



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways

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Prepared by the Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport
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Greenway

There is an excellent opportunity now to develop new Greenways in a way which can transform more rural areas around the country, provide a wonderful experience for visitors and locals, and contribute to the health of the nation.



**An Roinn Iompair,
Turasóireachta agus Spóirt**
Department of Transport,
Tourism and Sport

Greenway

Ministers' Statement

The success of the recently opened Waterford Greenway and the Great Western Greenway in Mayo, opened in 2010, clearly demonstrates the potential of Greenways as economic contributors to rural communities through increased tourism. In addition, the benefits for the health and wellbeing of local communities through the use of Greenways as recreational amenities are significant. The experience from Waterford, Westmeath and Mayo has been extremely positive and there has been a transformative effect on many small towns along and adjacent to those Greenways. It is very evident that the State's investment in Greenways has delivered a significant boost for these locations.

The challenge now is to ensure that future investment in Greenways is done in a way that delivers the greatest benefits for the areas in which they are located and for Ireland as a whole. We have taken our experience and learning from previous Greenway projects and have sought to put in place a strategy that will deliver the best outcome for everyone involved in the delivery of future Greenway projects.

For that reason, we will be prioritising our investment in Greenways primarily towards those projects of scale, that while they will be great amenities for the regions in which they are located, can also deliver in terms of attracting visitors and increasing visitor revenue. We are very fortunate to have many examples of beautiful scenic areas all around the country where Greenways could be developed to provide the type of memorable experience that cycling and walking tourists look for.

There is a huge interest in Greenways nationwide and we know, from previous funding calls, that there will be no shortage of excellent projects being proposed. For the purposes of this strategy however, the main focus will be on the delivery of Greenways that are of strategic significance on a regional or national level which in turn could facilitate the development of linked and complementary local developments that may be delivered outside of this strategy.

The very significant response to the public consultation undertaken for this strategy raised many important issues which have been a very important part of our considerations in the preparation of this Strategy.

There is an excellent opportunity now to develop new Greenways in a way which can transform more rural areas around the country, provide a wonderful experience for visitors and locals, and contribute to the health of the nation. The beauty of Ireland's outdoors is one of our great assets and Greenways are already playing a major role in allowing people to experience and enjoy that beauty. We look forward to the delivery of new Greenway projects over the next decade which will spread the benefits and pleasure of Greenways to more communities and more people.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Ross'.

Minister Shane Ross



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Griffin T.D.'.

Minister of State Brendan Griffin



Introduction

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport recognises the benefits that can arise from the further development of Greenways in Ireland, as a tourism product with significant potential to attract overseas visitors, for local communities in terms of economic benefits, and for all users as an amenity for physical activity and a contributor to health and wellbeing.

The role of Greenways as part of Ireland's tourism product and its contribution to rural development has been outlined in recent Government strategies and policy documents, including;

- **Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework** and the **National Development Plan 2018-2027** note that creating the environment to support job creation in rural areas will be a key enabler to rejuvenating rural towns and villages, sustaining vibrant rural communities and reversing population decline. It recognises that "[T]he development of Greenways, Blueways and Peatways offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland. The development of a strategic national network of these trails is a priority and will support the development of rural communities and job creation in the rural economy, as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity." A strategic policy objective of Project 2040 is to facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.
- The Government's Tourism Policy Statement **People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025** sets the Government's primary objectives for tourism i.e to increase overseas visitors and revenue and the associated employment. Therefore the tourism policy statement is centred on Ireland achieving its full potential as a destination for overseas tourism whilst also recognising that the domestic market underpins the tourism offering. The Tourism Policy statement highlights the importance of sustainable development of tourism and recognises the contribution of facilities for activity-based holidays to Ireland's positive image and its attractiveness as a tourist destination. It also notes the Government's support for the development and improvement of our physical visitor attractions, visitor infrastructure and facilities for visitor activities, including the development of Greenways. Following the successful implementation of the Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018, a new Tourism Action Plan for the period 2018-2020 is being prepared.
- The Action Plan for Rural Development **Realising our Rural Potential** highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas. It states that "Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas in particular, by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking". The publication of this Greenways Strategy to support activity tourism in rural areas is specifically identified as an action point in the Action Plan.
- The health of our population is also a major focus for the Government. For example, the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Get Ireland Active, states "physical inactivity is a demonstrated clear risk to health and wellbeing in Ireland. Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviours are associated with numerous chronic diseases. With people no longer as physically active as they should be, there are many threats to our health and wellbeing from being inactive". Greenways provide an excellent opportunity for Irish people to participate in a healthy outdoor activity. Evidence from the Waterford Greenway has shown that 50% of users are walkers, this is a hugely important element and shows that Greenways can play a vital part in addressing physical inactivity.

The development of Greenways support two specific actions in the NPAP as follows:

36. Prioritise the planning and development of walking and cycling and general recreational/physical activity infrastructure.
37. Explore opportunities to maximise physical activity and recreation amenities in the natural environment.

Objectives

The objective of this Strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenways users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.

