

Appendix D3

Report on Community Workshop

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1 OPENING COMMENTS

On 31st March, 2007, a workshop was held by RPS, in Gaoth Sáile (Geesala), County Mayo, from 10 am until 4pm. The purpose of the workshop was to obtain community insight into the issues that would need to be addressed in identifying criteria to select a short list of potential pipeline corridors for the transportation of gas from the Corrib offshore gas field.

A general invitation to the workshop was issued at a Community Open House, held in February, which resulted in 12 people volunteering. Follow up phone calls and letters were then sent to approximately 60 others in the community who had either indicated an interest or concern with the project, or who reflected key sectors in the community. To be effective, the workshop process required there to be not more than 40 participants involved.

The format designed for the workshop randomly divided participants into four working groups, with each group having the opportunity, in the course of the day, to provide insights into four topic areas:

1. Technical
2. Environmental
3. Planning
4. "What have we missed"?

Each workshop topic was allocated approximately fifty minutes and had a resource person from the RPS project team, a facilitator, and a note taker. Community residents had been invited to give additional insights in each of the key focus areas through complementary processes – one-on-one telephone, email and face-to-face contact.

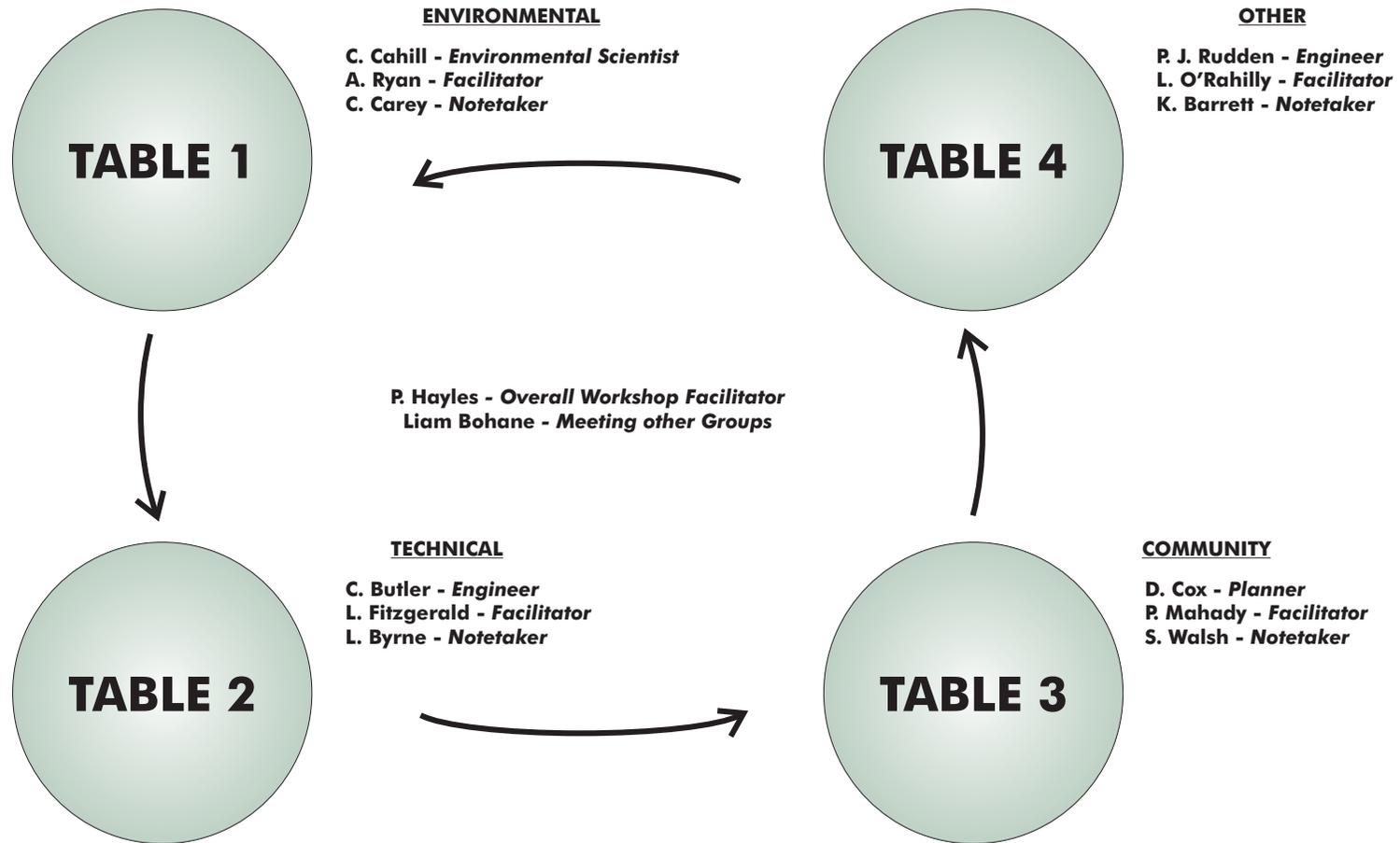
In the introduction to the day, PJ Rudden, Group Director of RPS, described the mandate of RPS which is to assess the options for a modified pipeline route to transport gas from the offshore site to the onshore processing facility. RPS will then narrow down the choices to a smaller number of options, before recommending a preferred route. The following statements regarding the purpose of the workshop and RPS's remit were on display during the workshop:

