Strategy for the Future

Development of Greenways

Public Consultation Paper

May 2017
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Foreword by Minister

I am very pleased to publish this public consultation paper on the development of a new Greenways Strategy.

Greenways have captured the imagination of people around the country since the Great Western Greenway opened in County Mayo in 2010. The impact that project has had on the locality has been transformative, but its impact nationally has also been very impressive. We have seen that providing a safe, segregated space for cycling and walking will bring people in their droves to the countryside, to cycle and walk as a family, to avail of stunning views, fresh air and a sense of peace.

While greenways address a range of policy objectives across many Departments, they respond directly to many policy objectives across the sectors under my Department’s remit; Sport, in promoting outdoor activity and recreation; Tourism, in attracting people from around Ireland and the world to use these facilities; and Transport, in relation to our Smarter Travel agenda. The headlines relating to greenways tend to focus on the tourism potential of these facilities but the evidence indicates that they are also being used for journeys to work and school in our towns and villages.

Whilst exchequer funding has been relatively limited to date for the development of Greenways, I am pleased that the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to providing an increase in funding for greenways and I am pursuing this in the context of the review of the Government’s Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 which is currently underway.

The purpose of this public consultation process is to inform the development of a new Strategy for the future development of greenways so I would like to hear the views of as many people as possible on the issues raised in this process. We often talk about engaging Stakeholders as if they were somehow “others”; the fact is that everyone in this country is a stakeholder in relation to greenways, those that have one in their locality, those that want one in their locality (and, indeed, those that are opposed to one in their locality or crossing their land) and those that want to visit greenways once constructed.

I look forward to receiving a wide range of views and I am confident that the new Greenways Strategy will drive the successful delivery of greenways throughout the country.

Shane Ross, T.D.
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport
1. Introduction

A key objective identified in the National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) published by the Department in 2009 is to “provide designated rural cycle networks providing especially for visitors and recreational cycling”. The development of “greenways” has become increasingly popular on the island of Ireland in recent years with a significant number of projects having been developed driven primarily by local interests. The development of many of these projects has been led by the relevant local authority but funded by a combination of local funding, exchequer funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and in some cases grants from other State bodies.

The Department has provided funding for a number of greenway projects around the country in recent years through dedicated funding calls under the National Cycle Network (NCN) funding programme developed under the Department’s Smarter Travel policy.

Greenways not only provide opportunities for active travel and recreation in the localities along their routes but they can also provide economic, social, environmental and health benefits.

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to seeking to set aside additional capital funding “to invest further in developing a nationwide greenway network”. The Department is now setting about developing a Strategy to guide the future development of greenways to ensure that any additional capital funding that may be made available by Government for this purpose is directed towards the best projects and this consultation paper is the first step in that process.

Responding to this consultation paper

The purpose of this consultation process is to invite views from interested parties to inform the development of a new Strategy on the future development of greenways in the State. Respondents may respond to the questions posed in this paper and/or provide any other observations they may have on this subject in order to inform the development of the new Greenways Strategy.

Interested parties are requested to make submissions in writing, preferably by email. Submissions are requested by 14th July, 2017 and should be made:

By email to: greenways@dttas.ie

or by post to: Sustainable Transport Division
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2
D02 TR60
Contributors should note that it is the Department’s policy to treat all submissions received as being in the public domain unless confidentiality is specifically requested. Respondents are, therefore, requested to clearly identify material they consider to be confidential in their submissions.

**Freedom of Information Acts**

Contributors are requested to note that information provided to the Department may be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Acts. Should you wish that any information supplied by you in any submission should not be disclosed because of its sensitivity, you should identify this information in your submission and specify the reasons for its sensitivity. The Department will consult with you about this sensitive information before making a decision on any request received under the Freedom of Information Acts.
2. Background and Policy Context

**Smarter Travel and National Cycle Policy Framework**

The aim of the Government’s transport policy statement *2009-2020 Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future* published in 2009 is to create a sustainable travel and transport system in Ireland.

In tandem with the publication of this transport policy statement, the Government also published its first *National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF)* in 2009 with a vision of creating a strong cycling culture in Ireland to contribute to the development of a more sustainable travel and transport system. The vision as enunciated in the NCPF is “that all cities, towns, villages and rural areas will be bicycle friendly”. Specifically, in relation to the interventions relating to our physical environment that need to be made in order to encourage cycling, a key objective that is identified in the NCPF is to “provide designated rural cycle networks providing especially for visitors and recreational cycling”.

