse. Articulation also results from the variation in colour arising from alternative use, whether dairying or arable. Occasional small blocks of coniferous plantations introduce a patchy landcover pattern to hills and ridge tops.

The landscape is also characterised by many old demesnes comprising, for example, high stone walls, broadleaf avenues and open parkland. Several large settlements are found within the area, including Mallow, Charleville, Mitchelstown and Fermoy, all of which

developed on the basis of the high agricultural productivity of the surrounding countryside.

Farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape, comprising large houses, traditional barns, barrel shaped metal roofed sheds and slatted sheds with A-shaped roofs. Such building complexes are typically partially screened by the mature hedgerows. The landscape is one of high fertility and, thus, productivity. It is a “working” landscape, manifesting the human bond with the land through agricultural activity. Because of its flatness the landscape might be described as ‘calm’. While this even and vast extent can best be perceived from an elevated location, views are otherwise curtailed by the prevalent tall hedgerows when viewed on the plain.

### Statutory Designations

This landscape type covers a large area of land and that is reflected in the number of designated sites found within the type. In total there are 24 proposed Natural Heritage Areas, three SAC’s and two SPA’s within this landscape type. The geology of the area, in particular the presence of limestone has resulted in the occurrence of interesting and diverse plant communities in the woodlands and elsewhere along both the Awbeg and Blackwater Rivers. Limestone cliffs and caves

as well as the only Turlough (disappearing lake) known in Cork are also found within this landscape. Wet and dry woodlands, freshwater wetland habitats and a number of sites for the rare plants, the Golden Dock and the Killarney Fern add to the interest. One of the largest known nursery roosts of Daubentons Bat has also been recorded here, close to the banks of the Blackwater River. Bird interest is associated with the river wetlands, the Blackwater Callows and Kilcolman Bog as well as a number of small ponds dotted around the area. Notable species include two species listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive, the Greenland White-fronted Goose and Whooper Swan. Salmon, Lamprey, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Crayfish and Otter are notable species recorded in the rivers.

### Scenic Routes

There are 14 Scenic Routes with this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This landscape type contains three landscape character types:

- 69 - Dromina/Charleville (Fertile Planar and Gently Undulating Mosaic farmland and Moorland Ridge). While lands remain predominately fertile,

there is more evidence of scrub on the plain than the Golden Vale. The main settlement is Charleville and the scattered villages in the vicinity, gravitate towards it.

- 62 - The Golden Vale (Moorland Ridge and Broad Undulating Patchwork Middle Valley), The human influence on this landscape is more keenly felt than in the other two landscape character areas and it provides a mastering of nature through the ordered and formal layout of field patterns.
- 30 – Kilworth (Moorland Ridge and Broad Undulating Patchwork Lower Valley).

### Key Characteristics

**Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- Broad plain defined by the River Blackwater with moorland ridges to the north and south
- Highly intensive dairying and tillage region.

- Mature broadleaf hedgerows on plain with patches of coniferous forestry on higher ground
- Good range and diversity of habitats many of which are contained along the Rivers Blackwater and Awbeg.
- The main natural features of the Rivers Blackwater and Awbeg have largely remained intact and their preservation in the future is vital for the developing tourism sector in the region.

### **Built Environment**

- Several large urban settlements and numerous villages in the area.
- High quality vernacular built environment and this is portrayed by the high concentration of Protected Structures that are evident throughout the landscape.
- Strong vernacular quality in terms of range and quality of estate homes and farmsteads.
- Numerous attractive villages and towns in terms of setting and built environment e.g. Castletownroche and Mitchelstown.
- The town centres in many of the main towns have maintained their architectural heritage.
- Farmsteads are spread throughout the landscape and these consist of large

houses and traditional barns. They have a logical relationship with the landscape and their buildings were sited to maximise opportunities for shelter and cultivation. The key visual relationship is between the siting of structures and the width, length and orientation of plots.

### **Socio Economic**

- Relatively strong economic base due to the strong urban character of the area and diversity of economic activities.
- Several large urban centres in the area, all of which developed on the basis of the high agricultural productivity of the surrounding countryside.
- Highly intensive farming has shaped the landscape.
- Fishing and attractive walks are associated with this landscape type.

### **Ecology**

See Statutory Designations Section Above.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Forestry*

Forestry development is beginning to dominate some of the upland areas within this landscape

therefore their visual impact on the landscape should be addressed.

Due to the pattern of land ownership in Ireland, forests on hill or mountain sites are often established as long narrow belts running uphill in isolation. Where a number of these are planted in close proximity, the resulting 'ladder' effect involving alternative strips of forest and open ground creates a disjointed landscape. The shape of plantations, which often resemble 'blocks' on the landscape and the lack of a mixture of species, are a cause for concern.

While parts of this landscape type have been robust enough to accommodate forestry development (due mainly to the diversity in the landscape in the Kilworth and Dromina/Charleville landscape character areas) further plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape.

The expansion of coniferous plantation onto the plain would have a profound impact on the general regimented field pattern in the area.

Deciduous trees are a dominant feature within the landscape, especially on the plain, as they help form field boundaries. Their continuation

will be important in retaining this landscape type's character.

### *Population*

This landscape contains many large settlements such as Mallow, Mitchelstown, Charleville and Fermoy. These are not only important county towns but they are also economic generators and service providers for a large hinterland.

The designation of Mallow as a hub under the NSS could see the population of the town and surrounds explode in the future. This may have huge impacts on one of the main defining features of this landscape type, 'The River Blackwater'. Indeed the intended strategy for Mallow should take account of the future management of this natural feature and counterbalance it with necessary economic development.

Each of the principal towns has numerous examples of sizable housing estates on the fringes of settlements. Many of these have an urban character and there is a general trend towards homogeneity in terms of their siting and design. Such development represents a particular force for change and may have an adverse impact on the quality and character of

some of the areas most distinctive local landscapes.

### *Agriculture*

This is a man made landscape and agriculture has played a central role in shaping the landscape thus its survival will be key to the preservation of the character of landscape. A decline in agricultural activity is likely to impact on the character of the area. Associated with the changes in the agricultural sector within the County as a whole, is an increase in part time farmers and the accompanying decline in farm employment. This loss of labour is often particularly acute with regard to the traditional maintenance and management of key agricultural landscape features such as hedgerows and ditches. More recently, with the introduction of schemes such as the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), an attempt has been made to explicitly link farming activities to the environment. However it remains to be seen how successful the second REPS programme will be in retaining and maintaining existing natural landscape features.

If agricultural activity is not encouraged then scrub invasion could damage landscape character by obscuring field patterns and distinctive landform.

However the surrounding agricultural lands have more potential for rural diversification due to their proximity to a large centre of population. The route that any future diversification may take will be a crucial factor in the altering of the landscape. The existence of the Green belts around the main towns supports the future of agriculture by helping to retain land in agricultural use and protect it from inappropriate development. Securing the Green Belt in agricultural use provides certainty for the farming community, which encourages investment and diversification in the agricultural industry.

### *Rural Housing*

Rural housing is evident throughout the landscape in the form of traditional farmsteads and more modern type dwellings. There is an abundance of vegetation on the plain and on higher ground and this helps provide screen planting for dwellings. However while this tall vegetation helps curtail views on the plain, on higher ground extensive views of the landscape are presented thus structures become more prominent.

### *Infrastructure*

There are a high number of transportation corridors through this landscape by rail and road. National road links to Dublin,



Killarney/Tralee and Limerick pass through this landscape type.

Major road projects have been a feature of this landscape in the past and with an ever increasing population plus a growing economy, it is envisaged that major infrastructural projects will also be a key force of change in the future.

### *Tourism*

The tourist industry in this landscape is based on a countywide or regional basis and does not attract the necessary foreign or even national interest it needs to sustain a viable industry. Thus tourist related developments are not currently a major force of change. However this has been an advantage, as the main natural features of the Rivers Blackwater and Awbeg have largely remained intact and free from unsympathetic developments. The landscape does contain a wide variety of attractions (e.g. high quality built environment, natural features such as rivers and mountains, Mallow racecourse, good transportation links) so if properly marketed, the development of tourism could become a part of rural diversification to sustain the local economy in the future.

### *Natural Resources*

There are a number of quarries in this LCT and it is important to safeguard the resources. The

most significant quarries in this area are located at Ballybeg, Glanworth and Araglin.

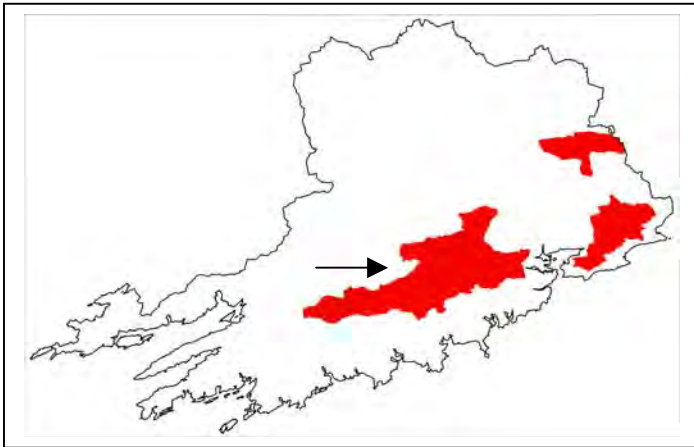
### **Recommendations**

- Much of this landscape type forms part of the rich agricultural area of the “golden vale” and is farmed relatively intensively. The promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
- Recognise that the lowlands are made up of a variety of working landscapes that are critical resources for sustaining the economic and social well being of the county.
- New farm buildings must be designed to integrate within the landscape considering factors such as materials and colouring.
- Protect the existing character and setting of villages and village nuclei that are under pressure from population growth, in particular villages like Castletownroche which have a unique historic setting.
- Continue to promote and protect Mallow Racecourse and the River Blackwater as the primary visitor attractions in this Landscape Type.
- Have regard to the rich heritage in this area and the concentration of buildings that are protected under the list of protected structures.
- Preserve the Blackwater Valley as a unique landscape setting for the main settlements of Mallow and Fermoy and improve public access by enhancing it as a key recreation and amenity source. Control development that will adversely affect distinctive linear sections of the Blackwater River Valley, especially its open flood plains, when viewed from relevant scenic routes and settlements
- Protect and preserve the Awbeg River as a valuable resource for scenic and amenity values.
- Recognise the potential constraints on development created by river flood plains and the value of these flood plains as increasingly rare habitats.
- Maintain and enhance the 18<sup>th</sup> Century estate landscapes and associated parkland and woodland to develop them as a tourist resource, for example, Doneraile Park in Doneraile.
- Reflect existing vegetation species and patterns in new planting schemes in this LCT.
- Forestry plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a

way that respects the character of the landscape.

- Encourage further planting of deciduous trees as they are a dominant feature in this landscape and their continuation is important in retaining the character of this landscape.
- Minimise disturbance of hedgerows in rural areas. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.
- Continue to promote Mallow as a 'hub' town as designated under the National Spatial Strategy and have regard to the environmental objectives set out in the Mallow Special Local Area Plan.
- Ensure that the approach roads to the towns and villages in this LCT are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of these settlements.

**Type 6a: Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys  
(Blarney-Ballincollig-Carrigaline-West  
to Dunmanway)**



*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: County*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type stretches west and east from the environs of Cork City but also includes a smaller area east of Rathcormac. The valleys in these areas are created by the rivers flowing east to west and are surrounded by low well spaced ridges. These shallow and flat valleys wind as they follow the course of the river, rising to the north and south with gentle slopes where the valley is wide but with steeper faced slopes where the valley narrows. Further upstream to the west the broad flatness narrows and winds between low hills.

Landcover comprises highly fertile, regularly shaped fields typically of medium size and with mature broadleaf hedgerows. Agricultural use primarily involves intensive dairying as well as tillage, with farmsteads relatively well screened by the hedgerows. Some of the larger settlements include Bandon, Ballincollig and Blarney to the west of Cork City, Castlemartyr to the east and Rathcormack to the north. Major roads such as the N22 between Macroom and Cork City and the N71 between Innishannon and Bandon tend to follow the rivers, often providing distant views across the landscape.

**Statutory Designations**

Thirteen sites of national value have been identified in this part of Cork County, all of which are proposed for protection as Natural Heritage Areas and one as a Candidate SAC. Habitats of high ecological value within the area are associated with the river valleys of the Bandon and the Lee. They include wet grassland, freshwater marsh, fen and both wet and dry woodland as well as the rivers themselves. There are Otters on the rivers and a diversity of bird species are found along the rivers and associated habitats. These include Curlew, Lapwing, Kingfisher, Mallard, Heron, Sedge Warblers, Grasshopper Warblers and Reed Bunting Lamprey and Freshwater Pearl Mussel, two rare species identified to require



particular protection measures that have been recorded in the Bandon. There are also some small lakes and ponds in the area with associated species rich grasslands. A number of rare plants have also been recorded. Semi-natural woodlands are found in the river valleys, with a particularly important example of alluvial woodland on the Bandon River. The best examples have a good diversity of native trees and diverse ground flora. Two cave systems with interesting limestone flora have also been noted in the area.

### Scenic Routes

There are 11 Scenic Routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This section of Landscape Type 6a - Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys includes the following Landscape Character Areas:

- 8 - Blarney (Wooded Valley of Low Hills and scattered Settlement Clusters)
- 27 - River Bride West (Broad Shallow Patchwork Valley)
- 58 - Enniskeane / Bandon / Ballinhassig (Broad Shallow Patchwork Lower Valley)

- 17 - Dunmanway (Semi-rugged and marginal mosaic Basin)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Landcover comprises a mosaic of regularly shaped fields typically of medium size. The fields throughout this landscape are bounded mostly by mature broadleaf hedgerows but also by post and wire fencing. Lower hedgerows prevail further to the west on higher ground.
- Scrub and areas of gorse are relatively rare but groups of broadleaf trees and shelterbelts are common, providing punctuation across the landscape or hinting at the presence of farmsteads.
- There are large field sizes to the east of this Landscape Character Type.
- Heathland on hilltops is more evident further west. Field sizes are also noticeably smaller in the western part of this Landscape Character Type.
- In the south west of this Landscape Character Type agriculture is interspersed with areas of marginal land and established broadleaf forestry.
- The valleys in these areas are created by the rivers flowing east to west, for

example the Lee and Bandon Rivers, and are surrounded by low well-spaced ridges. They have also created imposing views across the landscape.

### Built Environment

- Farmsteads comprise houses as well as metal sheds (with older barrel vaulted or modern A-frame roofs) and traditional out buildings, most of which are relatively well screened by the hedgerows.
- This landscape type is located close to Cork City and two of the key settlements of metropolitan Cork are located within or at the edge of the landscape (Carrigaline and Ballincollig). The main settlement of Bandon is also located to the South West of the area.
- In general the towns in the area have a strong character / urban fabric reflecting the historic agricultural wealth of the area.

### Socio Economic

- Some of the larger settlements include Bandon, Ballincollig and Blarney.
- The agricultural use of this landscape primarily involves intensive dairying

as well as tillage. The latter provides seasonal colour variation.

- Major roads such as the N22 between Macroom and Cork City and the N71 between Innishannon and Bandon tend to follow the rivers, often providing distant views across the landscape.
- There is some quarry activity in this area.

### Ecology

- The River Lee and the River Bandon flowing on an east-west axis of limestone between low well-spaced ridges of sandstone create the topography this area.
- Comprising mostly brown podzolic soils, this landscape is highly fertile, especially along the alluvial floodplain.
- See **Statutory Designations** section above

### Pressure for Change

#### *Windfarms*

To the north of Newcestown there is an area, which forms part of a larger strategic search area which has been identified as being suitable for wind energy development.

#### *Population*

In recent years the population of this area has increased particularly in the main settlements of Blarney, Ballincollig, Carrigaline and Bandon.

#### *Agriculture*

Away from the urban areas and the areas of strong agricultural activity there may be an issue of the role of marginal land (usually in the upland areas) where there is evidence of set aside and areas given over to forestry.

On the other hand in the agricultural areas where activity seems to be thriving there may be pressure from the need to maximise the return from the richer areas of agricultural land.

#### *Rural Housing*

The greatest pressure for new residential development is for isolated dwellings in the countryside.

Moving to the west, and away from the Greenbelt and Rural Housing Control Zone there is more pressure for individual houses.

In particular there has been inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to settlements. This type of development could

have a negative impact on the vernacular landscape.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

#### *Housing*

Each of the principal towns has numerous examples of sizable housing estates on the fringes of settlements. Many of these have an urban character and there is a general trend towards homogeneity in terms of their siting and design. Such development represents a particular force for change and may have an adverse impact on the quality and character of some of the areas most distinctive local landscapes.

The key pressure / force for change in this area seems to be urbanisation especially to the East of the Landscape Character Type. This landscape type is located close to Cork City and two of the key settlements of metropolitan Cork are located within or at the edge of the landscape (Carrigaline and Ballincollig). The

main settlement of Bandon is also located to the South West of the area.

An example of the urban pressure on the area can be seen to the east of the area where large estate scale development is occurring on the edge of the settlements in the area. This ranges from numerous estates on the edge of the larger settlements to single estates on the edge of existing settlements (i.e. Ballygarven).

### *Infrastructure*

New industrial and housing developments will have a significant impact on the countryside surrounding the areas towns and villages.

Major roads such as the N22 between Macroom and Cork City and the N71 between Innishannon and Bandon traverse this landscape.

### *Tourism*

Tourism is a significant industry in this LCT.

### *Natural resources*

There may be pressure arising from the quarrying activity in the area. The main quarries in the area are located at Ballygarvan, Ballincollig, Innishannon, Murragh and Killeady.

### **Recommendations**

- Protect and preserve the Lee Valley and the Bandon River and their surrounding floodplains as unique landscape features in this Landscape Character Type and as valuable resource for scenic and amenity values.
- Control development that will adversely affect distinctive linear sections of the Lee River Valley, especially its open flood plains, when viewed from relevant scenic routes and settlements.
- Conserve and enhance the characteristics in this Landscape Character Type that are important to tourism.
- Have regard to the rich and diverse natural heritage in this Landscape Character Type and the concentration of NHA's that are designated for protection. While protecting these areas it is also important to recognise their potential as key recreation and amenity sources.
- Protect the existing character and setting of villages and village nuclei which are under pressure from population growth particularly those villages which are located close to Cork City.
- Discourage ribbon development along approach roads to main settlements.
- Discourage sizable 'urban' style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.
- Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.
- Promote sustainable growth in the existing main settlements of Carrigaline, Ballincollig and Bandon by encouraging new development, which respects the existing character of these settlements in terms of both scale and design.
- Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be planned and located in a sensitive manner.
- Ensure that current quarrying sites undergo a rigorous monitoring regime by ensuring that agreed mitigation measures are fully implemented.
- Require that new quarries undergo a landscape and visual impact assessment with appropriate

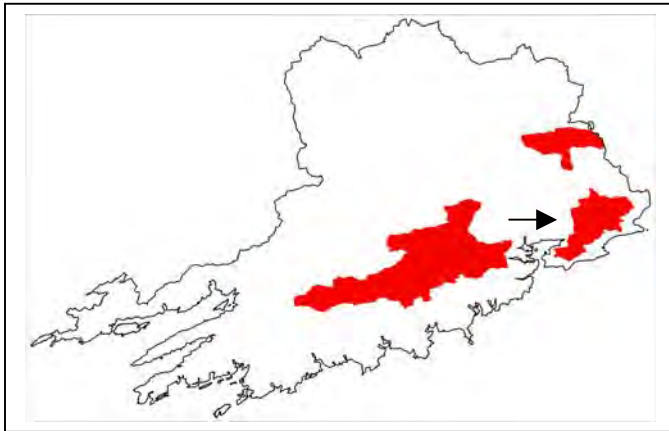
restoration plan to respect landscape character. Screen planting should respect landscape character.

- Recognise that the lowlands are made up of a variety of working landscapes that are critical resources for sustaining the economic and social well being of the county.
- Recognise that agriculture is a major landuse in this LCT. This will help maintain the existing features of this landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.





**Type 6b: Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys (Cloyne, Castlemartyr, Killeagh and Environs)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Locally*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type stretches east from the environs of Cork City and is located east of Midleton and along the valley of the River Womanagh.

