

Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo



Comhairle Chontae Mhaigh Eo
MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL

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Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo

1.- Project Methodology

1.1. Introduction

'The Landscape' is a general term used to describe the appearance of the physical environment. It is composed of a complex mixture of natural and man-made elements that can also be an important part of the identity of an individual or a community. It combines important economic, social and cultural roles – as the location of agriculture, housing and history. These natural and man-made Landscapes of Mayo have co-evolved over thousands of years. They are continuing to evolve and change today

Landscape Policies generally try to control the type and pace of these changes – to continue the distinctiveness and character of each part of the landscape – ancient and modern.

It is important to note that human activities - and the changes that they necessitate - are integral parts of the landscape. Landscape policies do not seek to prevent new uses or changes. Instead the policies attempt to manage the change to ensure that the effects of change are fair and proportionate – balancing individual needs against public rights; ensuring that the past remains visible to the future.

1.2. Need for Landscape Policy

Landscape and scenery are often important considerations in making planning decisions. It is important, therefore, to provide clear, fair and easily anticipated landscape policies to guide applications and decisions. In this way disappointments can be anticipated and avoided while also ensuring that decisions are more easily understood and accepted. To address these an independent 'Landscape Appraisal for County Mayo' was commissioned. It's purpose was to identify and describe the landscape character of each part of the County. Following this the capacity of each area to accept change – without disproportionate effects – was evaluated and a series of policies to guide developments in each type of landscape was proposed.

1.3.- Landscape Protection and Problem Definition

“Preserving the character of the landscape, including views and prospects, and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest (Part IV (7), 1st schedule (S10) LG (P&D) Act 2000”

The above statement, from the 2000 Planning Act, aims to protect views, prospects and amenities in the landscape. At the heart of this effort lies a highly complex interaction between the landuses which take place in the countryside; the appearance of those landuses when viewed from certain locations and the reaction of viewers to their appearance.

This interaction is made more complex because landuses constantly change in response to economic demands. Furthermore the aesthetic response of viewers can vary according to their cultural background and indeed may change over time, as a society's cultural sensibilities develop and grow.

The objective of this legislation is faced with difficulties as -

- € It seeks to “preserve” (prevent change) a dynamic landscape which always has always, and will always change.
- € It assumes that there are fixed reference points as to what constitutes “features of natural beauty” when in fact these vary from individual to individual and from time to time. This analysis also highlights the legal insecurity of any development control measure - such as

designations on account of “natural beauty” - which could limit the development rights of private property. It is inconceivable that designations on the grounds of “natural beauty” alone could be legally justified as being based upon judicious, replicable, objective or equitable criteria.

The “Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment¹” gives a clear definition of the relationship between visual and landscape impacts. Visual issues are only one small part of a wide range of issues which contribute to the character or distinctiveness of a landscape. Similarly, the EPA Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements states: -

“The topic has two separate but closely related aspects. The first aspect to be considered is visual impacts, focusing on the extent to which new development can be seen. The second aspect considers impacts on the character of the landscape, examining responses that are felt towards the combined effects of the new development. This topic is complex because it encompasses many other impacts such as noise, odours, ecology, history and because attempts to scientifically measure feelings and perceptions are not reliable. Cross references with appropriate specialist topics such as ecology, archaeology and architectural history are very important.”

The approach to this project has been to assess the landscape in terms of its **inherent** physical and visual characteristics without introducing concepts of **hierarchical** or **subjective** value. The methodology used for the categorisation of the County Mayo landscape (i.e. best, worst) in this project has been in close accordance with that recommended in the "Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines" being prepared by the Department for the Environment. The principle being a systematic approach that concentrates, in the initial stages, on identifying homogenous physiographic areas and gradually introduces the more evaluative elements of landscape sensitivity.

The four-phase methodology used in this project is as follows;

1. Identification of **Landscape Character Units** through the mapping and integration of;

- § Physical units
- § Appearance
- § Characterisation

The resultant "Character Units" are then described in terms of their defining landscape characteristics. Boundary determinant factors are then provided for each boundary of the character unit, and finally, "Critical Landscape Factors" are identified that have a bearing on the relative sensitivities or robustness to development within the unit.

2. Determination of **Landscape Sensitivities**, through the classification of physical features such as landuse, topography and visual units based in CORINE.

3. Designation of 4 **Principle Policy Areas** is then achieved by grouping the "Landscape Character Units" that have similarity of landscape types, which for Mayo have been identified as;

¹ The Landscape Institute, Institute of Environmental Assessment, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 1995.

- § Montaine Coastal
- § Coastal
- § Upland moors/heath/ or bogland
- § Drumlin/Pasture/Woodland

4. **Policy Responses** are then provided for each "Principle Policy Area", which recognises the inherent sensitivities and robustness of each area to development. In addition to landscape based policies a relative ranking of the 8 most common development types with landscape implications is provided. This is based on a weighting system that accounts for the flexibility of the various elements of each development type for each type of development and its inherent ability to influence the character of an area. The resultant tool is a **Development Impact - Landscape Sensitivity Matrix**, that provides a general indication of the likelihood of success of planning applications for each development type in each policy area.

The precise methodology for each phase is detailed in appendices A and B.

2.- Character Unit Descriptions, Boundary Determinants & Critical Landscape Factors

2.1.- Introduction

Mayo presents a wide range of landscapes. These range from complex agricultural patterns in the lowlands with small roads and houses; to a deeply indented and islanded Atlantic coastline; to the great and often empty uplands and moorlands of the west and north of the County. Mayo has many landscapes. One of the first tasks of any analysis is to subdivide the County into its constituent parts. These are called 'Character Units'. Each of them contains an area of land, which has similar character-giving elements such as slope, vegetation and landuse. The appearance of the landscape is relatively uniform within each Character Unit. Once identified and described these units are very useful for the consistent and clear application of policy because the effects of development will be relatively consistent within each Character Unit.

2.2 - Area A: Achill, Clare, Inishturk and related Coastal Complex

2.2.1.- Description

This area encompasses the Achill complex of islands, including Clare Island and Inishturk. This area is distinct from the remainder of Mayo's coast to the north due to the steep topography and relatively uniform upland moor appearance. The overriding characteristic of this area remains the almost constantly visible coastline with Slievemore on Achill Island, at 671m in height, as a dominating feature. Dramatic vistas of steep mountain sides and sea cliffs falling to the sea are common.

2.2.2.- Land Uses

Achill island is significantly dominated by peat lands, which are mainly unused. However, the presence of some agricultural and pasture lands reveal that agriculture is still an important land use in the locality. Achill island presents natural landscapes with scenic values, currently under strong development pressure due to tourism. Natural grasslands, disclosing an almost unspoiled landscape dominate the Clare and Inishturk islands.

2.2.3.- Boundary Determinants

This unit has probably the most visually obvious boundary of all of the character units being the coastline for the most part. The division between this coastal unit and the north-western coastal unit is topographic and occurs at the pinch point between the mountains of unit "E" and the southern lowest coastal watershed of unit "B".



Fig.1 Achill, Clare, Inishturk & Coastal Complex (Area A)

2.2.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Elevated Coastal Vistas

Being a complex arrangement of islands and peninsulas, there are significant lengths of coastline visible over this comparatively small area. Uninterrupted vistas across the water of bays and channels to opposing shorelines are abundant from areas of the public realm.

The R319 traverses Achill Island from east to west linking its main settlements, and various local level roads also exist. Although the roads utilise the lower lying terrain around the shore of the islands where possible, they still have many elevated positions above the coastline, due to the steep topography of the area. This provides clear and often striking vistas of considerable lengths of the coastline.

The main concern for natural linear features such as coastlines and ridge lines is to avoid penetration by development that will interrupt and reduce the integrity of such elements.



Fig. 2 Smooth Terrain and Elevated Coastal Vistas in Achill & Islands Complex

€ **Steep Slopes**

Steeply sloping land provides both a potentially increased elevation and an immediate back drop for development, intensifying its visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridge lines when viewed from lower areas of the public realm such as the roads in this area. Slope often provides an area with its character, and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character.

€ **Prominent Ridge Lines**

These occur as either primary ridge lines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridge lines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). In this island environment, nearly all ridge lines are primary when viewed from the public domain.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridge lines. Due to the dominating influence of ridge lines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ **Smooth Terrain**

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

€ **Low Vegetation**

Low vegetation as represented in this unit by moorland and bog type grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. Once again this inability to absorb development identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig. 3 Steep Slopes, Prominent Ridge Lines and Low Vegetation in Achill & Coastal Complex

2.3.- Area B: North West Coastal Moorland

2.3.1.- Description

This area occupies the north-western extremity of the County, north of Achill Island and includes the Bellmullet peninsula. It can be generally described as a complex of low lying islands and peninsulas with varying topographical and land cover characteristics but unified by its proximity to the coast.

The southern and eastern extents of this unit have a uniform bog/moorland appearance, which gradually changes to more diversified land cover and topography toward the north-west. The terrain is generally smooth and bog/moor type grasses are the dominant vegetation in this exposed area. However, the Bellmullet peninsula at the very north-west of the County has significant areas of pasture with dunes along the western coast.

2.3.2.- Land Uses

The main agricultural activity in this area is livestock production. Extensive areas of pasture and peat lands occur in the region. To the north-west and south of Bellmullet peninsula there are significant areas of moors and heathlands; to the west, dunes and sand beaches occupy the coastland which, although under tourism development pressure, remain relatively unspoiled. There are also pockets of lands principally occupied by agriculture but with significant areas of natural vegetation, that are currently being utilised for agricultural crop production.

2.3.3.- Boundary Determinants

The principal boundary for this character area other than the coast is defined by the upper limits of those coastal water catchments that drain directly into the sea, as these relate closely to visual catchments. Due to the low lying nature of the land and therefore limited visual enclosure of the defining water catchments, a dotted line has been used to indicate a broad transitional boundary.

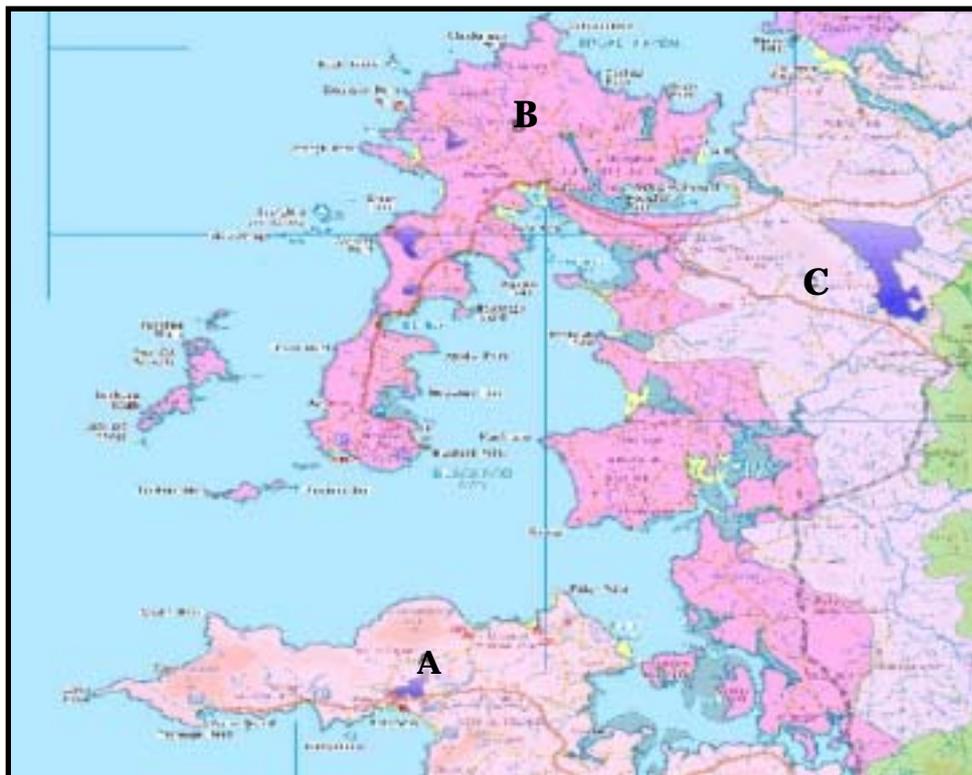


Fig.4 North West Coastal Moorland (Area B)

2.3.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Coastal Vistas

Being a complex arrangement of islands and peninsulas, there is a disproportionate length of coastline visible over this comparatively small area. Uninterrupted vistas across the water of bays and channels to opposing shorelines are abundant from areas of the public realm.

The main concern for natural linear features such as coast lines and ridge lines is to avoid penetration by development that will interrupt and reduce the integrity of such elements.

€ Smooth Terrain

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

€ Low Vegetation

Low vegetation as represented in this unit by moorland and bog type grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. It is this inability to absorb development that identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.

€ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). In this low lying and open environment, even low ridgelines are primary due to their isolation and setting.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.



Fig.5 Low Terrain, Smooth Vegetation and Coastal Vistas in North West Coastal Moorland

2.4.- Area C: North-West Coastal Bog

2.4.1.- Description

This area is the low-lying bog strip located between the western coastline and the Beg Range to the east. It has a homogenous, exposed, moorland appearance throughout. The topography is smoothly contoured with bog/moor type grasses being the predominant vegetation. Included in this area are the seaward foothills of the Beg Range.

2.4.2.- Land Uses

Although peat bogs cover most of the area to the north-west of the County, the land is mainly used for pasture, i.e. livestock production. Agriculture (e.g. complex cultivation patterns) and coniferous forestry are also present as land uses in the area. Natural grasslands and transitional woodland scrub patches occur throughout the major land cover types.

2.4.3.- Boundary Determinants

The western Boundary is a broad transitional one shared with area 'B' defined by the upper limits of direct coastal watersheds. The northern boundary is also derived from upper limits of direct coastal watersheds but due to steeper topography the boundary is more definite.

The eastern boundary is defined predominantly by slope but incorporates visual limits where gently sloping valleys disappear further into the Beg Range. This boundary follows a 10% gradient with land below this gradient considered to be part of the character area.

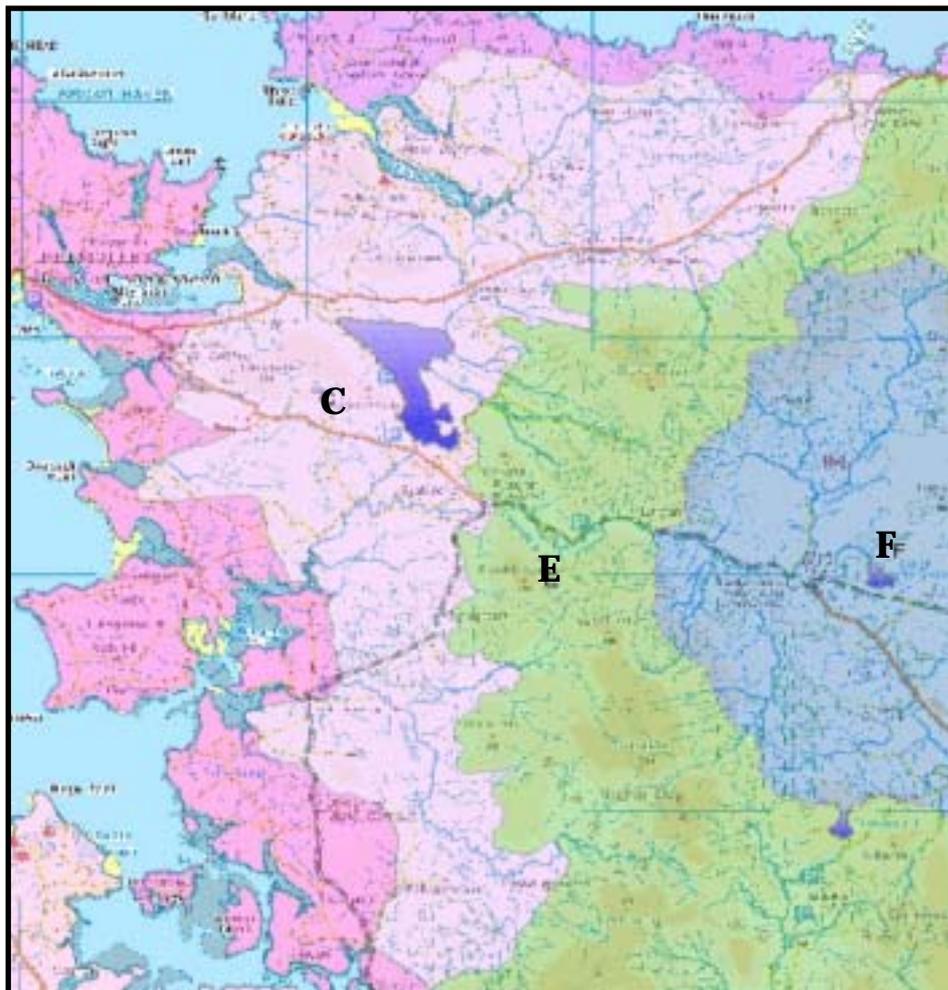


Fig.6 North-West Coastal Bog (Area C)

2.4.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

∄ Smooth Terrain

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

∄ Low Vegetation

Low vegetation as represented in this unit by moorland and bog type grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. This inability to absorb development identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig.7 Smooth Terrain and Low Vegetation in the North-West Coastal Bog

2.5.- Area D: North Coast Plateaux

2.5.1.- Description

This is a thin strip of often steeply sloping terrain, which has a combination of pasture and moorland on its planar seaward slopes above sea cliffs and abrupt gullies. This unit has an abrupt coastline in comparison to the other coastal units. The unit and coastline runs east-west and provides vistas of the sea to the north.

2.5.2.- Land Uses

Peat bogs and small patches of natural grassland dominate this area. The agricultural potential of the area is revealed by occasional pasturelands but with significant areas of natural vegetation.

2.5.3- Boundary Determinants

The inland boundary of this area is derived from the upper limits of direct coastal watersheds, which in this type of terrain, reflect visual fields closely.

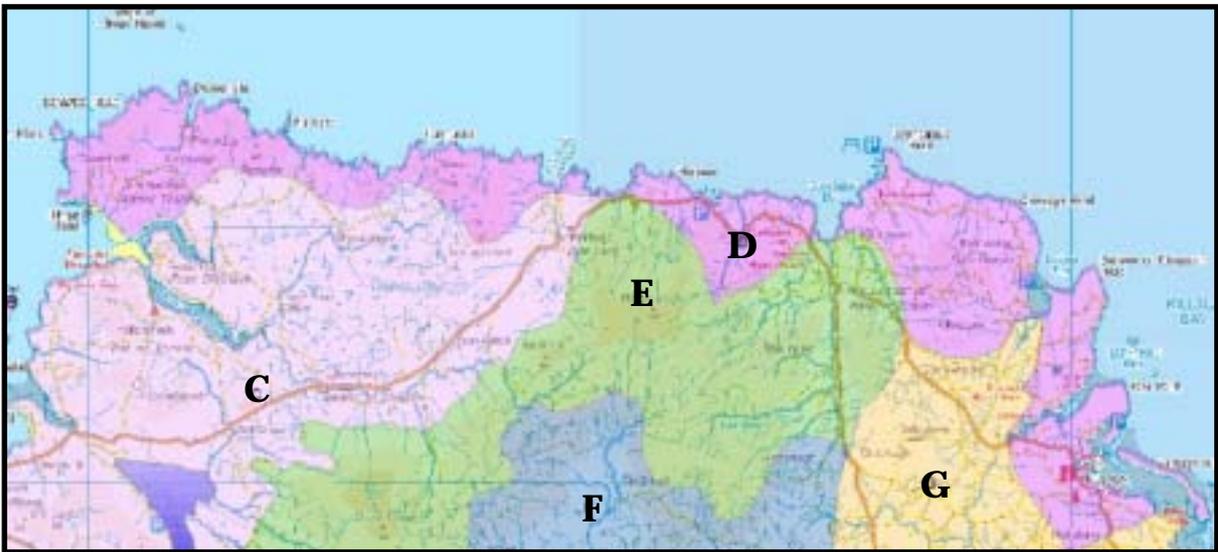


Fig.8 North Coast Plateaux (Area D)

2.5.4.- Critical Landscape factors

∄ Elevated Coastal Vistas

The R314 skirts the mild, upper seaward slopes in an east-west direction. Due to the uncomplicated straight arrangement of this coast, and the elevated road level, stunning vistas of a considerable distance along the coastline are available.