"The purpose of this workshop is to define, from a community perspective the issues that must be addressed in selecting a short-list of potential pipeline corridors."

"The remit of RPS is to assess, recommend and deliver a route for the Corrib Onshore Pipeline"

In response to questions, PJ Rudden confirmed that the working-group session would not address issues of community concern that were unrelated to their specific mandate. Other issues such as the terms and conditions of the oil industry's agreement with the Irish government, any potential for offshore processing, or siting issues relating to the processing facility, can continue to be raised with Shell outside of this process. One participant indicated he found this unacceptable and left the meeting, and four other participants, expressing similar concerns, left after the first group session.

The task for the day was to *"provide as much insight as possible into technical, environmental, community or other concerns that would need to be addressed in selecting a pipeline route from offshore to the processing facility"*. It was therefore made absolutely clear that there was no interest, at this stage, in obtaining any kind of consensus from the group as a whole. All issues needed to be addressed if they related to the choice of route corridors.



**Corrib Onshore Pipeline
WORKSHOP LAYOUT**



As participants moved from group to group many of the same issues were raised by each group, and were clearly concerns held by more than one participant in the group. When this is relevant to the report it is pointed out. However, there were also issues and concerns that were raised by a single participant, and these issues are given equal mention as, again, the purpose was to identify as many concerns as possible to ensure that the RPS team had a full understanding of the issues and the context in which they were working.

As expected, many issues and concerns do not fit neatly in to a specific category – such as environmental, technical, community etc. So for the purpose of a clear report, feedback from participants has been merged together under a series of topics, and reflected in five report headings:

1. What RPS learned about the community – socioeconomic and other contextual issues
2. Impacts on the community from the Corrib project to date
3. Questions about the pipeline, and the process, that need to be communicated
4. Specific issues and concerns that relate to the selection of pipeline criteria
5. Other insights and comments

2 WHAT RPS LEARNED ABOUT THE COMMUNITY – SOCIOECONOMIC AND OTHER CONTEXTUAL ISSUES

In helping RPS to understand the issues that were already there in the community, many participants indicated their concern that Erris was being left behind, and that employment is leaving the community. It was the perception of some participants that it is the responsibility of Governments to promote business employment in the community, not business. Grant monies are a big player in keeping employers in Erris, *“without Údarás, Belmullet would not be as developed as it is”*. But when grant monies run out the businesses move elsewhere. Sustainable employment is the big issue. Life styles are changing in rural areas, and assistance from neighbours, once certain, is no longer guaranteed.