In order to deliver on this objective in the NCPF, the Department issued a number of funding calls for cycle schemes over recent years in line with available exchequer capital funding under Government Capital Investment Plans. These funding calls attracted a high level of interest and, in all cases, the number of schemes proposed and the level of support sought far exceeded the exchequer capital funding available.

A large number of the schemes awarded funding by the Department in recent years, and indeed a large number of the cycle schemes proposed by local authorities and others, are routes that are generally considered to be “greenways” – routes that cater for cyclists and walkers and that are either fully segregated, or substantially segregated, from vehicular traffic.

The potential for disused railway lines and canal and river tow paths, in particular, to be converted to high-quality, traffic-free routes was identified in the NCPF and the majority of greenways developed to date have been on such routes including, for example, the *Old Rail Trail* from Mullingar to Athlone, the *Great Southern Trail* in West Limerick, sections of the Galway to Dublin Greenway in Kildare and Meath and the recently opened *Waterford Greenway* from Waterford City to Dungarvan.
**Wider policy context**

As well as responding to the transport policy objectives under *Smarter Travel* and the NCPF, greenways also respond to a range of other policy objectives across the Department’s remit and across wider Government.

Ireland has expressed its intention to transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. To this end, Ireland’s first National Mitigation Plan is currently being developed and transport is one of the key sectors in terms of tackling Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan will detail a range of existing and new measures that will deliver greatest return in emissions reduction and the measures under consideration for the Transport Sector include promoting modal shift away from private car use towards more sustainable and active means of travel, namely, cycling and walking.

The Government’s Tourism policy statement “*People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025”*, published in 2015, recognises the importance of investing in the visitor experience in order to continue to grow tourism including investment in facilities for visitor activities such as greenways and other outdoor recreational activities.

In 2016 the Government launched Ireland’s first ever *National Physical Activity Plan* which aims to get at least half a million more Irish people taking regular exercise within ten years. Initiatives proposed under the Plan include a “Get Ireland Cycling” initiative and the development of walking and cycling strategies in local areas. Greenways will clearly have a role to play in helping to deliver on the Plan’s objectives and the Department will work closely with the Department of Health and other relevant Government Departments and stakeholders to ensure that the approach we adopt to the future development of greenways will maximise the potential health benefits that can be derived from them.

The Government’s recently published 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 development of a new Greenways Strategy to support activity tourism in rural areas is specifically identified as an action point in the Action Plan.
Finally, the draft “National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 Our Plan” talks about the need to create “an attractive environment to encourage businesses and inward investment; more places for people to access nature, outdoor recreation or social interaction or physical activity by providing quality, linked green or ‘blue’ (water-related) spaces for walking, cycling and other physical activity and creating a sense of place and local distinctiveness.” The development of a new Greenways Strategy will also address this objective.
3. Why invest in Greenways?

Greenways can deliver significant benefits to the localities along their routes and more widely, including economic, social, health and environmental benefits.

Without doubt, the most successful greenway developed in Ireland to date is the Great Western Greenway (GWG), a 42km cycle route that follows the route of the old Westport to Achill railway in County Mayo which closed to traffic in 1937. The GWG is an exemplar of the potential of greenways to support tourism and rural regeneration. The first section of the GWG from Newport to Mulranney opened in 2010, with the full route opening in 2011. The project was one of the first rural cycle schemes that received funding from the Department.

The experience of the GWG is supported by a growing body of evidence both nationally and internationally of the benefits of greenways that is driving increased interest in, and growth of, greenway networks here in Ireland, across Europe and around the world.

**Economic Benefits**

Greenways can act as significant economic drivers in the areas that they serve by attracting cycling visitors to the area. The focus in the following section is on the potential of greenways to attractive overseas cycle tourists but the potential benefits from domestic tourists are also very significant.

**Cycle Tourism**

Cycle tourism is generating significant revenue for the economy. Cycle tourists represent a growing and valuable market segment, particularly in rural areas. Cycling can provide an added attraction and activity as part of a multi-activity holiday, which also helps to extend length of stay and encourage repeat visits. It provides new incentives for people to visit an area and can attract a new type of visitor.