Comprising mostly brown podzolic soils, these landscapes are highly fertile, especially along the alluvial floodplain. Landcover comprises a mosaic of regularly shaped fields typically of

medium size. The fields throughout this landscape are bounded mostly by mature broadleaf hedgerows but also by post and wire fencing.

The agricultural use of this landscape primarily involves intensive dairying as well as tillage. The latter provides seasonal colour variation. Farmsteads comprise houses as well as metal sheds (with older barrel vaulted or modern A-frame roofs) and traditional out buildings, most of which are relatively well screened by the hedgerows. Some of the larger settlements include Castlemartyr, Killeagh and Cloyne. Views are curtailed by the prevalence of hedgerows in flatter areas.

**Landscape Character Areas**

This landscape type contains two landscape character areas, which form a north-south divide. These character areas have the same technical name:

- 42 - Castlemartyr (Broad Shallow Patchwork Valley), which is located to the south of the study area. This character area provides a transition from the Fissured fertile Middleground located to the north. The main settlements are Castlemartyr, Killeagh, Mogeely and Ladysbridge.

- 43 - Cloyne (Broad Shallow Patchwork Valley), which is located to the south of the study area. Cloyne is a town known for its wealth of built heritage but there are other buildings in surrounding hinterland that are also of significance e.g. Ballymaloe House (known for its internationally famous cuisine and food products). Vernacular architecture is prevalent in this area. There are also scatterings of ruinous castles and old Churches in the area.

One of the key characteristics of both landscape character areas is the quality of its vernacular built environment and the historic importance including Ballymaloe House and grounds, estate houses, towns and villages in particular Midleton, Cloyne, Castlemartyr, Killeagh and Ladysbridge.

### Scenic Routes

There are three scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

### Statutory Designations

There are four NHA's within this Landscape Type. They include Clasharinka Pond, Loughs Aderry and Ballybutler and Ballyquirk Pond.

## Key Characteristics

### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- River Womagh and its valley are surrounded by low well spaced ridges.
- Landcover comprises highly fertile, regularly shaped fields typically of medium size and with mature broadleaf hedgerows.
- Fields are bounded mostly by mature broadleaf hedgerows but also by post and wire fencing. Lower hedgerows prevail further to the west on higher ground.
- Scrub and areas of gorse are relatively rare but groups of broadleaf trees and shelter belts are common, providing punctuation across the landscape or hinting at the presence of farmsteads.

### Built Environment

- Farmsteads comprise houses as well as metal sheds (with older barrel vaulted or modern A-frame roofs) and traditional out buildings, most of which are relatively well screened by the hedgerows.

## Socio Economic

- Some of the larger settlements include Castlemartyr, Killeagh and Cloyne.
- The agricultural use of this landscape primarily involves intensive dairying as well as tillage. The latter provides seasonal colour variation.

## Ecology

- A number of pNHA's that have been identified in this landscape are centred on lakes. No cSPA's and no SAC's have been identified.

## Pressure for Change

### Forestry

There are few coniferous forestry plantations within this landscape type, which is probably a testament that the land is valued too much for agricultural use. Any coniferous forestry plantations would impact hugely on the strong patchwork fields.

Deciduous trees are a dominant feature within the landscape as they help form field boundaries and their continuation will be important in retaining this landscapes character.

### Windfarms

This area is not regarded as a "Strategic Search Area" or a "Strategically Unsuitable Area" for

Windfarm developments. In the majority of areas the relatively tame nature of this landscape with its broad valleys would not lend itself to Windfarm development as such developments may dominate the surrounding landscape.

### *Population*

While there is no large centre of population within this landscape, it does contain some key villages such as Castlemartyr, Killeagh and Cloyne. The Middleton Electoral Area Local Area Plan attributes population increases to these villages therefore population decrease is not an issue in this landscape. None of these villages have experienced the same level of population increase as neighbouring Rathcormac.

Further growth in the housing market may place pressure on these villages and care must be taken to balance the new developments with the rich existing built environments that these villages already contain.

### *Agriculture*

This is a working landscape and agricultural practice has helped preserve the existing field boundaries while the built environment displays evidence of a productive agricultural economy. The promotion of agriculture as the

major landuse will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy.

Scrubland is evident in some areas and scrub invasion is already having an impact on the existing field pattern. A decline in agricultural activity will have a detrimental affect on the character of the landscape and there would be a danger that the well-defined and continuous field pattern could be disrupted.

### *Rural Housing*

Rural housing is evident throughout the landscape and takes the form of traditional farmsteads and more modern type dwellings. Proposals for large modern dwellings would be prominent in this rural area due to the relatively tame nature of the landscape.

Moving to the east, and away from the Greenbelt and Rural Housing Control Zone there is more pressure for individual houses.

In particular there has been inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to settlements. This type of development could have a negative impact on the vernacular landscape.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have

arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings

### *Infrastructure*

The proposed passenger rail link from Cork to Youghal will be one of the key infrastructural projects in the near future. Associated improvements to the existing line may have an affect on the immediate environment but the settlement strategy that will follow will have a larger implication on the wider landscape.

### *Tourism*

It is clear that tourism is not a major economic provider in this landscape despite its good transportation links. It does contain certain local features that could attract tourism from within the county, as Ballymaloe House is renowned nationally as a tourist attraction and Middleton Distillery and Youghal town are also located near this landscape type. Castlemartyr Wood with its landscaped grounds, or its neighbouring Lough Aderry, are pleasant stopping or picnic points.

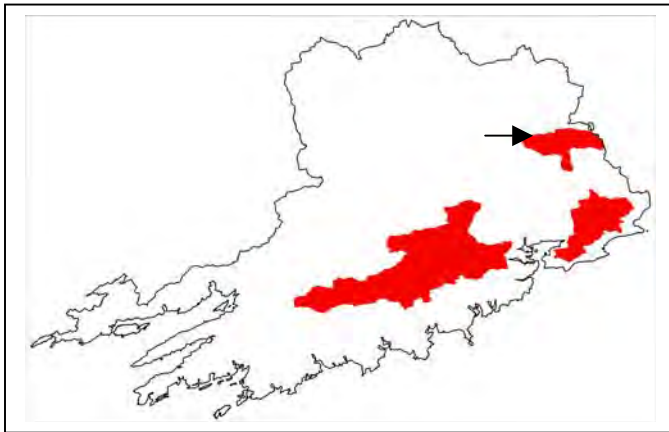
### Recommendations

- Recognise that the lowlands are made up of a variety of working landscapes that are critical resources for sustaining the economic and social well being of the county.
- Promote sustainable growth in the existing settlements of Killeagh, Castlemartyr and Cloyne by encouraging sympathetic new development, which respects the existing character of these settlements in terms of both scale and design.
- Protect and preserve the River Womanagh and its surrounding floodplain as a valuable resource for scenic and amenity values.
- Ensure that the approach roads to Castlemartyr and Killeagh are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of these settlements.
- Ensure that any future improvements to the N25 do not have a negative impact on the landscape.
- Discourage sizable 'urban' style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.
- Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork

Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

- Protect the unique architectural character of villages like Castlemartyr and Cloyne by preventing large-scale development which would undermine the attractiveness of these key villages.
- Encourage further planting of deciduous trees as they are a dominant feature in this landscape and their continuation is important in retaining this landscape setting.
- Ensure that new tourist facilities such as hotels will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere or detract from environmentally sensitive coastal areas. Appropriate location and an integrated landscape scheme will help to integrate the site with the surrounding landscape.

**Type 6c: Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys  
(Castlelyons-Rathcormack)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type is located around Rathcormack and Castlelyons and along the valley of the River Bride. Comprising mostly brown podzolic soils, this landscape is highly fertile, especially along the alluvial floodplain. Landcover comprises a mosaic of regularly shaped fields typically of medium size. The fields throughout this landscape are bounded

mostly by mature broadleaf hedgerows but also by post and wire fencing.

The agricultural use of this landscape primarily involves intensive dairying as well as tillage. The latter provides seasonal colour variation. Farmsteads comprise houses as well as metal sheds (with older barrel vaulted or modern A-frame roofs) and traditional out buildings, most of which are relatively well screened by the hedgerows. Some of the larger settlements include Rathcormack and Castlelyons. Views are curtailed by the prevalence of hedgerows in flatter areas but extensive vistas of the landscape are afforded as one travels the R628, which runs the majority of the length of this landscape.

**Statutory Designations**

There are no pNHA's, cSCA's or SPA's within this Landscape Type.

**Scenic Routes**

There are two scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

**Landscape Character Areas**

There is one landscape character area within this landscape type

- **7 - Castlelyons (Undulation Patchwork Lower valley)** - Elevated views of this landscape can be seen from the R626 regional route coming from Midleton. The tall and plentiful vegetation is very evident from this elevated position and so too is the very strong feature of patchwork field patterns. The landscape can be described as tame and this is due to the presence of a river valley formed by the River Bride. The Galty Mountains provide an impressive backdrop to this landscape.

### **Key Characteristics**

#### **Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- Landcover comprises highly fertile, regularly shaped fields typically of medium size and with mature broadleaf hedgerows.
- Strong patchwork field boundaries are one of the main characteristics of this landscape.
- Fields are bounded mostly by mature broadleaf hedgerows but also by post and wire fencing. Lower hedgerows prevail further to the west on higher ground.

- Scrub and areas of gorse are relatively rare but groups of broadleaf trees and shelter belts are common, providing punctuation across the landscape or hinting at the presence of farmsteads.

#### **Built Environment**

- Farmsteads comprise houses as well as metal sheds (with older barrel vaulted or modern A-frame roofs) and traditional out buildings, most of which are relatively well screened by the hedgerows.
- This landscape is characterised by a strong vernacular built environment.

#### **Socio Economic**

- The main settlements include Castlelyons and Rathcormack.
- The agricultural use of this landscape primarily involves intensive dairying as well as tillage. The latter provides seasonal colour variation.

#### **Pressure for Change**

##### *Forestry*

There is little or no commercial coniferous forestry within this landscape type, which is

probably a testament that the land is valued, too much for agricultural use. Any coniferous forestry plantations on and around the river valley would look conspicuous in the landscape and would impact hugely on the strong patchwork fields.

Deciduous trees are a dominant feature within the landscape as they help form field boundaries and their continuation will be important in retaining this landscape's character.

##### *Windfarms*

This area is not regarded as a "Strategic Search Area" or a "Strategically Unsuitable Area" for Windfarm developments. The tame nature of this landscape would not lend itself to Windfarm development as such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape.

##### *Population*

While there is no large centre of population within this landscape, it does contain some key villages such as Castlelyons/Bridebridge and Conna. The Fermoy Electoral Area Local Area Plan attributes population increases to these villages and this coupled with the fact the scrub invasion of field is not evident, provides evidence that population decrease is not an issue in this landscape. Neither have these

villages experienced the same level of population increase as neighbouring Rathcormack.

Further growth in the housing market may place pressure on these villages and care must be taken to balance the new developments with the rich existing built environments that these villages already contain.

### *Agriculture*

This is a working landscape and agricultural practice has helped preserve the strong field boundaries while the rich historic built environment displays evidence of a productive agricultural economy. The promotion of agriculture as the major land use will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy.

A decline in agricultural activity will have a detrimental affect on the character of the landscape and there would be a danger that the well-defined and continuous field pattern could be disrupted.

### *Rural Housing*

Rural housing is evident throughout the landscape as it takes the form of traditional farmsteads and more modern type dwellings.

Proposals for large modern dwellings would be prominent in the rural area due to the tame nature of the landscape.

### *Infrastructure*

This landscape contains no major roads or other main transportation routes thus it is not envisaged that significant infrastructural projects will take place in the future thus this will not be a force of change.

### *Tourism*

It appears that the tourist industry in this area is nonexistent which is surprising due to the rich heritage of this area, its attractive rural setting and association with horse breeding, attractive villages and the River Bride.

The development of tourism may be essential as a part of rural diversification to sustain the local economy in the future. Such developments in tourism should have a positive impact on the landscape as it could help preserve the main natural and built qualities that the landscape presently contains.

### **Recommendations**

- Promote sustainable growth in the existing settlements of Rathcormack, Castlelyons and Conna by encouraging

sympathetic new development, which respects the existing character of these settlements in terms of both scale and design.

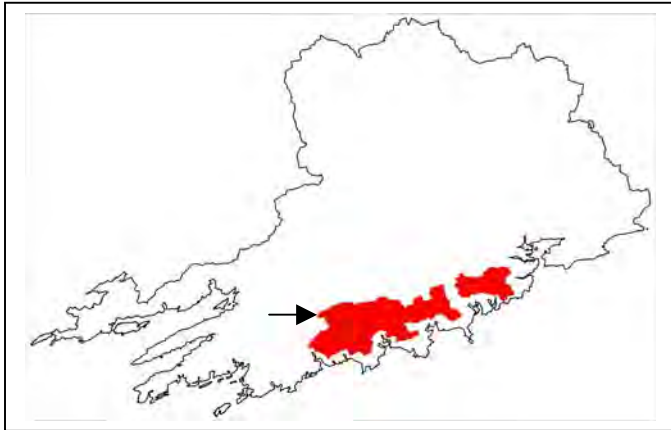
- Protect the existing character and setting of villages like Curraglass and Coolagown by preventing large-scale development which would undermine the attractiveness of these villages.
- Discourage sizable ‘urban’ style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.
- Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.
- Recognise that the lowlands are made up of a variety of working landscapes that are critical resources for sustaining the economic and social well being of the county.
- Much of this landscape type forms part of the rich agricultural area of the “golden vale” and is farmed relatively intensively. The promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help maintain the

existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.

- Preserve the Bride Valley as a unique landscape setting for the village of Conna and improve public access by enhancing it as a key recreation and amenity source.
- Recognise the potential constraints on development created by river flood plains and the value of these flood plains as increasingly rare habitats.
- Minimise disturbance of mature broadleaf hedgerows in rural areas. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.



**Type 7(a): Rolling Patchwork Farmland  
(Bandon-Clonakilty-Leap Environs)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: County*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape mediates between the Indented Estuarine Coastline and the Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys, stretching approximately between Leap in the west and the outskirts of Ballinspittle in the east. Geologically the upper ground comprises weather resistant old red sandstone flanked by shale and sandstone, while valleys comprise softer carboniferous limestone. There is a concentration of shale and sandstone in the southern portion of this landscape type around Bandon and Clonakilty.



They are similar to the latter river valleys, but are not structured with the same clearly identifiable linearity. Rather they roll in many directions with interlocking landform according to the irregular pattern of rivers. Even within larger river valley catchments such as that served by the Argideen and Owenkeagh rivers small hills prevail, thus creating a topographic complexity similar to a drumlin landscape but on a larger scale.

The rolling landform is characterised by low and subtly defined rounded hills and interweaving shallow valleys. In terms of landcover, a mosaic of small to medium sized fields prevails, predominantly comprising brown podzolic soils. These fields are defined by mature but relatively low broadleaf hedgerows, many of which are tightly clipped, and some post and wire fencing. Occasional broadleaf clumps and copses or conifer shelterbelts punctuate the landscape and small swaths of coniferous plantation ascend the slopes to higher ground. Here and there, larger fields can also be seen. While broadleaf hedgerows are common in many of the shallow valleys, the more incised ‘galleried’ valleys are articulated by gorse and bracken.

Landuse comprises intensive dairying and tillage, carried out on gently sloping fields. Farmsteads are mostly invisible and scattered

throughout the landscape or peep out from behind the hill slopes and mature hedges and broadleaf hedgerows. These houses and settlements are located on lower ground close to roads. Local villages include Ballinascarty in the west and Ballinspittle in the east.

In certain respects this landscape can be described as a ‘classic Irish farmland’ with its rolling and verdant patchwork of fields. Here nature is controlled through relatively intensive agricultural production, broken in some instances by the incisive ‘galleried’ valleys which are articulated by scrubby banks. Regarding landscape dynamic, no characteristic spatial flow dominates other than a general restless meandering, in some instances multi-directional, along interweaving valleys. Views are, thus, generally limited in extent.

Three small lakes have been identified within this landscape character type to have ecological significance. One of these, Cloonties is an interesting upland lake on peaty soil. Gallanes Lough is of importance as it supports high numbers of waders, ducks and swans. Species occurring here include Lapwing, Snipe, Curlew, Whooper Swan, Wigeon and Mallard.

### Statutory Designations

There are three pNHA’s within this landscape type. Cloonties Lough, Gallanes Lough and Bateman’s Lough. These three small lakes have ecological significance. Cloonties is an interesting upland lake on peaty soil. Gallanes Lough is of importance as it supports high numbers of waders, ducks and swans. Species occurring here include Lapwing, Snipe, Curlew, Whooper Swan, Wigeon and Mallard.

### Scenic Routes

There are 7 scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

There are three landscape character areas within this landscape type:

1. Argideen and Owenkeagh Rivers (Rolling Patchwork Farmland)
2. Connonogh (Rolling Intimate Mosaic Farmland with Scrub Outcrops)
3. Clasflugh Crossroads (Undulating Patchwork Farmland Valley)

### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Geologically the upper ground comprises weather resistant old red sandstone flanked by shale and

sandstone while valleys comprise softer carboniferous limestone. There is a concentration of shale and sandstone in the southern portion of this landscape type around Bandon and Clonakilty.

- Patchwork field boundaries are the defining feature of this landscape.
- The rolling landform is characterised by low and subtly defined rounded hills and interweaving shallow valleys.
- In terms of landcover, a mosaic of small to medium sized fields prevails, predominantly comprising brown podzolic soils.
- Mature but relatively low broadleaf hedgerows, many of which are tightly clipped, and some post and wire fencing define fields.
- Occasional broadleaf clumps and copses or conifer shelterbelts punctuate the landscape and small swaths of coniferous plantation ascend the slopes to higher ground.
- While broadleaf hedgerows are common in many of the shallow valleys, the more incised ‘galleried’ valleys are articulated by gorse and bracken.
- Landuse comprises intensive dairying and tillage, carried out on gently sloping fields.

### **Built Environment**

- Farmsteads are mostly invisible and scattered throughout the landscape or peep out from behind the hill slopes and mature hedges and broadleaf hedgerows.
- These houses and settlements are located on lower ground close to roads. Local villages include Ballinascarty in the west and Ballinspittle in the east.

### **Socio Economic**

- Relatively intensive dairying and tillage farming is the dominant landuse

### **Ecology**

- Three small lakes have been identified within this landscape character type i.e. Cloonties Lake, Gallanes Lough and Bateman's Lough.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Forestry*

The majority of this landscape type is farmed relatively intensively thus commercial coniferous forestry plantations have not been pursued as an alternative landuse. However there are notable exceptions e.g. there is a large forestry plantation near Kilbrittain. Connonogh (Rolling Intimate Mosaic Farmland with Scrub

Outcrops) landscape character area has experienced some plantations due to the presence of some marginal lands. Currently forestry has not made a big impact on the landscape and in general the existing forestry has a positive effect on the landscape and a degree of subtle diversity. However it is envisaged that plantations may intensify in the Connonogh landscape character area in the future due to the presence of marginal soils. If large to medium scale forestry is proposed in the future then the preservation of the strong field boundaries and deciduous rather than coniferous plantations should be considered.

#### *Windfarms*

This area is not regarded as a "Strategic Search Area" or a "Strategically Unsuitable Area" for windfarm developments. However, the tame rolling hills of this landscape would not lend itself to windfarm development and such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape. However a windfarm is visible to the north from the Connonogh landscape character area.

#### *Population*

There are a few small villages in this landscape type that undoubtedly are based economically and socially on agriculture. Many of these settlements contain a limited number of

services. The Connonogh landscape character area in particular appears to be bereft of a strong urban structure. The securing of agriculture and a strong rural diversified economy will play an important role in maintaining or increasing the current population levels.

#### *Agriculture*

As has been previously stated, this is a man made environment with agricultural playing a pivotal role in shaping this landscape. Agricultural practice has helped preserve the strong field boundaries, and the promotion of agriculture as the major landuse and will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy.

#### *Rural Housing*

Farmsteads are mostly invisible and scattered throughout the landscape or peep out from behind the hill slopes and mature hedges and broadleaf hedgerows. These houses and settlements are located on lower ground close to roads and this has led to ribbon development in some areas. Dwellings become more conspicuous in the landscape when located on elevated areas.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have

arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings

### *Infrastructure*

This landscape contains one major road (N71 Cork – Clonakilty – Rosscarbery) but does not contain any other main transportation routes. Further improvements of the important tourist and commuter route may impact on the wider landscape in the future.