To achieve these objectives, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will ensure that project promoters will work with Local Communities, Local Landowners, Local Authorities and other relevant State Bodies and organisations to deliver:

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1. A Strategic Greenway network of national and regional routes, with a number of high capacity flagship routes that can be extended and/or link with local Greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure;
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2. Greenways of scale and appropriate standard that have significant potential to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland and are regularly used by overseas visitors, domestic visitors and locals thereby contributing to a healthier society through increased physical activity;
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3. Greenways that provide a substantially segregated off-road experience linking places of interest, recreation and leisure in areas with beautiful scenery of different types with plenty to see and do; and
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4. Greenways that provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies, and
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5. Greenways that are developed with all relevant stakeholders in line with an agreed code of practice.
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What is a Greenway?

For the purposes of this Strategy, a Greenway is a recreational or pedestrian corridor for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. These routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities.

Greenways are for everyone. While they might be designed specifically to meet the needs of cyclists in terms of gradient and surface, they are used by pedestrians, wheelchair users, children in buggies as well as people on all types of bicycles. Greenways funded under this Strategy should meet the requirements of all users.

Greenways funded under this Strategy will be built following the criteria set out in the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Rural Cycleway Design Standard (Offline) Where Greenways are planned in areas of private land, they should be designed to transverse field boundaries and hedgelines to avoid severance where possible and in line with an agreed code of practice.

Greenways are not simply a means of getting from A to B, they are an experience in and of themselves. They are also a means to experience the communities through which they transport us. Greenways should be used to tell the story of the people and places through which they pass and interpretation will be a key means of enabling this.

It is recognised however, that access for motorised vehicles may need to be maintained for certain short sections of Greenway, including for maintenance works. The number of traffic movements on Greenways will, generally, be infrequent and limited to access for landowners and maintenance vehicles.

The National Cycle Network scoping study, which was referred to in the public consultation document, is replaced by this Strategy. The focus in that study was the provision of cycling links (mostly on-road) between towns and cities. The term “National Cycle Network” will not be used in future funding.

Focus of this Strategy

The potential of Greenways and cycle tourism to act as economic drivers in local areas was set out in detail in the public consultation document. This was informed by market research carried out on behalf of Fáilte Ireland which demonstrates that, along with the already existing growth in cycling and walking activities, there is great tourism potential for Greenways, particularly where the right type of infrastructure can be developed in the right places for the right people.

Furthermore, Greenways can assist in attracting visitors away from the busy traditional tourist centres and into rural communities. The associated job creation potential in local tourism and hospitality businesses is significant.

To capitalise on this, the tourism potential of Greenways will be an important element in the Department's considerations around future Greenways development and the consequent funding decisions. Furthermore projects to be funded under this Greenways Strategy will need to provide an excellent experience for all visitors and in that regard will need to be of scale.

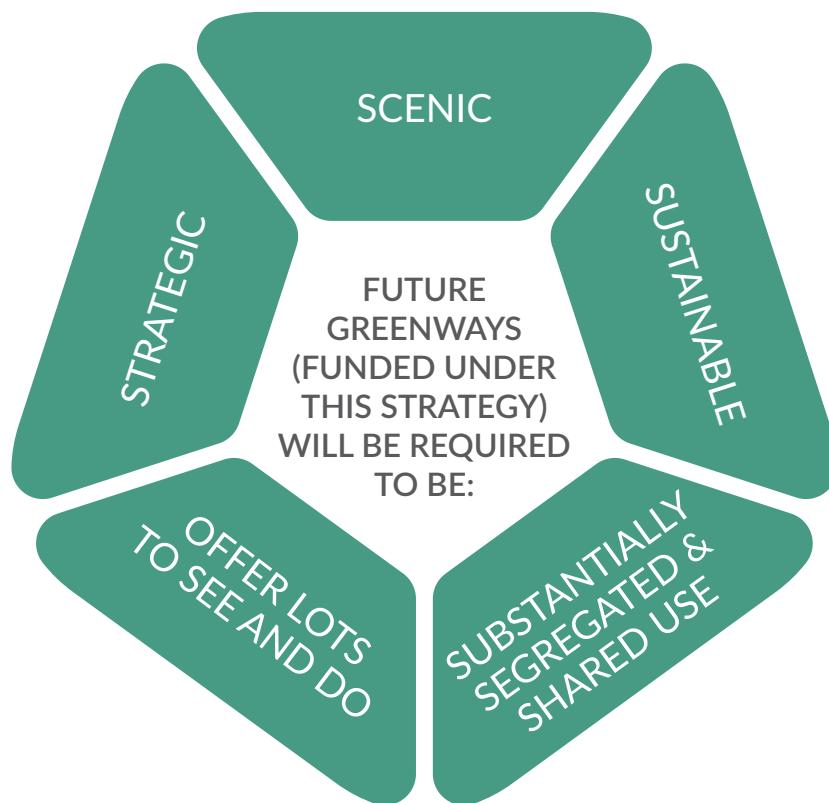
For example, to provide a quality "day out" visitor experience, Greenways should ideally be in the order of at least 20km in length and preferably longer. In order to bring additional revenue into an area, Greenways should ideally be closer to 40km, similar to the Great Western and Waterford Greenways, as this will usually require an overnight stay for non-local users. In addition, Fáilte Ireland advise, that if Ireland is to be recognised internationally as a world-class activity tourism destination it will need to have the appropriate infrastructure in place in order to motivate international tourists i.e. a number of national Greenways and a spread of regional Greenways that provide a compelling visitor experience.

