

1. Summary

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway is the pilot project in the National Cycle Network and will be Ireland's first dedicated inter-city coast to coast route for cyclists. Market research by Fáilte Ireland indicates that the cycleway will be a successful tourism product. For the first time, the new cycleway will offer an almost entirely off-road, segregated experience for long-distance cycle tourists in Ireland. It will also have a high amenity value for local communities along the route.

East of the Shannon the cycleway is routed along the towpaths of the Royal Canal and the disused Mullingar to Athlone railway. West of the Shannon the preferred route corridor connects Athlone, Ballinasloe, Loughrea and Galway City, and several towns and villages in between. Along the way it passes through private farmland, peatlands and forestry.

This is an attractive route corridor, which scores strongly against the following selection criteria: landscape and visual appeal, cultural heritage and other visitor attractions; connectivity and accessibility to services and amenities. However, landowners in the West are concerned about the potential impacts on their farms and livelihoods. Opposition is especially strong in rural County Galway.

Recognising this, in June 2015 the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport instructed the project team to commence consultations with individual landowners along the route corridor between Galway and Athlone, to discuss their concerns, and to ask whether they would be willing to accommodate the route on their lands. This report is a summary of the results and a statement of the consequences for the project.

The landowners identified a wide range of concerns. Foremost is the potential impact on farming (farm severance and loss of land, disruption to farming operations, loss of farm income and increased insurance premiums, animal disease control). This is closely followed by concerns about security (crime, trespass, nuisance). Also, some feared that proximity to a cycleway would compromise their hopes of getting planning permission for dwelling houses, for their sons and daughters, on family farmland. Others believed that cycleway users, on a greenfield route, would be at risk from livestock (especially bulls), crop spraying, slurry spreading and silage cutting (flying objects).

This is in striking contrast with County Roscommon, where the project has much greater acceptance among landowners. When State-owned lands are factored into the mix, c. 90% of an 'emerging route' can be delivered off road over the 46 km section between Ballinasloe and Athlone.

Results of landowner consultations in Galway and Roscommon 2014–115

In Galway, consultations in 2015 with c. 20% of the landowners along the *route corridor* (194 landowners) between Galway City and Ballinasloe record that c. 27% of landowners would accommodate a route for the cycleway on their lands, but c. 63% would object to it, c. 8% are undecided and c. 1% are 'unresolved' cases (e.g. lands in probate; owner gone away).

In the sector from Ballinasloe to Athlone, which is mostly in County Roscommon, when only landowners on an *emerging route* are considered (i.e. a particular line within the broader corridor), c. 74% accept the route, 1% object to it; c. 8% are undecided and c. 16% are currently 'unknowns'. When State-owned lands are factored into the figures, almost 90% of this emerging route can be delivered between Athlone and Ballinasloe.

2. Background

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway is the pilot project in a National Cycle Network proposed in a scoping study by the National Roads Authority ([NRA 2010](#)). It will ultimately form part of The Capitals Route (EuroVelo 2) in a European cycle route network being developed under the aegis of the European Cyclists' Federation ([EU Parliament 2012](#)).

Market research by Fáilte Ireland in 2013 and 2014 indicates that the cycleway has a high potential to be a successful tourism product, in addition to its amenity value for local communities along the route. An important selling point is that, for the first time, the new cycleway will offer an almost entirely off-road, segregated experience for long-distance cycle tourists in Ireland.

The development of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway is being managed by the National Roads Office at Westmeath County Council with funding for the design from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and for construction from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS). Work in other host counties is being conducted under formal agreements with Westmeath County Council per Section 85 of the Planning and Development Act 2001. The consulting engineers for the project are Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM. The advisory group for the project includes Fáilte Ireland, the Irish National Trails Office (Sports Council), and the TII (formerly NRA).

East of the Shannon the project is routed, for the most part, along the towpaths of the Royal Canal and on the disused Mullingar to Athlone railway ([Illus. 2.1 and 2.2](#)). A section (23 km) along the Royal Canal in Co. Westmeath was opened in 2014. Another section (40 km) in Co. Westmeath, along the disused railway, will be opened in October 2015. Other sections are at various stages of the planning process, including a proposed dedicated cycleway bridge over the River Shannon in Athlone, for which a preliminary design and EIS have been prepared.

West of the Shannon, in Counties Roscommon and Galway, there is no historic, disused transport infrastructure (canal or railway) that can deliver the project route all the way to Galway City. Consequently, a cross-country route corridor was chosen. This mostly traverses farmland that is currently in private ownership, but also some State-owned lands.



Illus. 2.1— Galway to Dublin Cycleway on the disused railway between Athlone to Mullingar.



Illus. 2.2—Downs Bridge on the Royal Canal, Co. Westmeath (Kevin Monaghan).

A policy statement by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2014 ([DTTAS 2014](#)) declared that compulsory purchase orders could be used to acquire lands to complete the project West of the Shannon. The necessity for the State to acquire and own these lands was reiterated in the Project Plan for the draft Strategic Environmental Assessment ([DTTAS 2015a](#)) (per Directive 2001/42/EC) for the cycleway project.

A preferred route corridor for the sectors west of the Shannon was developed by the project team in 2013–14. This would connect Athlone, Shannonbridge (environs), Ballinasloe, Loughrea and Galway City, as well as several villages along the way. In the last quarter of 2014 the route corridor was presented to the public at a series of advertised public consultation events throughout Galway City, County Galway, County Roscommon and Athlone town.

The project was greeted warmly by the general public but landowners along the route corridor were concerned about the potential impacts on their farms. This resulted in a number of representations to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport by farmers' representative organisations, individual landowners or groups of landowners, and elected representatives acting on their behalf. Opposition was especially strong in east County Galway.

Arising from the above, the Minister instructed the project team to commence consultations with individual landowners along the route corridor, to explain the project to them in more detail, to record their concerns and to ask whether they would be willing to accommodate the route on their lands. This report is an account of our engagement with the public to date and a summary of the results

3. Preferred Route Corridor

Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM considered several potential route corridors in Counties Roscommon and Galway (Illus. 3.1 and 3.2). Their conclusions—which were accepted by the project team—are set out in a series of route options reports, as listed here.¹

ROD AECOM 2014 *Galway Dublin Greenway. Galway City to Oranmore. Route Corridor Selection Report*. Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM for Westmeath County Council and the National Roads Authority.