### *Tourism*

The location of this landscape near Clonakilty, Rosscarbery and Kinsale may have an economic spin-off but this has not manifested itself in the landscape. It could be argued that this landscape could be described as a ‘classic Irish farmland’ with its rolling and verdant patchwork of fields thus it may have some tourist potential.

### **Recommendations**

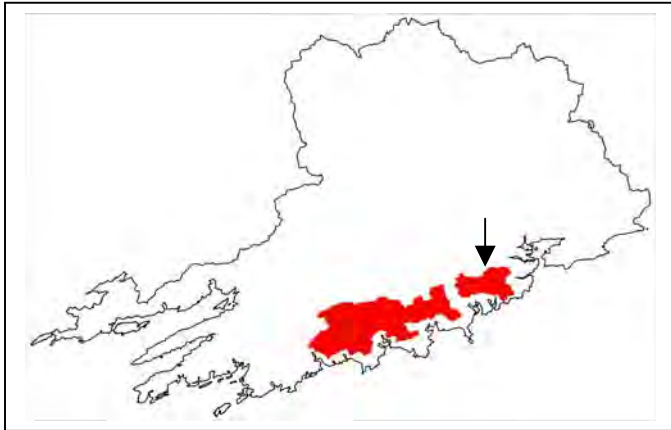
- Protect the existing rural character and attractive setting of villages and village nuclei, for example Kilbrittain, which are under pressure from population growth.

- Ensure that the approach roads to Rosscarbery and Clonakilty are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of these settlements.
- Discourage sizable ‘urban’ style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.
- Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside
- Protect the existing rural nature of this LCT by integrating new development within existing settlements.
- Maintain the visual quality of the prominent hill slopes by appropriate siting of new development in visually unobtrusive sites.
- Preserve the Argideen and Owenkeagh river valleys and improve public access by enhancing them as key recreational and amenity sources.
- The majority of this landscape is farmed relatively intensively therefore the promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help

maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.

- New farm buildings must be designed to integrate with the landscape considering factors such as materials and colouring.
- Minimise disturbance of mature hedgerows in rural areas within this LCT. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.
- To ensure that any future improvements to the N71 do not have a negative impact on the landscape.

**Type 7(b): Rolling Patchwork Farmland  
(Dunderrow-Belgooly and Environs)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape mediates between the Indented Estuarine Coastline and the Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys, stretching approximately between Dunderrow in the west and the outskirts of Belgooly in the east. Geologically the upper ground comprises weather resistant old red sandstone flanked by shale and sandstone while valleys comprise softer carboniferous limestone. There is a

concentration of shale and sandstone in the southern portion of this landscape type around Kinsale. They are similar to the latter river valleys, but are not structured with the same clearly identifiable linearity. Rather they roll in many directions with interlocking landform according to the irregular pattern of rivers. Small hills prevail, thus creating a topographic complexity similar to a drumlin landscape but on a larger scale.

The rolling landform is characterised by low and subtly defined rounded hills and interweaving shallow valleys. In terms of landcover, a mosaic of small to medium sized fields prevails, predominantly comprising brown podzolic soils. These fields are defined by mature but relatively low broadleaf hedgerows, many of which are tightly clipped, and some post and wire fencing. Occasional broadleaf clumps and copses or conifer shelterbelts punctuate the landscape and small swaths of coniferous plantations ascend the slopes to higher ground. Here and there, larger fields can also be seen. While broadleaf hedgerows are common in many of the shallow valleys, the more incised ‘galleried’ valleys are articulated by gorse and bracken.

Landuse comprises intensive dairying and tillage, carried out on gently sloping fields. Farmsteads are mostly invisible and scattered

throughout the landscape or peep out from behind the hill slopes and mature hedges and broadleaf hedgerows. These houses and settlements are located on lower ground close to roads. Local villages include Dunderrow and Belgooly.

In certain respects this landscape can be described as a ‘classic Irish farmland’ with its rolling and verdant patchwork of fields. Here nature is controlled through relatively intensive agricultural production, broken in some instances by the incisive ‘galleried’ valleys which are articulated by scrubby banks. Regarding landscape dynamic, no characteristic spatial flow dominates other than a general restless meandering, in some instances multi-directional, along interweaving valleys. Views are, thus, generally limited in extent.

### **Statutory Designations**

There are no Statutory Designations within this Landscape Type.

### **Scenic Routes**

There are three scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

### **Landscape Character Areas**

This section of Landscape Type 7a – Rolling Patchwork Farmland includes the following Landscape Character Area:

31: Belgooly (Rolling Patchwork Farmland)

### **Key Characteristics**

#### **Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- This landscape is comprised of a rolling and fertile patchwork of medium sized fertile fields, bounded by mature but relatively low broadleaf hedgerows with some coniferous plantations on slopes and higher ground.
- Land use comprises intensive dairying and tillage, while farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape, often concealed behind hill slopes and mature broadleaf hedgerows.
- The rolling landform is characterised by low and subtly defined rounded hills with interweaving shallow valleys.

#### **Built Environment**

- Houses and settlements are located on lower ground close to roads.

- There are a lot of individual houses along the approach roads to villages in this Landscape Character Type.
- Local villages including Dunderrow and Belgooly have experienced a significant growth in residential development in recent years.

#### **Socio Economic**

- Eli-Lilly, a large pharmaceutical company, operates in Dunderrow, and currently employs over 400 people. It has been located in Co Cork for the past 25 years and the factory fits relatively well into the landscape.

#### **Ecology**

- Geologically the upper ground comprises weather resistant old red sandstone flanked by shale and sandstone while valleys comprise softer carboniferous limestone.
- There is a concentration of shale and sandstone in the southern portion of this landscape type around Kinsale.
- There are no Statutory Designations within this Landscape Type.

## Pressure for Change

### Forestry

The majority of this landscape type is farmed relatively intensively thus commercial coniferous forestry plantations have not been pursued as an alternative landuse. Therefore forestry has not made a big impact on the landscape and in general the existing forestry has a positive effect on the landscape giving it a degree of subtle diversity.

### Windfarms

This area is not regarded as a “Strategic Search Area” or a “Strategically Unsuitable Area” for windfarm developments. However, the tame rolling hills of this landscape would not lend itself to windfarm development and such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape.

### Population

Increase in population in recent years particularly in the villages of Dunderrow, Riverstick and Belgooly has put extra demand on infrastructure and community facilities in these villages. Recent large-scale developments have had an impact on the rural attractiveness of this area

### Agriculture

Agricultural practice has helped preserve the strong field boundaries and the promotion of agriculture as the major landuse and will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy.

### Rural Housing

This area is protected by the Green Belt and the Rural Housing Control Zone settlement policies therefore individual rural housing is limited.

Farmsteads are mostly invisible and scattered throughout the landscape or peep out from behind the hill slopes and mature hedges and broadleaf hedgerows. These houses and settlements are located on lower ground close to roads and this has led to ribbon development in some areas. Dwellings become more conspicuous in the landscape when located on elevated areas.

### Infrastructure

This landscape type does not contain any major transportation routes however it does contain two important regional roads (R600 Cork City – Kinsale and R611 Carrigaline to Belgooly) Further improvements to these important tourist and commuter routes may impact on the wider landscape in the future.

### Tourism

The location of this landscape near Kinsale may have an economic spin-off but this has not manifested itself in the landscape. It could be argued that this landscape could be described as a ‘classic Irish farmland’ with its rolling and verdant patchwork of fields thus it may have some tourist potential.

### Recommendations

- Protect the existing character and setting of villages like Belgooly and Riverstick by preventing large-scale development which would undermine the attractiveness of these villages.
- Promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- The majority of this landscape is farmed relatively intensively therefore the promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
- New farm buildings must be designed to integrate with the landscape considering factors such as materials and colouring.

- Minimise disturbance of hedgerows in rural areas. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.
- Protect mature trees or groups of trees which may be at risk from development and which are not protected by Tree Preservation Orders.
- Ensure that the approach roads to settlements like Belgooly and Riverstick are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of these villages.



**Type 8: Hilly River and Reservoir Valleys**



*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: National*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type comprises a relatively confined swath of land stretching between unique alluvial oak woodland known as "The Gearagh" in the west and the village of Inishcarra in the east. Topographically the landscape includes interweaving hills and valleys which conduct the River Lee. The valleys are contained by low flanking ridges set back from the water while intermediate land comprises low hills which undulate or

occasionally interlock and create a meandering course for the water. Geologically it comprises a river valley, or almost an elongated basin, of old red sandstone overlaid with brown podzols. The river as the dominant element in the landscape, expands and contracts along its course between hydroelectric dams. Landcover pattern comprises regular shaped fields of medium size, bounded by broadleaf hedgerows which are mostly low and thin. Complexity of landcover is provided not only by shelterbelts and small woodland copses, but also by patches of scrub, marginal land, bracken and gorse. Willow is found on lower wet areas while part of the reservoir includes the remains of the alluvial woodland. Coniferous plantations also articulate some flanking ridges where soils are thinner.

Given that the soils are generally of moderate fertility, landuse comprises mostly pasture. Farmsteads are typically on the middle to low ground and are visible where located on slopes and where hedgerows are low. The largest urban settlement is Coachford, located to the north of the reservoir. Other noteworthy artefacts are the numerous bridges which cross the narrower part of the river and the structures associated with the production of electricity or water supply. The Gearagh is used as a popular amenity for walking and is protected for its wildlife value.



The prevalence of a broad serpentine river course, in a sense, draws light down to the earth, creating a luminous meandering spine. Wherever one is located in this landscape this water course seems to draw the eye, giving structure and character. The entire landscape flows gently, opening and narrowing according to topographic configuration. Although under fairly intensive agricultural use, the dominance of human activity throughout the landscape is mitigated by the water and interweaving landform.

### Statutory Designations

There are three NHA's, one SAC and one SPA within this landscape character type. These are Glashgarriff River, the Gearagh, and the Lee Valley. The Glashagarriff River which is proposed for designation as a Natural Heritage Area has a notable waterfall and several series of rapids. The site consists of a small stream and wooded river valley. The wooded, humic valley has regions of seepage and exposed rock. Sedges and Eared Willow are characteristic of the woodland here while the rocks are generally covered by mosses or, in shady places filmy ferns. The Killarney Fern was recorded here in the past, but is no longer thought to be present.

### Scenic Routes

There are two scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This landscape type is made up of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- 59: The Gearagh (Alluvial Flood Plain and Reservoir in Patchwork Valley)
- 56: Lee Reservoir (Rolling Patchwork Hills and Lake)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Landcover pattern comprises regular shaped fields of medium size, bounded by broadleaf hedgerows which are mostly low and thin. The hillsides are dominated by scrub, marginal land, bracken and gorse.
- Given that the soils are generally of moderate fertility, landuse comprises mostly pasture.
- The Gearagh is protected for its wildlife value and supports the most extensive alluvial woodland in Western Europe.

- Topographically the landscape includes interweaving hills and valleys, contained by low ridges and interlocking hills, resulting in a meandering course for the River Lee, which expands and contracts between hydroelectric dams.
- Farran Forest Park is 53 hectares in area and contains stands of coniferous trees and mixed woodland. The main species are Japanese larch, Scots pine, Norway spruce, Douglas fir, beech, ash, oak, sycamore and maple. The Park is also rich in both animal and bird life.

#### Built Environment

- There is a strong urban influence in this area due to its location close to the city and there are views of Ballincollig to the east.
- Individual houses in the area are more predominant in the western part of this Landscape Character Type while to the east the houses are more established.
- The built environment has a strong character reflecting agricultural wealth.

### Socio Economic

- This landscape is valued as an important tourist location, due mainly to the quality of its natural heritage, its scenic and recreational amenities and due to its strategic location between Cork and Killarney.
- This is a very fertile area and agriculture is a major employer.
- There is some land zoned for industrial development in the village of Coachford.
- There are a number of quarry sites in this area, which provide some employment.

### Ecology

- Geologically it comprises a river valley, or almost an elongated basin, of old red sandstone overlaid with brown podzols.
- The Gearagh is a national nature reserve, a biogenetic reserve, a Ramsar site and a candidate SAC.
- Farran Forest Park is rich in both animal and bird life. A wildlife enclosure supports a variety of wildfowl and mammals including a herd of red deer. There is an ecology

display housed in the restored hunting lodge.

### Pressure for Change

#### *Forestry*

Deciduous trees are a feature within this landscape and their continuation will be important in retaining this landscape's character.

Coniferous plantations also articulate some flanking ridges where soils are thinner. Due to the scenic nature of this landscape it will be necessary to retain a reasonable number of views therefore future plantations should take cognisance of this issue.

#### *Windfarms*

This area is not regarded as a "Strategic Search Area" or a "Strategically Unsuitable Area" for windfarm developments. However, the low rolling hills of this landscape would not lend itself to windfarm development and such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape.

#### *Population*

Village settlements in this Landscape Type are coming under pressure from development due to their proximity to Cork City and suburban areas like Ballincollig which are constantly

expanding. It is therefore important to ensure that the character of these settlements is not threatened by inappropriately scaled housing developments.

#### *Agriculture*

The land use in this area comprises mostly pastoral farming. Agricultural practice has helped preserve the strong field boundaries and the promotion of agriculture as the major land use and will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy.

#### *Rural Housing*

Most of this area is protected by the greenbelt and the Rural Housing Control Zone therefore individual rural housing is limited however the areas outside these areas are under pressure from individual housing growth.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings

### *Tourism*

This landscape is valued as an important tourist location, due mainly to the quality of its natural heritage, its scenic and recreational amenities and due to its strategic location between Cork and Killarney.

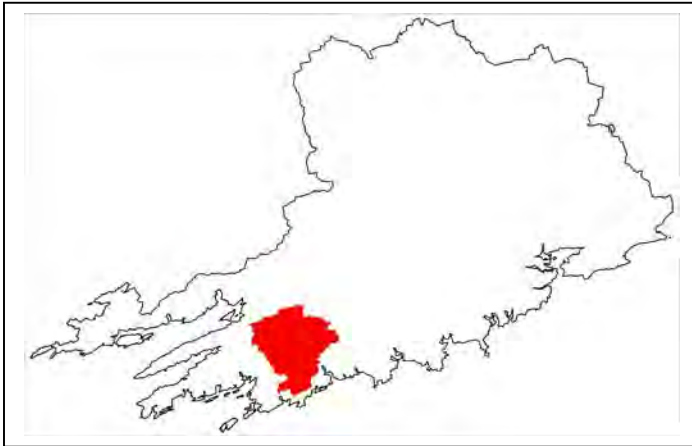
### *Natural resources*

Pressure may arise from the quarrying activity in this area. There are approximately four local quarries in this Landscape Type.

### **Recommendations**

- Preserve the scenic and amenity values of the Lee Valley, which has a unique landscape setting, while also aiming to improve public access to the River Lee for amenity and recreational use.
- Control development that will adversely affect distinctive linear sections of the Lee River Valley, especially its open flood plains, when viewed from relevant scenic routes and settlements.
- Improve public access to the Glashagarriff River by enhancing it as a key recreational and amenity source. Development should not encroach into the flood plain where this would have a detrimental effect on landscape or ecological function.
- Ensure future development of urban fringe is well integrated with the rural setting through screening with local plant species.
- Ensure the continued protection of the Gearagh for its wildlife and natural heritage value while also ensuring its continued use as a popular amenity attraction for both locals and tourists.
- The majority of this landscape is farmed therefore the promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
- New farm buildings must be designed to integrate with the landscape considering factors such as materials and colouring.
- Protect the prominent hillsides, which are predominant components of this landscape type, particularly on the northern side of the R618 that runs through the village of Coachford.
- Protect the unique rural character and setting of villages like Coachford and Dripsey by preventing large-scale development which would undermine the attractiveness of these villages.
- Minimise the disturbance of hedgerows in this area. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominantly indigenous/local species and groupings.
- Ensure the protection of Farran Wood for its wildlife and natural heritage value while also ensuring its continued use as a popular amenity attraction for both locals and tourists.

**Type 9: Broad Marginal Middleground and Lowland Basin**



*Landscape Value: Low*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

A broad shallow basin serving the River Ilen and its tributaries enclosed by rugged ridges and rocky outcrops characterises this landscape in respect of landform. Contained by Mullaghmesha, Nowen Hill and Millane Hill to the north, Mount Kid to the west and Carrigfadda to the east, it falls gently southwards, gradually expanding its width in an east-west direction and southwards towards Skibbereen and ultimately beyond to the coastal fringe and the sea.

With respect to geology and soils, higher ground comprises old red sandstone with some blanket peat, but this gives way to other kinds of sandstone as well as glacial deposits called "kames" (undulating mounds of stratified sand and gravel) with patches mostly of brown earths and gleys in bays and on lower ground to the south. Generally the terrain is one of ruggedness and undulation, including rocky knolls and hillocks. Landcover at lower elevations mostly comprises relatively fertile pasture but with rush on hillsides and on low-lying flatter and wetter ground. These parts are characterised by a mosaic of relatively small fields and low to medium sized hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Areas of higher ground are characterised by patches here and there of rough scrub, gorse bracken and heather, especially around rocky knolls and hillocks. Hedgerows in these higher areas frequently broaden into drifts of scrub. In some instances these drifts merge with small patches of coniferous plantations, which are interspersed throughout these areas.

Buildings are fairly sparse, comprising occasional houses, farmsteads and sheds. The relative complexity of terrain resulting from topographic undulation and frequency of hedgerows, scrub and woodland provides a reasonable amount of screening to these buildings, thus lending a distinct sense of rural



character and remoteness. Towns and villages in this landscape type include Drimoleague to the north, Drinagh to the east and the town of Skibbereen to the south.

This landscape could be described as ‘secretive’ due to the fact that its restless undulation, scrub and hedgerows conceals or partially conceals many of its elements. This involves not only screening of buildings, but also a hinting at naturalistic landscapes behind hills and knolls and at the possibility of ascent towards even higher wilder and remote areas. Notwithstanding the roughness of terrain, the sensitive eye is drawn down along the basin by observing a calming in landcover texture as well as an increase in both light and ‘skyscape’ southwards.

### **Statutory Designations**

There are no Statutory Designations within this landscape type.

### **Scenic Routes**

There are five Scenic Routes within this Landscape Type.

### **Landscape Character Areas**

This landscape type contains two landscape character areas:

61: Lough Abisdealy (Rugged Ridge and Rolling Scrub and Mosaic Farmland), which is located to the south of the landscape type.

52: Drimoleague/Skibbereen (Moorland Ridge and Broad Undulating Patchwork Middle Valley), which is located in the north of the landscape type.

### **Key Characteristics**

#### **Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- This landscape is characterised by a mixed agricultural productivity with fertile pasture on lower ground and basin and poorer agricultural land on higher ground with rocky outcrops.
- The landform of this Landscape Character Type is enclosed with low hills.
- Mixed forestry on upland hills with coniferous forests on hill tops and marginal land
- Two designated Scenic Landscapes: one overlooking Drimoleague and the other at Sheparton lakes.
- Good areas of heath with rocky outcrops on the north and northwest rim.

- Small lakes are a characteristic of the landscape and are often surrounded by natural woodland or scrub.
- Field boundaries south of Skibbereen and towards Castletownshend are mainly post and rail fencing with some tree and scrubs intermittingly placed between
- Field boundaries to the north of Skibbereen consist mainly of scrub, hedgerow and sod and stone walls.

#### **Built Environment**

- In overall terms this area retains a strong vernacular quality. It is not subject to major development pressure and this allied to the undulating quality of the terrain serves to retain the traditional quality of the area. Drimoleague in particular has a strong vernacular quality.
- Transition from rural landscape to an urban node is clouded by linear housing developments on the approach roads to Drimoleague.
- Old traditional farmhouse type dwellings along with agricultural buildings generally sit well in the landscape but some newer dwellings are sited sometimes above the highest hill ridge level and are more incongruous within the landscape.