For the purposes of this strategy, the development of 'Greenways' relates to the development of Greenways of scale i.e. for new developments or extensions of existing Greenways that are more than 20k or shorter distances where it is proposed to join a number of existing Greenways to form a longer, more strategic route. The development of smaller, more local Greenways will not be funded under this strategy and will rely on other existing funding programmes such as the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and LEADER which are implemented by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Fáilte Ireland's research also indicates that visitors cycling while on holidays want their cycling routes to be scenic and have lots of other things to see and do. Future funding proposals will include an assessment of the tourism potential of a Greenway and the extent to which it meets these criteria.

While best practice would be that all Greenways be fully segregated from vehicular traffic, we consider it prudent to allow some scope for local situations where total segregation might not be possible but that other traffic calming measures have been introduced to make the route more suitable for inexperienced cyclists. Therefore, this Strategy uses the term "Substantially Segregated". Our Greenways will be for "Shared Use" by pedestrians and people cycling and for a range of different users.

Finally, Greenways being developed under this Strategy should be Strategic and should have the potential to link into a larger cycling and walking network. Furthermore, this will allow consideration of projects that while they do not in and of themselves meet all the Scenic and See and Do criteria they would provide a strategic link to other activities and locations.



Based on these factors, under this Strategy and subsequent funding call, the Department will concentrate on the development of National and Regional Greenways. These are routes that meet the criteria set out above which will achieve the best return on the State's investment.

- **Our definition of National Greenways are those which are at least 100 kilometres long.**
- **Our definition of Regional Greenways is one which is at least 20 kilometres in length, but preferably closer to 40 kilometres long, or which can be extended to connect to a longer strategic route.**

The Department considers this approach to be the most logical first step in the strategic development of an excellent Greenways system around the country which will greatly enhance the activity tourism offering for overseas and domestic visitors and will deliver the best opportunities for local communities.

From the submissions received during the public consultation period it is clear that there is a wide selection of proposed Greenways that could be developed which, together with the Greenways already in place, would deliver an excellent National and Regional Greenways system around the country. We already have a number of Greenways in place which fit into the definition of a regional route – Great Western Greenway, Great Southern Greenway, Waterford Greenway and Old Rail Trail, all of these can be extended further and some may be able to achieve National Greenway status. The Galway to Dublin Greenway clearly has the potential to be a National Greenway of scale and international appeal. Construction of the section of this route from Maynooth to Athlone will be completed in 2019.

Local routes and other Non-Greenway Routes

Many possible routes were proposed during the public consultation which could be described as local rather than national or regional routes. These would be classed primarily as a local amenity and would be unlikely to attract many visitors from outside the immediate locality. These routes have excellent merit at a local level and while the Department will continue to encourage their development, they will not be the focus of this funding programme.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has provided funding for many walking and cycling projects in recent years and will continue to provide funding for local Greenways, blueways and other trails under the Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (as set out in the National Development Plan). These projects will, where appropriate, also adhere to the TII Standard and DRCD and this Department will work together to ensure that links between local Greenways and National and Regional Greenways are provided.

Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP)

The Outdoor Recreation Plan, developed by a number of State Agencies, seeks to achieve a step-change in investment in the provision and maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities. There are a large number of other cycling routes that could be provided through the Outdoor Recreation Plan. Some of these routes would not be Greenways but would provide excellent cycling routes and options for users of Greenways to continue their journey by bicycle. The intention of this Strategy is to provide linkages where possible to potential routes delivered under the Outdoor Recreation Plan - this could include routes through forests owned by Coillte, land under the ownership of Bord Na Móna or trails through National Parks and Wildlife Service or OPW land. The map across shows the extent of State owned lands and waters.

An example of a potential non-Greenway route would be from Clifden to Letterfrack through the Connemara National Park owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Coillte owned land. Another would be route in the Midlands links the Grand Canal Route with cycling routes on Coillte and Bord Na Móna owned lands in County Offaly and with the OPW managed site at Clonmacnoise. These would not necessarily be Greenways as the gradient/slope and surface may not comply with the criteria but would provide an off-road cycling option that would prove attractive to many Greenway users.

IRELAND RECREATION

LEGEND

- ▲ Nature Reserves
- Fisheries
- National Parks
- State Lakes
- Coillte Trails
- Bord na Móna
- Waterways Ireland
- Coillte Owned Lands



Map courtesy of Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht



Development of Greenways

Public Consultation Process

In order to ensure a successful Greenway development it is vital that those who are proposing such developments do so in such a way as to ensure, in so far as is possible, that there is buy in and support locally. Early engagement, with the local community and particularly landowners that may be affected either directly or indirectly, before any decisions regarding route selection, is vital.

