

# AA CONCLUSION STATEMENT

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IN SUPPORT OF THE  
**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**

OF THE

## DUBLIN TO GALWAY GREENWAY PLAN

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF  
**ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE**

**for: Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport**

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# Section 1 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Conclusion Statement for the Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan.

The obligation to undertake AA derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives.

This AA Conclusion Statement should be read in conjunction with the following documents which accompany the Statement:

- Strategic Environmental Report; and
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS), including Appendix I 'Detailed characteristics of the SAC sites identified within 15km or with a hydrological link to the Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan' and Appendix II 'Detailed characteristics of the SPA sites identified within 15km or with a hydrological link to the Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan'.

## 1.2 Legislative Requirements in relation to AA

In carrying out the AA for the Greenway Plan, the Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires, inter alia, that the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport take into account the matters arrayed in the first column on Table 1.1 below. The second column identifies how these issues have been addressed.

**Table 1-1 Matters taken into account by the AA**

| Matter specified by the Regulations  | How addressed by AA  |
|--|--|
| (a) the NIS  | A NIS accompanies this AA Conclusion Statement and the Plan  |
| (b) any other plans or projects that may, in combination with the plan or project under consideration, adversely affect the integrity of a European Site (see Section 2) | Throughout the NIS, particularly Section 3.4 of the NIS.   |
| (c) any supplemental information furnished in relation to any such report or statement   | This AA Conclusion Statement supplements the NIS which is also accompanied by an Appendix (NIS Appendices I & II) which provides additional detail on European Sites |
| (d) if appropriate, any additional information sought by the authority and furnished by the applicant in relation to a Natura Impact Statement                           | The Natura Impact Statement has taken into account submissions received during the Plan/AA preparation process – see Section 2 of this Statement                     |
| (e) any information or advice obtained by the public authority   |  |
| (f) if appropriate, any written submissions or observations made to the public authority in relation to the application for consent for proposed plan or project         |  |
| (g) any other relevant information   |  |

In addition to the above, the regulations require that the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport makes available for inspection a determination regarding the outcome of the assessment with respect to effects on the integrity of European Sites (such a determination is provided at Section 4 of this document).

### **1.3 AA Conclusion Statement**

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's Non-Statutory AA guidance states that (Section 4.14) it *"is recommended that planning authorities include a clear and discrete AA Conclusion Statement as a distinct section in the written statement of the plan separate to the SEA statement."*

This guidance recommends that the following issues are addressed by the AA:

- Summary of how the findings of the AA were factored into the plan
- Reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered as part of the AA process;
- A declaration that the plan as adopted will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of European Sites; and
- The Natura Impact Statement.

As recommended, this AA Conclusion Statement addresses the above issues.

## **Section 2 How the findings of the AA were factored into the Greenway Plan**

Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to the Council through the SEA and the AA. By integrating all related recommendations into the Plan, the Council have ensured that both the beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan have been and will be maximised and that potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Integration of AA considerations into the Plan was achieved through the:

### **1. Consultations**

As environmental authorities identified under the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended, the following authorities were sent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping notices indicating that submissions or observations in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report could be made to the Council various submissions were received from the environmental authorities.

Furthermore, submissions from the public and others were made on the Plan and AA Natura Impact Statement while these documents were on public display and these resulted in updates being made to the documents. Changes to the provisions of the Plan made on foot of submissions were considered and did not change the conclusions of the AA. No comments relating to the AA were made by the DAHG's submission on the Plan and associated assessments.

### **2. Consideration of alternatives**

Consideration of and integration of environmental considerations into alternatives, including sequencing, and ultimately into the Plan will contribute towards the protection and management of the environment over the lifetime of the Plan (see Section 3 of this Statement).

### **3. Integration of individual AA-related provisions into the Plan**

Various provisions have been integrated into the text of the Plan through the iterative Plan-preparation with SEA and AA processes. These include AA-related measures that are part the Strategic Environmental Report. Objectives and policies contained within the Greenway Plan that will act to protect European Sites include those detailed in Appendix I of the Plan.