- Main finishes to buildings are predominately smooth plaster but clever use of stone has been used in an urban context where a stone finish reflects nearby structures and thus satisfactorily assimilates into the surrounding area.
- Front boundary walls in the rural areas are predominately plaster or stone finished with some examples of paddock fencing. However all of the above ignores the fact that sod and stone walls, scrub and hedgerows are the long-established field boundaries.
- Traditionally houses have been concealed in the landscape as they are located well off roads and are thus screened by vegetation. Their size and orientation also helps to maintain a better relation to their surroundings. However newer developments have tended to be nearer the road therefore they are much more visually prominent and thus have an adverse impact on the landscape.

### Socio Economic

- Relatively weak economic base with main economic activity based on agriculture (mixed and dairy farming).
- Windfarms are fast becoming a part of rural diversification in this landscape

but their cumulative affects on the landscape must be assessed

- The area benefits little from the surrounding strong tourism market
- Strong sense of community based on sustained settlement pattern, well established farming, church and GAA.

### Ecology

- There are no NHA, SPA's or SAC's in this landscape type.
- There are numerous small wooded river and stream valleys on the transitional area between the upper slopes and the lower lying lands. These provide a good hunting habitat for Sparrow hawks and Kestrel.
- The low lying reach of the Ilen is of ecological interest and scrub and patches of natural woodland still occur along the river banks.
- Diverse landscape which has retained a strong natural character shaped by non-intensive farming particularly in the north resulting in a diversity of habitats including a good number of countryside bird species and bats

### Pressure for Change

#### Forestry

Coniferous forestry is evident on high ground but it doesn't affect the impressive heath ridges, which are a key feature of this landscape. Overall this landscape is highly diverse as it contains various different features and characteristics thus it is capable of accommodating further forestry development. However if further forestation is to occur then it should strive for diversity of species throughout, especially on the lower grounds where soils are of better quality. The species selection should also respond to the tapestry of different colours of moorland and farmland by incorporation broadleaf species and larch. Hedgerows, where possible, should also be retained in order to reflect field patterns and it will be important to set back forestry from peaks and ridges.

#### Windfarms

There are numerous areas that have been identified under the County Development Plan as "Strategic Search Areas". The majority of these areas are found to the north of the landscape type.

Currently Windfarms are very visible on the A86 Scenic Route as there have been a number of windfarm developments constructed between Drimoleague and Drinagh.

Windfarms are fast becoming a part of rural diversification in this landscape and while the landscape is diverse enough to accommodate change, the cumulative affects of more Windfarms on the landscape must be assessed in the future.

### *Population*

Population decline is associated with much of this area and for the majority of areas the current challenge is to retain the existing population. The dominance of scrublands presents evidence of population decline and the abandonment of agricultural practice in rural areas.

### *Agriculture*

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area as further lands may give over to forestry and scrub. If the level of agricultural activity is not encouraged then further scrub invasion and forestry could obscure the existing field patterns, however minimal they may be. Associated with the changes in the agricultural sector within the County as a whole, are an increase in part time farmers and the accompanying decline in farm employment. This loss of labour is often particularly acute with regard to the traditional maintenance and management of key agricultural landscape

features such as hedgerows and ditches. More recently, with the introduction of schemes such as the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), an attempt has been made to explicitly link farming activities to the environment. However it remains to be seen how successful the second REPS programme will be in retaining and maintaining existing natural landscape features.

### *Rural Housing*

Isolated dwellings are a feature of the landscape but are by no means a dominant characteristic. The majority of the existing stock of isolated dwellings are traditional and well established which reflects the lack of development pressure in this area. However some ribbon development is evident near many of the main settlements. Indeed the transition from rural landscape to an urban node is clouded by linear housing developments on the approach roads to Drimoleague.

### *Infrastructure*

This landscape contains no major roads or other main transportation routes thus it is not envisaged that significant infrastructural projects will take place in the future thus this will not be a force of change.

### *Tourism*

The area benefits little from the surrounding strong tourism market. The rugged undulating quality of the landscape, the unspoilt natural beauty and strong natural character shaped by non-intensive farming may lead itself to some tourist expansion in the future.

### **Recommendations**

- Maintain the visual quality of the upland areas by appropriate siting of new development in visually unobtrusive sites.
- Protect the existing rural nature of this LCT by integrating new development within existing settlements.
- Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- A diversity of species should be encouraged especially on lower grounds where soils are of better quality. Hedgerows, where possible, should be retained in order to reflect field patterns.
- Improve public access to the River Ilen by enhancing it as a key recreation and amenity source.
- Protect the unique rural character and setting of villages by preventing large-

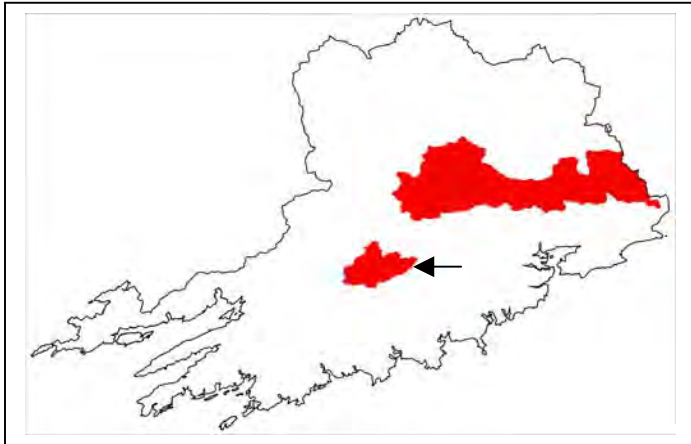


scale development which would undermine the attractiveness of this LCT.

- Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside
- Discourage sizable ‘urban’ style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.
- Ensure that the approach roads, particularly the scenic routes, to settlements of Drimoleague, Drinagh and Skibbereen are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of these settlements.
- Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be planned and located in a sensitive manner.
- Protect the setting of the lakes, which are a characteristic of this landscape.



**Type 10a: Fissured Fertile Middleground (South of the Gearagh)**



*Landscape Value: Low*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Low*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape is located south of The Gearagh. This landscape type, as a middleground, has characteristics of both the flatter fertile farmland type (Fertile Plain with Moorland Ridge) and the higher marginal hilly or rugged type (Rolling Marginal and Forested Middleground). It comprises an area rising above adjacent plains with moderate to low relief of elongated interlocking hills forming sinuous rivers.

It is an elevated landscape, which is sequentially fissured by these rivers and their valleys. It predominantly comprises old red sandstone, but lower levels (shallow valleys) involve limestone. Soils are mostly brown podzolics as well as some acid brown earths at lower altitudes. It is, thus, a reasonably fertile farming landscape comprising a mosaic of medium sized fields but also includes the occasional small marginal field. Hedgerows are typically broadleaf but this can include or be replaced by gorse higher up with punctuation given here and there by conifer shelterbelts. Similarly, in some instances where the rivers are deeply incised their steep valley sides are covered in dense broadleaf vegetation at lower elevations and gorse above.

Given the elevation of the landscape and resulting exposure, most hedgerows are fairly low. Some of these broaden into swaths of coniferous plantation or merge with more extensive copses of broadleaf trees. These areas of woodland are located in all parts of the landscape. The small plantations that rise to hillcrests provide a characteristic feature along with drifts of gorse which thrive on the thinner soils.

The land is used predominantly for dairy cattle pasture as well as some arable production. Houses, farmsteads and sheds are spread



across this landscape at most altitudes, though are least likely to be located on hilltops. Villages and hamlets nestle against hillsides, spreading up from valley bottoms and taking advantage of the shelter provided by the fissured topography. Examples of such settlements include Cappeen.

In its continuous rising and falling, this is a somewhat restless landscape. The overall appearance is one of intensive farming. Agricultural practices and buildings are strong components as is the patchwork field pattern and occasional copses and woodland. The openness of this landscape type varies, as vistas are contained or opened depending on the configuration of landform and the viewing position.

Settlements include Cappeen and Teerelton.

### **Statutory Designations**

This Landscape Type contains no pNHA's or cSAC's or SPA's.

### **Scenic Routes**

This Landscape Type contains one scenic route the A84.

### **Landscape Character Areas**

This section of Landscape Type 10a - Fissured Fertile Middleground includes the following Landscape Character Area:

55: Cappeen (Upland of intimate Rolling Farmland Mosaic with Scrub Outcrops)

### **Key Characteristics**

#### **Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- This landscape type has characteristics of both the flatter fertile farmland areas and the higher marginal hilly farmland.
- Elevated landscape, which is fissured by rivers and their valleys fairly gentle slopes, with reasonably fertile agricultural land comprising a mosaic of small to medium sized fields with broadleaf hedgerows.
- It is a reasonably fertile farming landscape comprising a mosaic of medium sized fields but also includes the occasional small marginal field. Moving east there are larger fields with mature trees and hedges as field boundaries.
- Hedgerows are typically broadleaf but this can include or be replaced by

gorse higher up with punctuation given here and there by conifer shelterbelts.

- Given the elevation of the landscape and resulting exposure, most hedgerows are fairly low. Some of these broaden into swaths of coniferous plantation or merge with more extensive copses of broadleaf trees.

#### **Built Environment**

- Houses, farmsteads and sheds are dispersed across this landscape, while villages and hamlets nestle against hillsides, spreading up from valley bottoms, taking advantage of the shelter provided by the fissured topography.

#### **Socio Economic**

- This landscape character type is used predominantly for dairy as well as some arable production.
- There are some small forestry plantations in this landscape.

#### **Ecology**

- It predominantly comprises old red sandstone, but lower levels (shallow valleys) involve limestone. Soils are

mostly brown podzolics as well as some acid brown earths at lower altitudes.

- This Landscape Type contains no pNHA's or cSAC's or SPA's.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Population*

This landscape contains the small village settlements of Cappeen, Castletownkenneigh and Teerelton. Population decline in settlements like Castletownkenneigh is an issue in this landscape however there has been reasonable growth in other settlements like Teerelton.

While it is important to reverse decline and stabilise the population it is also important to ensure that development supports the rural character of the area.

#### *Agriculture*

The land is used predominantly for dairy cattle pasture as well as some arable production.

#### *Windfarms*

There are numerous areas in this LCT that have been identified under the County Development Plan as "Strategic Search Areas". The majority of these areas are found to the

northwest and west of this landscape type and the rest are scattered to the centre and east.

Currently Windfarms are not a feature of the landscape but as much of the landscape is generally preferred location for Windfarms, they may become more prominent in the future.

#### *Rural Housing*

Houses, farmsteads and sheds are spread across this landscape at most altitudes, though are least likely to be located on hilltops. There is some new inappropriate and non-traditional hilltop housing development. In addition, inappropriate new development could have a negative impact on the vernacular character of this area while ribboning of development on approach roads to villages could have a negative impact on the setting and character of the area.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

#### *Tourism*

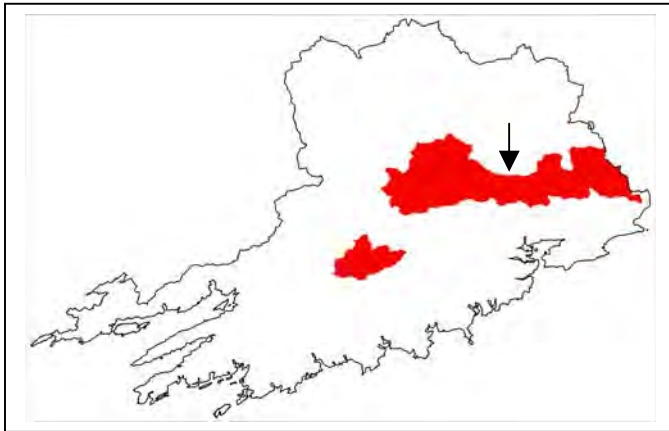
The potential progress of tourism and the role it will play will be a significant factor in the future development of the area. CASP suggests that the harbours and coast are an under-appreciated resource, and there is considerable scope to further develop their tourist potential.

### **Recommendations**

- Respect the remote character and existing low-density development in this LCT.
- Maintain the visual integrity of the area, which has retained a dominantly undisturbed upland character.
- Maintain the strong vernacular character of villages of Teerelton and Castletownkenneigh and promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- Protect the existing character and setting of villages and village nuclei by encouraging development which is compatible with existing development in terms of scale and design.
- Discourage sizable 'urban' style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.

- Ensure that the approach roads to villages are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of these settlements.
- The majority of this landscape is farmed relatively intensively therefore the promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
- Hedgerows, where possible, should be retained in order to reflect field patterns.
- Discourage developments that entail the removal of attractive roadside hedgerows and trees. Where the removal of part of the roadside boundary is necessary the new boundary should reflect the old boundary.
- Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.

**Type 10b: Fissured Fertile Middleground (Rylane east to Waterford)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: County*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type runs broadly between Macroom to the west and the county boundary to the east. This landscape type, as a middleground, has characteristics of both the flatter fertile farmland type (Fertile Plain with Moorland Ridge) and the higher marginal hilly or rugged type (Rolling Marginal and Forested Middleground). It comprises an area rising above adjacent plains with moderate to low relief of elongated interlocking hills forming sinuous rivers. It is an elevated landscape,

which is sequentially fissured by these rivers and their valleys. Many of the rivers in the western parts extend beyond this landscape type and feed into the River Lee and Bandon River while those to the east head southwards to the sea.

It predominantly comprises old red sandstone, but lower levels (shallow valleys) involve limestone. Soils are mostly brown podzolics as well as some acid brown earths at lower altitudes. It is, thus, a reasonably fertile farming landscape comprising a mosaic of medium sized fields but also includes the occasional small marginal field. Hedgerows are typically broadleaf but this can include or be replaced by gorse higher up with punctuation given here and there by conifer shelterbelts. Similarly, in some instances where the rivers are deeply incised their steep valley sides are covered in dense broadleaf vegetation at lower elevations and gorse above. Given the elevation of the landscape and resulting exposure, most hedgerows are fairly low. Some of these broaden into swaths of coniferous plantation or merge with more extensive copses of broadleaf trees. These areas of woodland are located in all parts of the landscape. The small plantations that rise to hillcrests provide a characteristic feature along with drifts of gorse which thrive on the thinner soils.

The land is used predominantly for dairy cattle pasture as well as some arable production. Houses, farmsteads and sheds are spread across this landscape at most altitudes, though are least likely to be located on hilltops. Villages and hamlets nestle against hillsides, spreading up from valley bottoms and taking advantage of the shelter provided by the fissured topography. Examples of such settlements include Donoughmore, Carrignavar and Ballincurrag.

In its continuous rising and falling, this is a somewhat restless landscape. The overall appearance is one of intensive farming. Agricultural practices and buildings are strong components as is the patchwork field pattern and occasional copses and woodland. The openness of this landscape type varies, as vistas are contained or opened depending on the configuration of landform and the viewing position.

### Statutory Designations

There are three sites that have been identified to be worthy of designation for protection within this landscape type. All three are woodlands that have retained a strong native character and a good diversity of species both in the canopy and in the ground layer. Leamlara Wood lies in a steep sided valley. The dominant tree species is Oak with Hazel and

Willow frequent. The relatively rare Hay-scented Buckler Fern has been recorded here. Oak and Birch are dominant at Ardamadane, while the Shournagh Valley has a wetter type of woodland with Hazel and Oak and old mixed estate woodland where Beech is co-dominant with Oak.

### Scenic Routes

There are 8 Scenic Routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

There are two landscape character areas within this landscape type –

- 41 - The Mourneabbey (Rolling Patchwork Upper-Middle Valley) landscape character area, which is located to the northeast of the landscape type and the
- 4 - Donoughmore/Watergrasshill/Dungourney (Fissured Patchwork Middleground), which stretches from east to west.

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- This landscape type has characteristics of both the flatter fertile farmland areas and the higher marginal hilly farmland.
- Many of the rivers in the western parts extend beyond this landscape type and feed into the River Lee and Bandon River while those to the east head southwards to the sea.
- This is an elevated landscape, which is fissured by fairly gentle slopes, with reasonably fertile agricultural land comprising a mosaic of small to medium sized fields with broadleaf hedgerows
- Three sites have been identified to be worthy of designation for protection within this landscape type. All three are woodlands that have retained a strong native character and a good diversity of species both in the canopy and in the ground layer.

#### Built Environment

- Houses, farmsteads and sheds are dispersed across this landscape, while



villages and hamlets nestle against hillsides, spreading up from valley bottoms, taking advantage of the shelter provided by the fissured topography.

### **Socio Economic**

- Used predominantly for dairy as well as some arable production.
- Settlements include Donoughmore, Carrignavar and Ballincurrig.

### **Ecology**

- Leamlara Wood lies in a steep sided valley. The dominant tree species is Oak with Hazel and Willow frequent. The relatively rare Hay-scented Buckler Fern has been recorded here.
- Oak and Birch are dominant at Ardamadane, while the Shournagh Valley has a wetter type of woodland with Hazel and Oak and old mixed estate woodland where Beech is co-dominant with Oak.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Forestry*

Coniferous forestry is commonplace right through this landscape but it is particularly

found on the upland areas. Coniferous forestry can add to the drama and diversity to the long vistas that can be viewed throughout this landscape and it can also reinforce the rurality of the countryside. However large-scale forestry, if unplanned, can lead to a bleak landscape that emphasises the process of abandonment and it can also impinge adversely on field patterns.

Patchwork fields are still a strong feature and if this were to be maintained then smaller sized forests would be more appropriate. A benefit of allowing original field patterns to determine forest pattern is that the memory or mark of the previous landuse is retained.

These plantations are dominated by one species. However colour variations, achieved by using different species, especially broadleaf, would be more appropriate.

Extensive continuous forests can affect the apparent continuity of the landscape and can help emphasise landform by concentrating on hilltops or along dips between hills.

#### *Windfarms*

There are numerous areas that have been identified under the County Development Plan as “Strategic Search Areas”. The majority of these areas are found to the northwest and west

of this landscape type and the rest are scattered to the centre and east.

Currently Windfarms are not a feature of the landscape but as much of the landscape is generally a preferred location for Windfarms, they may become more prominent in the future.

#### *Population*

This landscape is located between large centres of population e.g. Mallow and Fermoy to the north, Cork City and Midleton to the south, Macroom to the west and Youghal to the east. However the urban structure within this landscape type is very weak as there are only a number of small settlements that are dispersed throughout this landscape including Carrignavar, Whitechurch, Donoughmore, Bweeng, Mount Unlacke and numerous village nuclei. Isolated dwellings are a feature all through this landscape and this is due largely to urban sprawl and rising property prices in the surrounding centres of population.

In the uplands a process of abandonment is palpable, as large areas have been covered by forestry and scrub invasion is evident. If this process develops further then it will have serious consequences on the existing patchwork field pattern in the landscape.

The main forces of change in this area will be preventing further urban sprawl and managing the rapid growth of strategically located

villages while also addressing the changes in the upland areas.

### *Agriculture*

Agriculture appears to be the main employer in this area and the numerous villages serve as service centres. The main feature throughout the landscape is the patchwork field boundaries which agricultural practice played a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining. Thus any decline in agriculture practice would have a detrimental affect on the landscape.

### *Rural Housing*

Most of this area is protected by the greenbelt and the Rural Housing Control Zone therefore individual rural housing is limited however isolated dwellings are a feature all through this landscape and this is due largely to urban sprawl and rising property prices in the surrounding centres of population. While old farmsteads are still present, the majority of isolated dwellings are modern buildings. This reflects the fact that this area is within commuting distance from Cork and other main towns.

The landscape by and large is able to absorb a medium amount of development due to plentiful vegetation and diversity in the landscape. However where long vistas are

visible, buildings become more conspicuous and the landscapes ability to absorb developments is reduced.

Linear roadside housing developments in rural areas are commonplace but dwellings that are set further back from the road and which make use of existing vegetation and landform are less prominent.

### *Infrastructure*

Some key National Primary routes traverse this landscape including the N20 and N8. The Cork-Mallow rail line, which is an essential component of the rail network in Ireland, also transverses this landscape. Future upgrades or redirection of these transportation routes would have a significant impact on the landscape.

While car transportation to main settlements is good, concentric links between villages within the landscape is poor as many of the third class roads are narrow and twisted.

### *Tourism*

This landscape has no outstanding features that would sustain a vibrant tourist economy but it does contain a rustic ambience that could be successfully marketed. The areas close proximity to popular tourist centres such as Blarney and Youghal is an advantage as is its

strategic location between large centres of population.