The main concern for natural linear features such as coastlines and ridgelines is to avoid penetration by development that will interrupt and reduce the integrity of such elements.

∄ Smooth Terrain

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

€ **Low Vegetation**

Low vegetation as represented in this unit by moorland and bog type grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. This inability to absorb development identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig. 9 Smooth Terrain, Low Vegetation and Elevated Coastal Vistas in the North Coast Plateaux

2.6.- Area E: North Mayo Mountain Moorland

2.6.1.- Description

This area is the mountainous spine of northern Mayo oriented in a crescent from the northern coast before diverging west toward Achill, and east toward Lough Conn, ending at this point with Nephin Beg. This mountain range is a focal point for northern Mayo and shares boundaries with 7 other landscape character units, which indicates its physical extent and landscape dividing role. It can be characterised as a barren montaine, moorland with steep flowing slopes.

The land cover primarily comprises bog/moor type grasses with significant areas of coniferous and mixed, commercial forests with exposed rock at the highest points. This area contains a high proportion of the Counties primary and secondary ridgelines (see Map 5), which dominate surrounding vistas for considerable distances in all directions.

2.6.2.- Land Uses

The main agricultural activity in the area is livestock production. Although peat bogs cover most of the area, agricultural and pasture lands, together with conifer and broad-leafed forests, present significant land uses in the region.

2.6.3.- Boundary Determinants

The western boundary shared with landscape area 'C' is derived primarily from slope with visual limits used to smooth the transition where flatter valley floors disappear further into the ranges. Land with a gradient of 10% or greater falls inside this character area. This boundary is confirmed by soils data, which indicates a change in soil type, which closely corresponds to this boundary.

The eastern boundary, which wraps around to the north and south, is also derived from slope change and visual fields, with geological and soils data confirming this as a fairly precise transition in landscape terms.

The northern boundary shared with area 'D' is the upper limits of direct coastal watersheds.

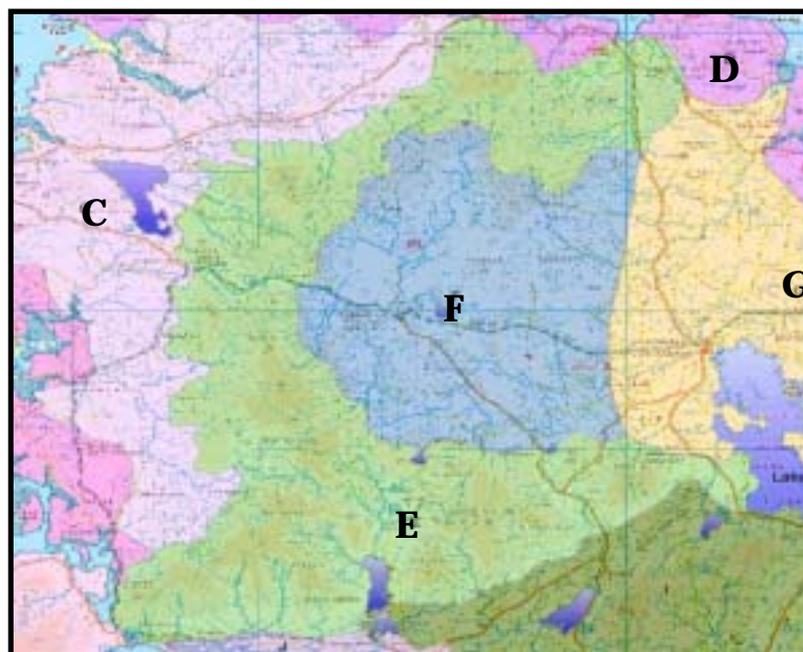


Fig.10 North Mountain Moorland (Area E)

The southern boundary is derived from a combination of gradient change and at the western end, a change in land cover and landscape type from montaine to coastal drumlin. This physiographic change is further confirmed by geological and soils data and the boundary can therefore be considered as a reasonably precise transition.

2.6.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

∉ Steep Slopes

Steeply Sloping land provides both a potentially increased elevation and an immediate back drop for development, intensifying its visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridge lines when viewed from lower areas of the public realm such as the roads in this area. Slope often provides an area with its character, and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character.

∉ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). In this mountainous environment, there is an abundant mix of primary and secondary ridgelines visible from vast areas of the County.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

∉ Smooth Terrain

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

∉ Low Vegetation

Predominantly low vegetation as represented in this unit by Moorland grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. This inability to absorb development identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig.11 Prominent Ridge Lines, Smooth Terrain and Low Vegetation in North Mountain Moorland

2.7.- Area F: North Mayo Inland Bog Basin

2.7.1.- Description

This is a large bog area of some 300 square kilometres surrounded to the north, west and south by mountains giving it the appearance of a lowland basin. It is, however, at an altitude of about 100m a.s.l.

It is an exposed plain with little settled agriculture or other human activity, covered predominantly by bog grass types. It does however, include intermittent areas of production forestry, and north of the N59 much of the bog has been cut away to fuel the visually prominent Bellacorrick power station. Wind farms also occupy the northern vista.

2.7.2.- Land Uses

The area is mainly covered by peat bog. However, agricultural lands with significant areas of natural vegetation, conifer forests and pasturelands represent the land uses in the region. Some natural grassland areas remain unaltered.

2.7.3.- Boundary Determinants

This character area is perhaps the simplest of all of the areas to define. To the north, west and south the boundary is determined by geology, soils, and slope, while the boundary to the east is clearly demarcated by land cover, geology, soil type, and a change to drumlin topography.

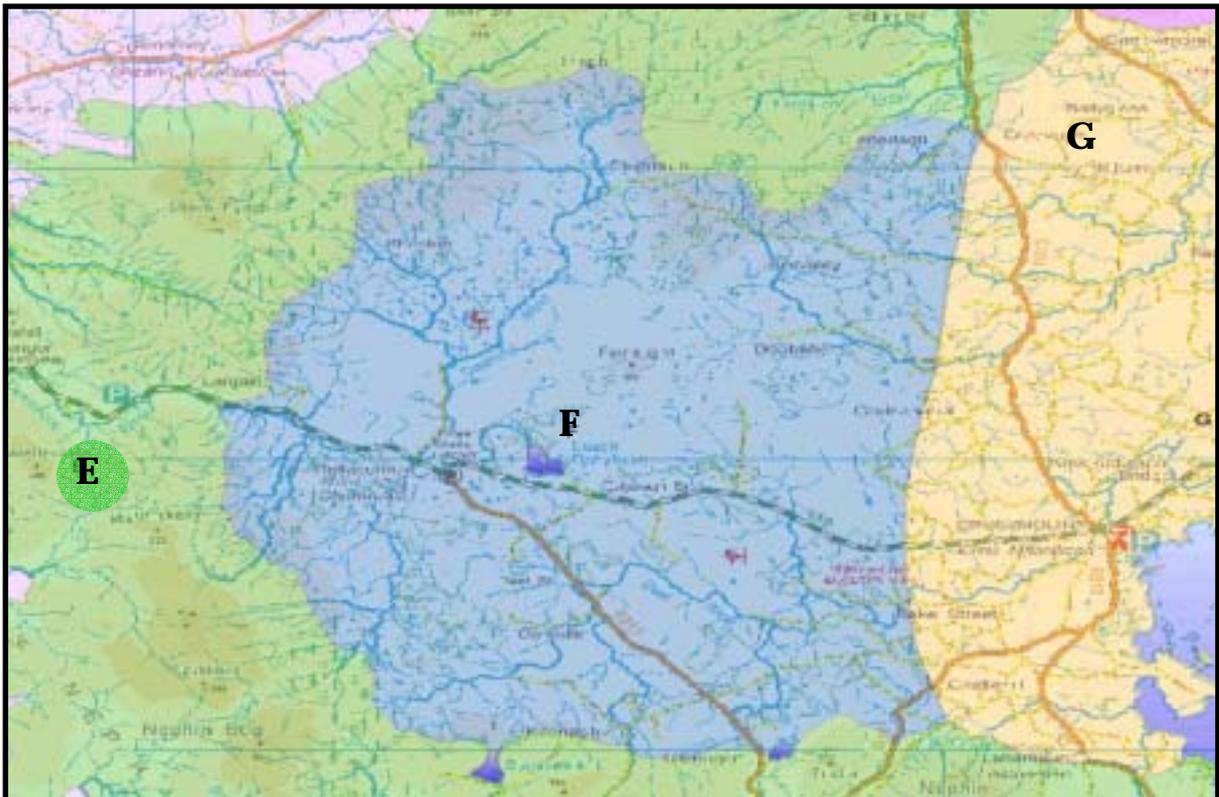


Fig.12 North Inland Bog Basin (Area F)

2.7.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Smooth Terrain

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

€ Low Vegetation

Predominantly low vegetation as represented in this unit by Moorland grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. It is this inability to absorb development that identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig.13 Smooth Terrain and Low Vegetation in North Inland Bog Basin

2.8.- Area G: North Mayo Drumlins

2.8.1.- Description

This area of drumlin topography contains mild low lying lakeland drumlins at the southern end merging into similar coastal topography in the north east surrounding Killala Bay. More severe, steeper drumlins occur around the foothills of the mountains to the north-west and the Ox Mountains to the east. The flood plain of the River Moy is also incorporated within this area.

The land cover is dominated by pasture with sporadic areas of moorland and patches of exposed rock in the rugged drumlins to the east. Hedgerows and small patches of scrub and woodland create a patchwork of farmer landscapes in this area.

2.8.2.- Land Uses

The main agricultural activity in this area is livestock production. The region is dominated by extensive areas of pasturelands and some pockets of peat bog. This region includes the significant urban settlement of Ballina.

2.8.3.- Boundary Determinants

The boundary to the west is defined by a combination of land cover, geology, soil type, and a change to flat bogland topography. To the north west, south west and east, the change in slope and topography are the predominant factors, while to the north the inland limits of directly draining coastal water sheds have been used.



Figure 14. North Mayo Drumlins (Area G)

2.8.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Undulating topography

Mildly undulating topography as represented in this character unit by glacial drumlins has the ability to both shelter and absorb the visual impact of development. Firstly, the physical shielding of a built form within the lee of a hill where it does not break the skyline renders it visually unobtrusive and reflective of landscape scale. Secondly, the dynamic and complex nature of undulating country provides foreground, middle, and distant ground to a vista that helps to provide a realistic scale and visual containment not available in open country.

€ Shelter Vegetation

In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms.

€ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). In this area both primary and significant secondary ridgelines are located to the east as part of the Ox Mountains.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines, it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridge lines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ Localised Lake Vistas

This character unit envelops a large part of Lough Conn, around the shores of which, several major roads pass. Due to the low-lying nature of lakeland environments such as this, low prospect vistas are available from the roads of the Lough and its shores.

The main concern for natural linear features such as lake-shores, coast lines, and ridge lines is to avoid penetration by development that will interrupt and reduce the integrity of such elements. Given the low viewing points around the Loughs, visual intrusion by development is likely to be enhanced.



Fig.15 Undulating Topography, Shelter Vegetation and Localised Lake Vistas in North Mayo Drumlins

2.9.- Area H: East Mayo Uplands

2.9.1.- Description

This area is primarily made up of rugged hill country, which provides for low quality pastoral land uses. It progresses from low-lying lakeland drumlins around the shores of Lough Conn and Lough Cullin, to rugged hill country where it forms the foothills at the south western end of the Ox Mountains.

2.9.2.- Land Uses

The region is mostly occupied by peat bogs, however, agricultural lands with significant areas of natural vegetation and pasture lands are also present in the landscape. Other major land uses include small-scale conifer plantations and urban settlements (i.e. Foxford).

2.9.3.- Boundary Determinants

The north-western boundary is formed by a combination of slope change and the transition from the low glacial drumlins of area 'G' to the rugged foothills of the Ox Mountains. This boundary is also reinforced by a soil type transition. The south-western boundary is influenced by topography, which indicates a division between the rugged Ox Mountain and smoother north-western Mayo Mountains associated landscape. A geological transition is also apparent at this point, where to the west of this boundary a complicated series of substrata occurs. The more definite south-eastern boundary is dictated by a combination of geology, soil, slope change and topography.

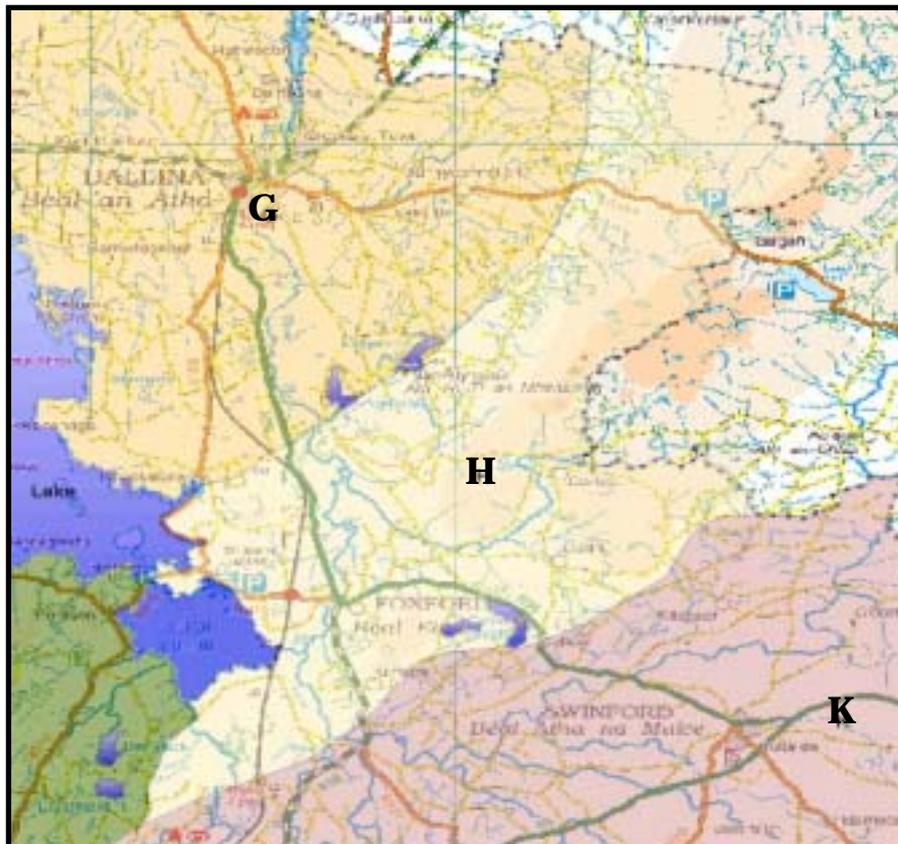


Fig.16 East Mayo Uplands (Area H)

2.9.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Steep Slopes

Steeply Sloping land provides both a potentially increased elevation and an immediate backdrop for development, intensifying its visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridgelines, when viewed from lower areas of the public realm such as the roads in this area. Slope often provides an area with its character, and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character.

€ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridge lines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). In this area both primary and significant secondary ridgelines are located to the east as part of the Ox Mountains and the west with Nephin Beg and Croaghmoyle.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ Localised Lake Vistas

This character unit envelopes parts of both Lough Conn and Lough Cullin, around the shores of which, several major roads pass. Due to the low-lying nature of lakeland environments such as this, low prospect vistas are available from the roads of the Lough and its shores.

The main concern for natural linear features such as lakeshores, coastlines, and ridgelines is to avoid penetration by development that will interrupt and reduce the integrity of such elements. Given the low viewing points around the Loughs, visual intrusion by development is likely to be enhanced.



Fig.17 Steep Slopes and Prominent Ridge Lines in East Mayo Uplands

2.10.- Area I: Central Mayo Mountain Moorland

2.10.1.- Description

This area relates closely to parts of the mountainous area 'D' adjacent to the north in terms of its smooth terrain and moorland appearance, but has been identified separately due to its visual detachment. It is also clearly divided in a physical sense by Glen Nephin.

This upland area which includes the valley of Glen Nephin is smooth and steeply sloped on its northern side as it climbs out of the valley, but becomes increasingly rugged and undulating on the more gradual decent toward Castlebar and Clew Bay, to the south. The predominant land cover is moorland/bog type grasses with patches of woodland scrub and production forestry.

2.10.2.- Land Uses

Peat bogs cover large areas of this region, with significant pockets of transitional woodland scrub. The main land uses in the area include conifer, broad-leafed and mixed forest plantations with scattered small-scale agriculture

2.10.3.- Boundary Determinants

The boundary shared with areas 'E' and 'G' to the north is determined by slope change, and reinforced by geological and soil boundaries. The boundary to the east is a function of geological and topographical transitions, and the boundary to the south through a combination of land cover, slope, topography, geology and soils data.

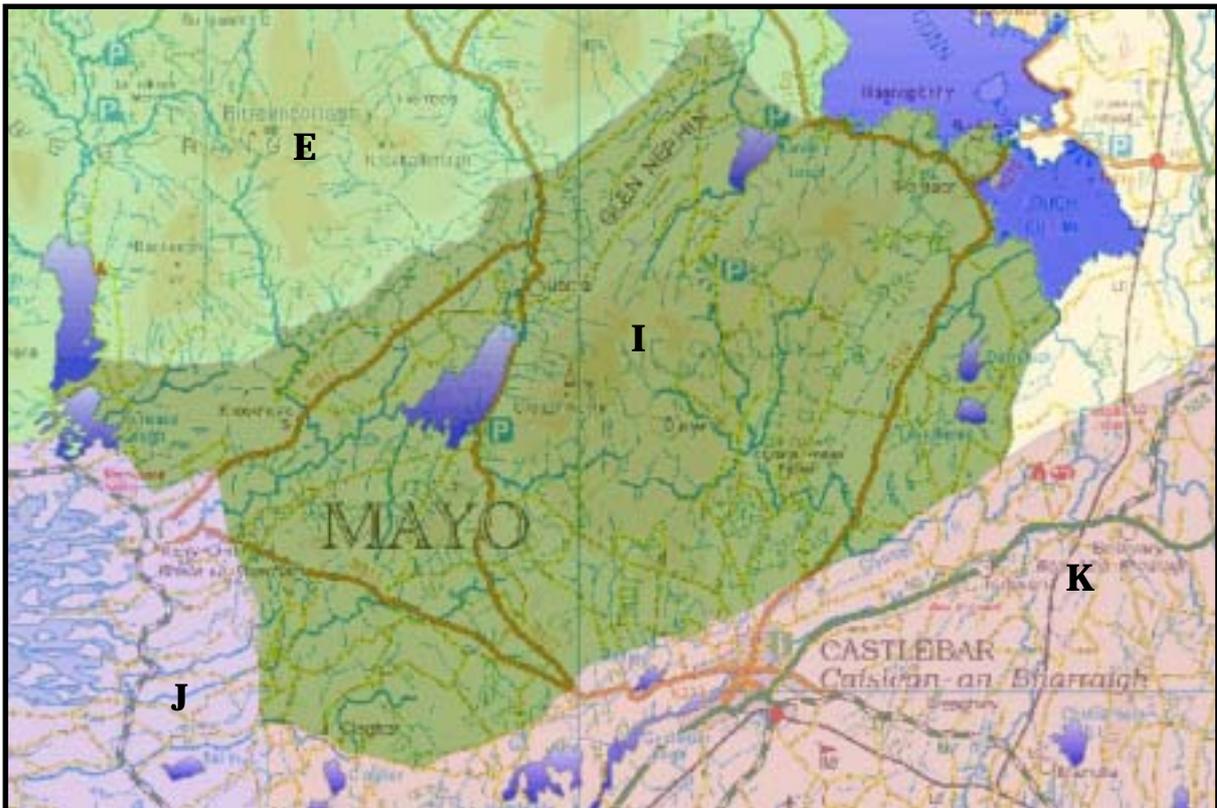


Fig.18 Central Mayo Mountain Moorland (Area I)

2.10.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

∉ Steep Slopes

Steeply Sloping land provides both a potentially increased elevation and an immediate backdrop for development, intensifying its visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridge lines when viewed from lower areas of the public realm such as the roads in this area. Slope often provides an area with its character, and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character.