The two areas of highest deprivation in Ireland were felt to be Erris and County Donegal. The community would like to find opportunities to bring local people “back in” through technical qualifications, schools, colleges, and employment opportunities. *“80% of school leavers go to college, 2% return to Erris to work”*. They see Erris as *“Forgotten Ireland, where the Celtic Tiger began in the rest of Ireland in 1993, the Celtic Kitten in Erris did not start until 1999”*.

Participants felt that most of the local infrastructure needs upgrading.

Hospitals are seriously deficient: *“we have an X-ray unit but the radiographer is only there 2 days a month due to no funding”*, The nearest A&E Department is in Mayo General Hospital in Castlebar. The main road from Belmullet to Castlebar is poor – *“it takes an hour to get to Castlebar, which raises serious safety concerns”*. Also, the problem is not only with the major routes but smaller roads around the area. *“We seem to be in a ‘no man’s land’ in terms of assigning responsibility for upgrading and maintenance (Mayo County Council)”*. There is little community infrastructure - *“the nearest public swimming pool is an hour away”*.

It was felt important to recognise that the area is a natural, unspoilt area not industrialised *“therefore development will result in irreversible changes”*. Those attending the workshop were not only concerned about the potential for pollution, but also damage to the reputation of the area, which impacts tourism. Tourism is already problematic, because it is seasonal, *“there is not a lot of accommodation available and people are going elsewhere looking always for better deals”*. Concern was expressed that a message was being sent to tourists that the area has been destroyed. *“The reputation of the area has been ruined”*.

All of this led to the perception that the community was not gaining much from the Corrib development. *“At the start of the original process there was nothing offered to ordinary people of the area, no actual benefits to Erris. The scale of things being given to the community by SEPIL is miniscule in comparison to the profits of the company”*.

3 IMPACTS ON THE COMMUNITY FROM THE CORRIB PROJECT TO DATE

Participants spoke of the devastating impact on the people in the community of the events that have led up to this point.

They saw the community as both fractured and conflicted due to the current level of discord in the community over the pipeline

Many think the community is perceived to have closed itself off from all outside influence. *"No one will go to these meetings anymore, people are afraid, can't be seen going, car registrations are taken of all those present at meetings". "Shell to Sea' refused Mr Cassells permission to speak to anyone bar Shell to Sea, and then said he was reporting to Minister Dempsey and refused to talk with him". "How independent can that be when locals can not speak to the representative?"* It was felt that the legacy of this discord will carry on for many generations.

Several participants spoke of the intimidation that they felt in going about their daily lives. *"Imagine if your neighbour/friend was picketing for you to stop working – it's a horrible situation to be put in". "If you take employment from Shell you are considered a 'scab'". "Individuals are either with or against the issue, this is much more prominent in the Rossport area".* Participants spoke of family members who no longer spoke to each other. Of an unwillingness to have a family gathering as it would degenerate into heated arguments about the pros and cons of the pipeline. *"If you don't agree on how things are progressing you are therefore considered an outsider. You are split off from the community".*

Many groups and individuals in the community felt there was an element of intimidation coming from 'Shell to Sea', particularly at meetings where the meetings tend to be dominated by 'Shell to Sea' with an intimidating atmosphere. This workshop was felt to be the first time that there has been a chance to talk *"in a friendly atmosphere"*.

Some participants spoke of the anger that still prevailed at the treatment by the Gardaí *"of people who were just observing"*. Others spoke of how this had even spread to the school system, with kids bullying each other at school because of their families taking different sides.

They no longer knew who to trust *"who do we believe, SEPIL or Shell to Sea or the 'experts'". "We would be happy to accept views of someone, or a body totally independent of SEPIL and RPS and Shell to Sea".* It was felt that most of these divisions had been caused by an inadequate process *"It's a done deal"*. It was felt that there had been a complete breakdown of trust between SEPIL and the people of Erris, and that *"SEPIL's perception of the Erris community is one of uneducated, backward thinking people". "There is no transparency. In terms of health and safety concerns, who do you believe?"*

SEPIL was felt to have never asked for consent or views about the project *"from the people who are objectors, living locally to the proposed works". "Shell have tried but have not been allowed". "Andy Pyle was too late". "SEPIL made martyrs out of the Rossport Five". "People were pushed into acceptance not asked"*.