ROD AECOM 2014 *Galway Dublin Greenway. Oranmore to Ballinasloe. Corridor Selection Report*. Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM for Westmeath County Council and the National Roads Authority.

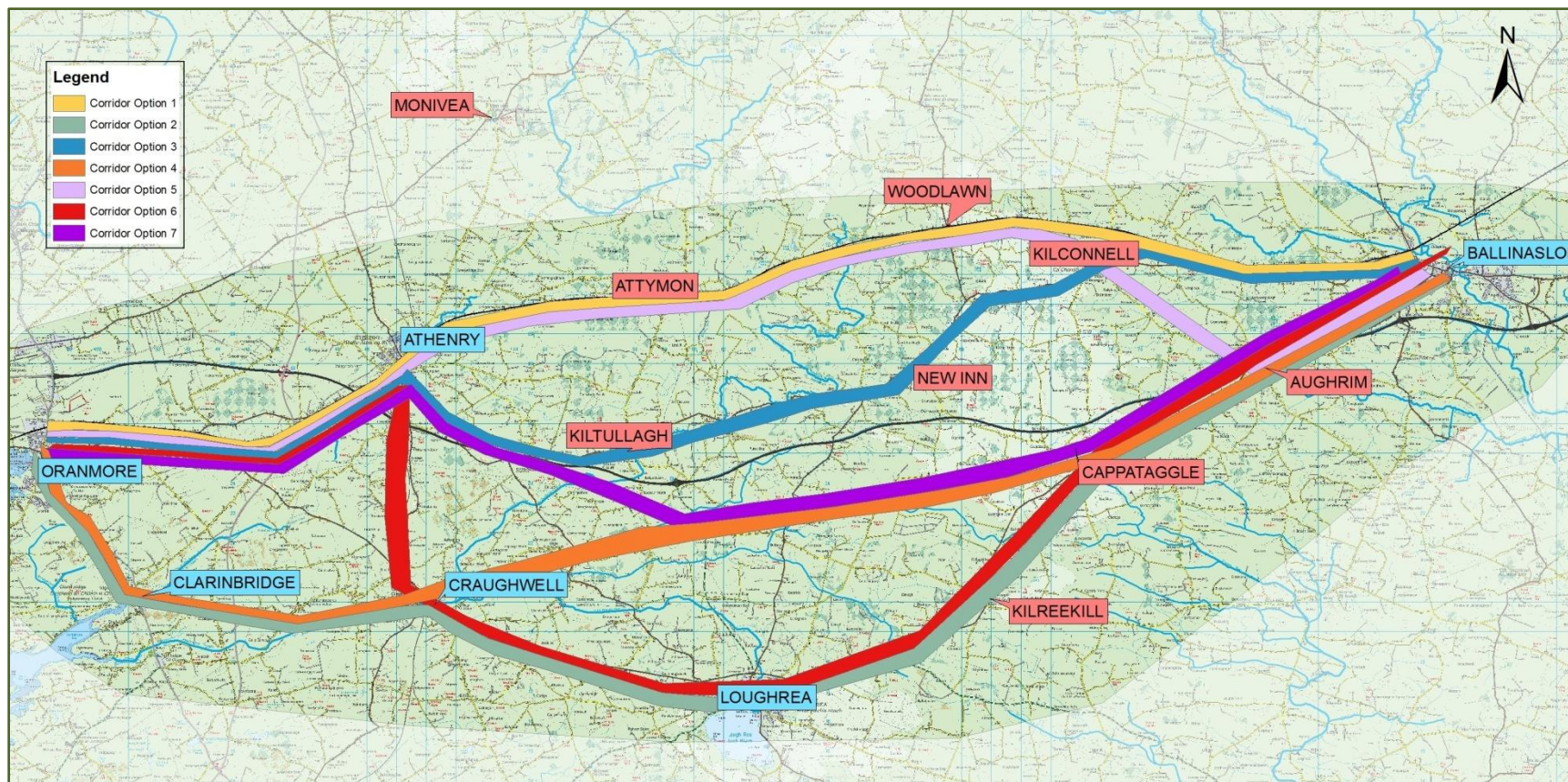
ROD AECOM 2014 *Route Corridor Selection Report. Galway to Dublin Greenway. Ballinasloe to Athlone*. Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM for Westmeath County Council and the National Roads Authority.

The various route corridor options were assessed under a list of criteria that included:

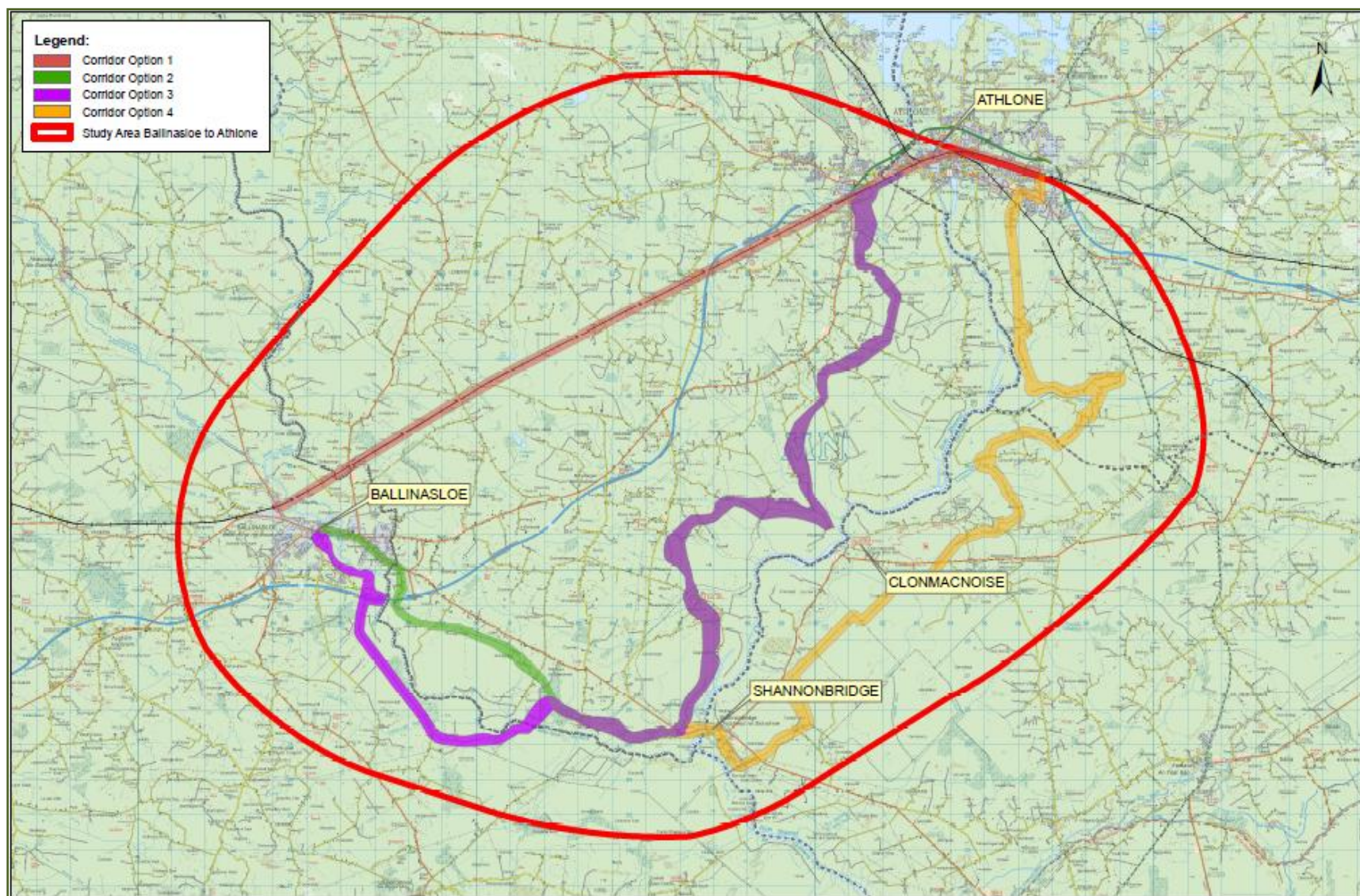
- landscape and visual impacts (attractions and potential impacts)
- flora and fauna (attractions and potential impacts)
- cultural heritage and visitor attractions
- connectivity and accessibility to local amenities
- user safety
- economy (cost)
- physical constraints (topography, flooding)
- human beings, material assets (e.g. communities, farms, businesses).

The Preferred Route Corridor that emerged from this process (Illus. 5.1 and 5.2, below) offers a cross-country or greenfield (i.e. segregated) route that connects the following towns and villages: Galway City, Oranmore, Clarinbridge, Craughwell, Loughrea, Kilreekil, Aughrim, Ballinasloe, Shannonbridge (environs) and Athlone. This route scored strongly against the following criteria: landscape and visual appeal, cultural heritage and other visitor attractions; connectivity and accessibility to services and amenities.

¹ These route option reports are all on the project website at www.galwaytodublincycleway.ie



Illus. 3.1—Map of route corridor options considered in the Oranmore to Ballinasloe sector in County Galway (ROD AECOM).



Illus. 3.2—Map of route corridor options considered in the Ballinasloe to Athlone sector in Galway and Roscommon (ROD AECOM).

4. Public consultations

4.1 Public consultation events

In October and November 2014 the Preferred Route Corridor was presented in a series of advertised public events throughout Galway City and County, County Roscommon and Athlone (Table 4.1; Illus. 4.1). All the landowners in the corridor who could be identified from the records of the Property Registration Authority were invited to attend. The venues were staffed by project team members from Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM, Westmeath County Council, Roscommon County Council, Galway County Council, Galway City Council and the NRA (now TII). Members of the public were encouraged to sign an attendance sheet and were given the opportunity to record their views on 'Public Consultation Questionnaires'. The results are not discussed here as they are superseded for present purposes by more recent liaison with landowners along the preferred route corridor.

Table 4.1
Preferred Route Corridor public consultation events in 2014

Location	Venue	Date
Oranmore, Co. Galway	Maldron Hotel	14 October 2014
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway	Shearwater Hotel	15 October 2014
Loughrea, Co. Galway	Loughrea Spa Hotel	16 October 2014
Moore, Co. Roscommon	Moore Community Hall	20 October 2014
Athlone	Shamrock Lodge Hotel	21 October 2014
Galway City	Radisson Hotel	23 October 2014
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway	Shearwater Hotel	12 November 2014

4.2 Project website

To promote awareness of the project to a wider audience, a dedicated website was developed in early 2015 (www.galwaytodublincycleway.ie). The site includes an e-mail address that members of the public can use to ask questions or communicate their views. The limited number of communications received to date have all been positive (i.e. from members of the public who welcome the project and would use the route).



Illus. 4.1—A member of the project team discusses the route corridor maps with members of the public in Moore Hall, Co. Roscommon.

4.3 Project leaflet

A colour illustrated leaflet was developed early in 2015 and 5000 copies were printed. The leaflet described the project and its potential benefits for businesses and communities; it stated the likely use of compulsory purchase to acquire the lands and as a mechanism to deal fairly with landowners and compensate them; and it promised further consultations ([Illus. 4.2](#)). Copies of the leaflet have been give to individual landowners in the course of visits by the project team but have also been distributed through a range of public outlets in east Galway including schools, libraries, supermarkets, newsagents, post offices and community halls.