∉ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridge lines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). This area is defined by two of the most prominent primary ridges in the County. These are Nephin Beg, immediately to the north, and Croaghmoyle, which forms the centrepiece of this unit.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridge lines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

∉ Smooth Terrain

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

∉ Low Vegetation

Low vegetation as found over the majority this unit represented by moorland grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. This inability to absorb development identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig.19 Steep Slopes, Prominent Ridge Lines and Smooth Terrain in Central Mayo Mountain Moorland

2.11.- Area J: Clew Bay Glacial Drumlins

2.11.1.- Description

This coastal area is made up of sharply undulating glacially formed drumlins. River catchment and topographical data indicates that this area tilts into Clew bay creating a labyrinth of islands from those drumlins that have been partially submerged. The drumlin set wraps around the bay to the north and south in thin coastal strips. The unit is sandwiched between the dominating bulk of Croagh Patrick to the south and the Beg Range to the north, but relatively open vistas are available out to sea and inland toward Castlebar. Clew Bay can be described as an area of high scenic value.

The predominant land cover of the coastal drumlins is low quality pasture and transitional woodland scrub interlaced with small areas of higher quality pasture.

2.11.2.- Land Uses

The main land use in this coastal area is agriculture. There are some areas of pasture lands for livestock rearing, but also significant areas of transitional woodland scrub that remain unused. This area comprises a significant zone of continuous urban fabric or urban settlement (i.e. Westport), and the existing large golf course to the north-west of Westport reveals that sport and leisure, together with tourism, also comprise significant land uses in the region.

2.11.3.- Boundary Determinants

The distinctive boundary on the northern side of Clew Bay is defined by a combination of geology, soils, coastal water sheds, slope, topography, and land cover. The southern boundary is determined similarly excluding the soil element.

The inland boundary through the eastern quarters is not so visually obvious on the ground, however, macro level topography shows a distinct change in land pattern between the Clew Bay drumlins and the drumlins and hill country to east. This transition line is reinforced further by geology, river catchment, and land cover data.

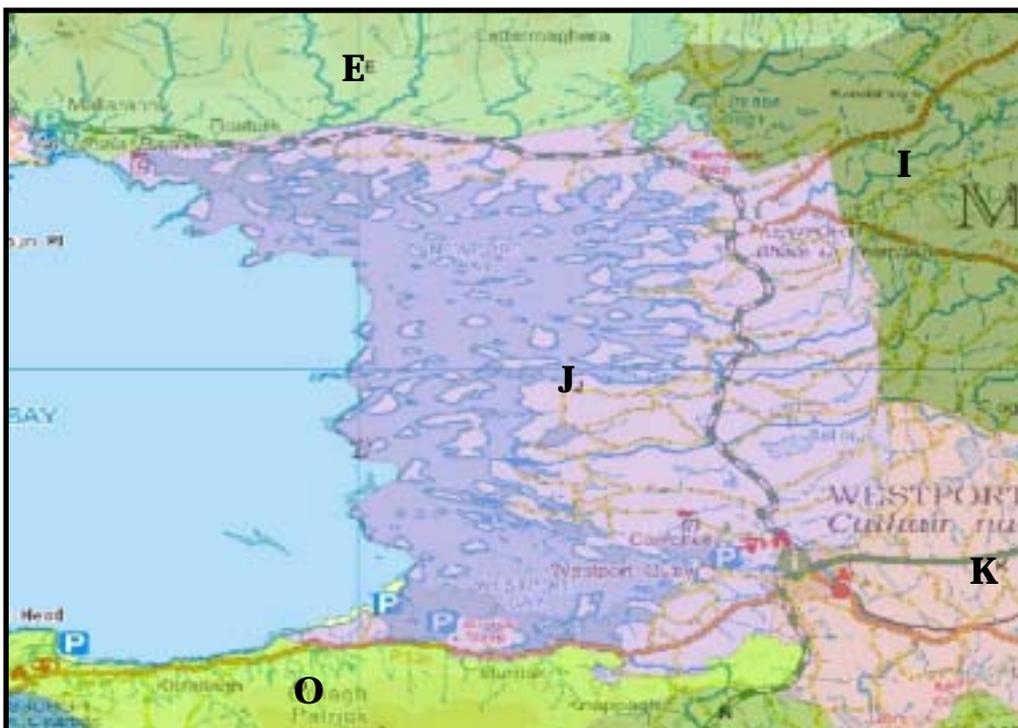


Fig.20 Clew Bay Glacial Drumlins (Area J)

2.11.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Distinct Coastal Vistas

Being a complex arrangement of shorelines and drumlin islands there is a disproportionate length of coastline visible over this comparatively small area. Uninterrupted vistas across the water of bays and channels to opposing shorelines are abundant from areas of the public realm.

The N59 and R335 combine to circumnavigate Clew Bay and provide elevated vistas over its shores and sunken drumlins, which provide a distinct coastal character.

Given the complex and undulating nature of this coastal environment, appropriately positioned development is likely to be assimilated more easily than for open coastal settings, characteristic of the Counties other coastal character units.

€ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). In this environment, there are major primary ridgelines to the north and south when viewed from the public domain.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ Undulating topography

Undulating topography as represented in this character unit by glacial drumlins has the ability to both shelter and absorb the visual impact of development. Firstly, the physical shielding of a built form within the lee of hill where it does not break the skyline renders it visually unobtrusive and reflective of landscape scale. Secondly, the dynamic and complex nature of undulating country provides fore, middle, and distant ground to a vista that helps to provide a realistic scale and visual containment not available in open country.

€ Shelter Vegetation

In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms.



**Fig.21 Undulating Topography, Distinct Coastal Vistas and Shelter Vegetation
in the Clew Bay Glacial Drumlins**

2.12.- Area K: East-Central Drumlin Spine

2.12.1.- Description

This area is made up of glacial drumlins that are uniform at its western end near its transition with the distinct drumlins of Clew Bay. In the east, these become less uniform and severe, and the terrain merges into several sets of geologically distinct and isolated hills as the unit encapsulates the towns of Castlebar, Swinford, and Charlestown.

The land cover is a mixture of bog/moorland, poor quality pasture and transitional woodland scrub with better quality pasture to the east and south.

2.12.2.- Land Uses

This area is characterised by a mixed land use pattern. Peat bogs and agricultural lands with significant areas of natural vegetation and transitional woodland scrub. There are also significant areas where pasturelands represent a major land use. Charlestown, Castlebar and Swinford towns display the significance of urban settlement areas in this region of the County.

2.12.3.- Boundary Determinants

The north-western boundary shared with areas 'J' and 'I' is a function of slope topography, and land cover, further reinforced by geology and soils data. The western boundaries to areas 'M' and 'N' are also derived from land cover, slope and topographical change with reinforcement provided by soil type. The less visually obvious boundary to the south is the boundary between the large Moy and Corrib water catchments as this has a bearing on visual limits even in low lying terrain. This boundary also coincides with a gradual land cover change from poor quality pasture, scrub and bog, to high quality pasture.

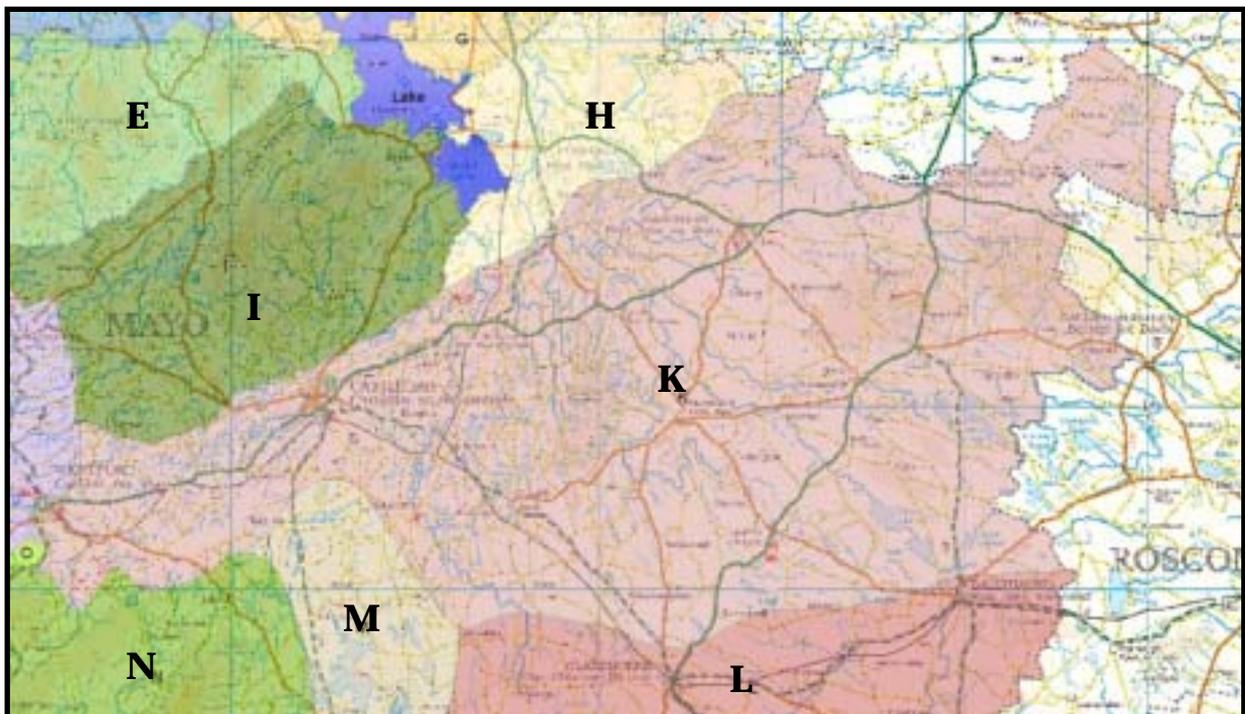


Fig.22 East-Central Drumlin Spine (Area K)

2.12.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Undulating topography

Mildly undulating topography as represented in this character unit by drumlins and low hills, has the ability to both shelter and absorb the visual impact of development. Firstly, the physical shielding of a built form within the lee of hill where it does not break the skyline renders it visually unobtrusive and reflective of landscape scale. Secondly, the dynamic and complex nature of undulating country provides fore, middle, and distant ground to a vista that helps to provide a realistic scale and visual containment not available in open country.

€ Shelter Vegetation

In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms.

€ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). There are major primary ridgelines beyond the north-west boundary of this character unit, and it also contains some relatively low and isolated examples of primary and secondary ridge lines through its centre.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ Localised Lake Vistas

This character unit envelops a large part of Lough Conn, around the shores of which, several major roads pass. Due to the low-lying nature of lakeland environments such as this, low prospect vistas are available from the roads of the Lough and its shores.

The main concern for natural linear features such as lakeshores, coastlines, and ridgelines is to avoid penetration by development that will interrupt and reduce the integrity of such elements. Given the low viewing points around the loughs, visual intrusion by development is likely to be enhanced.



Fig. 23 Undulating Topography and Shelter Vegetation in the East-Central Drumlin Spine

2.13.- Area L: South-East Mayo Plains

2.13.1.- Description

This area is a mosaic of high quality pasture with distinct paddocks divided by rock walls and well-maintained hedgerows. There are occasional pockets of transitional pasture and woodland scrub throughout the gently rolling drumlins.

2.13.2.- Land Uses

The main land use of the region is livestock rearing, conspicuous on the landscape by the dominance of pasturelands. Agricultural lands, complex cultivation patterns and conifer forests are also representative of the land uses in the area. Intermittent areas of urban fabric reveal the significance of urban settlements (i.e. Ballyhaunis, Claremorris and Ballinrobe) in the area.

2.13.3.- Boundary Determinants

The transitional boundary to the north is the division between the large Moy and Corrib water catchments as this has a bearing on visual limits even in low lying terrain. The distinctive set of linear south-east to north-west running lakes disappear to the north of this boundary giving an indication of the change in orientation and scope of the topography. The northern boundary also coincides with a gradual land cover change from poor quality pasture, scrub and bog, to higher quality pasture. The boundary to the west shared with area 'L' is primarily a function of a change in topography to lower lying, distinctly uniform, glacial drumlins. This is also supported by a land cover transition from predominantly pasture to a mixture of moor, forest, and transitional pasture.

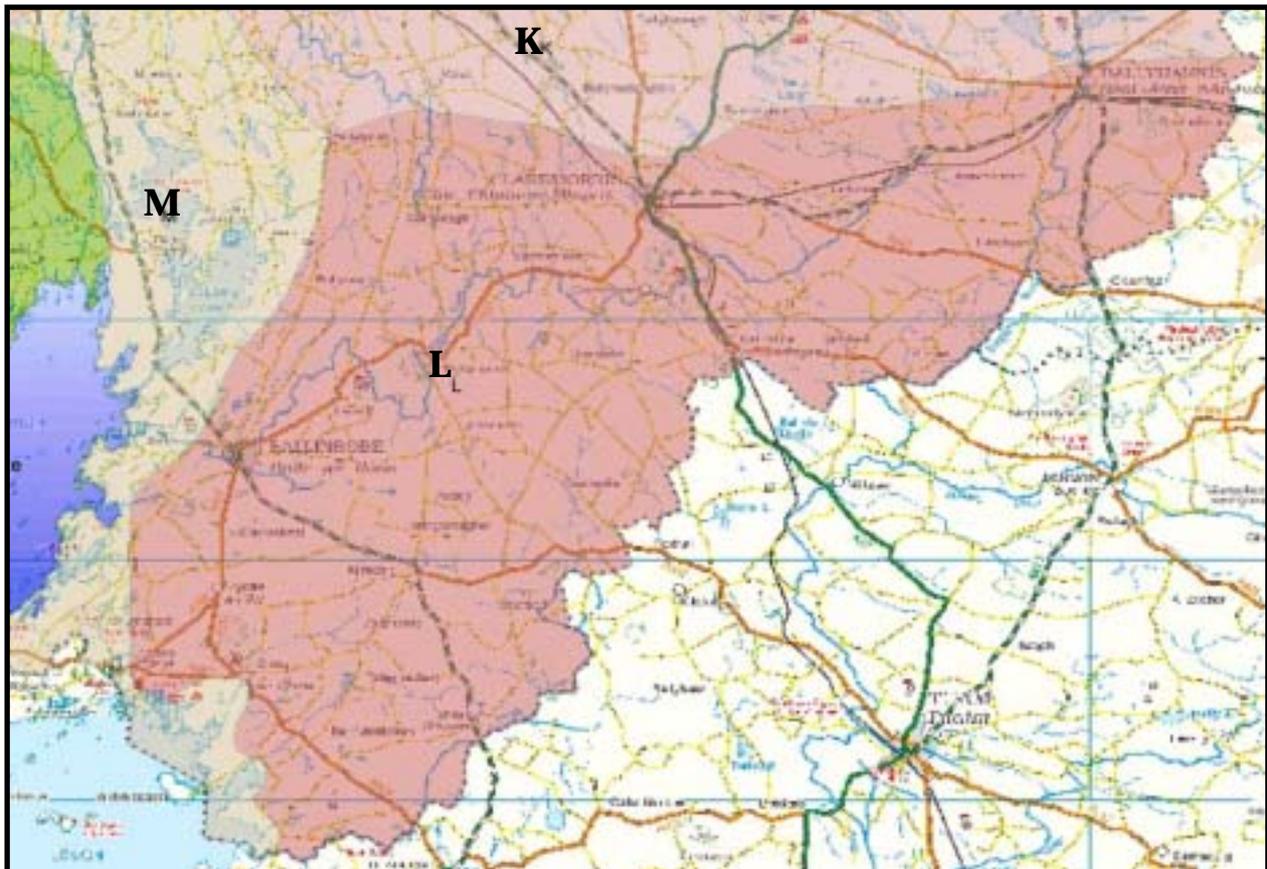


Fig.24 South-East Mayo Plains (Area L)

2.13.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Undulating topography

Mildly undulating topography as represented in this character unit by low drumlins, has the ability to both shelter and absorb the visual impact of development. Firstly, the physical shielding of a built form within the lee of hill where it does not break the skyline renders it visually unobtrusive and reflective of landscape scale. Secondly, the dynamic and complex nature of undulating country provides fore, middle, and distant ground to a vista that helps to provide a realistic scale and visual containment not available in open country.

€ Shelter Vegetation

In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms.



Fig. 25 Shelter Vegetation and Undulating Topography in the South-East Mayo Plains

2.14.- Area M: Lakeland Drumlins

2.14.1.- Description

This is an area of low-lying drumlins and wetland associated with Lough's Mask, Carra, and Corrib. There is a mixture of wetland land cover around the lakeshores and patches of forestry and moorland to the north and east. A dramatic backdrop of the Partry Mountains falling steeply to the shores of Lough mask occurs to the west. The eastern parts of this unit appears similar to the pastoral landscape of the unit to the east, however, the overriding feature is the proximately and influence of the Loughs.

2.14.2.- Land Uses

Pasturelands are dominant on the landscape with livestock rearing as the main land use in the area. However, significant areas of conifer forests and some mixed forests can also be found. On the east shores of Lough Mask, moors and heathlands reveal large areas of unused land.

2.14.3.- Boundary Determinants

The visually obvious western boundary shared with unit 'N' is defined by the abrupt slope change and is confirmed by soil type and land cover change. The boundary to the east is not as visually conspicuous, being derived from a subtle change in the orientation and pattern of the topography as well as the availability of lakeland vistas. There is also a gradual change from heath to predominantly pastoral land cover reflected by this boundary. Fluvial processes appear to have created a less uniform and distinctive pattern from the drumlins surrounding the lake, and the northern boundary is the topographical transition into the regimental glacial drumlins of the western end of unit 'K'. This boundary also follows the Moy and Corrib water catchments boundary.



Fig.26 Lakeland Drumlins (Area M)

2.14.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

≠ **Undulating topography**

Mildly undulating topography as represented in this character unit by low drumlins, has the ability to both shelter and absorb the visual impact of development. Firstly, the physical shielding of a built form within the lee of a hill where it does not break the skyline renders it visually unobtrusive and reflective of landscape scale. Secondly, the dynamic and complex nature of undulating country provides foreground, middle, and distant ground to a vista that helps to provide a realistic scale and visual containment not available in open country.