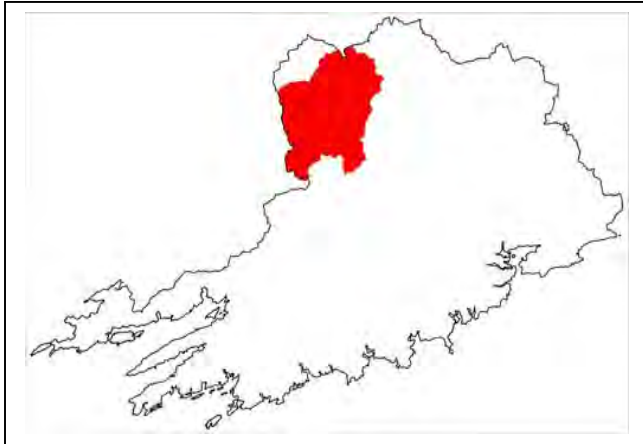
### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that future development in villages and village nuclei is appropriately scaled and sympathetic to the existing character and setting of the area.
- Discourage sizable ‘urban’ style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.
- Discourage ribboning of individual houses along approach roads to settlements.
- Ensure that any future improvements to the N20 and the N8 do not have a negative impact on the landscape.
- Recognise the pressure for development of individual houses outside the RHCZ and the impact of this development on the landscape.
- The majority of this landscape is farmed relatively intensively therefore the promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the

- local economy and rural diversification.
- Provide incentives to landowners to improve condition of farmland, including management of hedgerows and trees in field boundaries.
  - New farm buildings must be designed to integrate with the landscape considering factors such as size, materials and colouring.
  - Maintain and enhance views to and from areas of visual value including extensive uninterrupted views across open countryside.
  - Maintain the visual integrity of the area which has retained a dominantly undisturbed upland character.
  - Ensure the continued protection of the Shornagh Valley for its wildlife and natural heritage value while also ensuring its continued use as a popular amenity attraction for both locals and tourists.
  - Develop amenity walks through Leamlara Wood while also continuing to protect it for its wildlife and natural heritage value.
  - Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be located and laid out in a sensitive manner.



### Type 11: Broad Marginal Middleground Valley



*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

#### **Landscape Description**

Located between upland and lowland areas in northwest Cork. This landscape is characterised by its relative evenness of terrain across the broad shallow valley of the River Blackwater, fed by several tributaries draining the higher ground to the north and south. At higher altitudes, the ground rises relatively steeply to meet a more mountainous landscape, while lower down the ground spreads out into gently sloping fertile land. Land is generally of marginal agricultural quality, typically of small

to medium size fields bounded by mixed broadleaf hedgerows. Dairy farming is the main landuse, while buildings comprising farmsteads, and individual houses are dispersed throughout the landscape. The main towns include Newmarket and Kanturk.

#### **Statutory Designations**

There are three pNHA's and one SAC within this landscape type. These are Priory Wood (Lismire), Banteer Woods and Killarney National Park.

#### **Scenic Routes**

There are 7 Scenic Routes within this landscape type.

#### **Landscape Character Areas**

There are two Landscape Character Areas contained within this landscape type which almost provide a near perfect north-south divide. They are:

- Upper Blackwater (moorland ridge and undulating mosaic farmland upper-middle valley), which is the southern section.
- Newmarket (fissured and hilly mosaic farmland), which is the northern section.

## Key Characteristics

### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- The main agricultural land use is dairy farming.
- Small to medium size fields bounded by mixed broadleaf hedgerows.
- The hedgerows and vegetation that forms the road boundaries is of medium height and in some areas it restricts views of the surrounding landscape.
- Relative evenness of terrain across the broad shallow valley of the River Blackwater, fed by several tributaries draining the higher ground to the north and south.
- At higher altitudes, the ground rises relatively steeply to meet a more mountainous landscape, while lower down the ground spreads out into gently sloping fertile land.
- There are very few designated sites, i.e. SAC's, NHA's, SPA's within this landscape area.

### Built Environment

- Buildings comprising farmsteads, barrel roofed metal sheds, slatted sheds

and individual houses are dispersed throughout the landscape. The older farmhouses are generally located a significant distance from the main road and are well screened.

- Building materials include plaster and blue black tiles.
- A lot of the newer dwellings display non-traditional features like Dutch gables and their front boundaries have not retained any part of the hedgerow. These new houses usually are located in a linear fashion and some are sited so as to maximise views of the surrounding landscape.
- The built heritage of the area is important within County Cork, with notable concentrations at Kanturk and Drishane. The old Convent in Newmarket and its surrounding grounds is an attractive landmark in the town.

### Socio Economic

- Land is generally of marginal agricultural quality however dairy farming is the main land use.
- The main towns include Newmarket and Kanturk.

## Ecology

- Some NHA's include the Priory wood in Lismire and the Banteer Ponds.

## Pressure for Change

### *Rural Housing*

Isolated one-off dwellings in the open countryside are a common feature all over this landscape type. While scattered dwellings along roads are characteristic, continued ribbon development along main routes and local roads may result in the loss of distinctiveness between town and country and would thus be inappropriate.

Inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to main settlements is a particular feature of this landscape type. Approach roads to main towns like Kanturk and Newmarket are littered with urban sprawl development. This does not provide a pleasing introduction to settlements as it reduces the loss of distinctiveness between urban and country areas.

Building styles contribute to the distinctiveness and character of an area however there is a strong trend towards a profusion of varied styles, which is currently impacting on the distinctiveness of the landscape character.

### *Population*

Population decline is associated with this area. However as housing prices have rapidly increased in recent years in metropolitan Cork and the ring towns, people have started to move to the southern and eastern part of this landscape type.

Population increase is most noticeable in Kanturk as it has a number of examples of sizable housing estates on the fringes of the settlement. Many of these have a very formal character and there is a general trend towards homogeneity in terms of their siting and design. Such development represents a particular force for change and may have an adverse impact on the quality and character of some of the areas most distinctive local landscapes.

Villages to the east and south of Kanturk such as Banteer could experience serious pressure for housing development in the future.

More isolated areas to the extreme north and west of this landscape type are not experiencing the same level of growth, and in a number of areas the current challenge is to retain the existing population. There is evidence of population decline in parts with rush and scrub infestation on agricultural lands

and a number of derelict and unoccupied dwellings in villages.

### *Agriculture*

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area. Associated with the changes in the agricultural sector within the County as a whole, is an increase in part time farmers and the accompanying decline in farm employment. This loss of labour is often particularly acute with regard to the traditional maintenance and management of key agricultural landscape features such as hedgerows and ditches. More recently, with the introduction of schemes such as the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), an attempt has been made to explicitly link farming activities to the environment. However it remains to be seen how successful the second REPS programme will be in retaining and maintaining existing natural landscape features.

If agricultural activity is not encouraged then further scrub invasion could damage landscape character by obscuring field patterns and distinctive landform.

### *Forestry*

Forestry development is beginning to dominate some of the upland areas within this landscape

therefore their visual impact on the landscape should be addressed.

Due to the pattern of land ownership in Ireland, forests on hill or mountain sites are often established as long narrow belts running uphill in isolation. Where a number of these are planted in close proximity, the resulting 'ladder' effect involving alternative strips of forest and open ground creates a disjointed landscape. The shape of plantations, which often resemble 'blocks' on the landscape and the lack of a mixture of species, is a worrying trend.

While this landscape type has been robust enough to accommodate forestry development (due mainly to the diversity in the landscape) further plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape.

### *Windfarms*

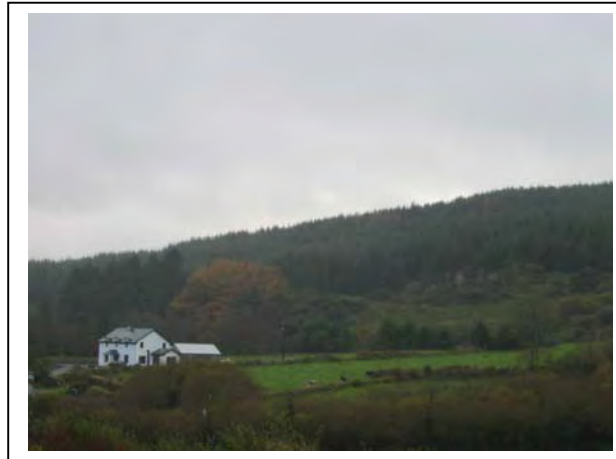
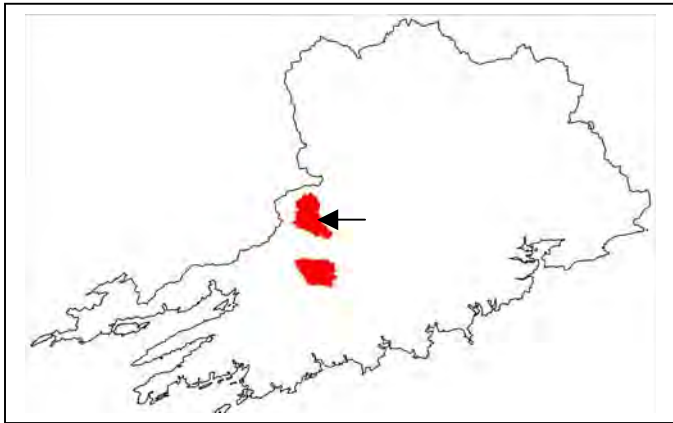
Existing Windfarm development has made a strong imprint in the north of this landscape type. Further Windfarm developments in the north of the area will have a lasting influence on the landscape therefore their cumulative visual impacts should be thoroughly assessed.

### Recommendations

- The majority of this landscape is farmed therefore the promotion of agriculture as the major land use in this LCT will help maintain the existing features of the landscape while also supporting the local economy and rural diversification.
- Minimise disturbance of hedgerows in rural areas and encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings. Broadleaf planting should be encouraged in this landscape type, as it is the prevailing foliage.
- Promote introduction of deciduous edges to existing coniferous plantations to soften their appearance. New plantations should respect landscape pattern (see Forestry Guidelines).
- Ensure that additional conifer planting is at small scale and is in sympathy with the landscape. Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges
- Protect the high ridges and mountainous peaks, particularly to the west of Millstreet town. These upland areas are predominant components of this landscape type.
- Maintain the strong vernacular character of this landscape type and promote best practice through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide. These guidelines are a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.
- Discourage ribboning of development along roads in particular along the national and regional routes that link towns and villages like Kanturk, Newmarket and Banteer.
- Protect Rivers Blackwater, Dalua and Allow and their surrounding floodplains. Ensure its value as a scenic amenity area is managed and maintained.
- Identify walkways, and existing and potential recreational areas within this landscape type.
- Details of landscaping should be submitted with each application unless it is for a development that will have minimal impact on the landscape e.g. garage or an extension.
- Ensure the continued protection of Caherbarnagh for its wildlife and natural heritage value while also ensuring its continued use as a popular amenity attraction for both locals and tourists.
- Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be located and laid out in a sensitive manner.



**Type 12a: Rolling Marginal and Forested Middleground (Ballyvourney-Gaeltacht)**



*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type is located in the vicinity of Ballyvourney/Ballymakeery. This is a middleground landscape comprising rolling topography with rugged rocky ridges and knolls of old red sandstone spread across shallow river basins formed by low hills. To the north, south and west it extends to higher ridges that form part of the adjoining Ridged, Peaked and Forested Upland landscape character type. Soils include peaty podzols and a thin layer of blanket peat on higher ground

which supports a patchy moorland vegetation of semi-natural grassland and heather and also swaths of bracken on slightly more fertile areas. A mosaic of small irregularly shaped pasture fields are scattered among the scrub on lower ground indicating pockets of relatively high fertility between rocky outcrops. The landscape is mottled in terms of both colour and texture due to the diverse landcover, involving a mix of scrub and cultivated patches. On wetter ground and along streams at lower altitudes willow is more prevalent while rush is common in fields of marginal agricultural quality. Broad swaths of coniferous plantations skirt the hills mostly at lower altitudes but also ascend to hilltops.

Farmsteads and houses are sparsely located on lower ground. Farm related buildings such as sheds are generally small and limited in extent. Roads are also limited in width and wind through the rugged terrain. Village clusters are small and scattered, and include those at Coolea and Ballyvourney.

There is a strong presence of the untamed and naturalistic throughout this landscape but this is held in balance by the small pockets of farmland with its relatively ordered field pattern. Spatial flow or dynamic is one of restless undulation. It is a moderately open landscape, providing views between

hedgerows across the river valley. However, spatial containment is provided to the north, south and west by the relatively high ridges forming part of the adjoining landscape character types.

### Statutory Designations

There is one candidate Special Area of Conservation within this landscape character type. St. Gobnait's Wood is an important old Oak woodland, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Its canopy is dominated by a mixture of Birch, old Beech, Ash and Sessile Oak with occasional Alder and Sycamore. It has a very rich herb and moss layer adding to its ecological interest. St Gobnait's Wood is also a pNHA.

### Scenic Routes

There are four Scenic Routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This Type includes two areas

- 23 - Ballyvourney (Composite Middle Valley of Rugged Scrub and Marginal Land)
- 28 - Reananerree (Composite Middle Valley of Forests, Rugged Scrub and Marginal Land)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- It comprises rolling topography with rugged rocky ridges and Sullane River basin.
- Hills forming these two basins are gently sloping, becoming somewhat steeper at lower levels and generally comprised of patchy moorland vegetation of semi-natural grassland and heather.
- A mixture of small irregularly shaped fertile fields located on lower ground between scrub and rocky outcrops.
- The landscape is mottled in terms of both colour and texture due to the diverse landcover, involving a mix of scrub and cultivated patches.
- On wetter ground and along streams at lower altitudes willow is more prevalent and rush is common in fields of marginal agricultural quality.
- Broad swaths of coniferous plantations skirt the hills mostly at lower altitudes but also on some hilltops. Extensive felling has taken place.
- Significant areas of broadleaf woodland including St. Gobnait's Wood which is an important old Oak

woodland, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

- Field boundaries consist hedgerows, post and wire fencing and some stone walls

### Built Environment

- Roads are limited in width and wind through the rugged terrain.
- Houses and farmsteads are sparsely located on lower ground. Housing does not dominate the landscape but instead fits in with the wooded areas and winding roads.
- Village clusters are small and scattered, and include those at Coolea and Ballyvourney.
- Reananerree is one of the few settlements in the area.

### Socio Economic

- This landscape type comprises a substantial component of the Muskerry Gaeltacht, which is of national significance for its linguistic, musical, educational and cultural value. This attracts tourism in the form of Irish colleges. Funding from Údarás na Gaeltachta has helped create an industrial cluster in Ballyvourney

which provides employment for a large hinterland.

- The area is located along the main Cork to Killarney road thus the area benefits from the spin-off of the passing tourist traffic.
- This landscape is valued for its scenic amenity and its expansive views and scenic routes, including the Cousane Gap.
- The main centres of population include Ballyvourney and Coolea.

### Ecology

- St. Gobnait's Wood is a pNHA and a cSAC.
- Soils include peaty podzols and a thin layer of blanket peat on higher ground, which supports a patchy moorland vegetation of semi-natural grassland and heather, and also swaths of bracken on slightly more fertile areas.

### Pressure for Change

#### *Forestry*

There are large areas of commercial forestry plantations and there has been extensive felling in this area. While parts of this landscape have been robust enough to accommodate forestry development further plantations and re-

plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape.

Deciduous trees are a feature within this landscape, which has significant areas of broadleaf woodland, and their continuation will be important in retaining this landscape's character.

#### *Windfarms*

This area is not regarded as a "Strategic Search Area" or a "Strategically Unsuitable Area" for windfarm developments. The low rolling topography of this landscape would not lend itself to windfarm development and such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape. There are views of wind farms to the west from this landscape type on the Kerry side of the Cork Kerry boundary.

#### *Population*

Population decline is a major issue in the Muskerry Gaeltacht area. Settlements such as Ballymakeery/Ballyvourney and Kilnamartyra can play a vital role in stemming population decline and reversing the decline in other sectors such as employment, services and amenities.

While it is important to reverse decline in this area it is also important to ensure that

development supports the linguistic, cultural and rural heritage of the area.

#### *Agriculture*

Much of the farmland in this area is of marginal agricultural quality and is often used for commercial forestry.

#### *Rural Housing*

The greatest pressure for new residential development in rural areas is for isolated dwellings in the countryside. Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage.

There are not many new individual houses in this landscape however there has been some inappropriate ribboning of development along approach roads to villages in this area.

It is important to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the existing vernacular character of this landscape.

#### *Tourism*

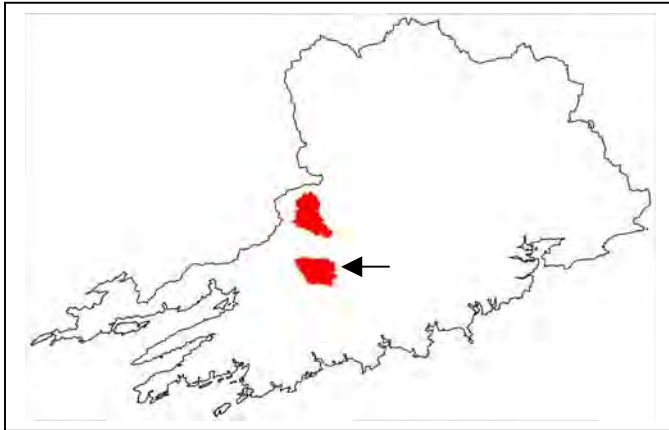
Due to its strategic location between Cork and Killarney and the number of visitor attractions tourism is important to this area. The potential

progress of tourism and the role it will play will be a significant factor in the future development of the area.

### Recommendations

- Continue to promote the Muskerry Gaeltacht area in Ballyvourney as a cultural resource.
- Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- Promote introduction of deciduous edges to existing coniferous plantations to soften their appearance.
- Minimise disturbance of landscape and habitats like St. Gobnait's Wood which is an important old Oak woodland.
- Develop amenity walks through St. Gobnait's Wood while also continuing to protect it for its wildlife and natural heritage value.
- Improve public access to the Sullane River Valley by enhancing it as a key recreation and amenity source while also recognising the potential constraints created by the river flood plain.
- Protect the existing rural character and setting of Ballyvourney, Ballymakeery and Coolea by preventing large scale development that would undermine the attractiveness of these villages.
- Discourage sizable 'urban' style housing developments on the fringes of settlements as these can have an adverse impact on the quality and character of an area.
- Promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- Protect the existing rural nature of this LCT by integrating appropriately scaled new development within existing settlements.
- Protect the high ridges and mountainous peaks, which are predominant components of this landscape type, particularly surrounding the villages of Ballyvourney, Coolea and Ballymakeery.
- Ensure that the approach roads, particularly the scenic routes, to Ballyvourney, Coolea and Ballymakeery are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of these settlements.

**Type 12b: Rolling Marginal and Forested Middleground (South)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type is situated north of Dunmanway. This is a middleground landscape comprising rolling topography with rugged rocky ridges and knolls of old red sandstone spread across shallow river basins formed by low hills. To the north, south and west it extends to higher ridges that form part of the adjoining Ridged, Peaked and Forested Upland landscape character type.

The river basins include the upper reaches of the River Bandon and Sullane River (12a). While typically the hills forming these two basins are gently sloped, they become somewhat steeper at lower levels. Soils include peaty podzols and a thin layer of blanket peat on higher ground which supports a patchy moorland vegetation of semi-natural grassland and heather and also swaths of bracken on slightly more fertile areas. A mosaic of small irregularly shaped pasture fields are scattered among the scrub on lower ground indicating pockets of relatively high fertility between rocky outcrops. The landscape is mottled in terms of both colour and texture due to the diverse landcover, involving a mix of scrub and cultivated patches. On wetter ground and along streams at lower altitudes willow is more prevalent while rush is common in fields of marginal agricultural quality. Broad swaths of coniferous plantations skirt the hills mostly at lower altitudes but also ascend to hilltops.

Farmsteads and houses are sparsely located on lower ground. Farm related buildings such as sheds are generally small and limited in extent. Roads are also limited in width and wind through the rugged terrain. Village clusters are small and scattered, and include Shanlaragh and Togher.