➤ What the National Galway-Dublin Cycleway means for Landowners

- ▶ The Cycleway will cross significant lengths of privately owned farmland between Galway and Athlone. The selection of the route for the Cycleway is being carried out in consultation with landowners and communities. The initial public consultations in 2014 identified a wide corridor for potential routes between Galway and Athlone.
- ▶ The State is making a substantial investment to provide this major facility. Because of this, and for suitable long term management and maintenance, the route needs to be in public ownership. This is best achieved through acquisition of the land by means of the compulsory purchase legislation. This legislation provides landowners with a mechanism to be compensated for their land. Landowners can expect to receive fair and reasonable compensation for their land and any disturbance, severance and injurious affection incurred.
- ▶ **Further consultations will be held with landowners to refine the route.** As the cycleway caters for walkers and cyclists there is relative flexibility in its location. This flexibility will facilitate minimisation of impacts on individual farm holdings and their operations.
- ▶ **We want to hear from you.** It is important that you fully understand how the Cycleway might affect you and it is important that we hear your concerns and suggestions. Please take the time to email us with your comments: info@galwaytodublincycleway.ie

Further contact details are provided towards the end of this information leaflet.

Illus. 4.2—Extract from the project leaflet that was issued in Spring 2015.



Illus. 4.3—Extract from the opportunities booklet printed in Autumn 2015.

4.4 Project booklet

A colour illustrated booklet was also developed in 2015 ([Illus. 4.3](#)). Again, this describes the route, but with more emphasis on its attractions and benefits as a tourism product. It describes the types of tourist most likely to use it—based on market research—and advises communities about the business opportunities the project is likely to generate.

4.5 Interviews with landowners

At public consultation events in 2014 the project was greeted warmly by the general public. There was a general appreciation of the benefits of the project in terms of tourism and amenity. But many of the landowners along the route corridor were concerned about the potential impacts on farmland and farm operations. This resulted in a number of representations in early 2015 to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport by farmers' representative organisations, individual landowners or groups of landowners, and elected representatives acting on their behalf. Opposition was especially strong in County Galway.

Arising from the above, the Minister instructed the project team to commence consultations with individual landowners along the route corridor in Galway City and County, to explain the project to them in more detail, to record their concerns and to ask whether they would be willing to accommodate the route on their lands ([Minister's letter at Appendix 8.1](#)). The project team were also mandated to talk to other landowners, in the environs of the route corridor, to explore local alternatives as the opportunity might arise.

In several instances a landowner requested a small-group meeting, to include several of his/her neighbours. This request was always facilitated by the project team and these small-group meetings were generally productive in terms of the aims of the work. The interviews in Galway were recorded on a standard 'Landowner Meetings' report form for each landowner and summarised in a project database ([see sample form at Appendix 8.2](#)).

In one instance when a meeting was sought with a landowner, Mr Adrian Kelly—who also identified himself as a spokesman for the Greenway Action Group, he requested that 11 other neighbours would attend. This too was facilitated but, in the event, 32 people attended. The attendees represented 23 farms or houses in the route corridor. Despite the large attendance, this was an orderly meeting, with a wide-ranging discussion, but it was not a wholly productive meeting in terms of the aims of the work, as all who attended declined to complete the survey

questionnaire—though their objection to the project was noted on an attendance sheet. (All who signed the attendance sheet were invited to simply add Yes or No after their names to record their ‘vote’ on the project and this information was added to the project database.)

Another, separate petition was submitted to the project team by Mr Gerard Armstrong, Chairman of the Clarinbridge IFA, signed by 32 landowners objecting to the proposed route corridor, and this information was also added to the project database.

The views of c. 200 landowners along the route corridor have now been recorded and are summarised below ([‘5.1 Interviews with landowners in County Galway’](#)).

5. Landowner consultation

5.1 Interviews with landowners in Galway

Meetings with individual landowners or small groups of landowners along the preferred route corridor were conducted in Galway City and County in June–August 2015. The meetings were recorded and contribute to the data presented here ([Table 5.1](#); [Illus. 5.1a-b](#)).

Table 5.1

Summary of landowners responses to the proposed route corridor in Galway City and County, in recorded meetings with individuals and small groups in June to August 2015

Sector	Meetings	Positive	Negative	Undecided	Unresolved*
Galway City–Oranmore	1	0	1	0	0
Oranmore–Clarinbridge	29	8	20	0	1
Clarinbridge–Craughwell	49	18	29	2	0
Craughwell–Loughrea	23	2	20	1	0
Loughrea–Kilreekil	57	16	29	11	1
Kilreekil–Aughrim	31	8	21	2	0
Aughrim–Ballinasloe	4	1	3	0	0
Total meetings	194	53	123	16	2
Responses %	100%	27.3%	63.4%	8.3%	1.0%

* The ‘unresolved’ column includes lands in probate: i.e. the occupant is not yet the registered owner; or lands where the owner was abroad and could not be contacted at the time of survey.

The survey represents 194 landowners from a potential pool of c. 1000 who own land within or adjoining the preferred route corridor, amounting to a sample of c. 20% of the potential interviewees. The survey results can be regarded as representative, nonetheless, for the following reasons.

- The landowners we spoke with come from all sectors of the route.
- They represent a wide variety of farmers and farming operations (part-time and full-time, dairy, beef, sheep, tillage and equestrian, or a combination of these).
- They also include several other sorts of landowner who are not farmers but whose property is within the route corridor (householders, developers; also Coillte).
- The landowners interviewed were generally selected on the basis of their availability to meet us and not on the basis of any criteria that might have biased the result.

The meetings were recorded on a field survey sheet or 'Landowner Meetings' form. In addition to contact details, background information on land use, and a comments field, there were three key questions on the form.

- Would you object to the cycleway being routed over your lands?
- Can you show us a preferred route [for the cycleway] over your lands?
- Would you require any special measures (mitigations) if it is routed over your lands?

The responses to these questions are summarised below but we note here that, while the responses are certainly representative of the landowners' general feelings about the project, they are of limited value in purely quantitative terms concerning, for instance, preferred mitigations or particular concerns (e.g. security, severance). This is because some landowners declined to have their responses recorded on a form and many of them gave information for only some sections of the form. We are confident, however, that, in all cases, we have accurately recorded whether the landowners interviewed were positively disposed to the project, or negatively disposed to it, or preferred to reserve judgement at the time of survey (i.e. answers to Q1).