In 2010, 168,000 overseas tourists engaged in cycling while staying in Ireland spending approximately €180 million; this increased further to 175,000 in 2011 and an estimated €200 million spend. Notably, these increases occurred at a time when overall visitor numbers were declining. In 2015, Fáilte Ireland estimated that this had increased to 355,000 representing 7% of the overall overseas tourist market.

An economic assessment of the GWG commissioned by Fáilte Ireland in 2011 noted that “estimates derived from the study suggest that all direct expenditure associated with the greenway would contribute to a projected €7.2 million in the local economy over a full year. While the study was published in 2011, and the
estimates only relate to the Newport to Mulranny section (the full greenway only opened in 2011), the authors considered it highly likely that its economic impact would grow following the opening of the final sections. This has indeed been the case. The number of annual users of the greenway in 2011 was estimated at 144,000 whilst the actual number of users in 2016 was 211,000. An updated analysis of the economic impact is currently being undertaken.

In “Measuring the Success of the Great Western Greenway in Ireland” by Caulfield, Deenihan & O’Dwyer⁸, they state that “providing infrastructure similar to the GWG throughout the country could prove to be important at reducing pollution, obesity and traffic congestion. The greenway is located in a predominantly rural area and was expected to be mostly used by tourists. From analysis of the usage counters along the greenway, it can be seen that there are pronounced morning peaks and afternoon/evening Monday to Friday. This indicates that not only are tourists using this facility, but it is being used as a sustainable travel mode for locals.”

Caulfield et al go on to state “From looking at the tourism expenditure, it can be estimated that domestic and non-domestic tourists profit for the local area is approximately €1.065 million per year while visiting. From these figures alone, the facility has a payback period of 6 years. These figures indicate that investing in cycling facilities in areas that cater not just for local usage, but also for tourists can be very worthwhile to the local economy. The small local population of the area alone would not warrant an investment of €5.5 million in cycling facilities. However, the amount of tourists using the greenway has made the facility a very worthwhile investment.”

**European Experience**

Evidence from elsewhere in Europe also demonstrates the significant economic benefits that cycle tourism generates. Research carried out for the European Parliament⁹ on the Euro Velo Network (a network of 15 long-distance cycle routes connecting the whole European continent that has been developed by the European Cyclist Federation) has estimated that the total economic impact of cycle tourism is €44 billion per annum in Europe, with average spend on day trips of €16 per person with overnight stays leading to a total spend of €353 per trip (not per day).

Research has also been carried out in a number of European countries on the impact of cycle tourism in those countries and some similar themes emerge – those tourists going on cycling holidays tend to stay longer than non-cycling holiday makers, they may spend less per day but their total spend is more. Spend in Denmark⁹ and Brandenburg¹⁰ in Germany was about €60-65 per day, whilst foreign cycle tourists in the Netherlands¹¹ spent €133 per day.
Of course, these figures are based on those taking cycling holidays. It is likely that tourists visiting Ireland will encompass cycling within their holiday rather than being the sole purpose of the holiday.

Closer to home Sustrans have recently published an analysis of cycle tourism’s value to the Scottish economy\textsuperscript{xiii}, in which they found that “Holiday makers who come to Scotland to cycle spend £50 million per year. The average length of overnight stays ranges from four to six days, where each visitor spends between £60 and £65 per night. Its value to the Scottish economy was £345 million in 2015. Cycle tourism not only supports cycling related businesses, like bike repair and hire shops, but can offer a valuable revenue stream for traditional tourism businesses such as cafés and restaurants, visitor attractions, caravan and camping parks, as well as hotels, self-catering, and hostel accommodation.”

**Adventure Tourism**
Fáilte Ireland undertook a very significant piece of research in 2013\textsuperscript{xiv} (15,000 interviews) that is still relevant today. This research identified that adventure tourists stay longer and spend more than regular tourists. The key findings relating to cycling routes were:

- Beautiful scenery and landscape was the top priority for the overseas and domestic markets.
- This was followed by requirements for traffic free and safe cycling routes, perhaps reflecting the large proportion of the market that travels with children.
- Access to towns and villages and attractive cities and towns were also important, with a range of things to see and do also ranking in the top five with the domestic market.
- As 41% of the potential domestic market and 38% of the potential overseas market for cycling in Ireland travel with children, the importance of delivering trails which meet the needs of this market segment cannot be overstated.