## Section 3 Appraisal Process of Alternatives Considered in relation to the AA

### 3.1 Summary Description of Alternatives

As per the requirements of the SEA Directive, this SEA considers reasonable alternatives, which are capable of being implemented for the Greenway Plan, taking into account the objectives and policies of all higher-level Plans. These alternatives were assessed through the SEA process with reference to the specific requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and European Sites. An iterative process was undertaken between the SEA, AA and Greenway Plan design/development.

#### 3.1.1 Strategic Alternatives

The final Greenway will consist of a combination of a number of existing and new components. Not all of these elements can be foreseen at this time. 'Scenarios' that describe different alternative combinations of elements are often used to consider the effects of a range of possible outcomes and their associated environmental effects.

In this instance it appears that three main scenarios that could occur.

**Scenario One:** *Maximum use of existing and previously permitted components.*

In this scenario, existing pathways along canals, rivers and publically accessible rural lands would be used. This scenario would also use existing public roads and pathways in both urban and rural areas.

This scenario would use the least number of new projects that have not yet been permitted or included in existing, assessed plans.

This scenario would also use existing plans and/or permitted projects where these have been subject to a consent process that has previously included the carrying out or screening for SEA/EIA and/or AA.

**Scenario Two:** *Substantial use of existing and some use of new projects*

In this scenario, the above-mentioned existing components would be augmented in places by more optimal routes that would involve new works – such as additional paths, routes and crossings of streams, rivers, canals, road, rail or bog.

It is anticipated that all such components would be subject to relevant assessment including SEA, EIA, and AA etc.

**Scenario Three:** *Use of existing and substantial new elements*

In this scenario, the Greenway would involve the development of substantial new components. This may involve bypassing and or duplicating existing and/or permitted elements.

It is anticipated that all such components would be subject to relevant assessment including SEA, EIA, and AA etc.

### **3.1.2 Routing Alternatives**

Alternatives for the development of the greenway comprise:

Canal

1. Along existing canal right of way
2. Outside of canal right of way

River

3. Within the River Corridor
4. Outside of the River Corridor

Railway

5. Within the Railway right of way
6. Outside of the Railway right of way

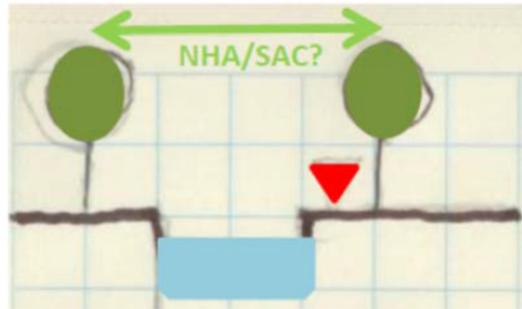
Roads

7. Along road (shared on smaller roads, for shorter distances)
8. Along roadside (cycleways)
9. Outside of road right of way

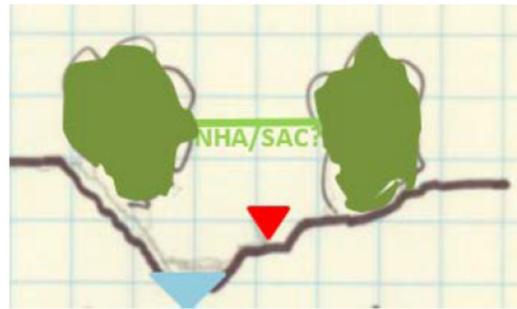
Tracks on State owned lands

10. Tracks on Forestry lands
11. Tracks on Peatland lands

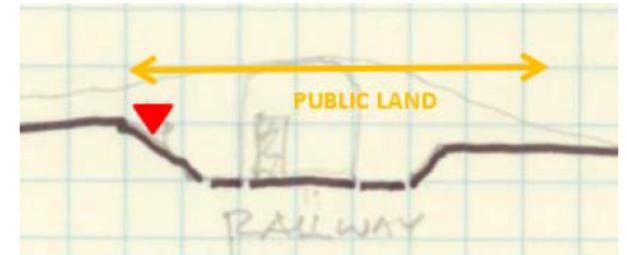
Sketches for alternatives 1 to 10 are provided on Figure 3.1.