Q1. Would you object to the Cycleway being routed over your lands?

The response to this question shows that 27.3% of the landowners interviewed would accommodate a route for the cycleway on their lands but 63.4% would object to it, while 8.3% were undecided at the time of meeting (Table 5.1). (The remaining 1.0% represents an 'unresolved' situation where we met occupants of lands in probate and who are not, therefore, currently registered as the legal owners; or where we sought to meet a landowner who was gone abroad.) Overall, the landowners' response is not to reject the project unanimously as the vote is roughly 2:1 against. Nonetheless, the distribution of the objectors is critical for the project, because they occur throughout the current preferred route corridor and are not concentrated in just a few pockets. In fact, on current information, there are only two locations in rural County Galway where a cross-country route can be established from one local road to another, with the landowners' goodwill. (These cross-country sectors are both c. 2 km long; not illustrated.)

Q2. Can you show us a preferred route over your lands?

Forty-nine landowners were willing to indicate a route over their lands. Most often this was along a boundary with neighbouring farms, but other examples were along road frontage, or along watercourses that already divided their land. Note that this group does not simply

correspond with 49 landowners who would accept the project. Many of them are objectors who were willing to indicate a ‘least worst’ option, should the project proceed on their lands.

Q3. Would you require any special measures (mitigations) if it is routed over your lands?

There was a low response to this question (Table 5.2). Stock-proof fencing was the main concern, followed by access to lands, including crossing gates and preservation of rights of way. Among a miscellany of other items, one landowner was concerned to know whether he could have direct access from the cycleway, with signage, as he proposes to convert his farmhouse into a cycleway hostel or B&B, if the project proceeds within the present route corridor.

Table 5.2

Mitigation measures identified by landowners in Galway

Mitigations?	No.
Fencing, hedge	17
Access to lands (gates, right of way)	5
Access for development site	2
Safety fencing (quarry, golf driving range)	2
Access for tourism business, signage	1
Access to private graveyard	1
Accommodation works (cattle handling)	1
Cattle grids	1
Preserve site for village festival	1

Other issues recorded in landowner meetings

The ‘Comments’ field in the Landowner Meeting reporting forms recorded valuable information about why different landowners supported or rejected the project route. To a large extent this echoed information recorded at the Public Consultation events in 2014, as most of the recorded feedback on Public Consultation Questionnaires came from landowners. The topics raised in our more recent meetings with landowners are listed below and, again, are ranked in their order of frequency on the reporting forms (Table 5.3). As already stated above, this is not an absolute list in quantitative terms, because some landowners declined to have their concerns recorded on a Landowner Meeting form and many of them offered only limited information. We believe, nonetheless, that the list is representative of landowners’ concerns and opinions in general, and that it is probably a fair representation of the hierarchy of these concerns.

Potential impacts on farmland and on farming operations dominated the recorded comments. Severance, livestock watering and loss of lands all appear here. Related themes are potential loss of market value of agricultural lands adjacent to a cycleway, increases in farmers’ public

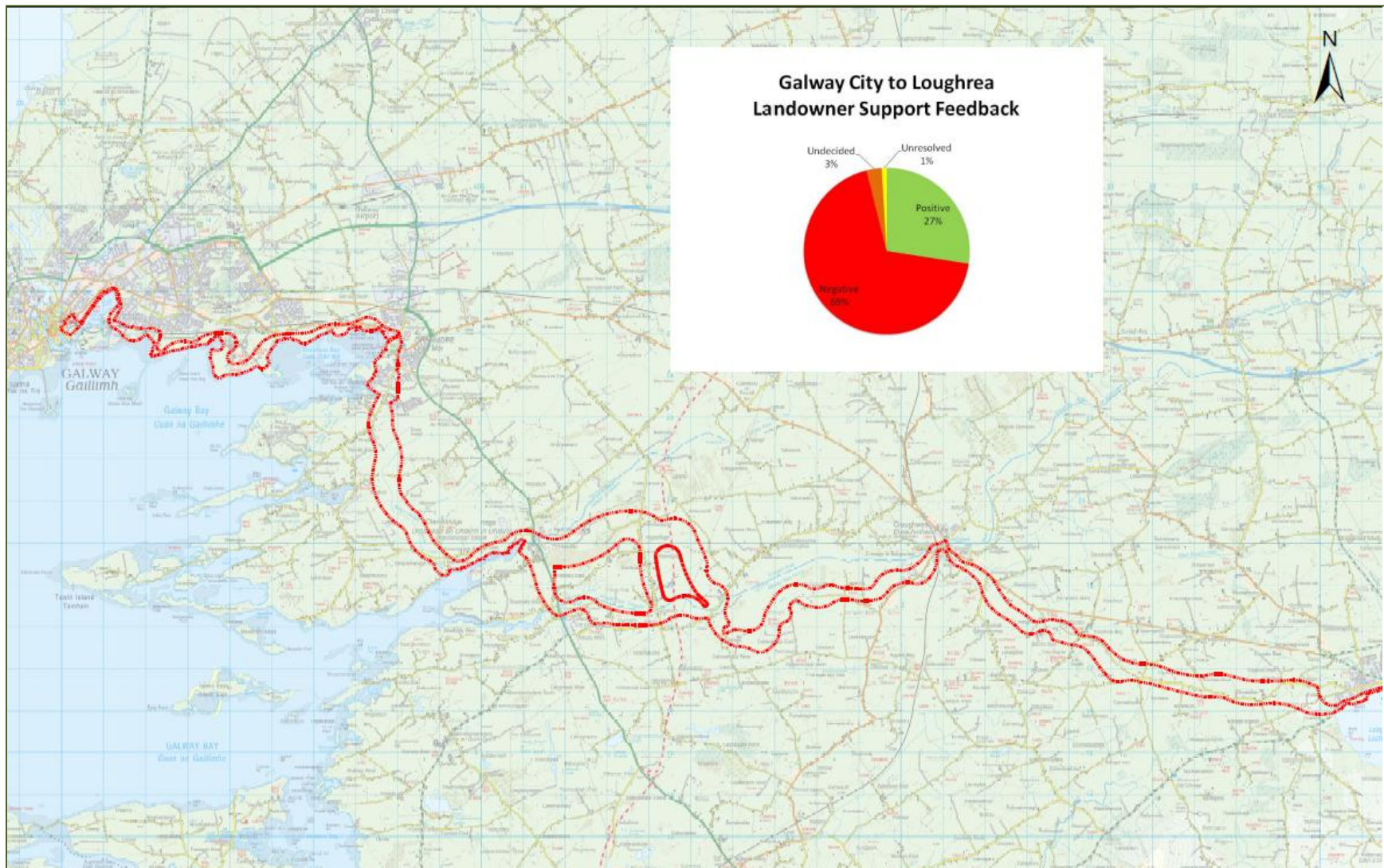
liability insurance premiums, and an increased threat of animal disease borne by walkers and cyclists traversing the countryside on the cycleway route (e.g. foot-and-mouth disease).