Concern was expressed that *"some parts of the community will not accept anything now, totally against the process"*. Others believed that *"95% of the people living in the area would like to see the project go ahead"*.

Several people felt that Shell should have had an office in Belmullet. *"Shell wanted to move into Belmullet, but were not allowed." "Local Shell employees saw it as a great opportunity for them to work 'at home'. This has now turned into a nightmare for these people"*.

It was felt that the *"community hatred of SEPIL"*, is now spreading towards An Garda Síochána. Health and Safety is the issue not money. *"Shell has robbed the local people of their existence of work"*.

This led many people to talk of the need to give back to the community for all it had lost through some form of community gain. The benefit most often mentioned was a gas connection for Belmullet, *"other towns are getting connected. Belmullet not getting a connection!!!"* *"Some are thinking that it is because we have no serious industry to support the "cost" of connecting the town. Whereas Crossmolina which has no serious industry is getting a connection"*.

The second suggestion was for an upgrading of roads and other infrastructure. This was based on a concern that the smaller roads were not capable of carrying construction material and local residents. But also because of a concern in terms of access to emergency health care if there was an accident and the hospital was an hour away.

The third was some guarantee of access to long term training and jobs for our young people. *"Norway through Statoil, had a 10 year plan. We need to train our own people into the specialised jobs"*. The Bord na Móna site, in Bangor, Erris was cited as a model that the community did not want to see happen again. *"Workers from outside the area were brought in"*. Using local businesses, *"when a local business is by-passed in favour of outside business, everyone finds out"*

There was some suggestion that it was now too late to change what had happened in terms of the Government's agreement with the oil industry. But not too late to arrange some benefit to flow to the community. It was felt that the benefit should go to the landowners and the community. *"It is a commercial pipeline, the landowners affected should be paid 'rent' for every year the line is in use. A specific € per metre"*.

"We are looking to SEPIL for contributions to the local community, not 'peanuts' but relative amounts [relative to the value of the gas field]. When the project is finished, the community should get funds as per how long the pipeline has been in use". Suggestions included monies being allocated to education, scholarships, and sports facilities. *"Giving back to the community, a community fund based on how long the pipeline has been in use, sustainable funds forced into long term development. The above points not only benefit the community but also help SEPIL's image, could be a model for the future"*

Others wanted to see some overall, net benefit to the environment. Mention was made of off-setting the impact of the gas by implementing renewable energy projects in the area (wind etc).

4 WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE PIPELINE/THE PROJECT

“Who do we believe, SEPIL or Shell to Sea or the ‘experts’?. We would be happy to accept the views of someone or a body totally independent of SEPIL and RPS and Shell to Sea”.

Many participants spoke of the mistrust that had built up over the last 6 years, and the lack of transparency and accountability. *“SEPIL seem to be saying that there is a project they completed in Norway which is ‘supposedly’ the same as the proposed project here. However it is not, the Norwegian line does not pass through residential areas”.*

SEPIL’s distribution of information was seen as being very poor. Technical aspects and the language of the project have been poorly explained. *“Surely it can it be made more understandable, simpler language thereby giving more people the opportunity to debate the issue?”* The Advantica report was too technical for most to read, and three pages of reference documents cannot be accessed by the public. Some participants said they were still waiting for a soil report from Shell (issue of sand over peat in the bay)

The need for simple, easily understood, information fell into five areas:

1. The Pipeline itself

- Will access be needed for each side of the pipeline?
- The width of the corridor area needed?
- The depth of the pipe?
- Maintenance requirements both access and impact
- Will the area be fenced off?
- How wide will the trench be?
- Is there a specific Code of Practice for this Pipeline Project?
- Will/can the Beach Valve shut off safely? (check pg 42 of Advantica Report)
- Slug catcher, was this excluded from the HSA report.
- If there was a blockage, would full pressure develop in order to “push the slug” on?
- Umbilical, was this assessed with the Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA) or Project Planning Process? More information required.
- RPS should try to explain pressure and diameter issues better for the general public. General point.