The public consultation process is intended to discuss with and inform the general public, and in particular those who might possibly be directly or indirectly affected, about the Greenway proposal, the manner by which the eventual route will be selected and the considerations that will inform this choice, i.e. social, practical, environmental, engineering, financial and tourism. This process also provides an opportunity for landowners and the wider local community to highlight aspects of concern or special interest to be taken into account by project promoters in advancing the planning and design of the Greenway proposal.

The nature of some route proposals can mean that the route is somewhat pre-determined as the majority of it might be on State-owned land or along former railway lines or canal towpaths. Nonetheless, the plan to construct a Greenway will intensify the use of that land and thus, potentially, impact on adjacent landowners. It is vital that all landowners that could potentially be impacted, either directly or indirectly, should be consulted and their concerns taken on board.

Project promoters must undertake appropriate consultation with landowners and communities when considering route options. A Project Liaison Officer should be appointed at an early stage in the process to engage with landowners and communities and be the official point of contact between the project promoters, landowners and members of the public. An Agronomist should also be appointed by the project promoters.

Decisions and publication of a preferred route should only occur after consultation with all potentially affected land owners has happened or has been attempted. It must be borne in mind that it may be difficult to identify and locate the registered owner of the land despite the best efforts of the project promoter.

Prior to public consultation the project promoters must consult the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to identify any areas of particular environmental concern in the Study Area. They should also strongly consider what State lands and, if suitable, public rights of way could be used for the potential route.

More detailed guidelines on the public consultation process are set out in Appendix 1.

Land Access for Greenways

The preferred model for future Greenways is to use lands already in the undisputed ownership or control of the State, either through Government Agencies, Government Departments or Local Authorities. The advantages that this model provides include certainty of permanent unrestricted access, clarity in relation to liability for any insurance claims and certainty of responsibility for maintenance and upkeep. Accordingly, the mapping of such lands is an essential early step in route planning. However, whilst there are significant amounts of land in State ownership around the country that are suitable for the construction of Greenways or sections of Greenways, there are also likely to be a small number of proposed Greenways that also traverse land that is in private ownership. It is essential in those cases that proposals and routes are developed in a consultative and proactive manner with the potentially affected landowners, that is sensitive to their needs, that maximises their support for, and goodwill towards, the proposed Greenway and is in line with an agreed code of practice.

Further details on route development are set out in Appendix 1 and will also be included in the Funding Criteria document that will follow this Strategy, but in summary, proposed Greenway development under this strategy will ensure:

- Early and proactive engagement and consultation, in so far as is possible, with all potentially affected landowners and other local stakeholders;
- Early discussion and agreement on accommodation works ;
- Agronomists are engaged, at no cost to the landowner;

- Severance is minimised to the maximum extent feasible whilst keeping in mind the requirements of Greenway users;
- Impact on land-holdings is minimised in so far as is possible ; and
- Needs of landowners and local communities are considered fully to maximise their support and goodwill.

Where proposed Greenways meet the requirements as set out in this Strategy –there are two main approaches to developing Greenways on privately owned lands 1) Permissive Access 2) Land Purchase.

Permissive Access

The majority of existing walking trail developments in Ireland have been established on a “permissive access” basis. Some Greenways developed to date, most notably the Great Western Greenway, have been developed using the permissive access model where the landowner (private or public) gives permission for the Greenway/trail to pass over the property. Permissive access does not lead to a route becoming a right of way. It is a route that can be used by the public with the permission of the landowner, where users must not damage the landowner’s interest. The permissive access model has been very successful to-date, but it can involve a degree of uncertainty for both landowners and users which may be an issue, particularly for Greenways of strategic importance

Where the landowners are willing to allow permissive access for a Greenway; a long term legal agreement will be necessary in order to provide certainty of continuous access to the facility given the very significant level of State funding required in their development. A landowner retains the right to withdraw permission for access should he/she so wish, subject to reasonable notice. The responsibilities in relation to the ongoing maintenance, liability and promotion of the Greenway would rest with the sponsoring agency or local authority that has paid for the development and construction. In circumstances where the landowner enters into a contract to allow long-term access to the relevant land the contract could also opt to cover the carrying out of the ongoing maintenance of that element of the Greenway.

Land Purchase

Where a section of a preferred route passes through private land and following the consultation process set out above and in Appendix 1, and where detailed discussions have taken place regarding the appropriate level of accommodation works, the view of the agronomist has been fully considered and the impact on Greenway users and landowners of alternate routes has been assessed, it is anticipated that voluntary agreements would be entered into to sell the small sections of land required to construct the Greenway. It is recognised, however, that despite everyone’s best efforts, there may be instances where a voluntary agreement cannot be reached and an economically feasible alternative route that meets the requirements of Greenway users in terms of gradient and access to scenery and things to see and do does not exist. In such circumstances and when efforts to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution have been exhausted, the purchase of the land using the available legal mechanisms may need to be considered.