**Job Creation**
The development and construction of greenways also has a positive impact on job creation both during the construction phase and following completion, in the services/tourism sector. In a study on the labour intensity of public investment, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform estimates\textsuperscript{xv} that approx. 12 construction jobs will be created for every €1 million of capital investment. The tourism sector sees an output of 29 jobs for every €1 million of capital investment. It can therefore be expected that the delivery of an expanded investment programme in greenways will see a significant number of jobs created in both the construction phase and more permanently in the services/hospitality sector in the localities served by greenways.
Social and Environmental Benefits

The overarching vision of the NCPF is to create a culture of cycling in Ireland and undoubtedly greenways are helping to re-engage people in cycling as a recreational pursuit with the further potential to encourage greater use of cycling for travel purposes.

Cycling had been in decline since the 1980’s for both adults and children but the increased provision of cycling infrastructure, both greenways and urban cycling infrastructure, is prompting a resurgence of interest in cycling. Greenways also offer great potential for social interaction and are prompting many individuals and groups to pursue new social activities based around greenways.

Greenways also have potential to contribute to reducing carbon emissions, noise pollution and congestion as they can offer alternatives to commuting by car in many areas by providing safer walking and cycling options for commuters.

Health and well-being Benefits

The provision of greenways and other walking and cycling trails can encourage physical activity and improve the general health of the population, both physical and mental.

Figures to date on many of our greenways show a significant number, if not a majority, of users are walkers. Walkers tend to make shorter but more frequent use of greenways.

A recent study by researchers in the Netherlands\textsuperscript{xvi} found that when a person cycles for one hour it extends life by the same amount of time on average – it is not lost time. Those figures equate to living for six months longer for every 75 minutes of cycling done in a week and about 11,000 deaths per year saved through cycling.

A study of over 250,000 people, carried out by the University of Glasgow\textsuperscript{xvii} and published recently in the British Medical Journal concluded that cycling to work nearly halved the risk of developing heart disease and cancer and also lowered the risk of premature death from any cause by more than 40%. The people taking part in the research were aged 52 on average and their health was tracked over a period of 5 years.

There is also a growing pool of evidence that shows how increased levels of active travel can have positive impacts on not only physical but mental health and well-being. Long running studies showed that active travel improved concentration levels, decision making abilities and lowered stress levels among people who walked or cycled to work compared to those who travelled by car.
**Rural Regeneration**

The recently published “Realising our Rural Potential - Action Plan for Rural Development” recognises the potential of activity tourism to contribute to rural regeneration - “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. These activities provide new incentives for people to visit an area and can attract a new profile of visitor. Improving and building on these resources also has benefits for local communities through the promotion of healthier lifestyles.”

**Questions for consideration**

Do you agree that the State should invest in greenways?

What do you consider to be the most important benefits that greenways can deliver in Ireland?

Are there benefits to be derived from greenways other than those set out above?

What benefits should be given primary consideration when considering investment in future greenway projects?

Should the State invest in greenways that do not offer the full range of benefits set out in this Chapter, e.g. greenways that do not offer real potential to develop tourist/visitor interest but provide a local recreational facility?
4. Common issues arising in the development of Greenways

A wide range of greenway projects have been submitted from all parts of the country in response to funding calls issued by the Department over recent years. Applications have ranged from projects at the concept stage to projects where planning permission had already been secured by the project developers/sponsors (generally local authorities). A list of all of the schemes awarded funding by the Department under the dedicated funding rounds in 2012 and 2014 is attached at Appendix 1.

A number of common issues have emerged which have, and in some cases continue, to hinder or delay progress on some of the projects that were awarded funding and these issues are identified and discussed here.

Consultation and Community Buy-in

Generally, proposals for greenway projects receive widespread support in the localities in which they are planned. However, issues can arise where there is inadequate consultation by the project developers in advance of a project. This can happen for a number of reasons and can arise in the case of projects to be developed on State-owned lands as well as projects that may seek to use private land.

In the case of projects to be developed on State-owned lands, there can often be differing views within communities on the use to which the land should be put and concerns about environmental impacts. While all relevant planning and environmental requirements must be followed in the normal course, ideally there should be adequate consultation in advance of project proposals reaching maturity and before formal planning or other statutory requirements are progressed.

Questions for consideration

How should local authorities and/or other greenway project developers engage with local communities on greenway proposals?

What level of consultation should take place and at what stage should this be initiated?

Is consultation as part of any statutory requirements sufficient?