- Stability of the pipeline, need to be satisfied that it will be safe.
- Under the Habitats Directive, is it illegal to enter Sruwaddaccon Bay?
- Do the designers know how to stabilise the peat?
- Peat Stability Report – request to have access to a report that exists on Peat Stability was not met. Is there something to hide?
- Slopes most vulnerable to peat slides are at gradients of 3° – 7°.
- Could the beach valve be moved to Rossport side?
- Volume of gas in a release from the pipeline. How long would it take to burn off?
- Quantity of methanol used 3,000 t/a or 1,800 t/a.

2. Future impacts on land use and planning

- Will it be difficult to get planning permission for a dwelling, which would be in close proximity to the pipeline? Will there be a wayleave, exclusion zone?
- There is a house on the present route that is 80m away, what if you wanted to build nearer?
- How close to the pipeline can you build?
- Will it affect house prices, the loss of land?
- Will the pressure in the pipeline affect the value of the land, as pressure increases will values decrease?
- Will the same distance be kept for new and existing housing?
- How will this devalue the land?
- Wider footprint of trench compared to BGE pipeline?
- People are afraid that it will contaminate areas within its route?

3. Regulatory authority

- Why is the responsibility for an onshore element under both the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) and An Bord Pleanála (ABP)?

4. Process issues

- When will the corridors be identified
- Has Sruwaddacon Bay been ruled out as possible route? Pipeline through the bay sounds better - no need for landowner consents
- What happens after route selection?

5. Compensation

- Will mountain and bog lands have the same value as the town centre?
- IFA and Bord Gáis compensation not relevant to present day
- Will people and landowners be suitably compensated?
- Some people were very keen to accept the money, without needing specific details
- If someone wanted to build for family and they don't get planning permission in the land due to the pipeline, what about compensation for this?

5 SPECIFIC ISSUES AND CONCERNS THAT RELATE TO THE SELECTION OF PIPELINE CRITERIA

In addition to the need for further information on the questions raised, there were a number of additional issues that participants would expect to see addressed in the selection of a pipeline corridor. The priority for everyone attending was concern for the health and safety of those living in the area.

Some participants indicated that there would be a “*huge difference*” if the pipeline could be routed away from settlements, and human activities – schools, school bus routes etc.

It was hard for several of the participants to focus on the question of criteria for pipeline selection without being able to address the two main concerns they had:

- Not processing offshore (raw versus processed gas)
- The processing facility itself (particularly as it pertains to the potential pollution of Carrowmore Lake - the main water supply for Erris), and the potential for emissions impacts.

A number of issues were raised concerning the potential impact of a pipeline on certain groups critical to the success of the local economy, such as the fishing industry:

- Would there be an impact on lobster and crab from mercury pollution associated with the waste pipe?
- Could there be a potential impact on salmon and trout. It was suggested that consultation should take place with the Angling Club in Glenamoy
- Protecting the nursery area for mussels in Sruwaddacon Bay
- Stability of the Sruwaddacon Bay “*sand is moving in the bay all the time*”
- Concerns that Sruwaddacon Bay had the 2nd strongest current in Europe
- The need to contact older people and fishermen as they have knowledge of currents.

A number of concerns relating to the potential impact on farming were raised:

- Reinstatement, this will affect farming?
- Farming, responsibility to REPS (Rural Environment Protection Scheme) must change
- Losing system of REPS (planning section to follow up on this)
- Shell benefits versus personal farming loss
- What will happen in terms of reinstatement of drains and land/field boundaries?

The choice of the final route raised several concerns:

Different views were held on which route would be a better choice. *"The landfall site has to change"*. Some felt that going up Sruwaddacon Bay would be the best option *"Most people would agree with a route that went through the bay"*, while some held other views *"The estuary route is only viable if there is no other option"*. Others mentioned coming in from the north coast and crossing the bog *"where there are no people/houses"*. *"Don't go through Machair"*. *"No damage to SAC's, NHA's, SPA's"*.