Accommodation Works

It is recognised that a proposal to construct a Greenway route through or adjacent to private land, particularly land used as a farm or other business, could impact on the landowner’s business. The goal is to ensure that any impact on a landowner’s business or livelihood is kept to a minimum. The provision of suitable and justifiable accommodation works, such as underpasses for significant sized dairy herds (as provided on the Waterford Greenway) and fencing to protect landholdings, would be an essential part of mitigating the impact of the project. In the vast majority of cases it is anticipated that agreement with landowners can be achieved on the exact routing and accommodation works.

Code of Practice

Based on the guidelines set out in this Strategy, as part of its work on the Galway to Dublin Greenway, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) will devise a Code of Best Practice for Greenways, this will be developed by a working group comprising the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Department of Rural and Community Development, a Rural Recreation Officer and representatives of the landowner groups. This will deal with issues such as agreeing the consultation process, the factors to be considered when choosing a route, appropriate types of accommodation works, appropriate levels of payment for land, agreement on the level of on-going maintenance and payment required, suitable types of access both for landowners and the public, ways of minimising severance, range of possible mitigation works and mechanisms to minimise disruption and to ensure the smooth and timely delivery of Greenway projects. This work will be finalised in advance of the closing date of the first funding call for Greenways under this Strategy.



Impact on Agriculture and Rural Areas

A significant number of the submissions made in the public consultation phase concerned the impact on those with an agricultural business. These are referenced more fully in the public consultation summary document. The impact on the business of farming and the impact on the homes of landowners were the main concerns.

As discussed earlier, great care must be taken with the routes of Greenways to ensure that they do not impact on the ability of adjacent landowners to continue making a living from their land. To that end it is important that the type of farming activity on the land is assessed during the planning and development of the route when considering the route options available and potential accommodation works required. Under this Strategy, professional assessment of land use by agronomists and agricultural advisors should be used by project promoters to assess the impact on agriculture during the Planning Process. This would be carried out at no cost to the landowner.

Greenways are flexible in nature and can be routed along field boundaries. For example, where a dairy farm is located on or adjacent to a route it may be necessary to provide an underpass in circumstances where the herd size or the size of the severed portion of land merits it, in accordance with the agreed Charter of Accommodation works.



Greenways are an excellent way of bringing people back into contact with nature but that contact must be respectful of the fact that much of the land they are travelling through is the source of someone's livelihood.

In reference to some of the concerns raised during the public consultation period, the information available to the Department is that there is no evidence of an increase in burglaries or anti-social behaviour due to Greenways having been developed in an area.

While there are risks associated with any construction near farm-holdings, the development of a Greenway adjacent to land may also present opportunities for some farm owners to develop small businesses which could be attractive to users of the Greenways, for example through petting farms, accommodation, and sales of farm produce.

Design and Standards

Projects funded under this Strategy will have to comply with the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Rural Cycleway Design (Offline) Standard. It is important to note that this standard permits a number of relaxations. Any such relaxations would need to be proposed to, and approved by, the Department.

This Standard should be read in conjunction with the other standards referred to therein, particularly in relation to junction design and road cross-sections that are covered in other standards.

While the TII Standard for off-road cycleways will be used for Greenways, the NTA's Cycle Manual should be used for links on urban roads.

Gradient/Slope

Greenways are designed to be used by as many people as possible whether they are walking, cycling any type of bicycle, in a wheelchair or pushing a child in a buggy. As stated in the TII Standard "The overall gradient along a cycle route is an important design consideration. Comfort and attractiveness of a cycleway will be greatly increased if the route follows a shallow gradient." In keeping with the TII Standard, the gradient (slope) on Greenways should generally be of the order of 3%, however the standard does provide for relaxations of this to 5% and 10% but does state "The provision of gradients greater than 5% should be confined to short sections of the cycle route and should be preferably less than 100 metres in length."

Surface

As stated in the TII Standard, "asphalt surfacing is the most popular among cyclists because of its evenness and high skid resistance."

It continues: "Although a closed pavement construction is preferred by cyclists in terms of comfort and safety, there are occasions where a surface is required to give a sense of the environment. In rural cycleway and Greenway situations, where the cycleways attractiveness is just as important as comfort, dust path construction or other loose material construction may be the preferred option in order to blend with the environment and to avoid unnecessary impacts in forests, along protected heritage trails, tow paths and along river banks. The application of loose surfaces can enhance the cycleways' appeal to its users due to its more natural aesthetics."

A separate document on Ancillary infrastructure is also being published that will address a number of facilities that will be required on Greenways funded under this Strategy.





Greenways and the Environment

In general, Greenway routes will need ecological assessment in their planning and design. In order to ensure their development is consistent with nature conservation objectives and legal compliance requirements, Greenways should be designed to take into account, and avoid where necessary, the sensitivities of the natural heritage, they can include measures to enhance biodiversity as well as providing an important resource for both locals and visitors. Greenways must be planned and constructed in compliance with the requirements of Irish and European law including, but not limited to, EU Directive 2014/52/EU.