The security of dwelling houses and farmyards was also a strong theme, with some landowners fearful that the cycleway would provide vandals and burglars with a new route into thinly populated rural communities. Nuisance (dogs, litter, trespass) and loss of privacy (dwelling houses) are related though less sinister themes.

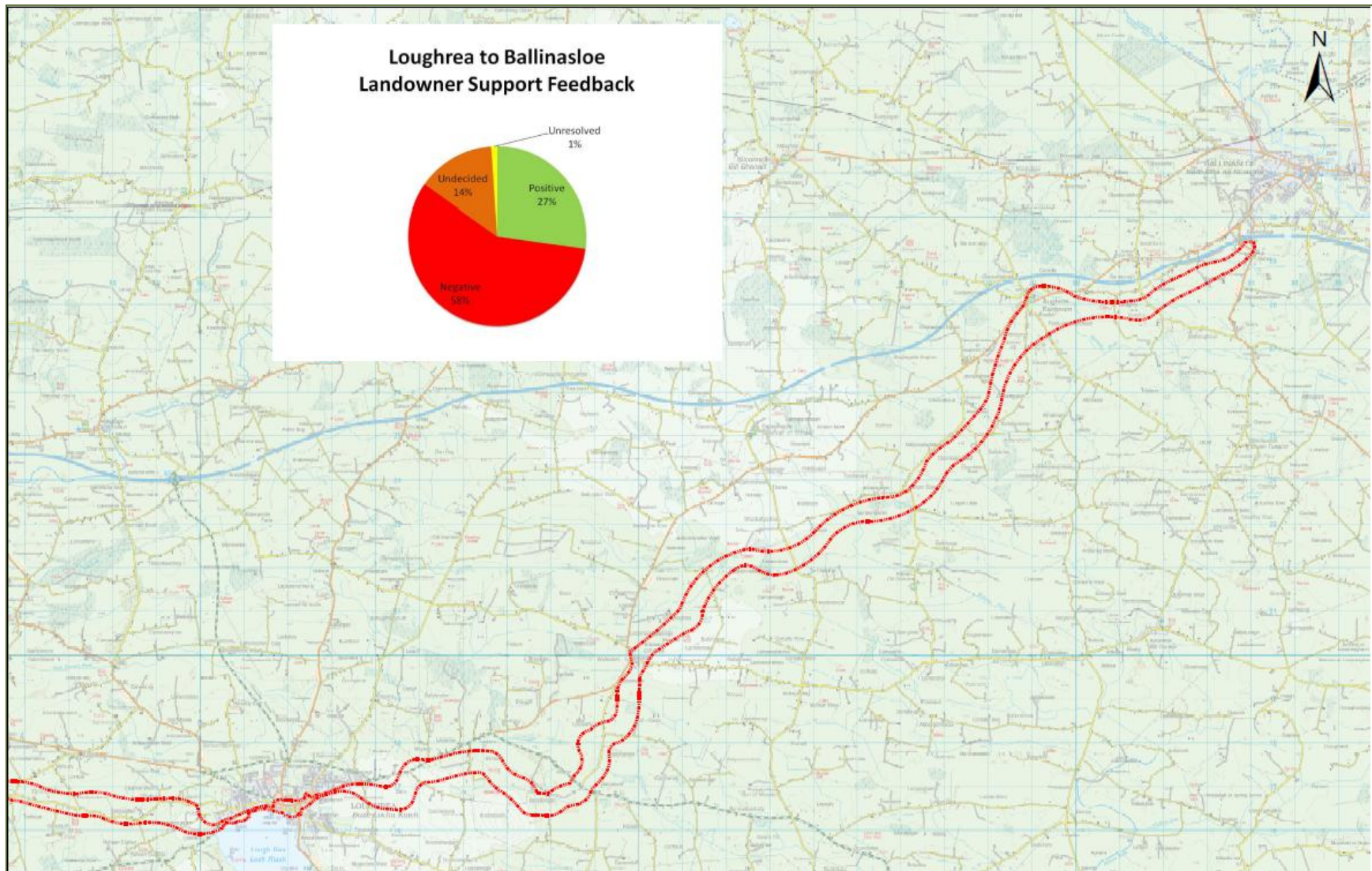
Table 5.3

Issues recorded in the Comments field on Landowner Meeting forms in Galway

Comments recorded on Landowner Meeting forms	No.
Farming operations (severance, livestock watering, access to lands, loss of lands)	71
Security of dwelling houses and farmyards (crime, burglaries)	27
Nuisance (litter, campers, trespass, dogs)	22
Route selection, alternatives not considered	20
Development sites compromised (planning permission)	17
Cycleway fencing (adequate for livestock?)	15
Amenity benefits, health	13
Increase in public liability Insurances	12
Tourism benefits	11
Existing and potential flooding	11
Loss of privacy (especially dwelling houses)	10
Heritage (archaeology, early buildings)	9
Rubbish, dumping	8
Safety of cycleway users (bulls, crop spraying, slurry, silage cutting 'projectiles')	6
Wildlife, protected species and habitats	6
Market value of lands (diminished)	5
Spread of animal disease	4
Previous CPO of lands	4
Need to consider longstanding tenants on lands	4
Barrier to hunting (Galway Blazers), shooting (gun clubs)	4
Lack of early consultation	3
Project costs versus public value	3
Miscellaneous	10



Illus. 5.1a—Galway City to Loughrea. The Preferred Route Corridor (outlined) for the cycleway showing landowners' attitudes to the project (pie chart) recorded in meetings and interviews with the project team in 2015 (ROD AECOM).