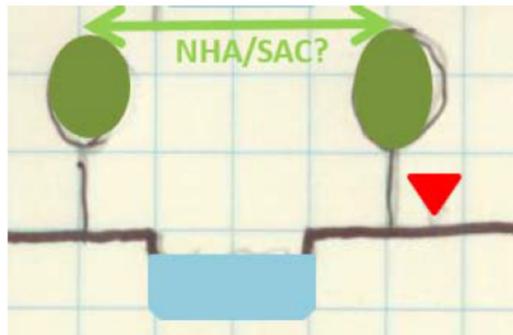
1. Within Canal right of way



3. Within River Corridor



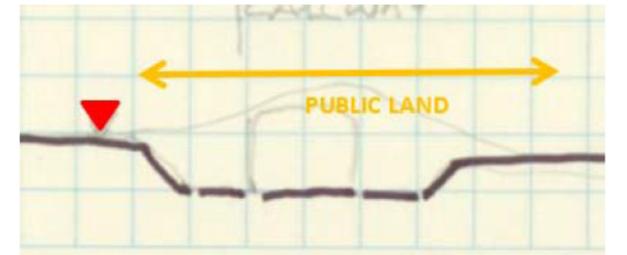
5. Within Railway right of way



2. Outside of Canal right of way



4. Outside of River Corridor



6. Outside of Railway right of way



7. Along road (shared on smaller roads)



8. Fringe to road right of way (cycleways)



9. Outside of road right of way

**Figure 3.1 Sketches of Alternatives**

## 3.2 Evaluation of Alternatives<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2.1 Strategic Alternatives

The final Greenway will consist of a combination of a number of existing and new components. Not all of these elements can be foreseen at this time.

**Scenario One:** *Maximum use of existing and previously permitted components.*

By using existing pathways along canals, rivers and publically accessible rural lands and using existing public roads and pathways in both urban and rural areas, this scenario would minimise potential adverse environmental effects (these effects are as detailed under Section 3.2.2) arising from developing new projects that have not yet been permitted or included in existing, assessed plans.

By using existing plans and/or permitted projects where these have been subject to a consent process that has previously included the carrying out or screening for SEA/EIA and/or AA, this scenario would further contribute towards minimising potential adverse environmental effects arising from developing new projects that have not yet been permitted or included in existing, assessed plans.

**Scenario Two:** *Substantial use of existing and some use of new projects*

Augmenting the above-mentioned existing components would in places by more optimal routes that would involve new works – such as additional paths, routes and crossings of streams, rivers, canals, road, rail or bog – that would present a variety of potentially adverse environmental effects (these effects are as detailed under Section 3.2.2).

It is anticipated that all such components would be subject to relevant assessment including SEA, EIA, and AA etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Footnotes like this are used in this section in order to identify instances where interactions between the relevant alternative and the relevant SEOs occur. The nature of these interactions is identified at Table 3.1. The following SEOs were used:

- *SEO C1: To reduce travel related emissions to air and to encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport*
- *SEO M1: For new development to be served with adequate and appropriate waste water treatment*
- *SEO M2: For new development to be served with adequate drinking water that is both wholesome and clean*
- *SEO M3: To reduce waste volumes, minimise waste to landfill and increase recycling and reuse*
- *SEO M4: To maximise the use of existing linear infrastructure*
- *SEO P1: To develop the greenway close to existing settlements*
- *SEO HH1: To protect populations and human health from exposure to incompatible landuses*
- *SEO B1: To ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and species<sup>1</sup>*
- *SEO B2: To ensure compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function act as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species*
- *SEO B3: To avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 with regard to the protection of listed species*
- *SEO S1: To avoid damage to the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource*
- *SEO W1: To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality and status of surface waters*
- *SEO W2 : To prevent pollution and contamination of groundwater*
- *SEO W3: To comply as appropriate with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*
- *SEO CH1: To protect archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context*
- *SEO CH2: To protect architectural heritage including entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context*
- *SEO L1: To avoid conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in the Development Plans of planning authorities*

### **Scenario Three: Use of existing and substantial new elements**

The development of substantial new components under this scenario – including possible bypassing and or duplicating existing and/or permitted elements – would involve the greatest amount of potentially adverse environmental effects (these effects are as detailed under Section 3.2.2).