Where proposed Greenways are along existing natural ecological corridors such as rivers and canals, or across natural habitats such as coastal habitats, there is potential for people to access nature and to see and learn about our natural heritage, its importance, and how to protect it. There is also potential to enhance the biodiversity value of an ecological corridor or other area when planning for Greenways. Providing interpretative facilities concerning the natural heritage is recommended. Proposed Greenways should examine their potential to provide enhancement measures for the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020.

Local authorities should promote a “leave no trace” philosophy for users of Greenways and should provide and promote a Code of Conduct for users of Greenways in their area.





Post-Construction

Evidence from existing Greenways both in Ireland and overseas is that there is a need for continued investment in the maintenance and marketing of Greenways. Animation of Greenways is also important in order to tell the local history of the area, be that social, political or environmental. Locals tend to use the Greenway regularly but others are unlikely to revisit if the Greenway is not adequately animated or maintained.

Guidance on the use of ancillary infrastructure is provided in a separate document on the Department's website. This document gives examples of facilities required at trailheads and along the route including seating and picnic areas, toilet facilities, art and story-telling as well as information boards.

Accreditation

Sport Ireland maintain a register of trails in Ireland. To be included on the register Sport Ireland Trails carry out an inspection of the completed trail and assess it against the appropriate standards and requirements. A scoring system is used to determine if a trail can be "accredited" and therefore included on the register. A report on the findings (a snag list) is issued to the local authority or State Agency responsible for the Greenway. This system will also be used for Greenways funded under this Strategy.

Maintenance

This is an important aspect to ensure that we continuously have a high standard of Greenways for all users. Appropriate maintenance provisions will form part of the terms and conditions of funding of Greenways. Local Authorities and State Agencies will be obliged to set up a reporting mechanism for any issues that arise with regard to Greenways including maintenance, environmental and social impacts. The need to have in place a Management and Maintenance Plan for a Greenway is also a requirement for accreditation by Sport Ireland.

Local authorities will have the option of maintaining the Greenway themselves or through using a payment scheme similar to the Walks Scheme implemented by the Department of Rural and Community Development whereby modest payments are made to landowners or adjacent landowners on an annual basis to maintain a certain portion of Greenway. This should create a greater sense of ownership amongst the community.

Branding

Branding for Greenways has been designed by Sport Ireland Trails and will be available on the Department's website. The Greenway branding and associated guidelines must be used for all Greenways funded by the Department. The branding can only be used on routes meeting the definition of a Greenway and must be approved by the Department.

Leveraging Greenways

Whilst Greenways are, of themselves, important attractors for tourists, both local and international, they can also be used to promote other aspects of our tourism offering. This can be through the Brand Experiences – Ireland’s Ancient East, the Wild Atlantic Way, Hidden Heartlands and Dublin – and/or with our food and culture offerings.



For example, Fáilte Ireland has recently unveiled plans to make the Waterford Greenway a top culinary destination with the potential to attract more overseas visitors and drive significant growth in the area. The Greenway has proven to be a hit having welcomed almost 250,000 visitors last year alone.

Working alongside Waterford City and County Council and Food the Waterford Way, Fáilte Ireland has already delivered training programmes for almost 50 enterprises along the Waterford Greenway to create authentic food and drink experiences which bring the culture of the local area to life. Food and drink experiences play a substantial part in helping to generate and sustain economic opportunity and development by increasing visitor numbers, dwell time, spend and satisfaction in visited areas.

The new ‘Savour the Greenway’ programme seeks to leverage the growing tourism trend for seeking out locally sourced food and culture in order to maximise the appeal of the Waterford Greenway, a 46km off-road cycling and walking trail from the Viking City of Waterford to the picturesque coastal town of Dungarvan. As part of the Ireland’s Ancient East brand, Fáilte Ireland will continue to work with local drink and food operators along the Greenway to develop a number of food experiences which can be promoted internationally by 2019.

Other Cycling and Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure

Whilst this Strategy concerns the construction of strategic Greenways there are many other different types of cycling infrastructure and routes available around the country. Greenways funded under this Strategy will be designed for use by all and it is expected that one of the main cohorts of users will be inexperienced and family cyclists. This type of user is unlikely to use on-road cycling infrastructure. However, for experienced cyclists Ireland provides a wonderful opportunity to discover new areas away from the main tourism centres, to that end it is important that we provide information on how to access these hidden gems. It is important to view Greenway development within this wider context.

Lower-Trafficked roads

We have an abundance of lightly trafficked roads in Ireland. Some of these may prove suitable to provide links from Greenways to places of interest, viewing points and towns and villages. However, traffic counts and speed surveys will have to be carried out if they are to be used to direct potentially inexperienced cyclists from a segregated Greenway to a regional or local road. Traffic calming measures including road narrowing, chicanes and lower speed limits may be required to make such roads suitable for family cycling.