There is a strong presence of the untamed and naturalistic throughout this landscape but this is held in balance by the small pockets of farmland with its relatively ordered field pattern. Spatial flow or dynamic is one of restless undulation. It is a moderately open landscape, providing views between hedgerows across the river valley. However, spatial containment is provided to the north, south and west by the relatively high ridges forming part of the adjoining landscape character types.

### Statutory Designations

There is one cSAC within this Landscape Type. The Bandon River supports a small though important example of alluvial wet woodland, a rare and important habitat. It also supports good examples of wet woodland with rare and protected plants and a number of animal species identified to require special protection measures. These include Otter, Salmon, Lamprey and Freshwater Pearl Mussel.

### Scenic Routes

There is one Scenic Route within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This Landscape type includes the following landscape area:

- 63 - Shanlaragh (Middle valley of rugged Moorland and Patchwork Moraines)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- It comprises rolling topography with rugged rocky ridges and the upper reaches of the River Bandon.
- Hills are gently sloping, becoming somewhat steeper at lower level, and are generally comprised of patchy moorland vegetation of semi-natural grassland and heather.
- A mixture of small irregularly shaped fertile fields located on lower ground between scrub and rocky outcrops.
- The landscape is mottled in terms of both colour and texture due to the diverse landcover, involving a mix of scrub and cultivated patches.
- On wetter ground and along streams at lower altitudes willow is more prevalent and rush is common in fields of marginal agricultural quality.
- Broad swaths of coniferous plantations skirt the hills mostly at lower altitudes but also on some hilltops.
- Mallabrackha Forest is north of Dunmanway. The Bandon River

meanders through the valley north of this site. The area originally carried a crop of oak, birch, rowan, holly, alder and hazel. Now there are stands of Sitka and Norway spruce, lodgepole pine and Douglas fir.

### Built Environment

- Roads are limited in width and wind through the rugged terrain.
- Houses and farmsteads are sparsely located on lower ground, with farm related buildings such as sheds generally small and limited in extent.
- Village clusters are small and scattered, and include Shanlaragh and Togher.

### Socio Economic

- The area is located along the main Cork to Killarney road thus the area benefits from the spin-off of the passing tourist traffic.

### Pressure for Change

#### Forestry

There are large areas of commercial forestry plantations and there has been extensive felling in this area. While parts of this landscape have been robust enough to accommodate forestry

development further plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape.

### *Agriculture*

Much of the farmland in this area is of marginal agricultural quality and is often used for commercial forestry.

### *Windfarms*

This area is not regarded as a “Strategic Search Area” or a “Strategically Unsuitable Area” for windfarm developments. The low rolling topography of this landscape would not lend itself to windfarm development and such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape. The landscape to the east of this area has been identified as a Strategic Search area for windfarms (10a).

### *Rural Housing*

The development of modern rural housing has had some impact on the vernacular landscape, whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and

overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### *Population*

There has been minimal growth in population in this area in recent years. Buildings and other structures are few and far between in this landscape type.

However it is important to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the existing vernacular character of this landscape.

### *Tourism*

The Bandon River and Mallabrackha Forest with amenity walks and other potential activities though not a major facility could be used as a local resource.

### **Recommendations**

- Respect the remote character and existing low-density development in this LCT.
- Maintain the strong vernacular character of the area.
- Promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- Improve public access to the River Bandon by enhancing it as a key recreation and amenity source while also recognising the potential

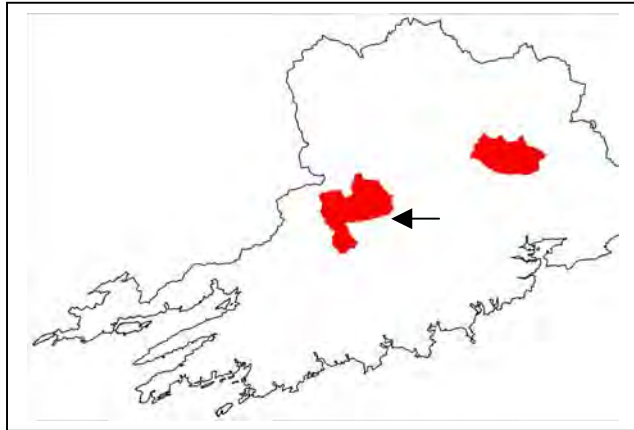
constraints created by the river flood plain and the value of this flood plain as a rare habitat.

- Develop amenity walks through Mallabrackha Forest while also continuing to protect it for its wildlife and natural heritage value.
- Minimise disturbance of hedgerows in rural areas. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.
- Promote introduction of deciduous edges to existing coniferous plantations to soften their appearance. New plantations should respect landscape pattern.
- Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.





**Type 13a: Valleyed Marginal Middleground (Macroom and Environs)**



*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: County*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type is found between Ballyvourney and Macroom. Topographically this landscape comprises low rounded hills of old red sandstone enclosing fairly broad undulating river valleys. The rivers in the western area comprise the middle to upper levels of the River Lee and Sullane River before they join together as the River Lee in an adjacent landscape type (Hilly River and Reservoir Valleys). The Sullane River holds stocks of small Brown Trout while the River Lee is a serious Salmon angling river.

An appearance of roughness prevails due to the fragmentation of fields by areas of marginal quality on peaty podzols or which are uncultivated and include clumps of willow, birch, heather, bracken and gorse. This appearance is also contributed to by the occasional rock outcrop and by the intermittent change of hedgerows from broadleaf to conifer shelterbelts and the strips of riparian vegetation winding along the more fertile riverbanks. Fields are located on hill slopes and valley bottoms and are used for grazing. They are both regular and irregular in configuration and small to medium in size, defined by low hedgerows of broadleaf trees and shrubs and conifers or simply by banks. Some patches of fields, which are on flatter ground at lower altitude, are of higher fertility. Coniferous plantations are mostly located on higher ground, rising to, and covering, hill tops where soils are thinner.

Bungalows and farmsteads are located on low to middle ground. Vaulted hay and modern metal sheds are also interspersed across the landscape. These buildings are generally well integrated into the landscape by the partial screening and physical linkage provided by hedgerows and shelterbelts. The largest settlement is the town of Macroom.



The smaller clearly delineated patches of fields on lower ground appear to weave among patches of scrub and rocky knolls as they follow drifts of fertile soil. They often seem almost etched into the landscape, like smooth, neatly shaped and luminous emeralds in a coarse and somewhat wild landscape studded by the occasional prominent rock outcrop. This engenders a visually interesting juxtaposition of the cultivated and the naturalistic.

### Statutory Designations

There are four sites within this landscape type that have been identified for designation for nature conservation purposes. A section of **the Gearagh (pNHA, cSAC and SPA)** is located in this Landscape Character Type. This site, which is of international importance, supports the most extensive alluvial woodland in Western Europe. This unusual area has formed where the River Lee breaks into a complex network of channels weaving through a series of wooded islands. The alluvial woodland which remains today at the Gearagh is of unique scientific interest. It has probably been wooded since the end of the last Ice Age and frequent flooding has served to enhance its character. The site is also important for wintering waterfowl including Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Teal, Tufted Duck and Golden Plover. Other areas of ecological importance within this landscape type include **Lough Gal**

**(pNHA) and two small woodlands Prohus Wood and Boylegrove Wood (pNHA's).**

### Scenic Routes

There are 6 Scenic Routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

There are three LCA's within this landscape type. They are:

- **Kilmichael** – Broad Middle Valley of Rugged Scrub and Marginal Land, which is located to the south of this landscape type.
- **Macroom** – Broad Middle Valley of Semi-Rugged Mosaic Hills and Rock Outcrops, which is located in the centre of this landscape type.
- **Ballynagree** – Moorland Ridge, Rolling Farmland and Boggy Flat Valley.

### Key Characteristics

**Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- Topographically this landscape comprises low rounded hills of old red sandstone enclosing fairly broad undulating river valleys.

- The rivers are the middle to upper levels of the River Lee and Sullane River before they join together as the River Lee.
- Small to medium sized fields are of marginal quality consisting of uncultivated peaty soils, and include clumps of willow, birch, heather, bracken and the occasional rock outcrop and low broadleaf hedgerows bound them. Stonewalls are a feature of the landscape in the upland areas.
- Coniferous plantations are mostly located on higher ground.

### Built Environment

- Bungalows, farmsteads and sheds are interspersed across the landscape and are generally well screened due to the abundance and variety of vegetation in the area.

### Socio Economic

- Macroom town plays a defining role in this landscape character area, especially in socio economic terms. The largest settlement is the town of Macroom.
- Sheep farming is carried out in the area around Ballynagree.

## Ecology

- There are four pNHAs in this landscape type. See Statutory Designations section above.

## Pressure for Change

### Forestry

Commercial forestry has impacted on much of the three landscape character areas especially the Ballynagree area due to its thin soils and elevated location. While the landscape is robust to accommodate commercial forestry, the formal layout can sometimes clash with the rugged appearance of parts of the landscape type.

In more fertile areas there is a clear field pattern and forestry development should respect these traditional field patterns and should not obscure their layout.

### Windfarms

Strategic Search Areas have been identified as being suitable for wind energy development to the north east of Macroom around the area of Ballynagree.

### Population

Macroom is the main town in this landscape type and it has a profound impact socially and economically. Villages in the vicinity gravitate towards the town and it has a very significant impact on the settlement pattern in the area.

While Macroom town and its environs have experienced population growth in recent years, outlining areas appear to have suffered population decline. The amount of derelict dwellings, vast coverage of forestry, scrub invasion of agricultural lands and a lack of a strong urban structure portray this.

### Agriculture

Much of the farmland in this area is of marginal agricultural quality.

### Rural Housing

Rural housing is concentrated around the town of Macroom, which in some areas leads to linear development. This landscape type does not contain a huge amount of scattered rural housing however they are a feature of this landscape.

The majority of houses in the outlining areas are traditional and sit well in the landscape.

More recently constructed dwellings are sited more for surrounding views rather than integration with the landscape.

### Infrastructure

The N22 National Primary Route, which links Kerry with Cork transverses this landscape. Future upgrades or redirection of these transportation routes would have a significant impact on the landscape.

### Tourism

Macroom is an important “stop-off” location for tourists travelling the Cork-Kerry road. Macroom’s attractive castle and square as well as its variety of accommodation, restaurants and cafes, provide an attraction for visitors.

### Natural resources

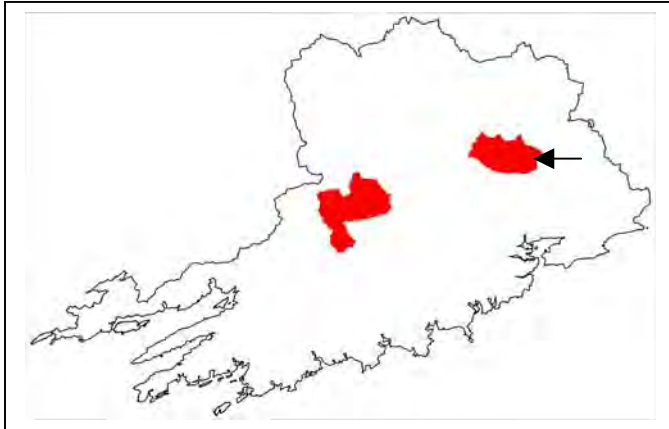
There are a number of local quarries in the Macroom area.

## Recommendations

- Ensure the continued protection of the Gearagh for its wildlife and natural heritage while also ensuring its continued use as a popular amenity attraction.
- Forestry development should respect the existing field pattern. Plantations

- and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forestry Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.
  - Protect Rivers Sullane and Lee and their surrounding floodplains. Ensure the value of these rivers as scenic amenity areas is managed and maintained.
  - Protect the existing rural nature of this LCT by integrating appropriately scaled new development within existing settlements.
  - Discourage sizable 'urban' style housing developments on the fringes of smaller settlements such as Ballinagree and Kilnamartyra, as these can have an adverse impact on the quality, character and setting of an area.
  - Promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
  - Implement improvements to visitor attractions in and around Macroom.
  - Ensure that the approach roads to Macroom are protected from inappropriate development, which would detract from the setting of this settlement.
  - Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be located and laid out in a sensitive manner.

**Type 13b: Valleyed Marginal Middleground (Glenville and Environs)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This landscape type includes and surrounds the village of Glenville. This landscape is valued for agriculture while the more marginal upland areas are particularly used for commercial forestry. Topographically this landscape comprises low rounded hills of old red sandstone enclosing fairly broad undulating river valleys. The river in this area is the upper part of the River Bride.

An appearance of roughness prevails due to the fragmentation of fields by areas of marginal quality on peaty podzols or which are uncultivated and include clumps of willow, birch, heather, bracken and gorse. This appearance is also contributed to by the occasional rock outcrop and by the intermittent change of hedgerows from broadleaf to conifer shelterbelts and the strips of riparian vegetation winding along the more fertile riverbanks. Fields are located on hill slopes and valley bottoms and are used for grazing. They are both regular and irregular in configuration and small to medium in size, defined by low hedgerows of broadleaf trees and shrubs and conifers or simply by banks. Some patches of fields which are on flatter ground at lower altitude are of higher fertility. Coniferous plantations are mostly located on higher ground, rising to, and covering, hill tops where soils are thinner.

Bungalows and farmsteads are located on low to middle ground. Vaulted hay and modern metal sheds are also interspersed across the landscape. These buildings are generally well integrated into the landscape by the partial screening and physical linkage provided by hedgerows and shelterbelts.

The smaller clearly delineated patches of fields on lower ground appear to weave among

patches of scrub and rocky knolls as they follow drifts of fertile soil. They often seem almost etched into the landscape, like smooth, neatly shaped and luminous emeralds in a coarse and somewhat wild landscape studded by the occasional prominent rock outcrop. This engenders a visually interesting juxtaposition of the cultivated and the naturalistic.

### Statutory Designations

The river valley of the Bride/Bunaglanna has been designated as a pNHA within this landscape type.

### Scenic Routes

There is one Scenic Route within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

There are two LCA's within this landscape type. They are:

- 6. Glenville – Moorland, Forested Ridge and Marginal Mosaic Upper Valley.
- 5. Upper Bride – Marginal Mosaic Middle Valley.

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- There is a strong contrast in this landscape between fertile fields and marginal land.
- Small to medium sized fields are of marginal quality consisting of uncultivated peaty soils, and include clumps of willow, birch, heather, bracken, the occasional rock outcrop and are bounded by low broadleaf hedgerows. To the north the landscape is hillier and the land is more marginal with less well-defined field boundaries.
- In general this area contains lush agricultural land. Fields located on hill slopes and valley bottoms are used for grazing. They are both regular and irregular in configuration and small to medium in size, defined by low hedgerows of broadleaf trees, and shrubs and conifers or simply by banks. Fields, which are on flatter ground and at a lower altitude, are of higher fertility.
- Topographically this landscape comprises low rounded hills enclosing fairly broad undulating river valleys.

- This Landscape Character Type contains the upper part of the River Bride.
- This landscape contains large areas of coniferous forestry plantations which are mostly located on higher ground. Ardara Forest was planted in 1969 and 1972. Douglas fir is the main tree species planted here. Poplar can be seen on the flat area between the road and the river while alder and hazel grow along the river bank.
- There are Clumps of wooded areas with mature broad leaf trees.

#### Built Environment

- Glenville is valued for the vernacular quality of its built environment and has been selected as one of Europe's 'Villages of Tradition' however the village has experienced significant residential development in recent years.
- Bungalows, farmsteads and sheds are interspersed across the landscape and are generally well screened by hedgerows.

#### Socio Economic

- This landscape type includes and surrounds the village of Glenville and is in very close proximity to the village

of Watergrasshill where there are a number of services and community facilities.

- The Cork to Dublin National Primary route cuts through this landscape.

### **Ecology**

- The river valleys of the Bride and the Bunaglanna have been identified for designation for nature conservation purposes.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Forestry*

To the north of the area there is a transition into marginal land with coniferous forestry. Coniferous plantations are mostly located on higher ground, rising to, and covering, hill tops where soils are thinner. Extensive areas have been felled. It appears that there is a trend of farmland giving way to forestry.

Looking southeast across the area there are views of rolling landscape with coniferous forestry and patchwork of farmland.

#### *Population*

The villages of Glenville and Watergrasshill have experienced a substantial amount of growth in the past few years and there are a number of examples of sizable housing estates

on their fringes. Many of these have an urban character and there is a general trend towards homogeneity in terms of their siting and design. Such development represents a particular force for change and may have an adverse impact on the quality and character of some of the areas most distinctive local landscapes.

#### *Agriculture*

There is a strong contrast in this area between fertile fields and marginal land. In general this area contains lush agricultural land however to the north there is a transition into marginal land with coniferous forestry.

This engenders a visually interesting juxtaposition of the cultivated and the naturalistic.

#### *Rural Housing*

Part of this area is protected by the Rural Housing Control Zone policy however the areas outside the Rural Housing Control Zone are under pressure from individual housing growth.

In particular there has been inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to main settlements. This type of development

could have a negative impact on the vernacular landscape.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

#### *Infrastructure*

The N8 national primary route cuts through this area however it fits well into the landscape.

#### *Tourism*

The potential progress of tourism and the role it will play will be a significant factor in the future development of the area.

### **Recommendations**

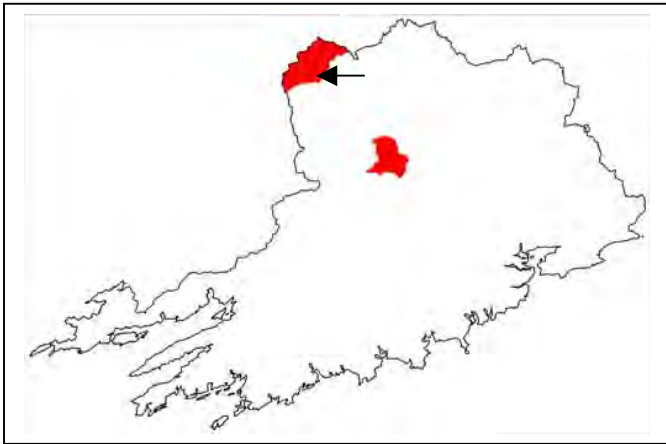
- Aim to protect the Rural Housing Control Zone from pressures for one off housing development.
- Preserve the unique landscape setting and scenic and amenity values of the Bride/Bunaglanna river valley.

- Develop amenity walks through Ardarou Forest while also continuing to protect it for its wildlife and natural heritage value.
- Protect the setting of Glenville Manor while also recognising the potential of Glenville Manor as a unique heritage resource for the community.
- All existing tree belts in the vicinity of Glenville Manor and elsewhere within the village should be maintained and strengthened.
- Ensure future development in the village of Glenville is appropriately scaled and sympathetic to the existing character and setting of the village.
- Discourage ribboning of development along approach roads to Glenville.
- Maintain the strong vernacular character of the area and promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- Recognise the potential role of tourism in this LCT.
- Ensure that additional conifer planting is small scale and is in sympathy with the landscape. Plantations and replantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are

produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.



**Type 14a: Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland (Northwest-Rockchapel)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

The topography of this landscape is one of relatively steep but rolling mountainous upland, which is fissured, in places quite deeply, by narrow serpentine rivers but also which includes some broad flat ground. The Mullaghareirk Mountains are located in this area. The higher ground is part of a larger mountain range comprising old red sandstone and mudstone. The area is characterised by fast flowing rivers which fan outwards from the main upland mass in directions ranging from south-west to east-west.

Due to the erosive action of the streams and rivers, the lower slopes tend to be steep. Soils on these slopes and valley bottoms are typically of poor quality and include gleys, while those on upper slopes comprise blanket peat. Such soils, combined with modest shelter provided by the hills and mountains have resulted in intensive commercial coniferous plantations. These forests are laid out in blocks over a significant area of this landscape, dramatically contrasting with the otherwise mottled colour and varied texture of the surrounding moorland of heather, semi-natural grassland and bracken. Some of the steeper slopes are articulated by heavy swaths of broadleaf and conifers. Fields comprise grassland, much of which is of marginal agricultural quality, being suited more to sheep than cattle. Some improved fields are located along valley bottoms and interweave with swaths of broadleaf woodland and copses.