Illus. 5.1b—Loughrea to Ballinasloe. The Preferred Route Corridor (outlined) for the cycleway showing landowners' attitudes to the project (pie chart) recorded in meetings and interviews with the project team in 2015 (ROD AECOM).

Numerous landowners feared that proximity to the cycleway—and especially if it were to be routed along road frontage on local roads—would compromise their ability to secure planning permission for new houses for family members (i.e. on lands currently zoned for agricultural use), or planning permission for new farm buildings.

Many of the comments concerned the selection of the route corridor itself. The hard shoulder of the R446 (formerly the N6 Galway to Dublin road) and the corridor of the existing Galway to Dublin railway line were the alternatives most frequently proposed by landowners in interviews. (We also heard these alternatives promoted very ardently at some group meetings where landowners declined to supply details for a Landowner Meeting reporting form.)

Public safety is a new theme here, not seen in the feedback recorded on Public Consultation Questionnaires. Several landowners believed that cyclists and walkers would be at risk from livestock (especially bulls) breaking out of pasture fields and onto the cycleway; and many of them expressed low confidence in the post-and-rail fencing that we identified to them as a standard fencing treatment. Crop spraying, slurry spreading and silage cutting (due to occasional flying debris) were also identified as posing risks to cycleway users.

The topics listed above as ‘Miscellaneous’ were all represented by only one or two comments. They include, as examples, the need to consult with Travellers using a Council halting site in the route corridor, and a desire by two landowners to share the burden of the cycleway 50/50 with their neighbours, if it could be routed along their common boundaries.

One landowner said that he could not give us his opinion until he knew what his neighbours would say. Although this comment appears only once on Landowner Meeting forms, it was clear to us that landowners in any one neighbourhood preferred to consult with their neighbours and make communal decisions, rather than act alone.

Despite all of the negative comments, there was also acknowledgement of the potential benefits of the proposed cycleway, both in economic terms (i.e. new tourism business) and amenity terms (health, recreation and local connectivity), and some of this positive feedback did come from farmers who might potentially be directly affected by the project.

5.2 Landowner meetings in County Roscommon

As already stated, this report is mostly concerned with consultations with landowners along the preferred route corridor of the cycleway in the City and County of Galway ([per DTTAS 2015b](#)). For completeness, we will look briefly at consultations with landowners in County Roscommon too—or more particularly the sector from Ballinasloe to Athlone, as in that sector the route corridor also traverses much privately-owned farmland.

Consultations with individual landowners along the route corridor in Roscommon were commenced in November 2014—following the local Public Consultation events described above—and continued throughout 2015. Again, the aim was to advise landowners about the project and how it might affect them, to gauge their willingness to accommodate the route, and to hear their concerns. During these visits the land was walked by members of the project team with the relevant landowner, noting issues relating to farm operations, drainage and flooding. There was a particular focus in finding routes that followed boundaries, avoiding severance. By this means a potential route was established throughout most of the corridor.²

Table 5.4

Attitudes of landowners to the preferred route corridor in the sector from Ballinasloe to Athlone

Responses of all landowners within the <u>route corridor</u>	No.	%
Accept the preferred route corridor	101	23.5%
Object to the preferred route corridor	27	6.3%
Undecided	8	1.9%
Opinion not known*	293	68.3%
Total	429	100%
Responses of landowners along the <u>emerging route</u>	No.	%
Accept the emerging route	64	74.4%
Object to the emerging route	1	1.2%
Undecided	7	8.1%
Opinion not known (nil contact or landowner deceased)	14	16.3%
Total	86	100%

² The consultation round in County Roscommon also involved meetings with Bord na Móna, the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) and the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association (ICSA).