≠ **Shelter Vegetation**

In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms.

≠ **Prominent Ridge Lines**

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). There are major primary ridgelines looming over the western boundary of this character unit, associated with the Partry Mountains.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

≠ **Localised Lake Vistas**

This character unit envelopes large parts of Loughs Cara, Mask and Corrib, around the shores of which, several significant roads pass. Due to the low-lying nature of lakeland environments such as this, low prospect vistas are present from the roads of the Loughs and their shores.

The main concern for natural linear features such as lakeshores, coastlines, and ridgelines is to avoid penetration by development that will interrupt and reduce the integrity of such elements. Given the low viewing points around the loughs, visual intrusion by development is likely to be enhanced.



Fig. 27 Undulating topography and Localised Lake Vistas in the Lakeland Drumlins

2.15.- Area N: South West Mountain Moorlands

2.15.1.- Description

This area is an exposed montane moorland with smooth steep slopes, broad valleys, and ridge top plateaux's. The land cover is almost entirely upland moor type grasses but distinct plots of production forestry and cleared forestry sites exist throughout. Upland lakes occur both on the valley floor and as tarns at higher altitudes.

2.15.2.- Land Uses

The area is largely covered by peat bog. This, together with the large area of natural grassland that exists on the Sheeffry Hills, indicate large areas where natural processes and features predominate. There are, however, some forest plantations revealing that forestry is a major land use in the area. Agricultural lands also occur within this area with significant areas of natural vegetation.

2.15.3.- Boundary Determinants

The visually distinct boundary to the east is determined through a combination of slope and land cover change, occurring directly above the shores of Lough Mask and is supported by soils data. The boundary to the north is the extent of a visual field, which occurs along the primary and secondary ridgelines associated with Croagh Patrick. Similarly, the western boundary is the extent of the visual field of unit 'P' which is a visually enclosed basin, and therefore follows the ridgelines of those mountains enclosing unit 'P'.

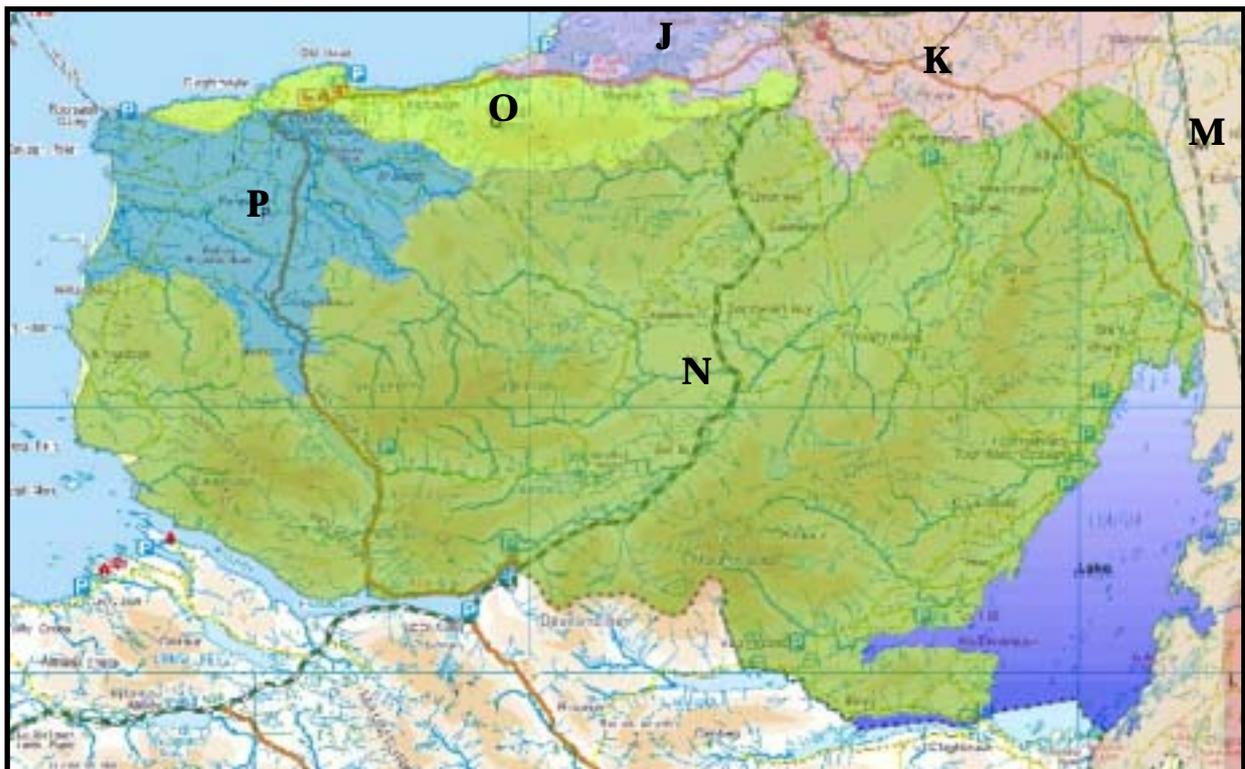


Fig.28 South-West Mountain Moorlands (Area N)

2.15.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ Steep Slopes

Steeply Sloping land provides both a potentially increased elevation and an immediate backdrop for development, intensifying its visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridgelines when viewed from lower areas of the public realm such as the roads in this area. Slope often provides an area with its character, and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character.

€ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). In this steep mountainous environment, nearly all ridgelines are primary when viewed from the public domain.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ Smooth Terrain

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to the inherent inability to absorb it physically or visually.

€ Low Vegetation

Low vegetation as represented in this unit by upland moor type grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. Once again it is the inability to absorb development that identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig.29 Steep Slopes, Prominent Ridge Lines and Low Vegetation in the South-West Mountain Moorlands

2.16.- Area O: Croagh Patrick Association

2.16.1.- Description

The vista of Croagh Patrick from the Clew bay and the north-west is a highly distinctive vista within County Mayo. It is a steep and smooth, montaine landscape ascending from moorland foothills to the south west of the town of Westport to the focal point of the peaked ridgeline of Croagh Patrick. Such views continue around to the west above Clew Bay as the dominating ridgeline descends toward the sea. The primary landcover consists of montaine grasses, thinning in places to expose upland gravels.

2.16.2.- Land Uses

The majority of the area is covered by peat bog and transitional woodland scrub while agriculture occurs in pockets at lower and central locations.

2.16.3.- Boundary Determinants

As this area has a visually dominating focal point with an associated montaine landscape, the boundaries are determined by those features that give rise to its appearance – slope and landcover. The southern boundary is determined by slope, incorporating the mountain, beginning to the south of Westport, and ending at Carrowmore on the far west of Clew Bay. The northern boundary is determined by slope, topographical and land cover change and is supported by geological data. This results in a thin low-lying, coastal strip that remains associated with the Clew Bay landscape area 'J'.



Fig.30 Croagh Patrick Association (Area O)

2.16.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

≠ Steep Slopes

Steeply sloping land provides both a potentially increased elevation and an immediate backdrop for development, intensifying its visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridgelines when viewed from lower areas of the public realm such as the roads in this area. Slope often provides an area with its character, and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character.

≠ Prominent Ridge Lines

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). This unit is defined by possibly the most recognisable primary ridgeline in the State.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ **Smooth Terrain**

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

€ **Low Vegetation**

Low vegetation as represented in this unit by upland moor type grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. Once again this inability to absorb development identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig.31 Steep Slopes and Prominent Ridge Lines in Croagh Patrick

2.17.- Area P: South-West Coastal Basin

2.17.1.- Description

This area is a low-lying combination of coastal moorland and pasture. The south-west mountain moorland to the east, and Croagh Patrick association to the north visually enclose the coastal unit. Due to the surrounding mountains and the smooth terrain there is a distinct basin appearance to the unit.

Although predominantly moor type land cover, the basin has the appearance of a flat pastoral mosaic interspersed with drainage ditches hedgerows and rock walls. Occasional low hills are present near the coast, which are visually prominent in relation to the surrounding terrain.

2.17.2.- Land Uses

Although peat bogs present the dominant land cover on the landscape, agricultural lands also occur. Nevertheless, the majority of the region remains little used as revealed by the extent of peatlands, transitional woodland scrub and natural grassland.

2.17.3.- Boundary Determinants

As a visually enclosed unit the inland boundaries have been determined by the visual extent of the basin. This is the most western ridgeline of the mountains making up the south-west mountain moorland to the east (area N), and Croagh Patrick (area O) to the north.



Fig.32 South-West Coastal Basin

2.17.4.- Critical Landscape Factors

€ **Prominent Ridge Lines**

These occur as either primary ridgelines (visible only against the sky from any prospect) or secondary ridgelines (visible at least from some prospects below a distant primary ridge line). Distinctive primary ridgelines define all the inland limits of this unit.

Ridge lines perform the important roles of providing an area with its identity, acting as dominant landscape focal points, and defining the extent of visual catchments.

As with other natural linear features such as shorelines it is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of primary ridgelines. Due to the dominating influence of ridgelines, in instances where penetration does occur, development can appear insubordinate to the landscape in which it sits.

€ **Smooth Terrain**

Smooth terrain, as is characteristic of this unit, allows vistas over long distances against a planar surface without breaking up fore and middle ground. In such terrain, distances can appear shorter and development closer or larger. As a result development can have a disproportionate visual impact in such terrain, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually.

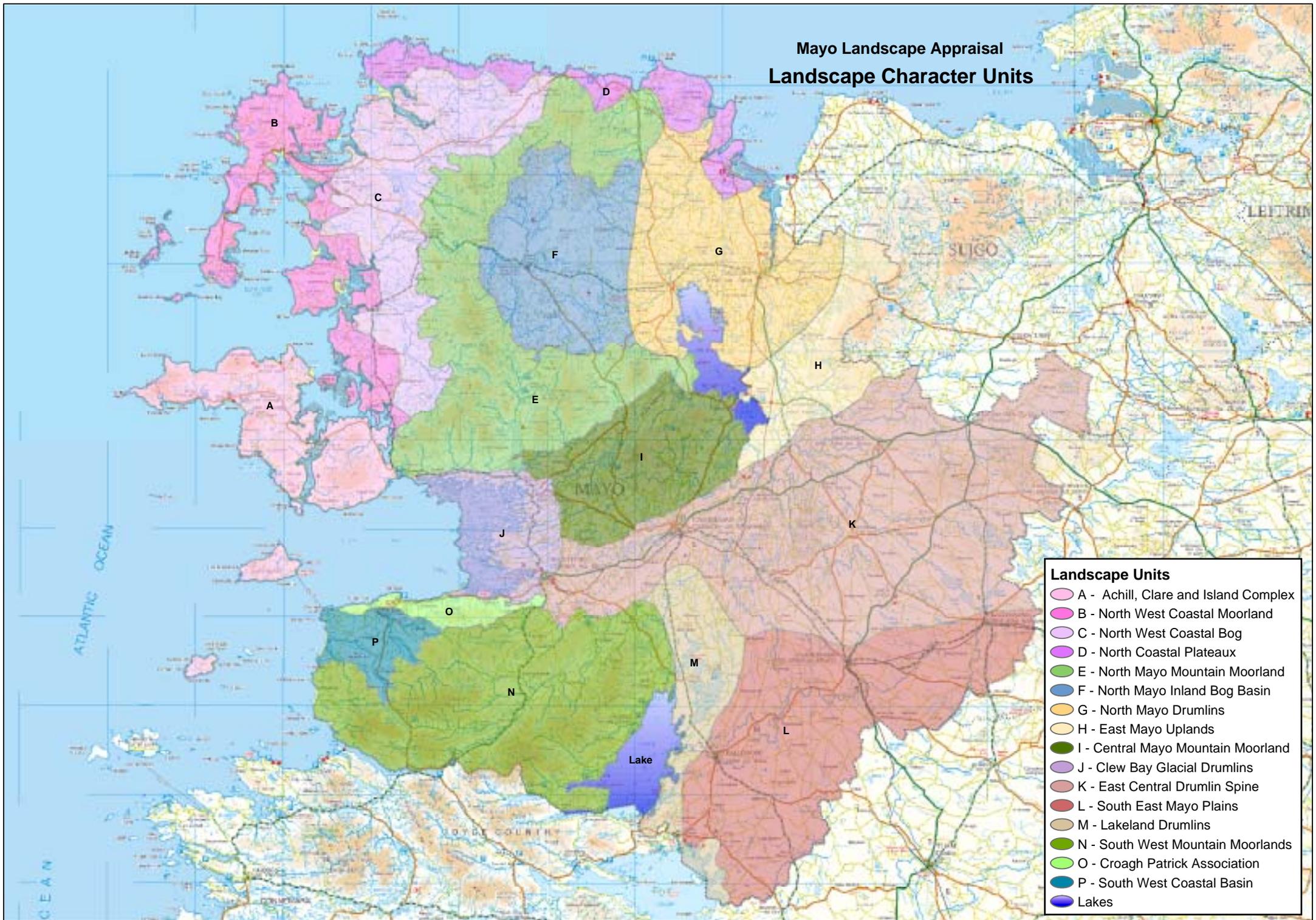
€ **Low Vegetation**

Low vegetation as represented in this unit by upland moor type grasses has similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms, and the two are often interrelated due to soil attributes. Grassland vegetation is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. Once again it is this inability to absorb development that identifies low vegetation as a critical landscape factor.



Fig.33 Smooth Terrain, Low Vegetation and Prominent Ridgelines in the South-West Coastal Basin

Mayo Landscape Appraisal Landscape Character Units



- Landscape Units**
- A - Achill, Clare and Island Complex
 - B - North West Coastal Moorland
 - C - North West Coastal Bog
 - D - North Coastal Plateaux
 - E - North Mayo Mountain Moorland
 - F - North Mayo Inland Bog Basin
 - G - North Mayo Drumlins
 - H - East Mayo Uplands
 - I - Central Mayo Mountain Moorland
 - J - Clew Bay Glacial Drumlins
 - K - East Central Drumlin Spine
 - L - South East Mayo Plains
 - M - Lakeland Drumlins
 - N - South West Mountain Moorlands
 - O - Croagh Patrick Association
 - P - South West Coastal Basin
 - Lakes

3. Area Designations

Under the categories specified for Landscape Assessment based on the CORINE Land Cover Project (see appendix A) the following is a designation of areas in County Mayo.

3.1(a) Areas Designated as Vulnerable

- € The coastline
- € The banks of the Rivers
- € The shoreline of all lakes
- € The skylines of upland areas
- € All headlands and promontories

1. The Coastline

The coastline from Killala Bay to Killary Harbour.

2. The shorelines of the Following Lakes, Rivers and Estuaries

Lough Mask, Lough Conn, Lough Carra, Lough Cullin, Curraghfin Lough, Lough Dahybaun, Bunaveela Lough, Termocarragh Lake, Cross Lough, Leam Lough, Lough Feeagh, Lough Beltra, Drumleen Lough, Roe Lough, Nanoge Lough, Urlaur Lough, Cloon Lough, Nageltia Lough, Nacorralea Lough, Carrowribly Lough, Ballymore Lough, Callow Lough, Lough Muck, Furnace Lough, Islandeady Lough, Derryhick Lough, Castlebar Lough, Levallinree Lough, Levally Lough, Keel Lough, Clough Lough, Mannin Lake, Island Lough (seasonal), Derry Lough, Carrowmore Lough, Lough Naminnoo, Washpool Lough, Duncan Lough, Cooley Lough, Moher Lough, Knappaghbeg Lough, Ballin Lough, Doo Lough, Clogher Lough, Lough Nacorra, Lough Glenawough, Lough Nadirkmore, Fin Lough, Glencullin Lough, Tawnyard Lough, Roonah Lough, Corraggaun Lough, Corryloughaphuill Lough; the banks of the Ballinglen River, Cloonaghmore River, Cloonlaghan River, Clydah River, Heathfield River, Sralagagh River, Keerglen River, Glenedagh River, Glencullin River, Bellananaminnan River, Glenulra River, Owenpollaphuca River, Glenamoy River, Belderg River, Muingnabo River, Rathroe River, Duvowen River, Belladooan River, Gleninaigh River, Gweedenev River, Srahrevagh River, Srahmore River, Altaconey River, Mumkin River, Muingnakinkee River, Shanvolahan River, Oweninny River, Srahmeen River, Altderg River, Glennamong River, Skerdagh River, Newport River, Ballyteige River, Boghadooan River, Glasheens River, Goulaun River, Gweestion River, Trimoge River, Robe River, Bunnadober River, Keel River, Aille River, Cloon River, Cloonlee River, Camage River, River Moy, Yellow River, Cullentragh River, Caheer River, Mannin River, Glore River, Pollagh River, Bulken River, Claireen River, Cloonlee River, Strade River, Little River, Toormore River, Manulla River, Meander River, Gallaghers River, Castlebar River, Tobergal River, Derrimurchers River, Castlehill River, Carra River, Cartron River, Meenbog River, Glenthomas River, Belfarsad River, Bunanioo River, Sraheens River, Murrevagh River, Bunnaho River, Rossow River, Bunnahowna River, Glendanurk River, Carrowsallagh River, Owennabruckagh River, Moyour River, Carrowbeg River, Bunnowen River, Bellakip River, Owengarr River, Glenummern River, Lugatoran River, Glenlaur River, Owenmore River, Erriff River, Lugayeran River, Owenaglogh River, Owenduff River, Owenwee River, Glendaruck River, Bundonagh River, Owenoniny River, Buleenshough River, Owennadornaun River, Bunanakee River, Tarraghaghmore River.

3. Skylines and Ridges

Croagh Patrick, Partry Mountains, Mauntrasna, Bohaun, Devilsmother, Finny, Mweelrea Mountains, Ben Gorm, Ben Creggan, Knappagh, Fox Hill, Clare Island Hills, Inishturk Island Hill, Tristia, Sraheens, Croaghmoyle, Nephin, Sheeffry Hills, Cloghmoyle, Killogeary, Rathlackan, Slieve Fyagh, Maumakeogh Mountain, Tawnaghmore, Knocknalower, Glencastle Hill, Maumykelly, Knocklettercuss, Carrafull, Knocknascollap, Pollatomush, Carrawteige, Porturlin, Knockadaf, Stonefield, Termon Hill, Tower Hill, Pollatomish, the West hills of the Ox Mountains, the Beg Range, Corslieve, Knockaffertagh, Bullaunmore, Birreencorragh, Glenamong, Claggan Mountain, Achill Sound Hill, Mweelin, Corraun Hill, Knockmore, Slievemore, Croaghaun.

4. Promontories and Headlands

Clew Bay drumlins.

3.1(b) Policy with Regard to Areas Designated as Vulnerable

These areas or features designated as vulnerable represent the principal features which create and sustain the character and distinctiveness of the surrounding landscape. To be considered for permission, development in the environs of these vulnerable areas must be shown not to impinge in any significant way upon its character, integrity or uniformity when viewed from the surroundings. Particular attention should be given to the preservation of the character and distinctiveness of these areas as viewed from scenic routes and the environs of archaeological and historic sites.

3.2(a) Main Areas Designated as Sensitive:

- € Natural Grassland
- € Peat Bogs
- € Moors and Heathland
- € Transitional Woodland Scrub
- € Beaches, dunes and sands
- € Estuaries
- € Broad Leaved Forest
- € Mixed Forest
- € Inland and Salt Marshes
- € Intertidal flats
- € Water courses/bodies
- € Agricultural lands with significant areas of natural vegetation

1. Natural Grassland

At Croaghaun; inland of Doolough Point; north of Gweesalia; at the Beg range north of Nephin Beg (Birreencorragh and Buckoogh); west of Nephin Hill.