Use of Public/State Land vs private land for development of Greenways

A significant amount of land in the state is owned directly by the State or through State Agencies, Semi-State Companies and other bodies. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural,
Regional and Gaeltacht affairs is developing a National Outdoor Recreation Plan for State and Public lands and waters. This will propose investment in State lands for outdoor recreation purposes including cycling and walking.

State owned land is an important resource and in some cases can be used for the development of greenways; indeed most of the long-distance greenways developed in the State to date have been on State owned land – the Great Southern Trail, the Old Rail Trail (from Mullingar to Athlone) and the Waterford Greenway are on former railway lines, whilst greenways in Kildare, Meath, Westmeath and Longford follow the canal bank of the Royal Canal.

It is expected that a significant portion of our future greenways will also be built on State-owned land. Access is cheap or free and licence agreements between the State bodies involved can provide certainty in relation to the use of these lands for greenways. Waterways Ireland, which has responsibility for the management and development of Ireland’s inland navigable waterways, has many years of experience in sensitively working on fragile canal and river banks and supporting the local eco-system whilst providing access to cyclists and walkers as well as anglers.

State owned lands will not always provide an appropriate base on which to develop greenways. Some of the State owned lands are quite remote from significant population centres and do not provide the opportunity for services to be created to meet any demand that may arise. Research by Fáilte Ireland in 2013 indicates that cycle tourists want interesting sights and tourism attractions along cycle routes as well as access to services – places to eat, drink and stay. Some of the state owned lands in remote areas will not meet these needs and may not therefore be suitable for state investment for these purposes.

It must also be borne in mind that greenways by their very nature are much more flexible in routing than roads which gives much more leeway in the design of the greenway to planners. Where plans for greenway projects involve the use of privately owned lands, discussions should take place between promoters of projects and landowners on a localised individual landowner level to determine the most appropriate routing to minimise the potential impact on landowners whilst also meeting the goals of the project in terms of access to tourist attractions or services on a route.

Blueways
As stated above, Waterways Ireland (WI) have many years of experience in improving access to river and canal banks for outdoor recreation along the waterways under their control. WI are currently constructing sections of the Galway to Dublin Greenway in Counties Meath and Kildare on behalf of the local authorities there. WI have recently developed the Blueways concept that promotes greater use of these waterways for water-based activities. The proposed increase in investment in greenways will also enable WI to increase the number and quality of access points to the water for canoes, kayaks and for swimming and
other water based activities. There are many synergies between blueways and greenways and WI will play a significant role in the development of infrastructure for walking and cycling around the country.

### Questions for consideration

Should local authorities and/or other project developers seek to use State-owned lands, where possible, for the development of greenways?

Are there reasons why State-owned lands should not be used for the further development of greenways in the State?

Are there particular types of State-owned lands that would not be appropriate for the development of greenways? If so, why?

How can the synergies between ‘blueways’ and ‘greenways’ be maximised to provide most benefit to the future development of outdoor recreational infrastructure in the State?

### Land Access Arrangements

#### Permissive Access

The majority of existing walking trail developments in Ireland are established on a “permissive access” basis. Some of the 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 infer that a route becomes 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. A landowner retains the right to withdraw permission for access should he/she so wish, subject to reasonable notice.

Where public or private funding is utilised for a project a minimum period of access is normally required. The permissive access model is a worthy mechanism for certain cycling and walking projects, particularly at a local level and often the landowners become champions of the project.

However, Permissive Access involves a degree of uncertainty with regard to the development of a greenway and permanent, long-term access. It requires agreement by all landowners along the route; even one key landowner disagreement may prevent development of the route. Where a route is developed under a permissive access
arrangement, the withdrawal of permission by one or more landowners could put the State investment in the project in jeopardy. This is particularly an issue for greenways that are capable of attracting domestic and overseas tourists where visitors may have arranged their holiday schedule expecting unimpeded access to a greenway. Where access to a greenway is denied this could have a significant reputational impact and negatively affect the ability to successfully market the greenway either in the domestic tourism market or internationally.

**Questions for consideration**

Is the permissive access model an appropriate basis for the future development of greenways in the State?

Permissive access arrangements can avoid potentially expensive land acquisition costs in the development of greenways but are there other benefits to using this model that would render it more appropriate in certain circumstances?

What type of greenway projects would permissive access be suitable for?

Are there projects that it would be unsuitable for?

