

**Dáil Question**  
**No: 66**

To ask the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress that has been made in the planning of a greenway pedestrian and cycling route between Athlone and Galway; and when he expects such a route to go to design and construction phase..

- Eamon Ryan.

For ORAL answer on Wednesday, 22nd March, 2017.

Ref No: 14245/17

**Answered by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport**  
**Shane Ross**

**REPLY**

As the Deputy will be aware, concerns were expressed by some landowners in Galway following the publication of the initial 'preferred route' identified for the Greenway from Athlone to Galway and my predecessor instructed Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Galway County Council to consult landowners along the route in relation to their concerns. Following the publication of the TII report on these consultations, a decision was taken in late 2015 to pause development of the Greenway west of the Shannon to allow all stakeholders to consider how best to progress this project.

In January this year, Minister O'Donovan and I met with a delegation of landowners and elected representatives from the region to discuss this project and that provided us with a good understanding of the issues involved. It is recognised that the approach taken initially in relation to the preferred route was sub-optimal and lessons have been learned from that experience.

My Department is currently developing a new strategy to set out a cohesive and forward looking approach to the development, funding and promotion of greenways generally and we will be consulting publicly on this in the near future. The proposed Strategy will include a recommended approach to be taken by authorities and agencies tasked with delivering greenway infrastructure where engagement and consultation with landowners is required and, when finalised, will inform the approach to be taken to progress the delivery of the section of the Dublin to Galway Greenway from Athlone to Galway.

In order to maintain momentum in the meantime, and to facilitate progress on the non-contentious elements of the project, the draft plan, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the overall Galway to Dublin Greenway were published in January. It is important to point out that the SEA is high-level and looks at the corridor between Galway and Dublin; it does not look at any specific routing or alignment on this corridor. The majority of the submissions received on the plan were favourable and I intend to publish the final SEA and overall plan shortly. I expect that consultation on the detailed route alignment between Athlone and Galway will take place later this year informed by the new Greenways Strategy when finalised.