It is anticipated that all such components would be subject to relevant assessment including SEA, EIA and AA etc.

The content of the Plan mainly reflects scenarios 1 and 2. The Greenway Plan constitutes an assemblage of elements – some will be new, some exist already, some are being developed as parts of existing local initiatives. Furthermore the Greenway contains elements that have already been adopted – following consultation and assessment - into County and Local Plans. Finally, some parts of the final scheme may consist of elements that emerge from new and emerging local plans and initiatives.

## **3.2.2 Routing Alternatives**

This section summarises the evaluation of environmental effects of the alternative scenarios that is provided in the SEA Environmental Report.

### **Air and Climatic Factors and Human Health**

**All alternatives** would be likely to result in significant positive effects upon objectives relating to air and climatic factors as they would improve options for sustainable mobility (cycling and walking), thereby reducing and limiting increases in greenhouse gas emissions, noise emissions and other emissions to air<sup>2</sup>.

By reducing and limiting increases in noise emissions and other emissions to air, **all alternatives** would be likely to contribute towards the protection of human health<sup>3</sup>.

### **Population**

**All alternatives** provide opportunities to route the greenway close to populations resident in settlements across the country<sup>4</sup>.

### **Water Services**

The greenway will comprise one of many types of infrastructure and services which will support existing populations and facilitate new populations. Consequently, **each of the alternatives** would, in combination with land use plans for the distribution of populations and other sectoral plans such as for the provision of water services, potentially interact with the need to provide adequate and appropriate water services (waste water and drinking water). It is the function of Irish Water to provide for these needs<sup>5</sup>.

### **Existing Linear Infrastructure and Waste**

The use of existing linear infrastructure varies across the alternatives. Developing the greenway along existing canal right of ways, within existing railway rights of way, along roads or the roadside and along existing tracks on forestry and peatland lands (**Alternatives 1, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11**) would make most use of existing infrastructure and routes<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> SEO C1

<sup>3</sup> SEO HHI

<sup>4</sup> SEO P1

<sup>5</sup> SEOs M1 M2

<sup>6</sup> SEO M4

Developing the greenway outside of the canal right of way, within or outside of river corridors and outside of railway and road right of ways (**Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6 and 9**) would be likely to require the most amount of new infrastructure<sup>7</sup> and result amounts of associated potential wastes<sup>8</sup> (from materials and excavations).

Development of the greenway along existing linear infrastructure would be unlikely to affect flood risk management issues<sup>9</sup> while drainage would be taken into account into the design of new infrastructure thereby mitigating<sup>10</sup> or enhancing any interaction with flood risk issues<sup>11</sup>. By protecting certain areas from the encroachment of development, the greenway could make contributions towards climate adaptation and flood risk management.

### **Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, Water, Soil and Human Health**

By protecting certain areas from the encroachment of development, all alternatives would provide for a continuation of (and further contribution towards) the protection of ecological, water and soil resources along the greenway route<sup>12</sup>.

Research by Fáilte Ireland in the Burren has shown improved environmental outcomes (improved attainment of conservation objectives) in areas with visitor management strategies. A visitor management strategy during the implementation of the Greenway project could contribute positively to advancing the attainment of conservation objectives along and adjacent to the route, thereby benefitting the management of designated sites<sup>13</sup>.

By reusing existing linear infrastructure and reducing the need for new construction, **Alternatives 1, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11**, would avoid some potentially adverse effects upon ecology (e.g. habitat loss/fragmentation, species disturbance/displacement and effects in riparian zones where new crossings of waters, if any, are progressed<sup>14</sup>), water (e.g. adverse effects upon status of waters arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology at construction stage or increases in outflow at waste water treatment plants<sup>15</sup>), soil (e.g. loss of hydrogeological and ecological function as a result of construction of associated facilities/infrastructure on greenfield lands<sup>16</sup>) and human health (interactions with environmental vectors<sup>17</sup>).