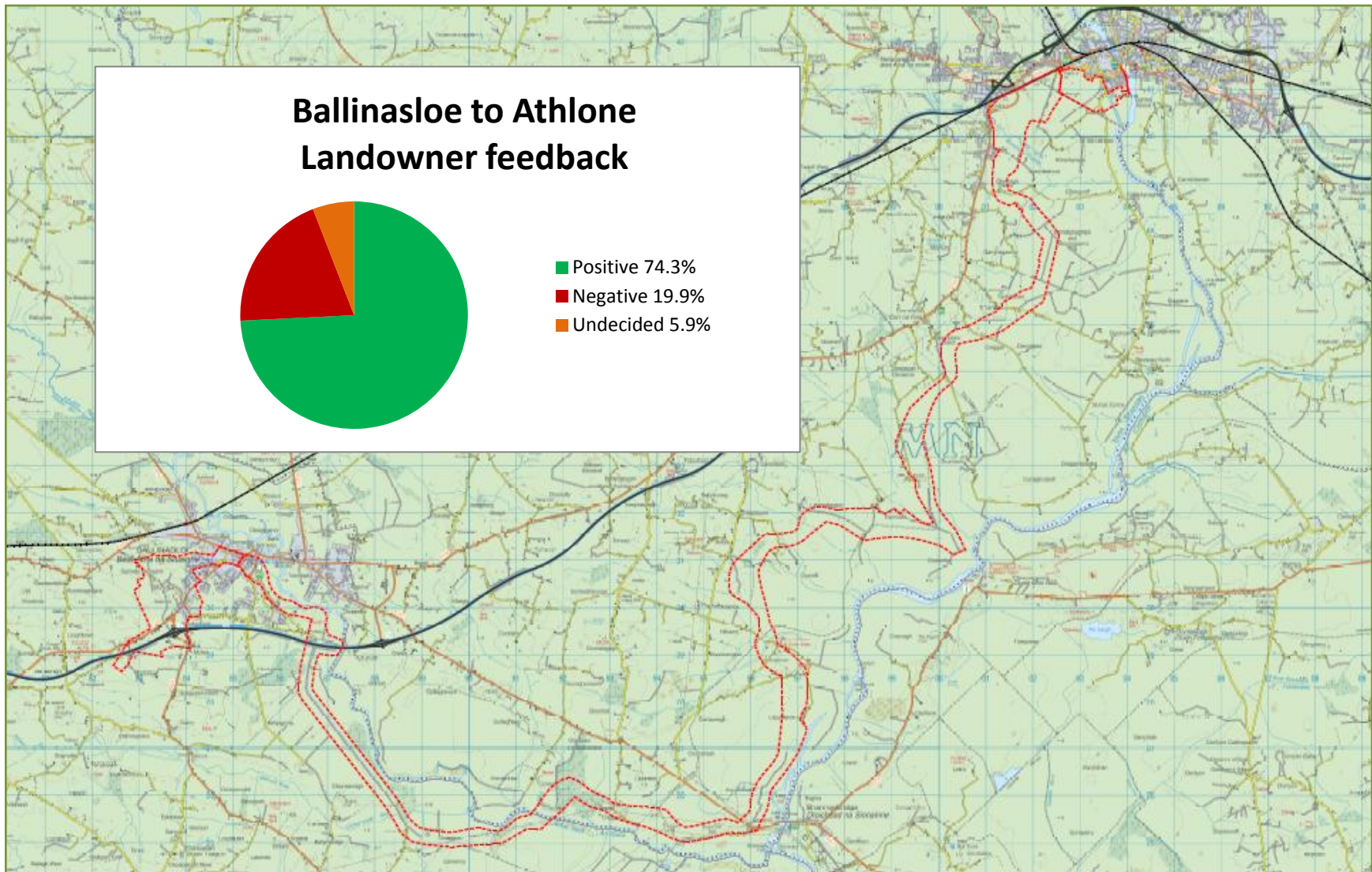
The feedback from landowners along the preferred route corridor between Ballinasloe and Athlone would not seem especially conclusive at first glance. Of 429 landowners potentially affected by the project, 23.5% accept the route corridor but a combined total of 76.5% are either against it (6.3%), undecided (1.9%) or are 'unknowns' (68.3%) (Table 5.4). An alternative reading of these figures is that, of the landowners whose opinion is known (total 136), 74.3% accept the route corridor, while 19.9% object to it and 5.9% are undecided (Illus. 5.2).

There is a more important set of figures available for Ballinasloe to Athlone, however, and this concerns the landowners along the *emerging route* in that sector. If only these landowners are considered then the picture becomes both clearer and more positive, with 74.4% accepting the emerging route and only 1.2% objecting to it (Table 5.5). The picture improves further when State-owned lands are factored into the mix as they potentially account for about a fifth of this emerging route. Taken all in all, it seems that almost 90% of this emerging route can be delivered between Ballinasloe and Athlone.

Table 5.5

Status of the emerging route from Ballinasloe to Athlone by distance (km)

Sectors of the emerging route	Km	Totals	%	Totals
Route accepted by landowners	17.52		39.5%	
Route on Bord na Móna lands	14.50		32.7%	
Route along disused canal through Bord na Móna lands	4.75		10.7%	
Route through CIE lands (under discussion)	2.16		4.9%	
Route with landowner acceptance or on State-owned lands	38.93	38.93	87.8%	87.8%
Route unresolved: landowners undecided	2.43		5.5%	
Route unresolved: nil contact with landowners	2.45		5.5%	
Route unresolved: landowners reject the emerging route	0.50		1.1%	
Route unresolved: nil landowner acceptance to date	5.38	5.38	12.1%	12.1%
Total distance		44.31		100%



Illus. 5.2—Ballinasloe to Athlone. Map of the Preferred Route Corridor (outlined) for the cycleway showing attitudes of landowners in the route corridor to the project (pie chart) recorded in meetings and interviews with the project team in 2014–2015.

6. Conclusions

The Preferred Route Corridor for the national Galway to Dublin Cycleway connects a necklace of towns and villages between Athlone and Galway City. The choice of this route is justified with reference to key selection criteria, including landscape, local services and attractions, and connectivity. However, between these towns and villages the route requires access over privately owned land.

In Galway City and Galway County, consultations with a sample of c. 20% of the landowners (194 landowners) along the route corridor record that c. 27% of landowners would accommodate a route for the cycleway on their lands, c. 63% would object to it, c. 8% are undecided and c. 1% are 'unresolved' cases (lands in probate; owner gone away). In the sector from Ballinasloe to Athlone, mostly in County Roscommon, the results are much more positive. In a sample of c. 32% of the landowners in the route corridor (136 landowners), 74.3% accept the route corridor, while 19.9% object to it and 5.9% are undecided. When State-owned lands are factored into the figures it seems that almost 90% of the emerging route has acceptance in this sector.

People in towns and villages are supportive of the project. They see it in terms of tourism and amenity benefits and not in terms of potential adverse impacts. It also has appeal for some householders and landowners in rural sectors of the route corridor, but 63% of landowners interviewed in Galway object to the proposed route corridor. They list concerns ranging from the threat of animal disease to loss of privacy and security. Underlying the long list of particular concerns is a general feeling that tourism is all very well, but it is not the industry in which they invest their time, work and money—or from which, reciprocally, they derive a livelihood for their families and themselves. The question 'What's in it for the farmer?' was raised in the consultations.

7. References

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- ROD AECOM 2014c *Route Corridor Selection Report. Galway to Dublin Greenway. Ballinasloe to Athlone*. Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM for Westmeath County Council and the National Roads Authority.
- www.galwaytodublincycleway.ie = Project Website developed in 2015 by Roughan O'Donovan consulting engineers.

8. Appendices

8.1 Letter from Ministers Paschal Donohoe and Michael Ring outlining landowner consultations process 25 June 2015

8.2 Sample Landowner Meeting report form