Dunmanway to Clashavoon 110kV Overhead Line Environmental Reports

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Assessment of Corridors Report – Landscape & Visual Impact

Submission to: ESB International

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1. Introduction

This section provides an assessment of the potential route corridors within the study area for the proposed 110kV line from Clashavoon to Dunmanway, Co. Cork. The purpose of this assessment is to recommend the route corridor that causes the least landscape and visual impacts.

A previous Constraints Report identified the most significant landscape and visual constraints within the study area. The potential route corridors have been designed having regard to the identified constraints.

2. Assessment of Route Corridors

The north-south routes traverse an area of east-west trending low hills. This means that all routes will have issues of being occasionally located across hill-tops. On the other hand the varied topography, smaller fields sizes and relatively sparse settlement patterns provide mitigation against significant visual impacts over wide areas for all three routes.

Western Route Corridor

This route skirts the northern part of a scenic area that Cork County Council have designated to the west of Macroom. It also cross the visually vulnerable river valley of the Sullane – west of Macroom and is likely to be visually obtrusive over a wide area from the N22 as it crosses the ridgeline near Dromagarry in this area.

The eastern variant of this route will be very visually prominent as it crosses the open level river valley of the Toon River and will be prominent on the skyline near Kilbarry in the same area.

Both the eastern and western variant will intrude upon the skyline when seen from the designated scenic route that runs south of Kilbarry.

The southern portion of both variants pass through complex and relatively sparsely populated countryside – the western variant traverses a significant number of hill tops.

The southern sections will be visually prominent on the skyline when seen from the northern outskirts of Dunmanway.

Central Route Corridor

This route traverses a relatively sparsely populated upland area in its central section – though the northern part of the route contains a significant number of angle masts (node 4 – 8) located on elevated and conspicuous ground that can be seen from many parts of the Carrigadrohid reservoir and its shores as well as from the scenic route that runs to the north of the reservoir. The large number of angle masts over a short distance in this northern part of the route will create locally significant visual impacts.

The central and southern portion of the route (both variants) contain significant numbers of conspicuous skyline locations – especially of angle masts. It will be visually conspicuous on the skyline form the scenic route to the east of Dunmanway.

Eastern Route Corridor

This route also traverses the Carrigadrohid reservoir, scenic route and N22 east of Macroom - but does so in a more direct and less obtrusive manner – compared to other routes. There will still be significant – if localised – residual visual impacts in the vicinity of Carrigadrohid. The remainder of this route appears to have fewer angle masts located on topographic prominences and to generally follow the flanks of elevated areas to a greater extent than the other routes. It will be the least visually conspicuous route as seen on approach to Dunmanway.

This routing may require localised re-examination of routes to avoid impacts on sites of cultural and heritage significance.

Combined Route Corridor

This route combines parts of the Eastern and Central Routes. It is distinctive because it aims to maximize the extent that the new route closely parallels the existing 110kV route in the sensitive northern and southern portions of the project.

The crossing of the sensitive eastern part of the reservoir – at Carrigadroihid – occurs close to the existing 110kV lines, which confines impacts to areas that are already affected. Thereafter the route corridor travels in valleys between high ground.

The southern portions of the route [south of Pike Cross Road] run parallel and close to the existing Dunmanway – Macroom 110kV lines which confines impacts to areas that are already affected

3. Selection of Preferred Route Corridor

The Combined Route Corridor will create the least visual impacts and the Western Corridor will produce the most.