Houses and farmsteads are sparse and tend to be located on lower slopes and valley bottoms. This reflects the limited agricultural potential of the area in general, but especially of higher ground. These buildings usually fit well into the landscape due to their modest size and form and also because of shelterbelts and hedgerows extending from them and linking them to adjoining fields. Settlements are scarce



and small and include the village of Rockchapel.

### **Statutory Designations**

This landscape type has no designated sites i.e. NHA's, SAC's or SPA's.

### **Scenic Routes**

There are three scenic routes within this landscape type.

### **Landscape Character Areas**

There is only one landscape character area in this landscape type:

- 24 - Rockchapel (Marginal Moorland and Forested Hills), which covers the entire landscape type. Rockchapel village is attractive in its rural setting with its hilly and forested surrounds.

### **Key Characteristics**

#### **Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- Includes the Mullaghareirk Mountains.
- Topography of this landscape is one of relatively steep and rolling mountainous upland, fissured by narrow river valleys and which slopes towards broad flat ground.

- Fields comprise grassland, much of which is of marginal agricultural quality, while there are also some areas of broadleaf woodland.
- Soils on these slopes and valley bottoms tend to be of poor quality and include blanket peat on upper slopes, which have resulted in intensive commercial coniferous plantations.

#### **Built Environment**

- Houses and farmsteads are sparse and tend to be located on lower slopes and valley bottoms and usually fit well into the landscape due to their modest size and form as well as by the use of shelterbelts and hedgerows extending from them into adjoining fields.

#### **Socio Economic**

- Settlements are scarce and small and include Rockchapel
- There is a strong music tradition in the Sliabh Luchra area and this local distinctiveness contributes to a strong sense of community and identity.

#### **Ecology**

- This landscape type has no designated sites i.e. NHA's, SAC's or SPA's.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Forestry*

Coniferous plantations dominate this landscape. The majority of these plantations are found on more elevated lands but some are also found in the valleys. In areas where large tracks of land are covered in forestry, the plantations add to the scenic beauty and sense of awe. For example some pleasant elevated views of a forested valley are available from the A18 Scenic Route north of Rockchapel. Thus large forested areas add to the sense of the wild and naturalistic.

However small isolated forested plantations usually follow field boundaries therefore they have a more formal layout, which in turn clashes with the rugged and wild appearance of the landscape.

#### *Windfarms*

Existing windfarm development has made a strong imprint in this landscape type. This has been recognised as a strategic area for windfarms and while further windfarm developments in this area will have a lasting influence on the landscape, their cumulative visual impacts should be thoroughly assessed.

The spread of windfarms may also have impacts on traditional practices, for example the harvesting of turf on peat lands.

### *Population*

Population decline is associated with this area and for the majority of areas the current challenge is to retain the existing population. The dominance of commercial forestry and the number of derelict and unoccupied dwellings present evidence of population decline in rural areas. Scrub invasion of agricultural lands is evident, which emphasises the impression of an abandoned landscape.

Further population decline will accelerate the spread of scrublands and forestation, the loss of field patterns and the possible expansion of Windfarms.

### *Agriculture*

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area as further lands may give over to forestry and scrub. If a level of agricultural activity is not encouraged then further scrub invasion and forestry could obscure the existing field patterns, however minimal they may be.

Associated with the changes in the agricultural sector within the County as a whole, are an increase in part time farmers and the accompanying decline in farm employment. This loss of labour is often particularly acute with regard to the traditional maintenance and management of key agricultural landscape

features such as hedgerows and ditches. More recently, with the introduction of schemes such as the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), an attempt has been made to explicitly link farming activities to the environment. However it remains to be seen how successful the second REPS programme will be in retaining and maintaining existing natural landscape features.

### *Rural Housing*

Isolated dwellings are a feature of the landscape but are by no means a dominant characteristic. The majority of the existing stock of isolated dwellings are traditional and well established which reflects the lack of development pressure in this area. However some ribbon development is evident on the Rockchapel to Newmarket road.

### *Infrastructure*

This landscape contains no major roads or other main transportation routes thus it is not envisaged that significant infrastructural projects will take place in the future thus this will not be a force of change.

### *Tourism*

This landscape has no outstanding features that would sustain a vibrant tourist economy but it

does contain a rustic ambience with a strong natural character. Also there this is an Irish traditional music stronghold that could be successfully marketed for cultural tourism.

### *Natural resources*

The spread of windfarms may also have impacts on traditional practices, for example the harvesting of turf on peat lands.

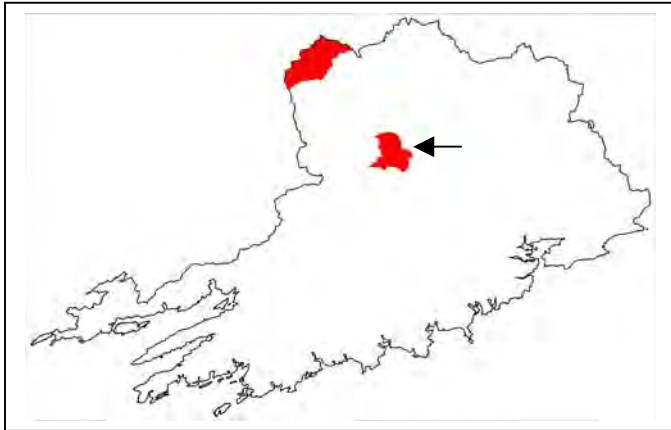
### **Recommendations**

- Respect the remote character and existing low-density development in this LCT.
- Maintain the visual integrity of this LCT, which has retained a dominantly undisturbed landscape.
- Recognise the value of the upland areas (Mullaghareirk Mountains) in this LCT particularly as a tourism resource for hill walking etc.
- Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- Encourage Broadleaf Planting and protect existing areas of broadleaf woodland.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under

the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.

- Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be located and laid out in a sensitive manner.
- Encourage rural diversification particularly in areas which have suffered from a decline in agricultural activity.
- Discourage ribboning of development along roads particularly between the settlements of Rockchapel to Newmarket.
- Recognise the potential role of tourism in this area where there is a remote rustic ambience and a Traditional Irish music stronghold, particularly in the Sliabh Luchra area.

**Type 14b: Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland (Lyre and Nad)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

The topography of this landscape is one of relatively steep but rolling mountainous upland, which is fissured, in places quite deeply, by narrow serpentine rivers but also which includes some broad flat ground. The Boggeragh Mountains are located in this area. The higher ground is part of a larger mountain range comprising old red sandstone and mudstone. The area is characterised by fast flowing rivers which fan outwards from the

main upland mass in directions ranging from south-west to east-west.

The elevation of this landscape provides fairly open vistas, though these can be curtailed by the interweaving of slopes as well as by the coniferous plantations when viewed at close quarters. Due to the relatively high elevation and poor soil conditions, this landscape appears to be undergoing a process of abandonment. This reinforces the sense of the naturalistic and remoteness expected of such mountain moorland areas. Nevertheless, the remains of earlier farming activity along with the existing farms and expansive coniferous plantations provide a reasonably strong human presence.

Houses and farmsteads are sparse and tend to be located on lower slopes and valley bottoms and usually fit well into the landscape due to their modest size and form as well as by the use of shelterbelts and hedgerows extending from them into adjoining fields. Settlements are scarce and small and include Rockchapel and Nad.

**Statutory Designations**

This landscape type has no designated sites i.e. NHA's, SAC's or SPA's.



### Scenic Routes

There are two scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This section of Landscape Type 14b - Fissured marginal and Forested Rolling Upland includes the following Landscape Character Areas:

- 3 - The Boggeraghs (Moorland and Forested Mountain Upper Valley and fissured Hilly Mosaic Farmland)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Contains the Boggeragh Mountains.
- Topography of this landscape is one of relatively steep and rolling mountainous upland, fissured by narrow river valleys and which slopes towards broad flat ground.
- Fields comprise grassland, much of which is of marginal agricultural quality, while there are also some areas of broadleaf woodland.
- Soils on these slopes and valley bottoms tend to be of poor quality and include blanket peat on upper slopes, which have resulted in intensive commercial coniferous plantations.

- This landscape comprises rolling hills and forestry (active planting and cutting) and marginal land (moorland / forestry).
- There are some areas of agricultural land on more fertile slopes in the valleys.

#### Built Environment

- Houses and farmsteads are sparse and tend to be located on lower slopes and valley bottoms, and usually fit well into the landscape due to their modest size and form, as well as by the use of shelterbelts and hedgerows extending from them into adjoining fields.
- A large scale housing development has recently been built in Lyre village

#### Socio Economic

- Settlements are scarce and small and include Lyre and Nad.

#### Ecology

- The Boggeragh Mountains are in this area.
- The higher ground is part of a larger mountain range comprising old red sandstone and mudstone.

### Pressure for Change

#### Forestry

Poor soils, combined with modest shelter provided by the hills and mountains have resulted in intensive commercial coniferous plantations.

These forests are laid out in blocks over a significant area of this landscape, dramatically contrasting with the otherwise mottled colour and varied texture of the surrounding moorland of heather, semi-natural grassland and bracken.

Some of the steeper slopes are articulated by heavy swaths of broadleaf and conifers. Fields comprise grassland, much of which is of marginal agricultural quality, being suited more to sheep than cattle. Some improved fields are located along valley bottoms and interweave with swaths of broadleaf woodland and copses.

The elevation of this landscape provides fairly open vistas, though these can be curtailed by the interweaving of slopes as well as by the coniferous plantations when viewed at close quarters.

#### Windfarms

This area is not regarded as a “Strategic Search Area” or a “Strategically Unsuitable Area” for windfarm developments however the

landscape to the east of this area has been identified as a ‘Strategic Search Area’ for windfarm development under the County Development Plan.

The visual impact of windfarm development in adjoining areas may become more prominent in the future.

### *Agriculture*

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area.

Due to the relatively high elevation and poor soil conditions, this landscape appears to be undergoing a process of abandonment.

### *Rural Housing*

It is important to protect the existing rural character and setting of Nad and Lyre by preventing large-scale development that would undermine the attractiveness of these villages.

There has been some inappropriate ribboning of development on approach roads to main settlements.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate

landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### *Infrastructure*

This area is relatively close to the city therefore it may come under pressure if road improvements and the proposed northern ring road come on stream in the future.

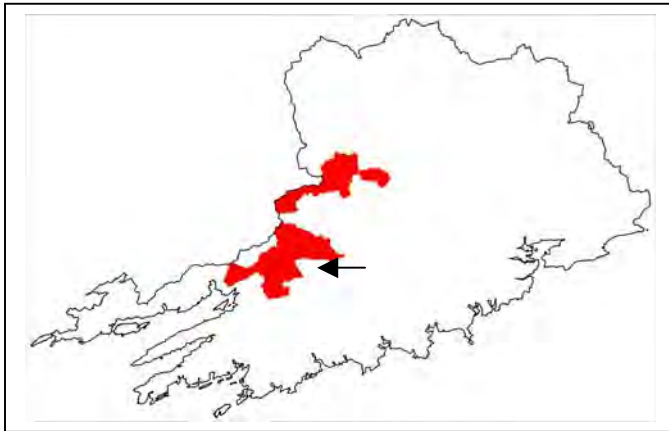
### **Recommendations**

- Protect the existing rural character and setting of Nad and Lyre by preventing large-scale development that would undermine the attractiveness of these villages. Maintain the visual integrity of this LCT, which has retained a dominantly undisturbed landscape.
- Recognise the value of the upland areas (Boggeragh Mountains) in this LCT particularly as a tourism resource for hill walking.
- Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- Encourage Broadleaf Planting and protect existing areas of broadleaf woodland.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.
- Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be located and laid out in a sensitive manner.
- Encourage rural diversification particularly in areas which have suffered from a decline in agricultural activity.
- Discourage ribboning of development along main roads.
- Maintain the visual quality of the hill slopes by appropriate siting of new development on visually unobtrusive sites.
- Minimise the disturbance of hedgerows in rural areas. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominantly indigenous/local species and groupings.





**Type 15a: Ridged and Peaked Upland  
(Mullaghanish to Millstreet)**



*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: County*

**Landscape Description**

The ridged, peaked and forested upland landscape type flanks much of the mid-western boundary of County Cork, from the vicinity of Bantry in the south to Millstreet in the north. This landscape type has been glaciated and comprises a fairly rugged and rolling mountainous topography at a relatively high elevation.

The area around the Cousane Gap provides a good example of this landscape type which is

inclined towards the rugged whereas the southern slopes of the Boggeragh Mountains further to the north in type 15B are a somewhat smoother example, thus adding to the openness of the moorland. These are often delineated by tight gorse hedgerows, walls, banks or post and wire fencing and punctuated by coniferous or broadleaf shelterbelts around small farmsteads.

The landscape, with its rapid and steep rising and falling, seems to tumble down along the valleys. The rugged and diverse landcover, involving moorland, heath and scrub, lends a strong sense of the naturalistic.

Urban settlements tend to be located on lower ground and include Ballingeary, Inchigeelagh.

**Statutory Designations**

There are two pNHA's and one cSAC within this Landscape Type. These are Lough Allua (NHA) and Derryclogher Bog (NHA and SAC). Lough Allua on the Lee is an acidic lake with associated peaty wetlands, wet grassland, interesting alluvial woodland and acid woodland. It supports the protected plant the pale dog-violet and a good diversity of wildfowl.

**Scenic Routes**

There are 9 Scenic Routes within this Landscape Type.



### Landscape Character Areas

This section of Landscape Type 15a - Ridged and Peaked Upland includes the following Landscape Character Areas:

- 33 - Lough Allua (composite middle valley of rugged scrub, mosaic and marginal land)
- 18 - Cousane Gap East (Serrated Ridge and Upper Moorland Valley)
- 37 - Pass of Keimaneigh (Rugged Rocky Pass with forest and scrub)
- 73 - Owvane Valley (Serrated Ridge and Upper Moorland Valley)
- 76 - Cousane Gap West (serrated Ridge and Upper Moorland Valley)
- 72 - Mealagh Valley (Serrated Ridge and Upper Moorland Valley)
- 71 - Coomhola Valley Lower (Glaciated Cradle, Serrated Ridge and Middle Valley of Ridges and patchwork moraines)
- 36 - Priests Leap (Glaciated Cradle Valley)

### Key Characteristics

**Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife**

- Comprises a rolling mountainous topography at a relatively high elevation which includes the Shehy Mountains.
- Soil is of low fertility and experiences relatively high levels of rainfall due to its elevation, resulting in poor growing conditions and limited vegetation including moorland, heath and scrub.
- Isolated or clusters of fields, are scattered along lower slopes, giving this landscape type a small scale dimension, to the otherwise open moorland.
- Large tracks of coniferous forestry evident particularly in upland areas.
- Patches of fertile land within the landscape
- The main agricultural practice in these upland areas is sheep farming.
- Field boundaries are mainly stone walls and lowland hedges.

### Built Environment

- The farmsteads are typically located on lower ground, especially along river plains, and comprise a cluster of small buildings formed by a cottage and some out buildings.
- There is a remote feel to the area with few houses, mainly farm buildings.

### Socio Economic

- The main agricultural practice in these upland areas is sheep farming.
- Údarás na Gaeltachta promotes employment opportunities within this Gaeltacht area and has a number of industrial premises within the village of Ballingeary.
- Inchigeelagh is located on a popular tourist route between Macroom and Bantry. Future development in this area will support the economic vitality of this area.

### Ecology

- There are two pNHA's and one cSAC within this Landscape Type. These are Lough Allua (NHA) and Derryclogher Bog (NHA and SAC).
- The primary physiographic components are the underlying geology of old red sandstone as well as the peaty podzols and a thin layer of blanket peat at higher elevations.

### Pressure for Change

#### Forestry

Coniferous plantations dominate this landscape. The majority of these plantations

are found on more elevated lands but some are found in the valleys also.

Small isolated forested plantations usually follow field boundaries therefore they have a more formal layout, which in turn clashes with the rugged and wild appearance of the landscape.

### *Windfarms*

Windfarms can be seen off in the distance from certain elevated views within this landscape type. While their presence is noted, their visual impact is not major but an accumulation of more windfarms could have a more intolerable visual impact in the future.

### *Population*

Population decline is associated with this area and for the majority of areas the current challenge is to retain the existing population. Settlements such as Ballingearry and Inchigeelagh can play a vital role in stemming population decline. The dominance of commercial forestry and the number of derelict and unoccupied dwellings present evidence of population decline in rural areas.

While it is important to reverse decline in this area it is also important to ensure that future

development supports the linguistic, cultural and rural heritage of the area.

### *Agriculture*

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area as further lands may give over to forestry and scrub.

If the level of agricultural activity is not encouraged then further scrub invasion and forestry could obscure the existing field patterns, however minimal they may be.

### *Rural Housing*

Isolated dwellings are a feature of the landscape but are by no means a dominant characteristic. The majority of the existing stock of isolated dwellings are traditional and well established which reflects the lack of development pressure in this area.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### *Infrastructure*

The majority of roads in this area are narrow third class routes, many of which can be described as boreens or “one car roads”.

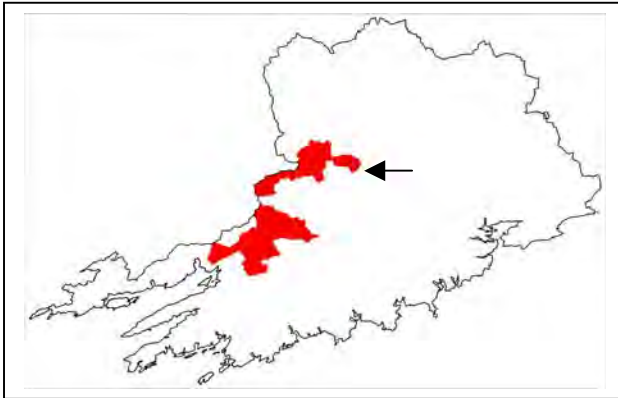
### **Recommendations**

- Protect the unique setting and character of villages like Ballingearry and Inchigeelagh.
- Continue to promote the Gaeltacht in Ballingearry as a cultural resource. Recognise the scenic value of the Cousane Gap as a valuable tourist attraction in this LCT.
- Recognise the value of Lough Allua as a valuable amenity for tourism and recreational activities.
- Recognise the value of the upland areas (Shehy Mountains) in this LCT particularly as a tourism resource for hill walking.
- Continue to protect and preserve Derryclogher Bog which is an important habitat with a rich and diverse natural heritage.
- Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- Promote introduction of deciduous edges to existing plantations to soften

their appearance. New plantations should respect landscape pattern.

- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.
- Promote best practice in design and layout through the use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.

**Type 15b: Ridged and Peaked Upland  
(Millstreet)**



Soils are of low fertility and experience relatively high levels of rainfall due to its elevation and location in the southwest of Ireland, resulting in poor growing conditions and limited vegetation including moorland, heath and scrub.

The landscape, with its rapid and steep rising and falling, seems to tumble down along the valleys. The rugged and diverse landcover, involving moorland, heath and scrub, lends a strong sense of the naturalistic

*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: County*

**Landscape Description**

The ridged, peaked and forested upland landscape type which is located south of Millstreet town, includes much of the Millstreet to Macroom road (R582) and swings south west towards the county boundary west of Ballyvourney. This landscape type has been glaciated and comprises a fairly rugged and rolling mountainous topography at a relatively high elevation. The area around the Boggeragh Mountains provides a good example of this landscape type.

The ridged, peaked and forested upland landscape type flanks much of the mid-western boundary of County Cork, from the vicinity of Bantry in the south to Millstreet in the north. This landscape type has been glaciated and comprises a fairly rugged and rolling mountainous topography at a relatively high elevation. The area around the Cousane Gap in Type A provides a good example of this landscape type which is inclined towards the rugged whereas the southern slopes of the Boggeragh Mountains further to the north are a somewhat smoother example, thus adding to the small scaled patchwork to the otherwise openness of the moorland. These are often delineated by tight gorse hedgerows, walls, banks or post and wire fencing and punctuated by coniferous or broadleaf shelterbelts around small farmsteads.



The landscape, with its rapid and steep rising and falling, seems to tumble down along the valleys. The rugged and diverse landcover, involving moorland, heath and scrub, lends a strong sense of the naturalistic.

Urban settlements tend to be located on lower ground and include Carriganimmy and Millstreet.