Many concerns were raised about the impact on certain fragile lands such as the Dóib (marl). Some concerns related to the potential for landslide damaging any pipeline that went through that kind of area. *"A new landslide could affect the existing landfall site"*. Also concern on what kind of methodology could be used to construct a pipeline through a bog. And the long term impact of disturbing the bog *"it took so long to establish in the first place. All land was originally reclaimed from the bog. Rushes could form."* *Stability of peat needs to be assessed"*. *"Underlying structure of the Bay is peat. It is constantly changing"*.

Other concerns related to the overall context of the proposal

- *"Legislation has been overlooked as the entire impact of the development have not been assessed"*

Having researched the project quite thoroughly, some participants had detailed technical questions or concerns:

- Heating of Outfall pipe
- Pressure reduction versus pressure limitation
- There must be 24 hour access to beach valve installation for safety reasons
- Compliance with Environmental Legislation – Habitats Directive
- Traffic management during construction will be very important - roads are very narrow and this can cause problems for local road users

6 OTHER INSIGHTS OR COMMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

Several of those attending gave a strong message to both RPS and Shell concerning their hopes for the future. *"Suspicion towards RPS as they are directly connected to SEPIL must be stamped out. This is the chance for RPS to open a new dialogue with everyone involved". "There will always be a certain minority who will object to any pipeline. Locals will engage with RPS before SEPIL". "Gradual reduction in police presence would be very welcome".*

Positive movement on this project is a must, *"no more miss-management". "Face to Face talks, no one should have to shout to be heard"* *"When dealing with the public past situations have felt that the local people were spoken 'down to', this has to stop".*

Trust is a big issue, towards all organisations involved, RPS, Shell, SEPIL, Mayo County Council Co, An Bord Pleanála. Compliance with EU and Irish legislation is paramount – *"there should be no short cuts"*

Several suggestions were made in terms of what should happen next

- If the project is going to happen, do it right from the start.
- Force people to talk about their fears, concerns, be open
- Informed decisions on the part of the landowners, correct and truthful information must be circulated
- Reasonable sessions, such as this one, will help if all those affected attended
- Discussion is key
- It is a process
- How would this information be administered, how would the model be assured to continue
- Workshop was very useful for two- way information
- Good will from the community could develop if there was sustainable / ongoing education and training
- A positive approach, this cannot be initiated now, it's too late
- Get local people to talk to the local people about the issues, locals have a much better understanding of the sense of the community and what mechanisms could move the process forward
- Could be a template for future projects
- RPS need to talk to the landowners

- Place an advertisement in the local papers stating the existence of the office in Belmullet, increase the company profile
- People have good grounds to be concerned
- SAC's, value to the community not only for environmental or technical aspects
- A monitoring group with clout is needed to ensure reinstatement is properly undertaken

And several suggestions were also made regarding what should happen in the future, particularly as it concerns environmental monitoring. The existing Environmental Project Monitoring Group that is in existence was felt to be dysfunctional

- Environmental Monitoring Group currently not functioning properly
- No feedback to the community about fears, pollution etc
- Monitoring agency must have teeth
- Monitoring, testing and reporting must be independent and reliable
- Environmental Monitoring Group no more 'mickey mouse' outfits

Participants expressed a great deal of support for the Workshop process carried out that day. Several indicated that they felt that this workshop had been the first occasion at which views could be inputted. *"This was the first time things were explained without 'us' feeling stupid"*. The hope was that the consultation would continue, would take the form of consultative meetings, but also one on one contact with local groups and people. *"Consult every step of the way – it's very important"*. *"The consultation process needs to be open and transparent RPS/Shell need to be there when information is sought by the public. You should ensure that every query is answered, if not on the spot, someone should get back to the person making the enquiry within a reasonable timeframe."*

"Make it a flagship"

RPS would like to thank all those attending for a very constructive and productive day.

Pat Hayles, April 2007