**Acquisition of land**

While compulsory purchase has become quite common in Ireland due to the major Roads programme under the National Development Plans and successive capital investment plans, the mechanism is not commonly used for smaller infrastructure projects such as greenways where local authorities and other project developers have relied, as far as possible, on the use of State lands and permissive access agreements with landowners.

Where a CPO is served, compensation is available to ensure that the landowner is restored, as far as possible, to the same financial position that they were in before the land and property were compulsorily purchased. Where greenways are intended to be on a national scale or of a scale that would require significant State investment, CPO will have to be considered, as a means of better protecting the State’s investment into the future.

Whilst the use of the term “compulsory” indicates an imposed solution, in the vast majority of cases agreement on price, on accommodation works and other elements is achieved prior to purchase so that the acquisition is, in effect, a negotiated solution in which the parties achieve a mutually satisfactory outcome. The use of CPO can ensure that no single landowner can use successfully negotiated purchases at other sections of the route to delay an entire project.

It is considered that CPO has the potential to assist in the delivery of the national greenways strategy while respecting landowners rights and concerns.
Some local authorities are pursuing a model of land acquisition for greenways known as “Purchase by Agreement”. The local authorities will seek agreement from landowners to purchase the necessary tract of land at a fixed price (proportionate to the amount of land needed). This is a low cost approach to securing permanent access to the land but there is no guarantee that the length of a preferred route will be secured. Consent of the landowner is still required and where a landowner does not agree to sell, it may be necessary for local authorities to examine alternative route options.

**Questions for consideration**

Where a proposed greenway route involves access to privately owned land do you think that CPO is a valid mechanism for the acquisition of land on a route?

If you don’t think CPO is valid, what alternatives would you suggest?

At what level should consultation take place with landowners where CPO is being considered - at the individual landowner level or with representative bodies?
5. What approach should be taken to the future development of Greenways?

The greenways that have been developed in the State to date are a range of individual projects rather than a network. There is a view that the development of an interconnected network of greenways would provide a basis for the development of a cycle tourism product that could be branded and marketed internationally as well as having appeal for the domestic tourism market (and, at the same time, providing a recreational amenity for local communities that could also provide a sustainable travel option for communities along its route).

A Network approach?

In fact, one of the objectives set out in the National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) published in 2009 was to develop a National Cycle Network. This was to include rural recreational routes around urban areas as well as connecting major urban areas.

National Cycle Network Scoping Study

Following publication of the NCPF, the National Roads Authority (now Transport Infrastructure Ireland) was tasked with developing the National Cycle Network (NCN) and it published the NCN Scoping Study in 2010.

The study identified potential route corridors between urban centres of 10,000 population and upwards that could make up a National Cycle Network. The potential Network identified in the scoping study was approximately 2,000km in length. It was envisaged that the identified route corridors would provide a skeleton around which routes should develop nationwide, with potential for links into and between the corridors, particularly where existing infrastructure allowed cost-effective delivery. Due to the economic crisis funding for the development of the NCN did not materialise and no further substantial work has been done on the concept of developing a network on the lines proposed in the NCN Scoping Study.

The Study was, however, referenced in the funding calls launched by the Department in 2012 and 2014. However, the on-road projects awarded funded under these funding calls have not proven to be as successful as those that were off-road or predominantly off-road, i.e. greenways.

While connectivity and a geographical spread of routes is a desirable long term goal in the development of a greenway network this may not be deliverable in the short to medium term. There is likely to continue to be a certain focus on those routes which can be delivered utilising existing infrastructure such as disused rail lines, canal tow paths or on those projects which build on an existing successful cycle route. For example there are a number of potential routes that suggest themselves, including the Grand Canal, the Barrow...
Way (with an extension from New Ross to Waterford to join up with the Waterford Greenway), extension of the Great Southern Trail to Limerick and Tralee. There are also a number of former Railway lines that have the potential to be developed as greenways such as Navan to Kingscourt. There is also the possibility of extending some of the greenways built to date and/or creating loop tracks from them.

**Questions for consideration**

Should the concept of the National Cycle Network as proposed in the 2010 NCN Scoping Study be developed or set aside?

Is it appropriate for the State to invest in individual greenway projects that may never have potential to connect to other greenways or substantially off-road cycle facilities?

Should the Greenways Strategy aim to develop a network of interconnected greenways or should alternative approaches be considered?