Two small patches west of Glenamoy (north of the R314).

At the Sheeffry Hills, between Nacorra and Lugacollinree Loughs.

On the shores of Killary Harbour, by the R335.

East of Mweelrea Mountain.

2. Peat Bogs

The majority of the land on the west of the County consists of peat bogs, with the exception of a narrow coastal band and the Clew Bay environs, the southern part of the Belmullet Peninsula, and large pockets at the Sheeffry Hills, the Beg Range and south, south-west of Croagh Patrick. Peat Bogs also cover significant areas to the south-east, in particular north and north-east of Castlebar and around Kiltamagh.

3. Moors and Heathland

On the west coast of the Belmullet Peninsula, from Erris Head to Doonamo Point; and from Termon Hill to Blacksod Point to the south of the peninsula.

East of Lough Mask: Ballymacgibbon, Coolavalley, Lislaughtera, an area between Creevagh South and Drumsheel Upper, Cow Island, Inishowen, Inishard, Bunnadober and around Bunnadober River, i.e. an area between Killour and Castletown.

4. Transitional Woodland Scrub

Dispersed throughout the south-east, west of Lough Mask: an area from Kilbride to Barevagh; Srahnalong to south of Toormakeady; southern end of Carrigeenamore Island.

West and north of Ballin Lough; north-west of Islandeady Lough (west of R311); south-west and south-east shores of Lough Feeagh; south of Corraun Hill; east of Cuillaloughaun, Claggnamountain to Essaun; at Bellagarvaun; at Drumsleed; north-west and north of Sheskin; north-west of Maumakeogh and south-east of Belderg; north-west of Crevagh and south of Keerglen,.

West of Lough Conn.; dispersed from the east, south and south-east of Castlebar to the County boundary.

5. Beaches, Dunes, Sands

To the West of Belmullet Peninsula at the following areas: Cross Point, Carraun Point, South of Tiraun Point; from Annagh Head to Belderra Strand.

South of Doolough Point, at the Tullaghan Bay Shorelines, at Trawboy and to both sides of Tonakeera Point (from Slugga to Curramboy). At Aigleam and from Tonadoon to Portmore – Clognahakilla - .

6. Estuaries

None

7. Broad-leaved forest

North of Bohaun in the Partry Mountains; North of Bellacorrick and South of Slieve Fyagh Mountain; on the South shores of Lough Mask (on the slopes of Fox Hill - at Knocknamuck); to the West of Lough Conn (around Prospect, at Grange, east of Tonacrock and East of the R315 road - at Massbrook Lower); and to the West and South-East of Westport town. North of Ballina, to the West of the River Moy.

8. Mixed Forest

South-east of Lough Mask at Ballykine and in the environs of Black Island; on the north shores of Lough Corrib, south of Strandhill and Lislaughtera; at Prughlish, at both sides of Boghadoon River; and at Tawnykinaff.

9. Inland Marshes

Mannin Lake; south-east of Claremorris, north of Carrownaskeha; Knocknagun Lough south of Ballina; shores of Lough Conn, between the lands where Castlehill River joins the lake and Cabragh.

10. Salt Marshes

None

11. Intertidal Flats

None

12. Water courses/bodies

Lough Mask, Lough Conn, Lough Cullin, Lough Carra, Lough Corrib, Curraghfin Lough, Lake Carrowmore, Lough Feeagh, Lough Beltra, Termocarragh Lake, Leam Lough, Cross Lough, Bunaveela Lough, Drumleen Lough, Ballymore Lough, Island Lough (seasonal), Lough Carroweribly, Lough Muck, Callow Lough, Urlaur Lough, Lough Roe, Nanoge Lough, Cloon Lough, Nageltia Lough, Nacorralea Lough, Lough Caheer, Mannin Lake, Lough Cullentragh, Derry Lough, Lough Naminnoo, Washpool Lough, Lough Derrihick, Lough Duncan, Cooley Lough, Lough Mallarc, Islandeady Lough, Castlebar Lough, Levallinree Lough, Levally Lough, Keel Lough, Furnace Lough, Clogher Lough, Doo Lough, Ballin Lough, Moher Lough, Knappaghberg Lough, Glencullin Lough, Tawnyard Lough, Lough Fin, Nadirkmore Lough, Glenawough Lough, Roonagh Lough, Corragau Lough.

13. Agricultural Land with significant areas of Natural Vegetation

Predominantly to the south and south-east of the County. To the west and north-west shores of Lough Conn; dispersed to Downpatrick Head; along the coastline of the south-west of the County; Annagh Island; west of Ballycroy to Doona; at Doonbeg Point; from Ardelly Point to Moyrahan Point; at Barrack, from Barranagh Island to Bunnaclassy Point; at Terrmoncarragh, Ballyglass and Shanaghy; north and south-east of Ballina.

3.2(b) Policy with Regard to Areas Designated as Sensitive

These areas have a distinctive, homogenous character, dominated by natural processes. Development in these areas has the potential to create impacts on the appearance and character of an extensive part of the landscape. Applications for development in these areas must demonstrate an awareness of these inherent limitations by having a very high standard of site selection, siting layout, selection of materials and finishes. Applications in these areas may also be required to consider ecological, archaeological, water quality and noise factors insofar as it affects the preservation of the amenities of the area.

3.2 (c) Considerations with Regard to Sensitive Areas

Where an area has been classified by the CORINE landcover classification system into groupings that are deemed to be indicative of a low potential to absorb significant development without significant change of character, then the area has the potential to be sensitive. These areas are indicative and prone to localised change over time where vegetative cover or agriculture management practices are the principal determinants.

The sensitivity to change may arise from very different sources e.g. woodlands may be sensitive to development that requires tree felling while peat bogs may be sensitive to development that requires tree planting.

The principle role in Development Control of landscape sensitivity mapping should be to heighten awareness (and scrutiny) of the potential for additional or disproportionate visual prominence. Project by project evaluation, for development control purposes will be required to ascertain the presence and significance of a sensitivity and its relevance to the specifics of the proposed development (if any).

3.2 (d) Slopes >10%

Contiguous areas with an area greater than 50ha and a slope of 10% (1 in 10) or greater are mapped. These provide an indication of elevated areas that are likely to be more conspicuous than the surrounding countryside. Such areas are also likely to form the context for larger vulnerable features such as ridge lines.

Actual sensitivity will be highly variable – principally on account of the local height, density and proximity of mature vegetation and trees. Therefore while such areas may have a general potential for vulnerability and sensitivity, they will also consistently contain areas with the same potential to absorb development as landscapes that are classified as ‘normal’.

Localised areas of steep topography also occur throughout the countryside at a smaller scale than this mapping will reveal – particularly along water courses and at the coast. This may create significant local prominence that will require project-by-project evaluation for Development Control purposes.

3.3 (a) Areas Designated as Normal

- ∄ Pasture Lands
- ∄ Complex cultivation patterns
- ∄ Coniferous Plantations

1. Pasture Lands

The majority of the north-east of the County and dispersed throughout the south and east. West of Clogher to Termon Hill; running from Bellmulltet to Cofclogh and at An Geata Mhór; northern tip of Doolough to Belmullet, Kanfinalta Head; at Kinrovor Point to Doohoma; south of Nephin Range; to the west of Beltra Lough.

2. Complex Cultivation patterns

West of Lough Conn, around Killeen, Ballybrinoge and Sranalaghta; east of Lough Conn at Ballybeg and Ballynahaglish.

On the environs of Knockapisha, Illanmore and Creevaroodaun.

At both sides of the R332, around Musicfield, Turin, Turloughanraun, and up to the Milford Demesne; at Carrowmore; at Hollymount, from Knockalegan to Cloneen, to Gortnashammer and Clogher.

At Carrowbeg, Burris, Lisduff and Lawaus.

3. Coniferous Plantations

To the west of Belderg; south-west of Knocklettercuss; to the north-east and south-west of Cregganbaun, due north-east of Charlestown; west of Liscarney; north-east and east of Lough Feeagh; north-east of Nephin Beg.

3.3(b) Policy with Regard to Areas Designated as Normal

A large areas of County Mayo is designated as a normal landscape. These areas have a potential to absorb a wide range of new developments subject to normal planning and development control procedures. In these areas the Planning Authority will have regard to general restrictions to development such as scenic routes, siting, road set backs, road widening plans, parking numbers, road and sewage disposal criteria.

3.4(a) Areas Designated as Robust

Note: The CORINE mapping data does not include units below 25 hectares in extent. Due to this, many small villages and areas of ribbon development are not recorded on the land cover map.

- ∄ Continuous Urban Fabric
- ∄ Discontinuous Urban Fabric
- ∄ Industrial or Commercial Units
- ∄ Road and Rail Networks and Associated Land
- ∄ Sports and Leisure Facilities

In robust areas:

- (a) New development shall sustain and reflect the character of the area
- (b) Frontages on to the existing streets shall reflect the character of the street through careful design and use of materials
- (c) Development should reflect the character of the townscape generally but fresh approaches to design will be considered

1. Continuous Urban Fabric

Castlebar, Westport, Claremorris, Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis, Swinford, Charlestown, Foxford, Ballina and Newport.

2. Discontinuous Urban Fabric

None

3. Industrial or Commercial Units

None

4. Road and Rail Networks and Associated Land

Established rail corridor connecting the towns of Ballina, Foxford, Castlebar and Westport. Rail stations located to the south of Westport town, at the south-east of Castlebar town with a final station in Ballina. Rail junction at Manulla Junction where line branches to south and north.

Regional roads list as follows:

R293, R294, R297, R298, R310, R311, R312, R313, R314, R315, R316, R317, R318, R319, R320, R321, R322, R323, R324, R326, R330, R331, R332, R334, R335, R345, R346, R375.

National Secondary roads list as follows:
N58, N59, N60, N83, N84.

National Primary roads lists as follows:
N5, N17, N26.

5. Sports and Leisure Facilities

Westport golf course facing Cleavagh Strand to the north-west of Westport; Castlebar golf course at Lightford on the south-eastern side of Castlebar; Ballina golf course on R294; Ballynakillew golf course on R331 outside Ballinrobe.

3.4(b) Policy with Regard to Areas Designated as Robust

A small area of County Mayo is designated as robust. These are areas of concentrated existing development and infrastructure. Appropriate new development in these areas can reinforce the existing desirable landuse patterns. Regard must be had to site development standards namely density, building lines, height of structures and design standards. The overall aim is to ensure that the inherent character of the town and village centres is maintained.

3.5(a) Areas Designated as Degraded

Degraded areas are characterised by a breakdown of natural processes or pollution.

1. Mineral Extraction Sites

Around Clooncah, south of Kilkelly.

2. Dump Sites

None

3. Peat Extraction

None

3.6 (a) Areas Designated as Scenic Routes

Roads in County Mayo listed as scenic routes are as follows:

N59 from Westport to the southern boundary with Co. Galway
N59 from Bangor to east of Rosturk

R294 from west of Bunnyconellan to the boundary with Co. Sligo
R297 from Castleconor to Crockets Town
R312 from Derreen to Beltra Lough (along the coast, west of the Beg Mountain Range)
R313 from Bellmullet to Blacksod Point
R314 from Belderrig to Bunatrahair Bay and from Glenamoy to Barnatra
R315 from Lahardaun to Pontoon (west of Lough Conn)
R319 from Mulrany to south of Bunacurry (northern part of Achill Island)
R335 from Westport to Aasleagh

L134 from Knockmore to north of Ross West (between Lough Conn and Lough Cullin)
L141 from south of Bunacurry to Dooagh
L141A around Lough Keel

Local road around Corraun Peninsula
Local road (i.e. "The Atlantic Drive") at Dooega Head (southern part of Achill Island), from the R319 through Dooega, Cloghmore and Derreen
Local road from Maumtrasna to Srah (west of Lough Mask)
Local road from Maumtrasna to Cong (south of Lough Mask)
Local road from south of Pollatomish to Barnatra
Local road to the west shores of Carrowmore Lake, from Barnatra to the R313 junction
Local road from Geesala and around the peninsula
Local road from Killsallagh to Owenmore Bridge
Local road from Lisearney to Doo Lough
Local road north-west of the Sheeffry Hills from Louisburgh to Kinnadooley and to Cregganbaun
Local road from Beltra to the R315 junction at Lough Conn
Local road from Killala to Moyne Abbey
Local road east of Lough Conn, from Garrycloonagh to Brackwanshagh
Local road west of Lough Conn, from the R312 junction north of Keenagh to Newport
Local road from south of Swinford to Kilkelly
Local road from Srahmore, running west of Furnace Lough, to Newport
Local roads north-west of Lough Mask, from Cordarragh to Tourmakeady and from Croaghribbeg to Bohaun
Local road north of Achill Island, from Bunacurry to Doogort

3.6(b) Policy with Regard to Scenic Routes

Scenic routes indicate public roads from which views and prospects of areas of natural beauty and interest can be enjoyed. Sightseeing visitors are more likely to be concentrated along these routes.

The onus should be on the applicant when applying for permission to develop in the environs of a scenic route, to demonstrate that there will be no obstruction or degradation of the views towards visually vulnerable features nor significant alterations to the appearance or character of sensitive areas.

3.7 (a) Areas Designated as Highly Scenic Vistas

R310 south of Lough Conn and north of Lough Cullin (looking to both lakes)
R313 from Blacksod Point to Fallmore Bay (looking towards Blacksod Bay)
R314 at Ceide Fields (looking towards the Atlantic Ocean)
R315 from Cuilkilllew to Pontoon (looking towards Lough Conn)
R319 from Achill to Achill Sound (looking towards Achill Sound)
R335 from west of Kilsallagh to Wesport (looking towards both Croagh Patrick and Clew Bay)
R335 from Cregganbaun to Delphi (looking towards the Sheeffry Hills and Doo Lough)

Local road north of Pollatomish (looking towards Broad Haven)

Local road west of Carrowmore Lake, from Barnatra to the R313 junction (looking towards Carrowmore Lake)

Local road at Dooyork (looking towards Blacksod Bay)

Local road from Owenmore Bridge to Doo Lough (looking towards the Sheeffry Hills and Owenduff Lake)

Local road from the R312 junction north of Keenagh, running to the west of Furnace Lough, to Newport (looking towards the Beg Range, Lough Feeagh and Furnace Lough)

Local roads west of Lough Mask from Tourmakeady to Maumtrasna and from Tream to Cappanacreha (looking towards both the Partry Mountains and Lough Mask)

Local road north-east of Lough Carra, from Carrownacon to north of Ballygarries (looking towards Lough Carra)

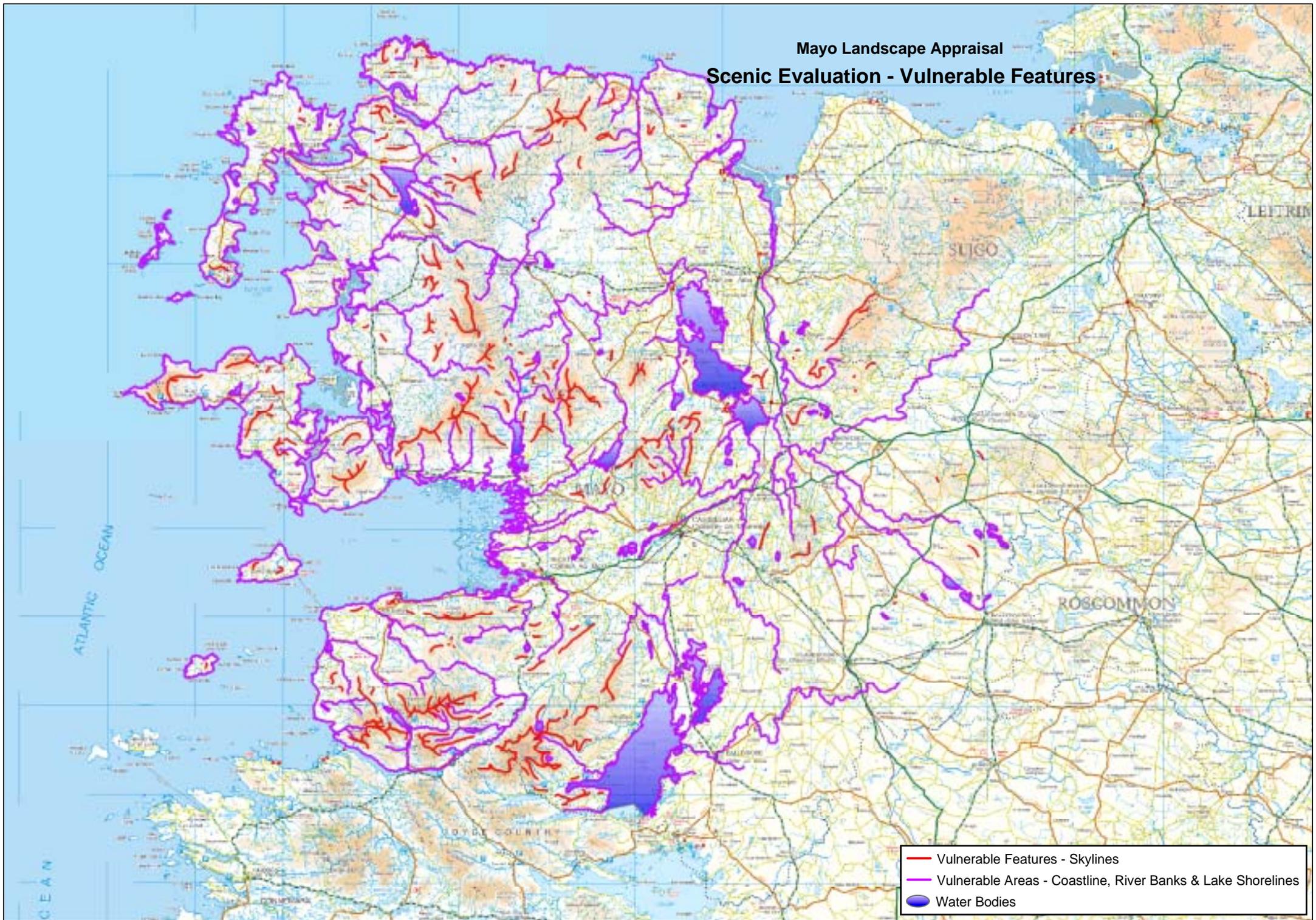
Local roads north-west of Lough Mask, from Cordarragh to Tourmakeady and from Croaghrimbeg to Bohaun (looking towards the Partry Mountains)

3.7(b) Policy with Regard to Protected Views

Highly scenic views or vistas indicate areas along public roads from which views and prospects of areas of high natural beauty and interest can be enjoyed. Sightseeing visitors are more likely to be concentrated along these areas.

Development located between the public road and the seashore, lakeshore or riverside should be subject to strict visual criteria. New development should only be considered where it can be demonstrated that it does not obstruct or designated highly scenic vistas nor alters or degrades the character of the surrounding landscape.