In that regard, many local authorities have already created cycling routes around their county. We have one of the most extensive road networks in Europe per head of population and many of these roads are very lightly trafficked. As part of the funding call following the publication of this Greenways Strategy local authorities seeking funding will be required to provide routes within their county of lower-trafficked roads that can provide access to places of interest and links to their proposed Greenway route, thereby placing the proposed Greenway within a broader infrastructural context. In this way we will be in a position to map out a more extensive network of routes around the country. Such routes should follow the criteria laid out in Eurovelo, that they have fewer than 2,000 vehicle movements per day and preferably 500 per day. Traffic calming measures and speed limit reductions may be required and applicants should set out how they would develop such routes and the wider cycling and walking infrastructure.

Flood Defence Measures

The development of flood defence schemes offers the potential to develop both pathways and cycle ways in the delivery of the scheme defences. The Department will work closely with the OPW, local authorities and, where appropriate, the NTA, to identify possible synergies between flood defence works and the provision of cycling infrastructure including Greenways.

Project Ireland 2040 included provision for significant funding for flood protection measures under the National Development Plan. The OPW and the other agencies involved in this work will seek to incorporate cycling and walking provision where possible when planning flood defence works. Whilst this provision might not necessarily be of Greenway standard it has the potential to provide additional cycling and walking infrastructure around the country that could tie in with our Greenway network.

Urban Greenways

The National Transport Authority has developed, or is in the process of developing, cycling networks for the Greater Dublin Area and the Regional Cities (Cork, Limerick, Galway & Waterford). These networks include a number of Greenways, which are, in the main, focussed on achieving an increase in the numbers commuting to work and education. The Department will work closely to ensure cohesion with the NTA's cycle network plans around the country.

Northern Ireland Greenways Strategy

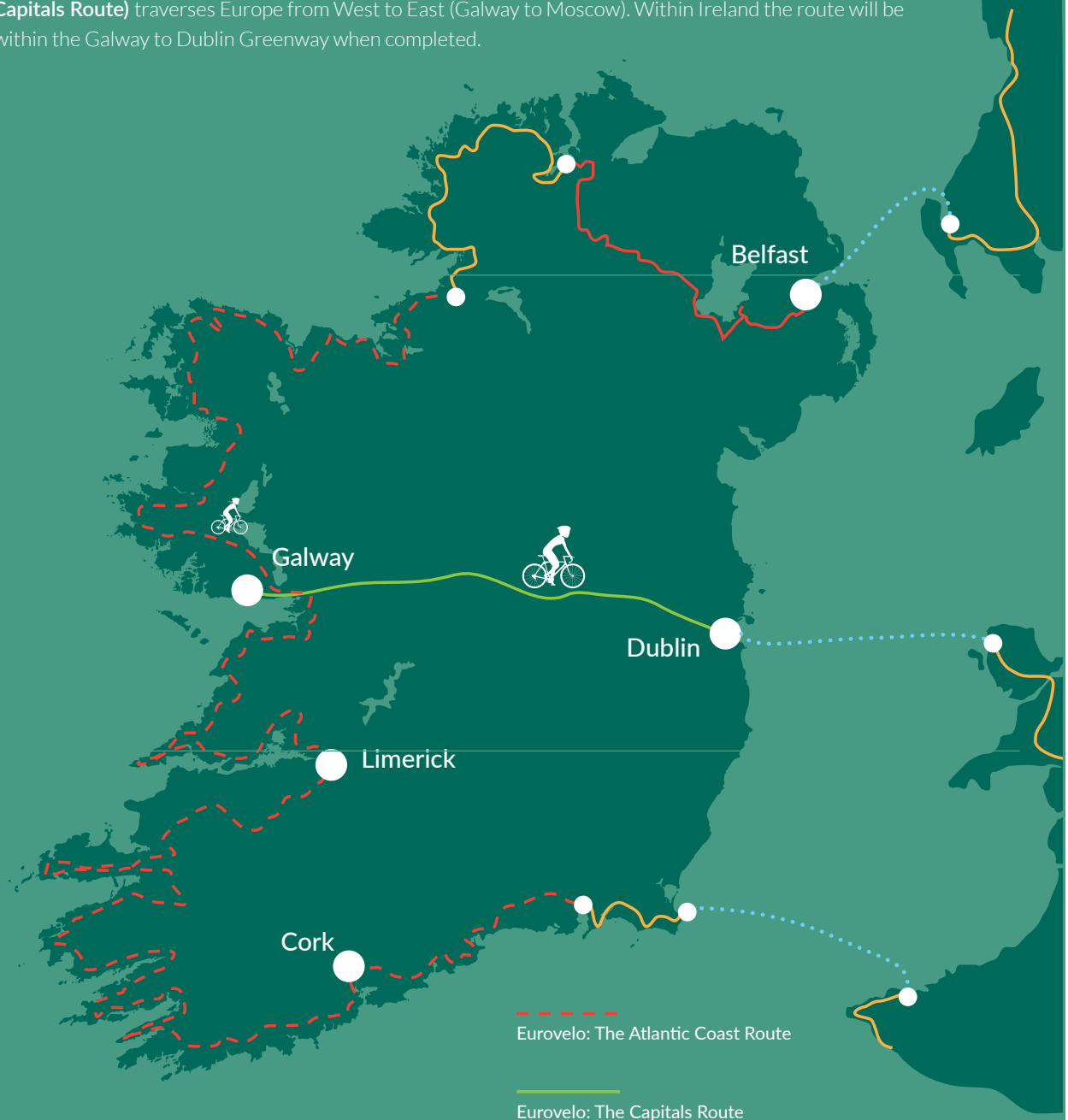
Northern Ireland published its Greenways Strategy in 2016 and it includes a number of Greenways that would logically extend across the border. EU funding under INTERREG VA has been made available to a number of these Greenways – Newry to Carlingford, Middletown in Armagh to Smithborough in Monaghan and Derry to Muff and Buncrana as well as Lifford to Strabane. Many of these Greenways can be extended in the coming years and it will be important to take a joint approach to proposals in this regard.