**A Cluster approach?**

The approach to the development of cycle routes in New Zealand provides an interesting example – see map attached at Appendix 2 of New Zealand’s “Great Rides” – 22 in all. These are spread throughout the country and do not comprise a network of linked routes but do feature a number of “clusters” of routes that could be combined to create a longer visit for cycle tourists.

The approach used in New Zealand was built around existing iconic attractions and infrastructure, was supported financially at central Government level ($50m) with co-funding from local authorities and trails owners ($30m).

This might suggest an approach that could work in Ireland, a number of routes linking off major routes. An example of where this has already been done in Ireland is the Mullingar to Ballymahon “spur” off the Galway to Dublin Greenway.

A study\(^{10}\) of the economic benefits of the greenway network in New Zealand for the 2015 calendar year found the following:

- An estimated 1.3 million users visited the 22 Great Rides in 2015.
- Approximately 86.5 per cent of users of the Great Rides were New Zealanders, and just over 13.5 per cent were international visitors.
- For every dollar attributed to construction and maintenance of the Great Rides in 2015, approximately $3.55 of annual benefits were generated.
- The economic contribution of the cycle trails in 2015 was estimated at $37.4 million.
- The social contribution of the Great Rides was estimated to be $12 million. This includes reduced mortality and cost savings from diseases associated with physical inactivity.

**An approach based on EuroVelo?**

EuroVelo is a network of 15 long distance cycle routes connecting the whole European continent. It is being developed by the European Cyclist Federation with the aim, inter alia, of promoting economically, environmentally and socially sustainable travel and improving the quality of EuroVelo routes in all participating European countries. It provides Europe-wide information on EuroVelo routes and national cycle routes. Eurovelo routes can be used by cycle tourists as well as by local people making daily journeys.

Two potential routes in Ireland are identified as part of the Eurovelo network (see Figure 1 below):

- *EuroVelo 1* - the Atlantic Coast Route
- *EuroVelo 2* – The Capitals Route

*Figure 1: EuroVelo Route Network*
EuroVelo 1 runs from northern Norway to Portugal, via Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, France and Spain finishing in Lisbon. For the most part the route follows the Atlantic seaboard and this is mostly the case for the elements of the route identified in Ireland.

Sections of EuroVelo 1 have been developed on quiet, lightly-trafficked roads in Co. Donegal and Co. Wexford as shown in Figure 2. EuroVelo 1 also incorporates the Great Western Greenway in Co. Mayo, the Great Southern Trail in Co. Limerick and the recently opened Waterford Greenway (the routes already developed are denoted by a continuous red line in figure 2).

EuroVelo 2 incorporates the Galway to Dublin Greenway; the full route runs from Galway through Dublin to Moscow (via London and Berlin). The elements of the Galway to Dublin Greenway that are already constructed (from Athlone to the County Meath border) are also identified in Figure 2. Construction is ongoing in Meath and Kildare with other works in Dublin planned or ongoing.
EuroVelo Standards
The European Cyclists Federation which is coordinating the EuroVelo project, sets out three different standard levels for the certification of EuroVelo routes. Standards are set for experienced cyclists, occasional cyclists and inexperienced cyclists. The standards are laid out under three broad headings - route infrastructure, services and promotion.

The standards for experienced cyclists and even occasional cyclists can generally be achieved on roads identified on the routes with low traffic volumes. However, it is difficult to achieve the higher standards required for inexperienced cyclists and families on on-road routes. Greenways are ideal for providing this standard, catering for all abilities and levels of experience.

EuroVelo Plan for Ireland
The Department has engaged Sport Ireland Trails to identify the potential route of EuroVelo 1 in Ireland. The objective of this project is to identify and agree a continuous potential route from Donegal to Wexford. This will include lightly trafficked roads, existing greenways (and potential future greenways) and other cycling infrastructure where it exists on the route. Work on this is ongoing.

Identification of a continuous EuroVelo 1 route would allow the route to be promoted both locally and internationally. The EuroVelo website www.eurovelo.com, hosted by the European Cyclist’s Federation, carries information on all Eurovelo routes with country specific links and information. This website can also be used to promote specific sections of the route such as greenways.

Regarding EuroVelo 2, Government policy is to construct the section in Ireland from Galway to Dublin as a substantially off-road route.

Questions for consideration
Do EuroVelo 1 and EuroVelo 2 offer an approach for the development of greenways and other cycle routes in Ireland?