Mayo Landscape Appraisal
Scenic Evaluation - Vulnerable Features



Mayo Landscape Appraisal
Scenic Routes and Protected Views



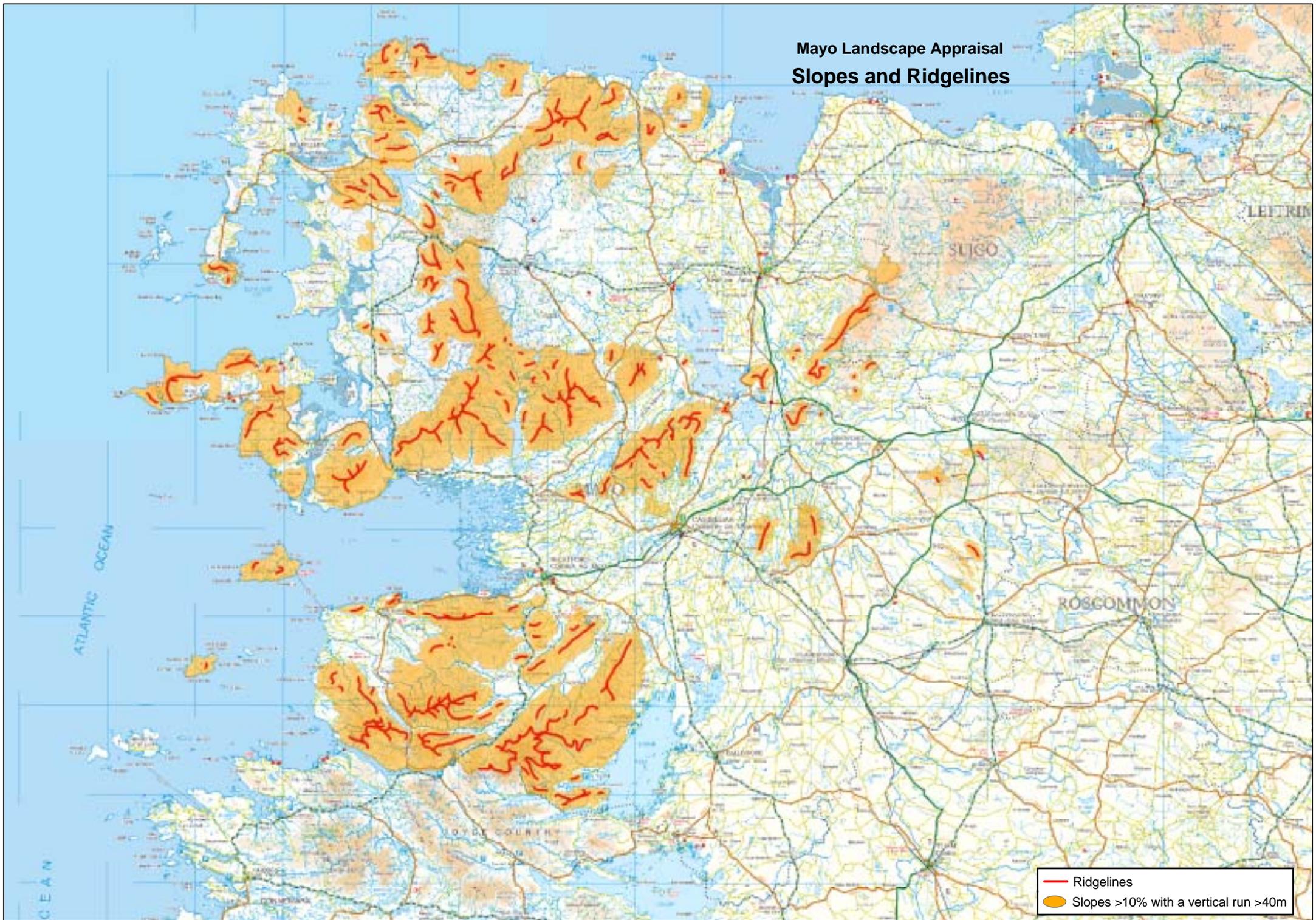
- Scenic Routes
- * * Scenic Views

Mayo Landscape Appraisal

Main Population Centres and Roads

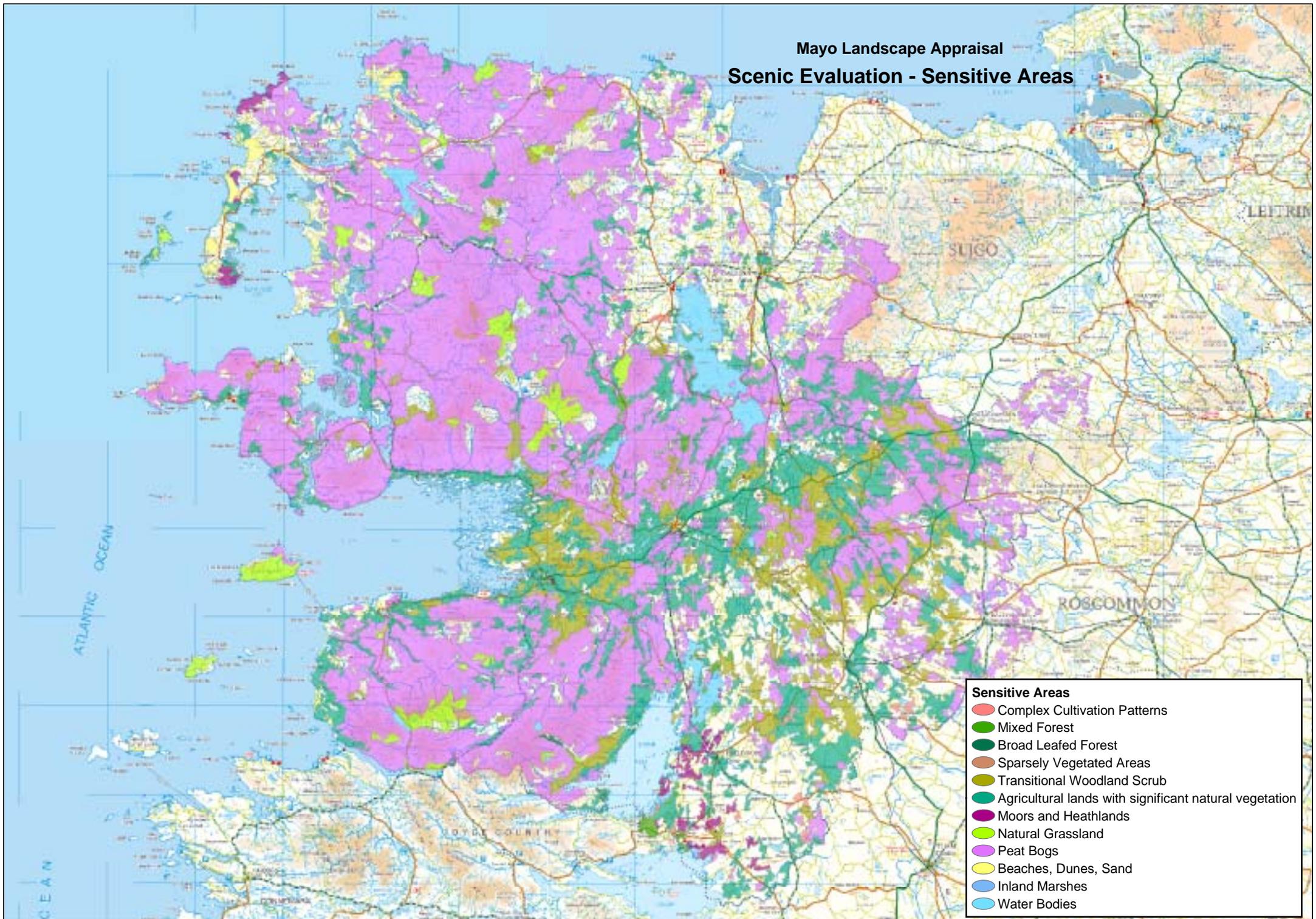


Mayo Landscape Appraisal Slopes and Ridgelines



- Ridgelines
- Slopes >10% with a vertical run >40m

Mayo Landscape Appraisal Scenic Evaluation - Sensitive Areas



4.- Principle Policy Areas

Drawing on field observation and mapping from the previous phase, character units with similar visual landscape elements were grouped according to 4 categories identified specifically for County Mayo.

1. Montaine Coastal
2. Lowland Coastal
3. Uplands, moors, heath or bogs
4. Drumlins and lowlands

A set of indicative policies relating to the landscape attributes, robustness, and sensitivities are provided below. It is not the intention of this project to provide a complete and comprehensive landscape section of the soon to be reviewed County Mayo Development Plan. Instead the following indicative policies will provide the framework and basis for such final landscape policies as required at the time of the development plan review.

The indicative policies below should always be read in conjunction with the critical landscape factors of each character unit, detailed in the previous section.

4.1.- Indicative Policies

4.1.1.- Policy Area 1: Montaine Coastal Zone

This area is visually distinct in County Mayo landscape terms as it incorporates, in a relatively small area, two dramatic landscape attributes being a steep and rugged shoreline and mountains rising immediately above. These elements make it a desirable setting for visitors and also particularly sensitive to inappropriate development.

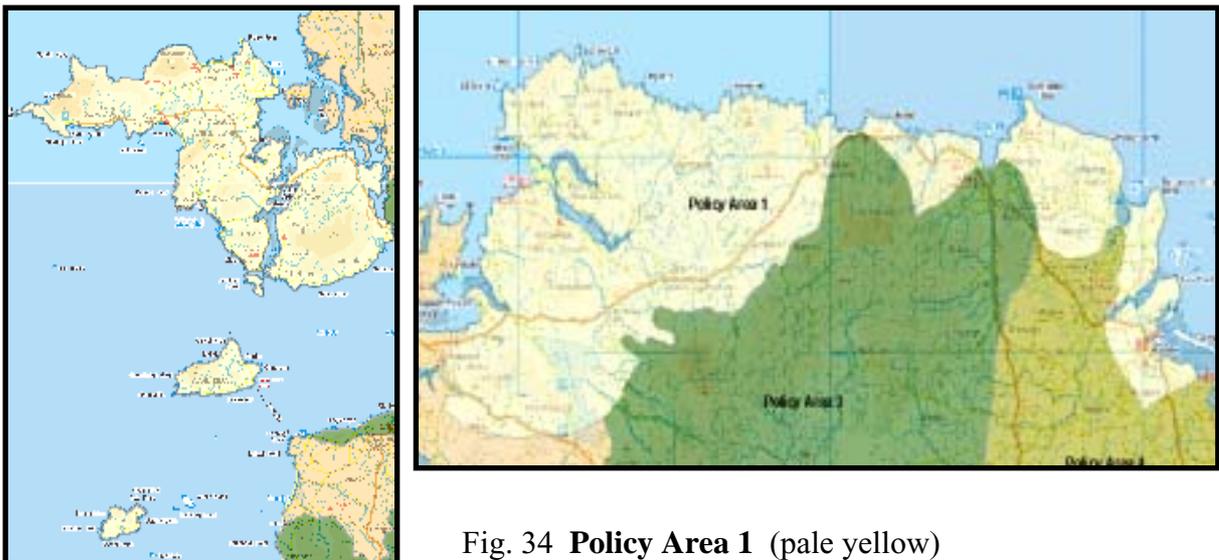


Fig. 34 Policy Area 1 (pale yellow)

€ **Policy 1**

Recognise the substantial residential development existing in some locations and the further pressures for residential development in this policy area.

€ **Policy 2**

Facilitate appropriate tourism and amenity development in a progressive and clustered manner, where feasible, that reflects the scale, character and sensitivities of the landscape (Ref. to Housing Policy).

€ **Policy 3**

Encourage development that will not have a disproportionate effect on the existing character of the coastal environment in terms of location, design, and visual prominence.

€ **Policy 4**

Consider development that does not significantly interfere or detract from scenic coastal vistas, as identified in the Development Plan, when viewed from areas of the public realm.

€ **Policy 5**

Encourage development that will not interrupt or penetrate distinct linear sections of primary ridge lines and coastlines when viewed from areas of the public realm.

€ **Policy 6**

Preserve any areas that have not been subject to recent or prior development and have retained a dominantly undisturbed coastal character.

€ **Policy 7**

Consider development on steep slopes, ensuring that it will not have a disproportionate or dominating visual impact on the surrounding environment as seen from areas of the public realm.

4.1.2.- Policy Area 2: Lowland Coastal Zone

This area, despite the mildly variant terrain and land cover, has as a principle landscape factor a visual association with the coastline. The lowland coast is considered a separate core policy area, in relation to the other steeper coastal area, as it has significantly different landscape attributes, sensitivities and robustness.

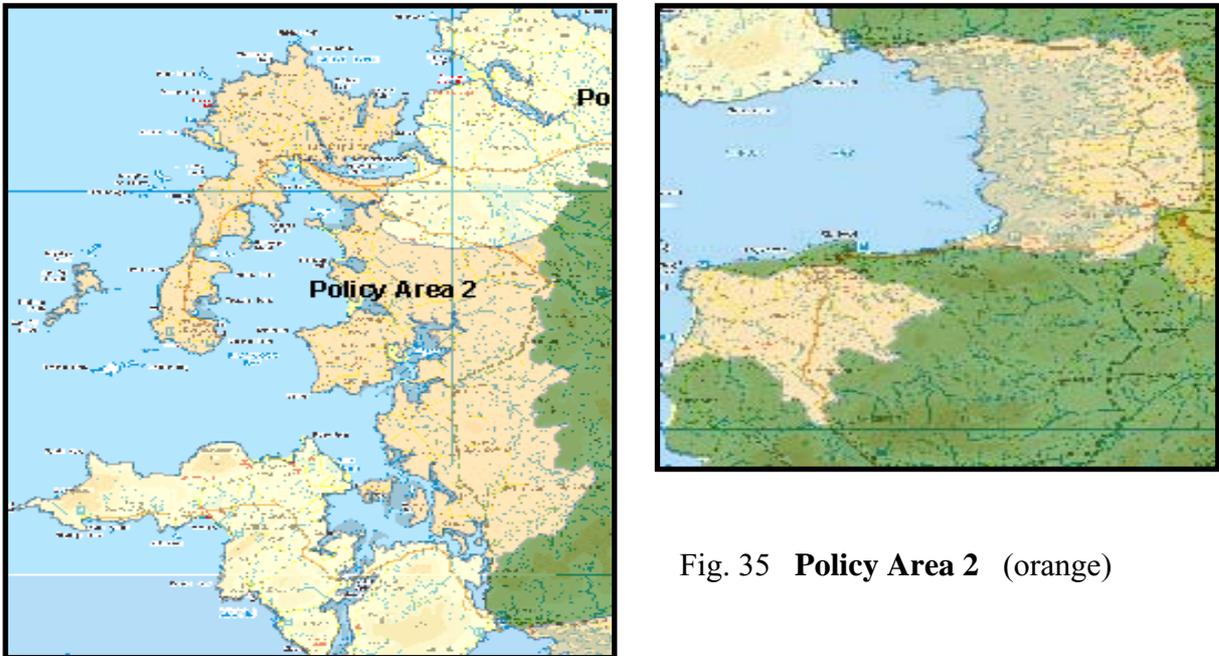


Fig. 35 Policy Area 2 (orange)

∄ Policy 8

Recognise the substantial pockets of residential and rural landuses in some locations and the emerging pressures for differing landuses of industry, wind energy and residential development in this policy area.

∄ Policy 9

Continue to facilitate appropriate development in a progressive and clustered manner that respects the scale character and sensitivities of the landscape.

∄ Policy 10

Recognise that in this low lying open environment, tall and bulky development can have a disproportionate impact against the landscape when viewed from the predominantly low lying areas of the public realm.

∄ Policy 11

Encourage development that will not have a disproportionate effect on the existing character of the landscape in terms of location, design, and visual prominence.

Apply policies 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 under "Montaine Coastal Zone" above, as appropriate.

4.1.3.- Policy Area 3: Uplands, moors, heath or bogs

These distinctive and vast areas of the County form a single policy unit due to the similar visual characteristics of smooth topography, limited shelter vegetation, often steep slopes and prominent ridge lines, rendering this policy unit similar suitability to absorb development.

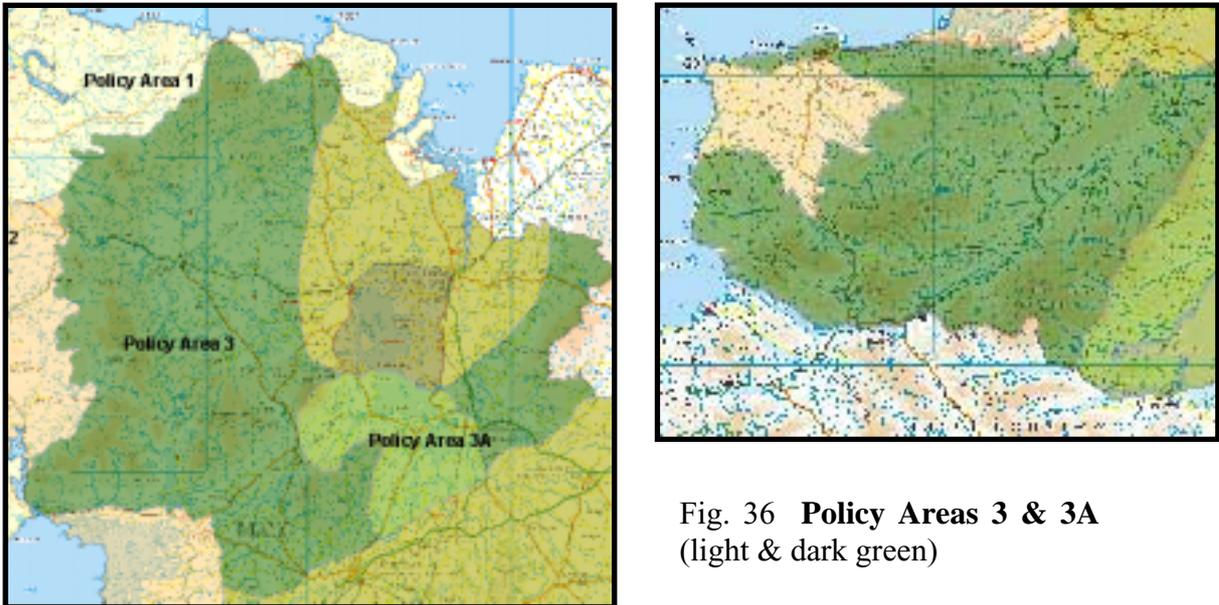


Fig. 36 Policy Areas 3 & 3A
(light & dark green)

€ Policy 12

Recognise the occurrence of areas of highly valued scenic vistas, uninterrupted by shelter vegetation or undulating topography, which can cover vast areas and are abundant.

€ Policy 13

Encourage development that will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere or detract from scenic upland vistas, as identified in the Development Plan, when viewed from areas of the public realm.

€ Policy 14

Encourage development that will not interrupt or penetrate distinct linear sections of primary ridge lines when viewed from areas of the public realm.

€ Policy 15

Facilitate developments that have a locational requirement to be situated on elevated sites (e.g. telecommunications and wind energy structures). It is necessary however to ensure that adverse visual impacts are avoided or mitigated wherever possible.

€ Policy 16

Preserve from development any areas that have not already been subject to development, which have retained a dominantly undisturbed upland/moorland character.

€ Policy 17

Consider development on steep slopes, ensuring that it will not have a disproportionate or dominating visual impact on the surrounding environment as seen from areas of the public realm.

4.1.4.- Policy Area 3A – Lakeland Sub-policy Area

This distinctive area of the County comprises the landscapes of policy areas 3 and 4, which bound Lough Conn. The environs of this Lough are often slopes and secondary ridgelines with limited shelter vegetation to the south and undulating areas of pasture, woodland and forest with underlying glacial drumlins to the north.

∉ Policy 18

Encourage only development that will not detract from scenic lake land vistas, as identified in the development plan, and visible from the public realm. Such development must not have a diminishing visual impact due to inappropriate location or scale.