Nonetheless there would be potential for adverse effects to arise, if unmitigated, as a result of, for example, new signage and route maintenance and use. As with other issues, detailed project level examination would be required, especially with respect to: **Alternative 1** 'Within Canal right of way', as the Royal and Grand Canals are designated as proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and traverse a number of candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs); and **Alternative 11** 'Tracks on Peatland lands', due to the protection afforded by the Habitats Directive to certain peatlands.

**Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6 and 9** comprise the development of new routes for the greenway and would require the most amount of new infrastructure and construction. Consequently these alternatives would present the potential for significant adverse effects upon ecology, water, soil and human health, generally to a greater extent than Alternatives 1, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11. **Alternative 3** 'Within River Corridor' poses the greatest potential for the occurrence of

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<sup>7</sup> SEO M4

<sup>8</sup> SEO M3

<sup>9</sup> SEO W3

<sup>10</sup> SEO W3

<sup>11</sup> SEO W3

<sup>12</sup> SEOs B1 B2 B3 W1 W2 S1

<sup>13</sup> SEOs B1 B2 B3

<sup>14</sup> SEOs B1 B2 B3

<sup>15</sup> SEOs W1 W2

<sup>16</sup> SEO S1

<sup>17</sup> SEO HHI

significant effects upon ecology, water and soil resources due to the concentration of designations and sensitivities which can occur within river corridors.

### Cultural Heritage and Landscape

**All alternatives** would provide opportunities for the continuation of (and further contribution towards) the protection from development of cultural heritage structures and landscape designations which are located within and adjacent to the greenway corridor<sup>18</sup>.

By reusing existing linear infrastructure and reducing the need for new construction, **Alternatives 1, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11**, would avoid some potentially significant adverse effects upon archaeological and architectural heritage<sup>19</sup>, including context, and landscape designations<sup>20</sup>. Nonetheless there would be potential for adverse effects to arise (if unmitigated) as a result of, for example, minor construction or new signage.

Due to the need to construct new routes for the greenway, **Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6 and 9** would have the potential to result in significant adverse effects upon archaeological heritage<sup>21</sup> (e.g. disturbance of unknown archaeology or effects upon the context of archaeology) and architectural heritage<sup>22</sup> (e.g. effects upon the context of architectural heritage) and landscape designations<sup>23</sup>. Higher concentrations of landscape designations and cultural heritage would be likely to occur within or adjacent to river corridors (see **Alternative 3** 'Within River Corridor' and **Alternative 4** 'Outside of River Corridor').

### Comparative Evaluation against SEOs

Table 3.1 provides a comparative evaluation of alternatives against the SEOs. The provisions of the alternatives are evaluated using compatibility criteria in order to determine how they would be likely to affect the status of the SEOs (these are all detailed at the beginning of Section 3.2.1). The SEOs and the alternatives are arrayed against each other to identify which interactions - if any - would cause effects on specific components of the environment. Where the appraisal identifies a conflict with the status of an SEO the relevant SEO code is entered into the conflict column - e.g. B1 which stands for the SEO likely to be affected - in this instance 'to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annexed habitats and species'.

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<sup>18</sup> SEO CH1 CH2 L1