Do you have experience of cycling on a Eurovelo route on continental Europe? Do you think the development of EuroVelo routes in Ireland would help to increase cycle numbers?

Should the focus of the Greenways Strategy be on greenways in the strictest sense (fully or substantially off-road) or should the use of lightly-trafficked roads like those on EuroVelo routes also be considered if a ‘network’ approach is to be taken?

What role, if any, should EuroVelo routes play in the Greenways Strategy?
6. Other Issues

Urban Greenways

Greenways are not restricted to rural or lesser populated areas, they can provide a highly efficient commuting option for cyclists and walkers in an urban setting as well as providing an attractive way for visitors to explore urban areas. The Grand and Royal Canals within the Greater Dublin Area already provide significant sections of greenway for use by commuters and visitors.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has designed the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Cycle Network Plan which is included in the NTA’s Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035. The Network includes a number of greenways such as the Dodder Greenway and the East Coast Trail in addition to on-road cycling routes.

A draft Cycle Network has also been devised for Cork, which includes a number of greenways including proposed extensions of the Curraheen River and the Passage West greenways.

The Galway Transport Strategy also includes plans for a Cycle Network including greenways. Work is ongoing in the relevant local authorities on developing plans for Limerick and Waterford and other towns and cities around the country.

Question for consideration

Should the Greenways Strategy address the development of urban greenways or should these continue to be pursued in the context of urban Transport Strategies as referenced above?

Greenway Users, Standards & Accessibility

Greenways should be developed in a way that attracts as many users as possible. Many of these users will be inexperienced cyclists, many will travel with friends and family members including children. They are looking for a peaceful and easy cycle that brings them into nature, that is not too taxing with steep gradients and where they can rent bikes and have the opportunity of a one-way trip with a lift back to the start of the journey or with accommodation available at the end of their trip.
Greenways are also a significant resource for walkers and the greenways already constructed have seen significant numbers use the routes for walking, particularly in the sections close to towns and villages.

One of the lesser known benefits associated with greenways developed to common standards is that they open up areas to all users as the gradients, surfacing and access points are such that wheelchair and buggy users can use the routes. Grassy surfaces on canal and river banks do not facilitate such users.

**Questions for consideration**

What type of surface should be used on Greenways?

Should different areas (rural/urban) have different surfaces?

Should access be controlled or open?
### National Cycle Network Funding Programme 2012-2013 - Projects funded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012</th>
<th>Project Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow/Kilkenny</td>
<td>44.5km cycleway linking Carlow to Paulstown to Kilkenny.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>4km cycleway linking Ennistymon to Lahinch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>195.5km cycle route between Donegal Town and Newtowncunningham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fingal</td>
<td>3km cycle link from Ashtown to Blanchardstown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>1.2km extension to existing cycle/pedestrian route from Killarney to Fossa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>3km extension to the Great Southern Trail (GST) from Abbeyfeale Town to Rathoran.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louth</td>
<td>6.3km greenway from Omeath and Carlingford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>8.8km greenway from Castlebar to Turlough Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>3km cycle/walkway from Drogheda Ramparts to the Oldbridge Estate entrance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>4.5km cycle route through Monaghan Town</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Tipperary</td>
<td>2.8km extension to the existing N52 walkway/cycleway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offaly</td>
<td>16.8km of dedicated cycle lanes along the R420 from Tullamore to Moate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>20km of dedicated cycle lanes along the former N6 between Athlone and Ballinasloe (funding withdrawn due to inability to deliver project)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterford City</td>
<td>3.2km cycleway between Tramore and Waterford City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterford Co</td>
<td>6.4km cycleway between the City Outer Ring Road to Tramore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>11.3km upgrading of canal tow path from Boardstown Bridge to county Boundary</td>
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APPENDIX 1 contd.

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<thead>
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<th>National Cycle Network Funding Programme 2014-2016 - Projects funded</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
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<th>Stimulus Funding 2014 - Projects funded</th>
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APPENDIX 2
http://www.smartertravel.ie/content/national-cycle-policy

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https://www.nationaltransport.ie/planning-policy/greater-dublin-area-transport-strategy-2016-2035/


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Page 9 – Great Western Greenway
Page 18 – Waterford Greenway
Page 25 – Waterford Greenway

Figure Credits
Figure 1 – European Cyclists’ Federation
Figure 2 – European Cyclists’ Federation