### Scenic Routes

There are five scenic routes in this Landscape Character Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This section of Landscape Type 15b - Ridged and Peaked Upland includes the following Landscape Character Areas:

- 1: Carraiganimmy (undulating Rugged and Forested Upland Valley)
- 2: Derrynasaggart Pass (Composite Moorland Upper Valley)
- 25: Millstreet (Composite Upper Valley)
- 26: Ballynagree West (Upper Moorland and Forested Valley)

### Statutory Designations

There is one proposed Natural Heritage Area and one Special Area of Conservation within

this landscape type. Mullaghanish Bog at the summit of Mullaghanish Mountain is an excellent example of an undamaged intact growing blanket bog, one of the few in the country which has not been damaged by overgrazing, fire or other erosional pressures.

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Comprises a rolling mountainous topography at a relatively high elevation and includes the southern slopes of the Boggeragh Mountains.
- Soils are of low fertility and experience relatively high levels of rainfall due to its elevation, resulting in poor growing conditions and limited vegetation including moorland, heath and scrub.
- Isolated or clusters of fields, are scattered along lower slopes, giving this landscape type a small scale dimension, to the otherwise open moorland.
- Large tracks of coniferous forestry evident particularly in upland areas.
- There are patches of fertile land within the landscape.

- The main agricultural practice in these upland areas is sheep farming.
- Field boundaries comprise mainly stonewalls and low hedges.
- With forestry over the landscape (not blocks as in other areas). Delineated by tight gorse hedgerows, walls, banks or post and wire fencing and punctuated by a coniferous or broadleaf shelterbelts around small farmsteads.

#### Built Environment

- The farmsteads are typically located on lower ground, especially along river plains, and comprise a cluster of small buildings formed by a cottage and some out buildings.
- There is a remote feel to the area with few houses mainly farm buildings.
- Individual houses are scattered around the town of Millstreet.

#### Socio Economic

- The main agricultural practice in these upland areas is sheep farming
- Urban settlements tend to be located on lower ground and include, for example, Carriganimmy and Millstreet.

- There is some quarry activity in this area. There is a large quarry located on the main Macroom to Millstreet Road.

### **Ecology**

- This landscape is valued as an important example of undamaged intact growing blanket bog at Mullaghanish.
- The dominant pressure is forestry and there is an issue in relation to forestry management.
- The primary physiographic components are the underlying geology of old red sandstone as well as the peaty podzols and a thin layer of blanket peat at higher elevations.

### **Pressure for Change**

#### *Forestry*

Coniferous plantations dominate this landscape. The majority of these plantations are found on more elevated lands but some are found in the valleys also. In areas where large tracts of land are covered in forestry, the plantations add to the scenic beauty and sense of awe. For example some stunning elevated views of a forested valley are available from the Scenic Route at Mullaghanish.

However small isolated forested plantations usually follow field boundaries therefore they have a more formal layout, which in turn clashes with the rugged and wild appearance of the landscape.

#### *Windfarms*

Windfarms can be seen off in the distance from certain elevated views within this landscape type. While their presence is noted, their visual impact is not major but an accumulation of more windfarms could have a more intolerable visual impact in the future.

#### *Population*

Population decline is associated with the more rural parts of this area and for the majority of areas the current challenge is to retain the existing population. The dominance of commercial forestry and the number of derelict and unoccupied dwellings present evidence of population decline in rural areas.

On the other hand the development of sizable housing estates on the fringes of some of the larger settlements represent a particular force for change and may have an adverse impact on the quality and character of some of the areas most distinctive local landscapes.

#### *Agriculture*

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area as further lands may give over to forestry and scrub.

If the level of agricultural activity is not encouraged then further scrub invasion and forestry could obscure the existing field patterns, however minimal they may be.

#### *Rural Housing*

Isolated dwellings are a feature of the landscape but are by no means a dominant characteristic. The majority of the existing stock of isolated dwellings are traditional and well established which reflects the lack of development pressure in this area. However ribbon development is evident on the approach roads to Millstreet.

Whilst the new dwellings are subject to development management, problems have arisen in relation to the use of certain design styles, ranch-style fencing and inappropriate landscaping of curtilage. The Cork Design Guidelines are however a positive step forward in addressing the issues of design, siting and overall approach to building dwellings in the countryside.

### Infrastructure

The main Macroom to Millstreet regional route (R582) runs through the eastern and northern section of this landscape type while a small part of a national route (N22) transects the southern and western section.

The majority of roads in this area are narrow third class routes, many of which can be described as boreens or “one car roads”.

### Tourism

Millstreet town provides a relatively strong tourist destination due to the presence of the Green Glens Arena. The rural area contains the widely known Millstreet Country Park and also the Duhallow way for hikers.

### Recommendations

- Promote the scenic value of the LCT as a visitor attraction and provide sensitively designed and located facilities such as parking, picnic areas, way marked trails, driving routes and signage.
- Recognise the value of the upland areas (Boggeragh Mountains) as a valuable tourism resource for hill walking.

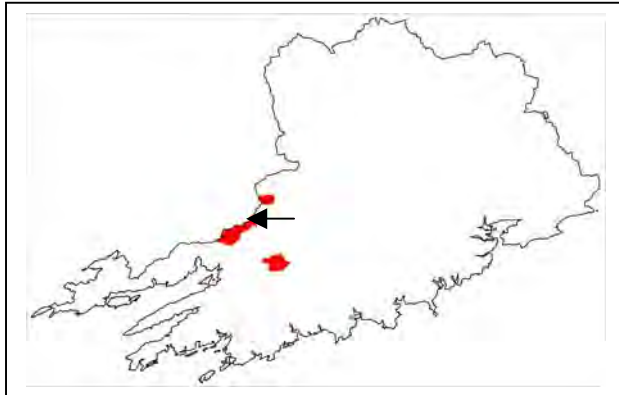
- Recognise the potential of Millstreet town as a relatively strong tourist destination due to the presence of the Green Glens Arena. The rural area contains the widely known Millstreet Country Park and also the Duhallow way for hikers.
- Promote introduction of deciduous edges to existing plantations to soften their appearance. New plantations should respect landscape pattern.
- Forestry plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.
- Encourage broadleaf planting and protect existing areas of broadleaf woodland.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.
- Aim to retain the existing population in this area where there has been a decline in the population in recent years.
- Discourage ribboning of development along roads. Ribbon development is particularly evident on the approach roads to Millstreet. It is important to

ensure that the approach roads to Millstreet are protected from inappropriate development which would detract from the setting of this settlement.

- Current quarrying sites require a rigorous monitoring regime to ensure that agreed mitigation measures are fully implemented.
- Minimise the disturbance of hedgerows in rural areas. Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominantly indigenous/local species and groupings.
- To protect and preserve Mullaghanish Bog which is a growing blanket bog.
- Protect the high ridges and mountainous peaks, particularly to the south west of Millstreet town (Claragh Mountain). These upland areas are predominant components of this landscape type.



**Type 16a: Glaciated and Forested Cradle Valley (Gougane Barra)**



*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: High*

*Landscape Importance: National*

**Landscape Description**

This is a landscape formed by intensive glacial erosion, leaving armchair-like forms gouged out of the mountain side. Gougane Barra provides an excellent example of these. The mountain sides are steeply scarped, falling to a flat but limited valley floor which typically accommodates a small lake and/or river. In the case of Gougane Barra, the river in question is the Lee, which rises here meandering its way to the sea at Cork Harbour in the east.

At lower levels scrub typically comprises gorse as well as stunted broadleaf trees and shrubs. Rush and willow are quite common on lower wetter areas, especially in small patches of previously improved land and along water courses. Coniferous plantations occupy a significant portion of these valleys, introducing a patchwork landcover. In certain instances small groups of conifers are strung out as they ascend to the ridge tops.

Buildings and other structures are few and far between in this landscape type. Gougane Barra is the most noteworthy exception, where the historical remains of the stone buildings used by the seventh century hermit and monk, St. Finnbar, remain along side a nineteenth century stone oratory as well as contemporary tourist facilities.

Notwithstanding the coniferous plantations, these landscapes are distinctly remote with a strong sense of the naturalistic. The relatively tight containment of valleys and passes (such as the Pass of Keimaneigh) by lofty ridges generates a spatial flow up their serrated slopes to their peaks and beyond to the skies. This vertical dynamic is complemented by a horizontal spatial release from the armchair containment of the valley down-slope, following the course of the river and revealing

something of the geological history involving glacial action of bygone eras which had such a formative influence on these landscapes.

### Statutory Designations

Though small in area, this landscape type has two areas of high ecological value that are proposed for designation. Gougane Barra Lake, renowned for its scenic value, is also important from an ecological point of view, being a good example of a large nutrient poor glacial lake with some associated rare plants. The cliffs surrounding the lake are a nesting site for the Peregrine Falcon. Derryclogher Bog is a good example of an intact actively growing blanket bog with other associated habitats including heath, upland grassland, exposed rock and flushes.

### Scenic Routes

There are two scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

Made up of the following Landscape Character Areas:

- 65: Gougane Barra: (Glaciated Cradle and Serrated Moorland Ridge)
- 70: Coomhola Valley Upper (Glaciated Cradle and Serrated Moorland Ridge)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Some forestry but located on the side of the elevated area.
- At the centre of this LCT is Gougane Barra a scenic area. It is evident why this is a tourist area due to its historical and picturesque setting with the lake and dramatic background.
- To the south is the more enclosed Gougane Barra Forest Park.
- To the south the valley is very lush with evidence of farming and farm buildings.
- The roadside is lined with ditches and bushes.
- The area is very dramatic to the west as the road climbs slowly up the area towards the Kerry border.
- This is a landscape formed by intensive glacial erosion, leaving armchair-like forms gouged out of the mountain side. Gougane Barra provides an excellent example of these.
- The mountain sides are steeply scarped, falling to a flat but limited valley floor which typically accommodates a small lake and/or river. In the case of Gougane Barra,

the river in question is the Lee, which rises here meandering its way to the sea at Cork Harbour in the east.

#### Built Environment

- Buildings and other structures are few and far between in this landscape type. Gougane Barra is the most noteworthy exception, where the historical remains of the stone buildings used by the seventh century hermit and monk, St. Finnbar, remain along side a nineteenth century stone oratory as well as contemporary tourist facilities.
- There are some tourist facilities in this area including a hotel, public house, craft shop and convenience shop.

#### Socio Economic

- Due to the extraordinary beauty of the landscape, tourism is an important industry.
- Significant concentrations of conifer and mixed forestry are important to the local economy as well as contributing to the local environment.

#### Ecology

- The primary geological component determining the appearance of the landscape is old red sandstone which supports both peaty podzols at lower

elevations and a thin layer of blanket peat higher up. The rock is layered diagonally, thus giving rise to a jagged profile on higher ridges and an angular ripple across the steep slopes articulated by strips of green where flora has found a place to root.

- Gougane Barra Lake is a pNHA and Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog is a pNHA and SAC.

### Pressure for Change

#### Forestry

Coniferous plantations occupy a significant portion of these valleys, introducing a patchwork landcover. In certain instances small groups of conifers are strung out as they ascend to the ridge tops.

#### Windfarms

This LCT has great landscape sensitivity hence the area is identified as “Strategically Unsuitable” for windfarm development. Such developments would dominate the surrounding landscape.

#### Agriculture

There is some sheep grazing in the area however it is not a force for change.

#### Infrastructure

Gougane Barra is located adjacent to the R584 regional route connecting Bantry and Macroom.

#### Rural Housing

There is some evidence of pressure for one-off dwellings to the south of the area.

#### Tourism

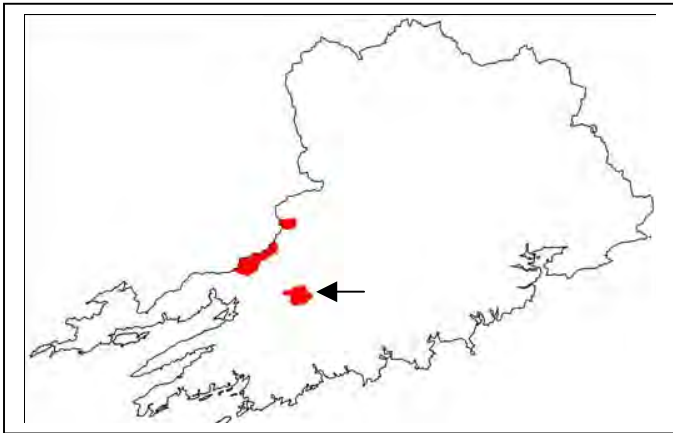
It is important that the continuation of tourism as an economic activity in this area does not impact on the natural and built heritage of the area.

### Recommendations

- Explore the potential to create way marked walking trails that facilitate interpretation and appreciation of historic landscapes features.
- Safeguard the visual amenity of the area.
- Have regard to the archaeological importance and richness of the area.
- Promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- Ensure the continued protection of the Derryclogher Bog for its natural heritage.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.
- Ensure the continued protection of Gougane Barra for its wildlife and unique natural heritage while also ensuring its continued use as a popular amenity attraction.
- Promote the scenic value of this LCT as a visitor attraction and provide sensitively designed and located facilities such as parking, picnic areas, way marked trails, driving routes and signage.
- Respect the remote character and existing low-density development in this LCT.



**Type 16b: Glaciated Cradle Valleys  
(Cullenagh Lake)**



*Landscape Value: Low*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This is a landscape formed by intensive glacial erosion, leaving armchair-like forms gouged out of the mountain side. The mountain sides are steeply scaped, falling to a flat but limited valley floor which typically accommodates a small lake and/or river.

The predominance of blanket peat allied with the relatively high level of rainfall experienced due to elevation and location in the southwest of the country, result in poor growing conditions and limited vegetation. This is

particularly evident on ridges, peaks and scarp slopes where heather, bracken and wild grasses interweave with clumps of scrub between jagged rocky outcrops, giving a mottled appearance. At lower levels scrub typically comprises gorse as well as stunted broadleaf trees and shrubs. Rush and willow are quite common on lower wetter areas, especially in small patches of previously improved land and along watercourses. Coniferous plantations occupy a significant portion of these valleys, introducing a patchwork landcover. In certain instances small groups of conifers are strung out as they ascend to the ridge tops.

Buildings and other structures are few and far between in this landscape type however Gougane Barra does contain historical remains of medieval stone buildings along side a nineteenth century stone oratory as well as contemporary tourist facilities.

**Landscape Character Areas**

Landscape includes the following Landscape Character Area:

- o 68. Cullenagh Lake (Glaciated Cradle, Serrated Forested Ridge and Middle Valley)

**Statutory Designations**

There are no pNHA's, cSAC's or cSPA's within this Landscape Type.

### Scenic Routes

There is one scenic route within this Landscape Type.

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Coniferous plantations occupy a significant portion of these valleys, introducing a patchwork landcover. In certain instances small groups of conifers are strung out as they ascend to the ridge tops.
- Scrub and marshy areas can be seen along road sides in this area.

#### Ecology

- Cullenagh Lake is the source of the River Bandon.
- The primary geological component determining the appearance of the landscape is old red sandstone which supports both peaty podzols at lower elevations and a thin layer of blanket peat higher up. The rock is layered diagonally, thus giving rise to a jagged profile on higher ridges and an angular ripple across the steep slopes articulated by strips of green where flora has found a place to root. While lower hills, having been subjected

more rigorously to glaciation, are rounder in form, they also maintain the generally prevalent roughness of the area. The predominance of blanket peat allied with the relatively high level of rainfall experienced due to elevation and location in the southwest of the country, result in poor growing conditions and limited vegetation.

#### Socio Economic

- Due to the extraordinary beauty of the landscape, tourism is an important industry.
- Significant concentrations of conifer and mixed forestry are important to the local economy as well as contributing to the local environment.

#### Pressure for Change

##### Forestry

Coniferous plantations occupy a significant portion of these valleys, introducing a patchwork landcover. In certain instances small groups of conifers are strung out as they ascend to the ridge tops.

##### Rural Housing

Buildings and other structures are few and far between in this landscape type.

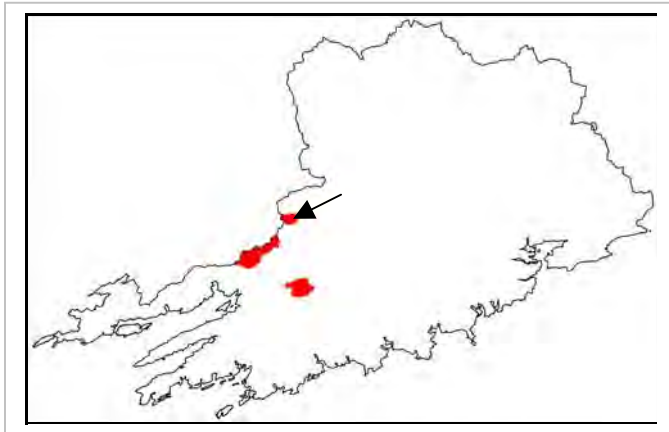
##### Tourism

Cullenagh Lake and Forest with walks etc. though not a major facility could be used as a local resource however it is important that tourism as an economic activity in this area does not impact on the natural heritage of the area.

#### Recommendations

- Respect the remote character and existing low-density development in this LCT.
- To develop amenity walks around Cullenagh Lake and forest while also continuing to protect it for its wildlife and natural heritage value.
- Explore the potential to create way marked walking trails that facilitate interpretation and appreciation of historic landscape features.
- Promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.

**Type 16c: Glaciated Cradle Valleys (Foilanumera)**



*Landscape Value: Medium*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Local*

**Landscape Description**

This is a landscape formed by intensive glacial erosion, leaving armchair-like forms gouged out of the mountainside. The mountainsides are steeply scaped, falling to a flat but limited valley floor which typically accommodates a small lake and/or river.

The predominance of blanket peat allied with the relatively high level of rainfall experienced due to elevation and location in the southwest of the country, result in poor growing

conditions and limited vegetation. This is particularly evident on ridges, peaks and scarp slopes where heather, bracken and wild grasses interweave with clumps of scrub between jagged rocky outcrops, giving a mottled appearance. At lower levels scrub typically comprises gorse as well as stunted broadleaf trees and shrubs. Rush and willow are quite common on lower wetter areas, especially in small patches of previously improved land and along watercourses. Coniferous plantations occupy a significant portion of these valleys, introducing a patchwork land cover. In certain instances small groups of conifers are strung out as they ascend to the ridge tops.

Buildings and other structures are few and far between in this landscape type however Gougane Barra does contain historical remains of medieval stone buildings along side a nineteenth century stone oratory as well as contemporary tourist facilities.

**Statutory Designations**

There are no pNHA's, cSAC's or cSPA's within this Landscape Type.

**Scenic Routes**

There are two scenic routes within this Landscape Type.

### Landscape Character Areas

This type is made up of the following Landscape Character Area

- 57. Foilanumera (Glaciated Cradle and Forested Valley)

### Key Characteristics

#### Land use, field boundaries, trees and wildlife

- There are few field boundaries mostly post and wire.
- There are rocky outcrops on the hillside
- There is some commercial forestry and evidence of extensive felling

#### Ecology

- The primary geological component determining the appearance of the landscape is old red sandstone which supports both peaty podzols at lower elevations and a thin layer of blanket peat higher up. The rock is layered diagonally, thus giving rise to a jagged profile on higher ridges and an angular ripple across the steep slopes articulated by strips of green where flora has found a place to root. While lower hills, having been subjected more rigorously to glaciation, are

rounder in form, they also maintain the generally prevalent roughness of the area. The predominance of blanket peat allied with the relatively high level of rainfall experienced due to elevation and location in the southwest of the country, result in poor growing conditions and limited vegetation.

#### Socio Economic

- Significant concentrations of conifer and mixed forestry are important to the local economy as well as contributing to the local environment.

#### Pressure for Change

##### *Forestry*

Coniferous plantations occupy a significant portion of these valleys, introducing a patchwork land cover. In certain instances small groups of conifers are strung out as they ascend to the ridge tops.

##### *Rural Housing*

Buildings and other structures are few and far between in this landscape type.

### Recommendations

- Respect the remote character and existing low-density development in this LCT.
- Explore the potential to create way marked walking trails that facilitate interpretation and appreciation of historic landscapes features.
- Promote best practice in design through use of the Cork Rural Design Guide.
- Guidelines on the design of woodlands and forestry and their management are produced by the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture and Food and should be used.