∉ Policy 19

Promote only development that will not penetrate distinct linear sections of shorelines when viewed from areas of the public realm.

∉ Policy 20

Recognise the value of scenic lake land vistas, as identified in the development plan. Protect areas that have not been subject to recent or prior development by ensuring any new development can be absorbed by the surrounding landscape.

4.1.5.- Policy Area 4: Drumlins and Inland Lowlands

These undulating areas of pasture, woodland and forest make up the remainder of the County and are considered to have a generally similar ability to absorb development. Many of these areas are underlain by glacial drumlins and incorporate low-lying lakelands.

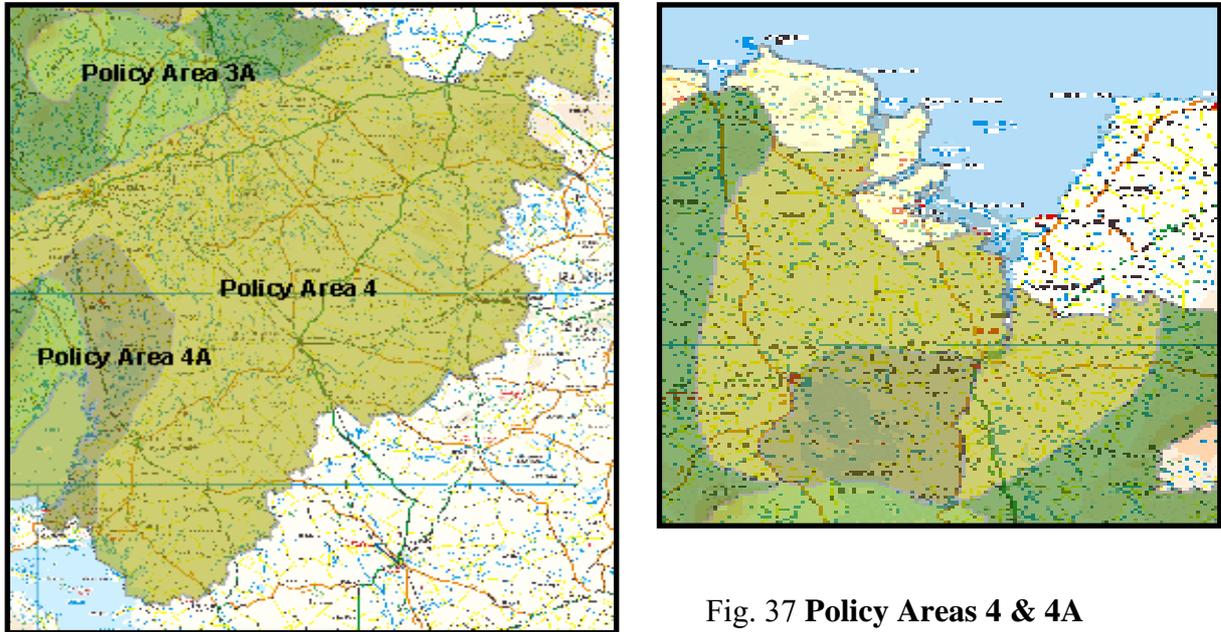


Fig. 37 Policy Areas 4 & 4A
(olive green)

€ Policy 21

Recognise that these areas are made up of a variety of working landscapes and contain the vast proportion of the County's population within principle towns and on rural holdings. These also incorporate all of the major national primary and regional roads, and railways.

€ Policy 22

Continue to permit development that can utilise existing infrastructure, whilst taking account of absorption opportunities provided by the landscape and prevailing vegetation.

€ Policy 23

Encourage development that will not significantly interfere or detract from scenic lakeland vistas, as identified in the Development Plan, when viewed from areas of the public realm.

€ Policy 24

Encourage development that will not result in detrimental impacts (through excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) on the landscape at a local or micro level as viewed from areas of the public realm.

Apply policies 14 and 16 above, as appropriate.

4.1.6 Policy Area 4A – Lakeland Sub-policy Area

This distinctive area of the County comprises the landscapes of policy areas 3 and 4, which bound Lough Mask. It bounds often steep slopes and prominent ridge lines with limited shelter

vegetation to the west and undulating areas of pasture, woodland and forest with underlying glacial drumlins to the east.

€ **Policy 25**

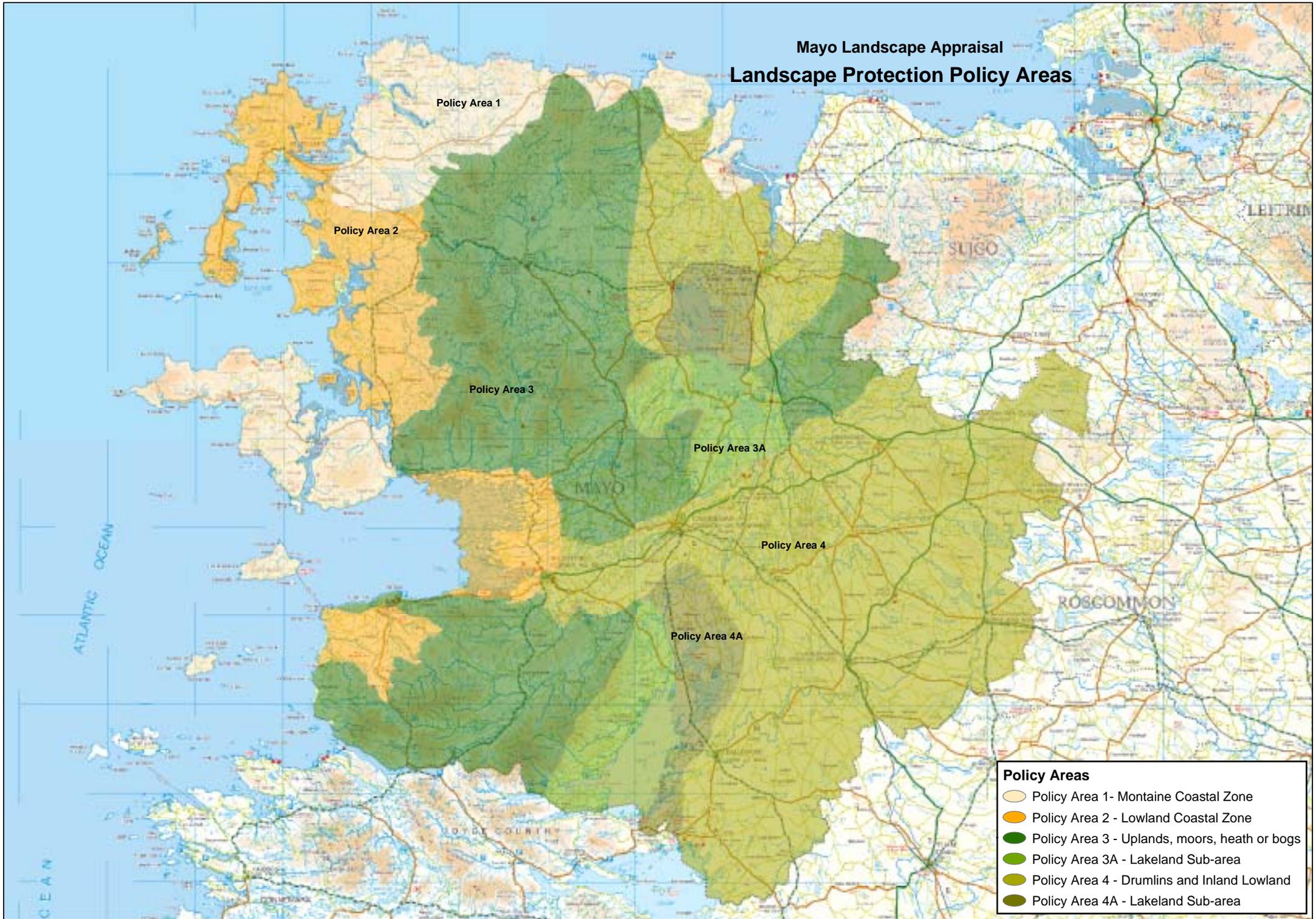
Ensure all new development utilises the existing infrastructure of the policy area in a manner, which can be best visually absorbed.

€ **Policy 26**

Ensure development will not take place on steep slopes, which will have a strong visual impact on the surrounding landscapes, when viewed from areas of the public realm.

Apply policy **19** and **20** above, as appropriate.

Mayo Landscape Appraisal Landscape Protection Policy Areas



Policy Areas

- Policy Area 1- Montaine Coastal Zone
- Policy Area 2 - Lowland Coastal Zone
- Policy Area 3 - Uplands, moors, heath or bogs
- Policy Area 3A - Lakeland Sub-area
- Policy Area 4 - Drumlins and Inland Lowland
- Policy Area 4A - Lakeland Sub-area

5.- The Development Impact - Landscape Sensitivity Matrix

5.1.- Purpose

The purpose of the **Development Impact - landscape Sensitivity Matrix** is to provide a quick reference guide for both planners and developers to determine the likely success of a planning application for a particular land use in a particular area. Due to the fact that all developments are unique in appearance and landscapes often vary at a micro level, it must be remembered that;

It is a guidance and decision supporting tool, not a decision making tool

5.2.- Basis

The basis for the Matrix is the fusion of the **Development Impact Potential Index** and the **Landscape Area Sensitivity Index**, which it should be used in conjunction with.

5.3.- Development Impact Potential Index

This index takes 8 development types, with landscape impact potential, and ranks them using a points system to establish whether they have a high, medium or low landscape impact potential. This is indicated in the final column of the index as a red, amber or green symbol.

5.3.1.- Flexibility

The points system is weighted by the relative importance of each factor. Firstly, with a range of 1-3 points, the flexibility of the particular development elements may be identified as;

€ **Bulk or Intensity**

In this instance bulk refers to the physical dimensions of buildings, plant, or structures associated with a development. Intensity refers to the spatial density of such physical elements. For example a wind farm might contain considerably more bulk than an industrial complex but has a lower intensity of development due to the considerable distances between turbines.

€ **Scale**

In this instance, scale essentially refers to the physical area covered by a development.

€ **Design/Appearance**

Design and appearance is a self-explanatory term relating to the colours, materials, shapes, and arrangement of the physical elements of a development. The pivotal factor is whether these elements blend or contrast with the existing visual environment.

€ **Location or Route Requirement**

In this context, "location or route requirement" relates to the necessity for specific siting of a development. In the case of communications masts or wind farms, these require elevation for line of site servicing and viable wind speeds respectively. The resultant impacts relate to visual prominence, or interruption of the natural landscape vista features, from areas of the public realm.

Where there is generally a high degree of flexibility with, for example, the design and appearance of a rural dwelling, 1 point would be awarded. A general lack of flexibility would attract 3 points.

€ **Public benefit**

Secondly, the degree of public benefit for each development type was taken into account, on the basis that landscape impacts of developments that serve the greater public good are perceived to be acceptable in instances where private development is not.

The points system ranged between 0-3-6 for this important factor with, for example, road projects attracting no points and rural dwellings attracting 6.

€ **Landscape Character Impact Potential**

Finally the overall Landscape Character Impact Potential was gauged by determining the extent to which a particular development type might contrast with, or dominate a landscape, thereby affecting its character.

The same points weighting as for the public benefit factor (above) was used. Low impact potential land uses such as forestry attracted 0 points, and uses such as wind farms gained 6 points.

The final impact **Index** was then determined by the overall score of the development type, with between 4-13 points being green, 14 -18 points amber, and above 19 points assigned red.

5.4.- Landscape Area Sensitivity Index

This index takes the 4 Landscape Policy Areas and ranks them, using a points system to determine the inherent sensitivity to development of each area.

The same development elements and points weightings have been used as for the Development Impact Potential Index (above), only this time sensitivity rather than flexibility is used. A moorland area such as Character Area "B" is highly sensitive to "bulky and intensive" development, so the full 3 points are attracted by this combination. Conversely, a drumlin area containing patches of tall vegetation such as area "J" would attract a sensitivity score of 1 for similar development.

€ **Slope**

The slope division is unique to this index. This relies on the basis that sloping land provides both an increased elevation and an immediate back drop for development, increasing its visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridge lines when viewed from lower areas of the public realm. Slope often provides an area with its character, and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character.

It must be remembered that the slope classification used throughout this project, which is taken at a gradient of greater than 10%, intentionally excludes low drumlins, as these often have the opposite effect of absorbing rather than presenting development. This has been achieved by including only slopes that maintain the relevant gradient for a vertical increase of over 40m.

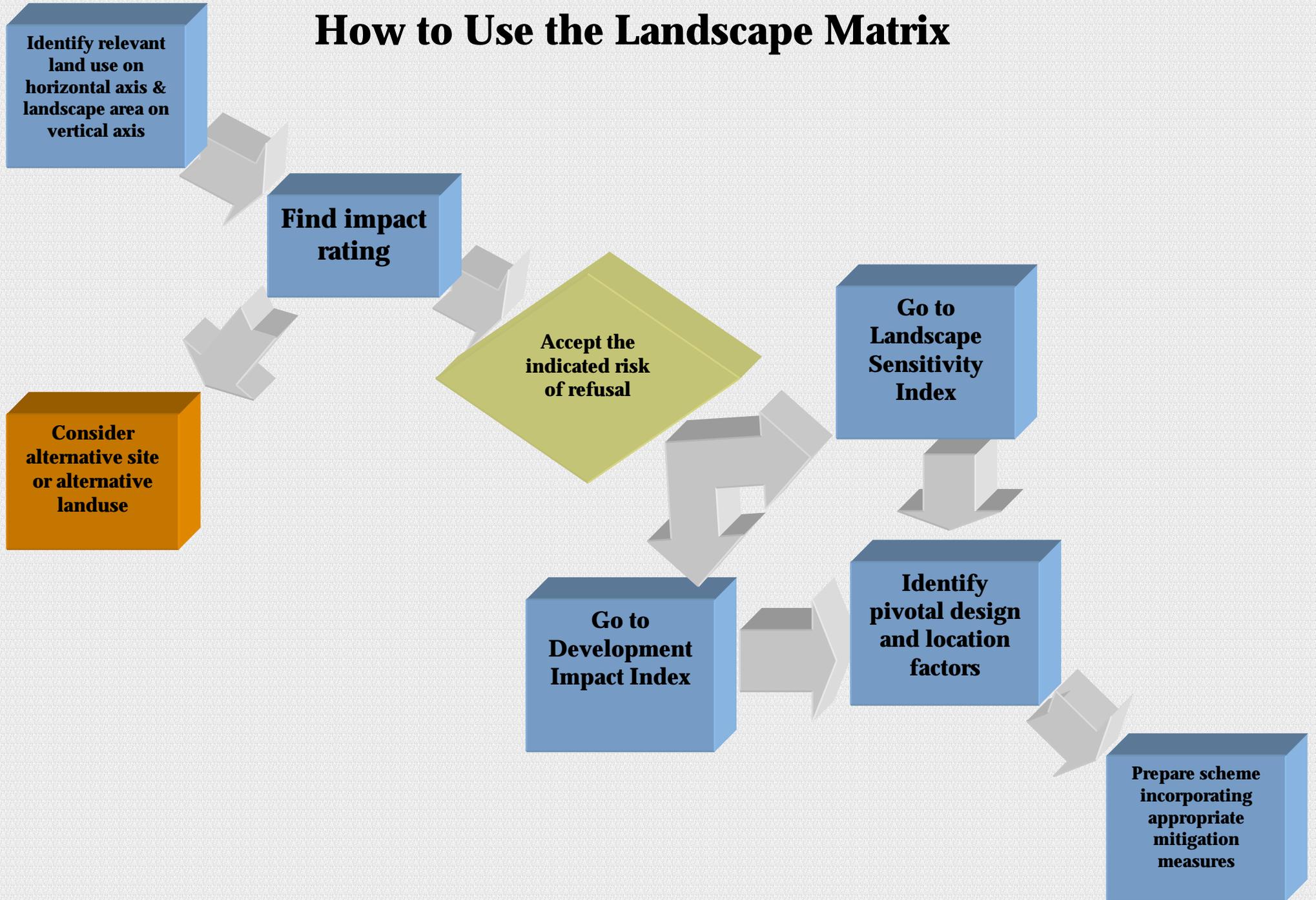
Character areas with less than 30% of their area subject to slopes over 10% gradient are attributed no points, between 30% - 70% of their area 2 points, and above 70% 4 points.

€ **Prior Development**

The final division is the level of (visible) prior development each character area has been subject to. The basis for this factor is that areas already compromised or characterised by prior development are less sensitive to, and more able to absorb, new development. This category recognises that some areas may have been densely developed at other periods in history but have since reverted to a more natural state.

With the same weighting as the slope factor above, no points are given to intensively developed areas, 2 points to considerable developed areas, and 4 points to insignificantly developed areas.

How to Use the Landscape Matrix



Development Impact Potential Index

	Bulk or Intensity	Scale	Design/ Appearance	Location or Route Requirement	Public Benefit	Relative Landscape Impact Potential	Index
Windfarms							
Powerlines							
Quarrying/Extraction							
Forestry							
Communication Masts							
Industrial/Commercial							
Rural Dwellings							
Road Projects							

Key							
Development Element Flexibility		Public Benefit		Landscape Character Impact Potential		Development Impact Index	
High Flexibility		High Benefit		Low Potential		4 - 13	
Medium Flexibility		Medium Benefit		Medium Potential		14 - 18	
Low Flexibility		Private Benefit		High Potential		19 - 24	

Landscape Area Sensitivity Index

	Bulk or Intensity	Scale	Design/ Appearance	Location or Route	Proportion over 10% slope	Prior Dvlpmnt	Index
PolicyArea 1							
PolicyArea 2							
PolicyArea 3							
PolicyArea 4							

Key Landscape Area Sensitivity		Slope Factor		Prior Development		Index Sensitivity score
Low Sensitivity		<30% of area		Intensive		1 - 9
Medium Sensitivity		30-70% of area		Considerable		10 - 15
High Sensitivity		>70% of area		Insignificant		16 - 20

Development Impact - Landscape Sensitivity Matrix

	Wind farms	Power lines	Quarrying/ Extraction	Forestry	Commun- -ication Masts	Industrial/ Commercial	Rural Dwellings	Road Projects
Policy Area 1								
Policy Area 2								
Policy Area 3								
Policy Area 4								

Key

-  = High potential to create adverse impacts on the existing landscape character. Having regard to the intrinsic physical and visual characteristics of the landscape area, it is unlikely that such impacts can be reduced to a widely acceptable level.
-  = Medium potential to create adverse impacts on the existing landscape character. Such developments are likely to be clearly discernible and distinctive, however with careful siting and good design, the significance and extent of impacts can be minimised to an acceptable level.
-  = Low potential to create adverse impacts on the existing landscape character. Such development is likely to be widely conceived as normal and appropriate unless siting and design are poor.

Appendix A

Determining Landscape Sensitivities

Appendix A

Determining Landscape Sensitivities

1.- Criteria for Evaluation

The protection of landscape and visual amenities should be carried out with reference to explicit criteria. These should be suitable for reference in decision making at all levels from countywide policy to site level. The criteria should be relevant to form the basis of an open-ended system of protection, which can be updated as the mapping of critical resources improves.

The criteria should form the basis of the protection afforded by such mapping or classification as may be included in the County Development Plan.

1.1.- Capacity to Absorb Development

The capacity of an area to visually absorb development is influenced by a combination of the following factors:-

- 1) *Topography* - development in elevated areas will usually be visible over a wide area; development in enclosed areas will not.
- 2) *Vegetation* - areas which support (or which have the potential to support) trees, tall hedges and woody vegetation can screen new development from view. Areas which cannot easily sustain such vegetation will be unlikely to screen new development.
- 3) *Development* - New development is less likely to be conspicuous in the context of existing development in the landscape.