Eurovelo

Eurovelo is the European cycle route network. It encompasses 15 routes all around Europe. Eurovelo routes 1 and 2 have sections within Ireland. Eurovelo provides a ready-made brand to market cycling in Ireland to experienced cyclists thinking of visiting Ireland for a cycling holiday.

Eurovelo 1 (the Atlantic Coast route) traverses Europe from North to South (Nordkap in Norway to Caminha in Northern Portugal). The route within the State generally follows the coast from Donegal to Wexford, mostly along lesser-trafficked roads. There are sections of Greenway in Mayo, Limerick and Waterford along the route. It is likely that further sections of Eurovelo 1 will be developed as Greenways over the period of the Strategy however it is highly unlikely that the entire route will be on Greenway over the coming decade. Eurovelo 1 will be fully mapped within Ireland by the end of 2018.

Eurovelo2 (the Capitals Route) traverses Europe from West to East (Galway to Moscow). Within Ireland the route will be accommodated within the Galway to Dublin Greenway when completed.





Next Steps and Funding

Following publication of this Strategy, the Department will announce a funding call for Greenway projects for 2019-2021. It is important to note that whilst funding is currently in place solely for those years it is the intention that the criteria laid out in this Strategy will be followed for the lifetime of this Strategy. If there are an insufficient number of applications to the funding call that offer the best prospects for development, not all the funding available will necessarily be allocated. Accordingly, there may be further funding calls.

Applications for funding will be accepted from Local Authorities and State Agencies. Due to the need to have procedures in place to protect public finances it will not be possible to accept funding applications solely backed by community groups.





Appendix 1: Public Consultation Guidelines

The support of the community and potentially affected landowners is essential to the long term success of the Greenway and those potentially impacted by a proposed Greenway route, especially landowners, must be consulted as early as possible.

1. Study Area Public Consultation

At the first public information session a large-scale map of the Study Area should be displayed. Information leaflets/ brochures may be made available. Local authority or State Agency personnel and any consultants should be in attendance to discuss, in general terms at this preliminary planning stage, all aspects of the project and to answer various questions from the general public. The recommended approach is for the project promoter to identify the towns and villages which are being proposed as potential stopping points on the route. The towns and villages being proposed as stopping points should have the facilities required for a good visitor experience, i.e. those with accommodation, restaurants and with things to “see and do”. Following this public consultation the views made known to the project team would inform their work on route corridor selection and constraints study. The constraints study would look at environmental impacts and the likely impact on businesses (including farms) and homes within the study area. Notice of the public information sessions should be provided through local and social media and notices on the project promoters websites.

2. Route Options Consultation

Every effort should be made to devise a route that maximises the support of the community and potentially affected landowners. The Route options report should also examine the relative attractiveness of the scenery provided by each route and the merits of the options with regard to activities, accommodation and things to see and do. The identification of environmental impacts must include assessment of potential impacts on local communities, homes and farms, archaeology/ heritage, flora and fauna, surface water and groundwater. Particular account must be taken of the presence of designated sites under European Directives and national legislation, including heritage areas and Special Areas of Conservation. Every effort should be made to devise a route that avoids direct impact on homes and such environmental sites and areas. Where this is not possible, steps should be taken to mitigate the effects.

3. Preferred Route Corridor Consultation

This process would culminate with a published Constraints Report based on the promoter’s research and public submissions. The second round of public consultation is the logical next interaction with the public where the local authority or State Agency can present the possible route corridor options that have emerged following the identification of constraints and follow-on analysis. The public should again be invited at public consultation sessions to comment on the work-to-date and to make the project promoters aware of any local issues that may not have been taken into account in the corridor identification process.

4. Preferred Route Consultation (meetings with individual landowners effected)

Following the consultation above a preferred route would be determined. This preferred route would lead to discussions taking place on a one-to-one basis with the landowners affected. These discussions should be proactive and constructive and would focus on agreeing the best route possible given the requirements of landowners, users of the Greenway, environmental and financial concerns. Severance of land-holdings should be minimised as far as possible, but where it is unavoidable, accommodation works should be provided to mitigate the impact. The services of an agronomist must be available to landowners that farm (at no cost) in order to fully and fairly assess the impact on their business. It must be recognised that it may not be feasible in all circumstances to come to an agreement and that there may need to be recourse to mediation with the objective of coming to a mutually agreeable solution that works for the Greenway and the landowner.



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