In Summary

- ∄ Areas where enclosing topography, screening vegetation and/or existing development are present should have a **high potential** to absorb new development.
- ∄ Areas of elevated topography, with low growing or sparse vegetation and little existing development should have a **low potential** to absorb new development.

1.2.- Disproportionate Visual Impacts

Every landscape can be affected to some degree by new developments. For the purpose of development control, it is important to work out the extent of the land affected by the visual impacts of the proposed development. It is reasonable to assume that any evaluation of the visual impact of a proposed development should have regard to whether the area of the visual impact has been kept to a reasonable minimum, so that actions by an individual do not impose disproportionate effects on the community as a whole.

Skyline ridges, hill and mountain tops, coastlines, promontories, headlands, lake shores and banks of large rivers are all conspicuous features in the landscape. The eye is strongly drawn to such features, principally because strong contrasts of colour and form occur along these lines of contact between the land and the sky or water. New development on or in the vicinity of such natural features has a significant potential to be conspicuous over a wide area. For the purpose of this report, therefore, such landscape features are considered to have an extremely low potential to absorb new development without causing disproportionate visual impacts.

1.3.- *Degrees of Sensitivity*

The landscape is made up of a series of compartments each of which has a distinctive character. Each unit of character is assigned an indicator of sensitivity, which indicates the extent to which the landscape will be vulnerable to change in its character. The categories will reflect the criteria of the capacity to absorb new development as well as the potential to create disproportionate visual impacts. Each unit of character can then become the focus of policy or development control.

The categories in the **Sensitivity Zoning Key** are as follows:

KEY	DESCRIPTION
1 = Degraded	Areas characterised by breakdown of natural processes or pollution (e.g. cut over bogs, old mineral waste areas)
2 = Robust	Areas of existing development and infrastructure. New development reinforces existing desirable land use patterns.
3 = Normal	A common character type with a potential to absorb a wide range of new developments.
4 = Sensitive	Distinctive character with some capacity to absorb a limited range of appropriate new developments while sustaining its existing character.
5 = Vulnerable	Very distinctive features with a very low capacity to absorb new development without significant alterations of existing character over an extended area.

Fig. 1. Sensitivity Zoning Key

The determination of the limits of character zones should be based upon existing data, which is mapped using objective, established and systematic techniques. The techniques should provide the highest level of resolution to facilitate development control at site-specific scales of interpretation.

2. **Methodology**

The methodology used for the project involved reference to the following information:

1. Areas of High Amenity, Areas of Outstanding Amenity and Areas of Scientific Interest included in the County Development Plan
2. The CORINE Land Cover Project.
3. Ordnance Survey Maps scale 1:250,000 and 1: 50,000 Discovery Series (These were used to determine the location of peaks, ridges, coasts and shorelines).
4. Geology of Mayo Maps (Geological Survey of Ireland, 1992)
5. Soils of Mayo (An Foras Talúntais - National Soil Survey of Ireland, 1966).
6. Dúchas register of NHAs, SACs, SPAs and Sites and Monuments Record (National Monuments Service).
7. Tourist information, including brochures and information on designated walking routes.

2.1 *Mapping the Zones of Sensitivity*

Topographical and land cover information were used to determine the categories of land use sensitivity - **Vulnerable, Sensitive, Normal, Robust and Degraded**

A description of each of the categories follows overleaf:

2.1 (a) **Vulnerable**

Areas included in this category were defined by mapping the shores of the main water bodies - lakes, large rivers, coasts, estuaries, promontories and headlands. The principal skylines were defined from the topographical map and illustrate where the 'watershed line' occurs. This is where the highest points along a ridge occur. As mentioned earlier, these are all conspicuous

features of the natural landscape to which the eye is drawn because of strong contrasts of form and colour where there is contact between the land and sky or water. The skylines illustrated are the major skylines, which are visible over a wide area (any area will be visible against the skyline if viewed from a lower elevation).

2.1 (b) Sensitive

Areas included in this category were determined by combining the following landuse categories from the CORINE Land Cover Project:-

Natural grassland	Bare rocks	Sparsely vegetated areas
Moors and heathland	Transitional woodland scrub	Beaches, dunes, sands
Estuaries	Broad leaved forest	Inland marshes
Salt marshes	Peat bogs	Intertidal flats
Water courses	Water bodies	Coastal lagoons
Mixed forest	Agricultural land with significant areas of natural vegetation	

Fig. 2. Sensitive landuse categories

These landuse categories include areas which are open and exposed with sparse or low growing vegetation cover which is insufficient to provide screening. Even if planting is introduced, the exposed nature of these areas will not support any significant tall vegetation. Due to this, any development would be visible over a wide area. The exception to this are broadleaved, mixed forest and transitional woodland scrub areas which do support tall vegetation with potential to screen development. However these categories are sensitive due to their natural character and their longevity in the landscape; any loss to their structure would have a visual impact over a wide area.

2.1 (c) Normal

Areas included in this category were determined by combining the following landuse categories from the CORINE Land Cover Project:-

Pasture lands	Non irrigated arable land	Annual crops associated with permanent crops
Complex cultivation pattern	Coniferous forest	

Fig. 3. Normal landuse categories

These landuse categories include the main areas of farming and rural residences. These tend to be confined to low lying or gently undulating areas where conditions are relatively fertile and therefore suitable to support tall vegetation, which could screen development. The vegetation is often in the form of small copses of trees or mature hedgerows which sub-divide fields. The category for coniferous plantations includes areas of established forest; young trees and planting since 1989-1990 are not included.

2.1 (d) Robust

Areas included in this category were determined by combining the following landuse categories from the CORINE Land Cover Project:-

Continuous urban fabric	Discontinuous urban fabric	Industrial or commercial units
Airports	Sports and Leisure Facilities	

Fig. 4. Robust landuse categories

These landuse categories include towns and built up areas, suburban and other developed areas. These areas can support new development as it is less likely to be conspicuous in the context of existing development in the landscape.

Note: The CORINE mapping data does not include units below 25 hectares in extent. Due to this, many small villages and areas of ribbon development are not recorded on the land cover map.

2.1 (e) Degraded

Areas included in this category were determined by combining the following landuse categories from the CORINE Land Cover Project:-

Mineral extraction sites	Construction sites	Dump sites
--------------------------	--------------------	------------

Fig. 5. Degraded landuse categories

Areas included in these categories are characterised by the breakdown of natural processes or pollution. Once extraction or dumping has been completed, new development in these areas is desirable as a means to improve the existing character.

Appendix B

Determining Landscape Character Units

Appendix B

Determining Landscape Character Units

1. Identifying Physical Units

This was an initial desktop phase, which involved the collation of the following map data for the County;

- § Geology
- § Soils
- § Water Catchments
- § Topography
- § CORINE land cover

Geology and soils data was kept to a summary level to avoid unnecessarily complicating these physical elements, for which, visual representation at ground level is often not obvious. Using summary data ensured that only major transitions in bedrock or soil type were taken account of, with the objective of confirming boundaries already identified by the other map data or visual analysis. *See diagrams below for examples.*

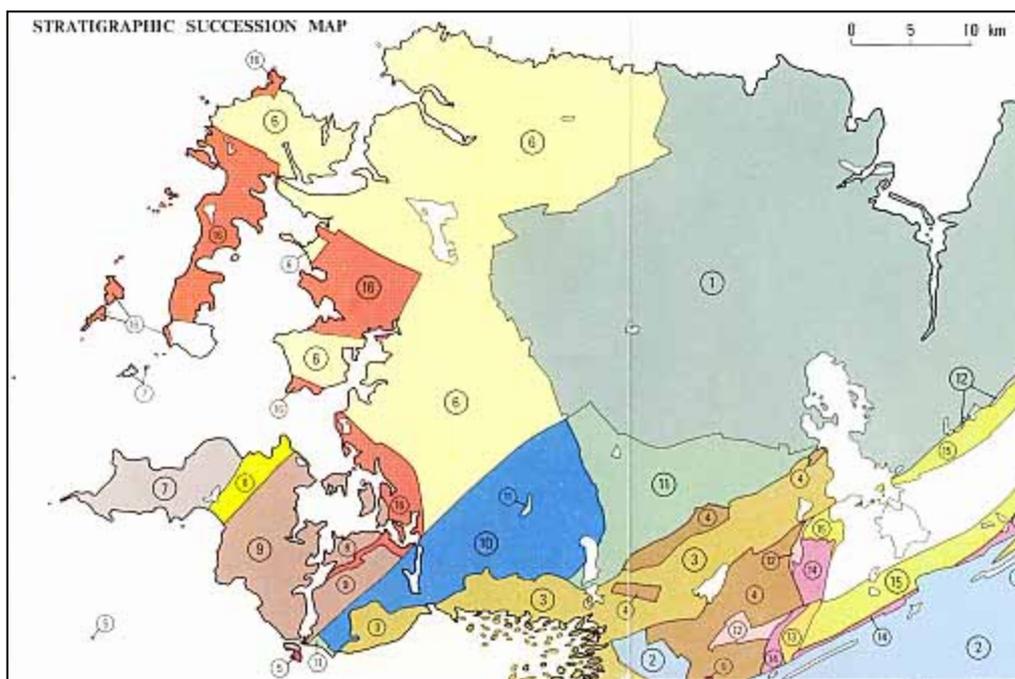


Fig. 6. Geology of Co. Mayo

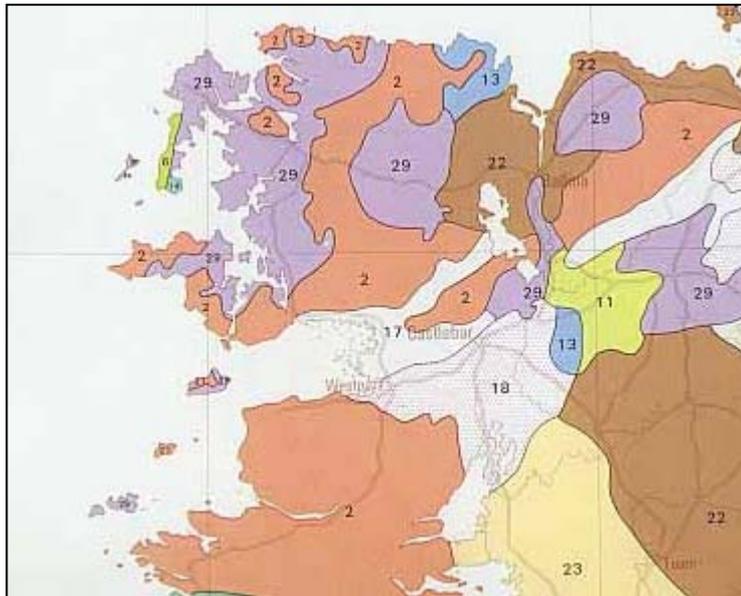


Fig.7. Soils of Co. Mayo

Water catchment information was also kept to a summary level, which in Mayo divided catchments into 3 categories:

- § Direct to sea or via small streams
- § Minor catchments under 500sq.km
- § Major catchments above 500sq.km

Water sheds and view sheds are closely related, most notably in steeper terrain, and these boundaries were often used to delineate character areas, especially at the coast. *See map below.*



Fig. 8. Water Catchments in Co. Mayo

Two scales of topographical map were used. The initial 1/50,000 scale (10m contour) version was used to identify primary and secondary ridge lines and to map slope change.

Primary ridge lines are those which, when viewed from most directions or distances (below), appear directly against the sky. **Secondary ridge lines** are often associated with spurs, and when viewed from certain directions or distances (Fig. 10) would have a backdrop of a primary ridge line above, forming the skyline.

Often broad flat ridge tops or plateau's present varying visible ridge lines, depending on the viewers location. In such instances the ridge line has been indicated around the perimeter of the plateaux. Maintaining the integrity of the skyline, particularly primary and secondary ridge lines will be a major consideration at the policy development stage.

The slope line used in this project indicates the transition point at which the gradient of the land is 10%. This gradient was chosen as survey work showed it to be the slope below which, existing houses had generally been constructed (possibly due to the greater earthwork and engineering requirements required for structures on steeper slopes). In Mayo the 10% gradient level also appears to be a critical transition point above which mild foothills abruptly become severe mountain sides. Slope has a major bearing on visual impacts of development in the landscape and will, therefore, be a major consideration at the policy response stage. *An example of the slope and ridge line mapping technique is indicated in Fig. 9 below.*

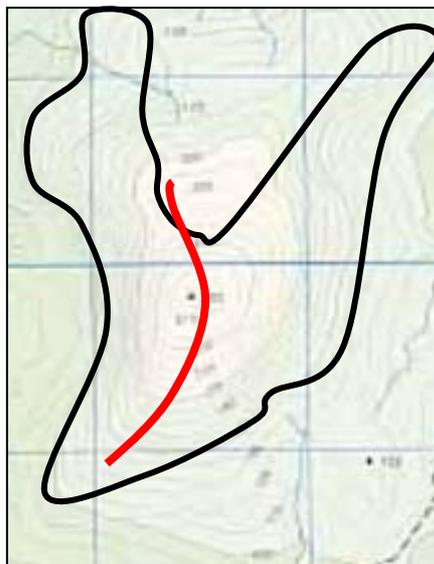


Fig. 9. Slope and Ridge Line Mapping Technique

A 1/250,000 (10m contour) topographical map was also used to identify terrain patterns that would not have been obvious at the lower scale (*See Fig.10*)

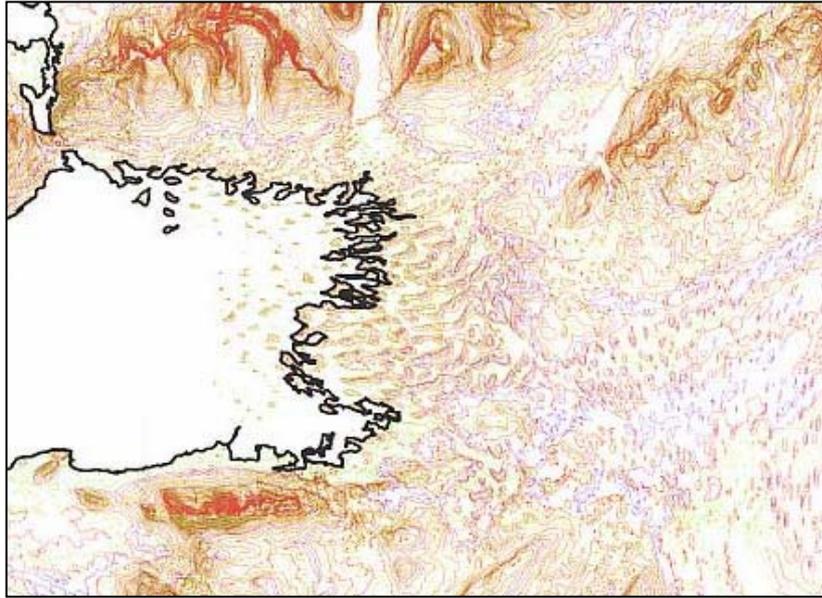


Fig. 10. 1/250,000 Topographic Map (10m contours)

The CORINE land cover map shows the surface covering of the County using a European standard methodology, dividing land cover into 19 categories under the sub categories;

- § Artificial Surfaces
- § Agricultural Areas
- § Forest and Semi-Natural Areas
- § Wetlands
- § Water Bodies

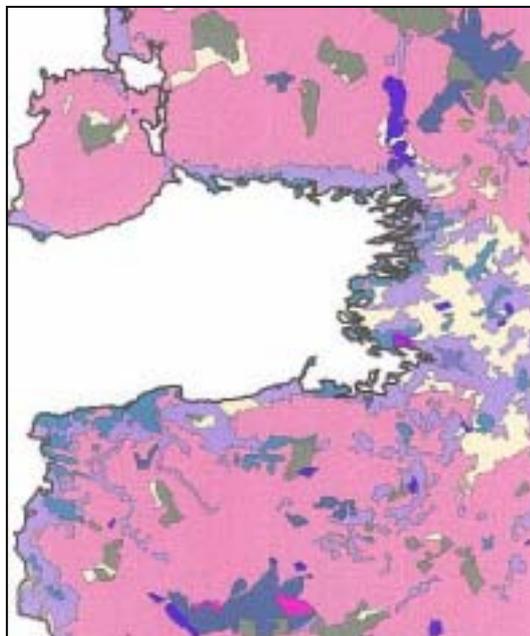


Fig. 11. CORINE Land Cover Map

All of the maps above were converted to a standard scale of 1/250,000 in order that they could be overlaid to examine repeated occurrences of transitional boundaries between physical characteristics. The output of the first part of this phase was a physical map.

2. Identifying Visual Units

The second part of this first phase was field based. The County was surveyed in order to establish homogenous visual units, the boundaries for which, were either the extent of visual fields, the transition from one landscape type to another, or the image unit associated with a particularly dominant feature, which acts as a focal point.

The first was applied to areas that were particularly visually enclosed by a series of primary ridge lines for example.

The second method was used most commonly in areas where a precise boundary was not obvious and would require map data for final determination.

The final method was only used in the case of Croagh Patrick¹, to ensure that the moorland foothills and lower slopes to both the east and west, which support the vista of the mountain from the north, were included within the same visual unit.

The visual units were to provide the basis for the final "**Landscape Character Units**" with the physical map data providing confirmation of the precise or transitional boundaries. In some instances, where several elements indicated a transitional boundary, a dotted line of conservative best fit was used with a bias toward the more visually obvious elements. *An example is illustrated below.*

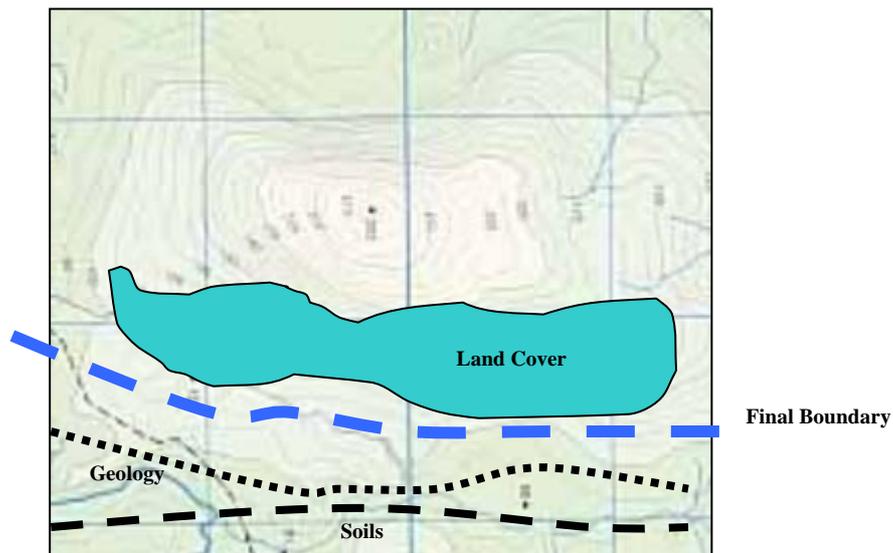


Fig. 12. Defining Landscape Character Units

Sixteen Landscape Character Units resulted from the process. A physical description, boundary determinants, critical landscape factors and supporting photographs of each area has been prepared. *See attached document.*

¹ Initial survey work indicated that Croagh Patrick & its environs is, by far the most photographed & depicted landscape feature of the County