<sup>19</sup> SEOs CH1 CH2

<sup>20</sup> SEO L1

<sup>21</sup> SEO CH1

<sup>22</sup> SEO CH2

<sup>23</sup> SEO L1

**Table 3.1 Evaluation of Alternatives against SEOs**

|  | Likely to <b>Improve</b> status of SEOs | Probable <b>Conflict</b> with status of SEOs- unlikely to be mitigated | <b>Least Potential Conflict</b> with status of SEOs- likely to be mitigated | <b>Potential Conflict</b> with status of SEOs- likely to be mitigated | <b>Most Potential Conflict</b> with status of SEOs- likely to be mitigated | <b>No significant interaction</b> with status of SEOs |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| 1. Along existing canal right of way                           | C1 HH1 P1 W3 M4<br>CH1 CH2 L1           |  | W1 W2 S1 CH1 CH2<br>L1  | M1 M2 B1 B2 B3  |  | M3  |
| 2. Outside of canal right of way                               | C1 HH1 P1 W3 CH1<br>CH2 L1              |  |   | M1 M2 M3 M4 W3<br>B1 B2 B3 W1 W2<br>S1 CH1 CH2 L1                     |  |   |
| 3. Within the River Corridor                                   | C1 HH1 P1 W3 CH1<br>CH2 L1              |  |   | M1 M2 M3 M4 W3  | B1 B2 B3 W1 W2<br>S1 CH1 CH2 L1  |   |
| 4. Outside of the River Corridor                               | C1 HH1 P1 W3 CH1<br>CH2 L1              |  |   | M1 M2 M3 M4 W3<br>B1 B2 B3 W1 W2<br>S1                                | CH1 CH2 L1   |   |
| 5. Within the Railway right of way                             | C1 HH1 P1 M4 W3<br>CH1 CH2 L1           |  | B1 B2 B3 W1 W2 S1<br>CH1 CH2 L1   | M1 M2   |  | M3  |
| 6. Outside of the Railway right of way                         | C1 HH1 P1 W3 CH1<br>CH2 L1              |  |   | M1 M2 M3 M4 W3<br>B1 B2 B3 W1 W2<br>S1 CH1 CH2 L1                     |  |   |
| 7. Along road (shared on smaller roads, for shorter distances) | C1 HH1 P1 W3 M4<br>CH1 CH2 L1           |  | B1 B2 B3 W1 W2 S1<br>CH1 CH2 L1   | M1 M2   |  | M3  |
| 8. Along roadside (cycleways)                                  | C1 HH1 P1 W3 M4<br>CH1 CH2 L1           |  | B1 B2 B3 W1 W2 S1<br>CH1 CH2 L1   | M1 M2   |  | M3  |
| 9. Outside of road right of way                                | C1 HH1 P1 W3 CH1<br>CH2 L1              |  |   | M1 M2 M3 M4 W3<br>B1 B2 B3 W1 W2<br>S1 CH1 CH2 L1                     |  |   |
| 10. Tracks on Forestry lands                                   | C1 HH1 P1 W3 M4<br>CH1 CH2 L1           |  | B1 B2 B3 W1 W2 S1<br>CH1 CH2 L1   | M1 M2   |  | M3  |
| 11. Tracks on Peatland lands                                   | C1 HH1 P1 W3 M4<br>CH1 CH2 L1           |  | W1 W2 S1 CH1 CH2<br>L1  | M1 M2 B1 B2 B3  |  | M3  |

### **3.3 The Selected Combination of Routing Alternatives**

The Greenway Plan encompasses all of the alternatives considered. Detailed route selection will inform the final project. The evaluation of alternatives will inform the decision-making framework for future projects.

The identification of route corridors and the refinement of the route line is likely to be informed by other considerations such as access to lands, perceptions of safety and attractiveness, costs and benefits and ease of maintenance.

The effects of implementing the selected combination of alternatives are detailed on Table 3.2 overleaf.

By complying with appropriate mitigation measures - including those which have been integrated into the Plan (see of this report) – potentially significant adverse environmental effects which could arise as a result of implementing the Plan would be likely to be avoided, reduced or offset.

### **3.4 Note on Minor Changes made to the Draft Plan after public display, before adoption**

Submissions on the Draft Plan resulted in two minor changes to the Draft Plan before adoption (the insertion of the word 'substantial' in two locations). These changes provide clarification and internal consistency within the Draft Plan and would not result in any additional potential effects to those already foreseen by the AA of the Draft Plan; they are not considered as being material.

**Table 3.2 Effects Arising from the Selected Combination of Alternatives and Mitigation Measures**

| <b>Environmental Component</b>   | <b>Likely Positive effect</b>   | <b>Potentially Significant Adverse effect, if unmitigated (these effects will be mitigated)</b>   | <b>Primary Indicator(s) for Monitoring</b>   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Air and climatic factors         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements in air quality and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from: reduced car usage and increases in levels of cycling and walking</li> <li>Contributions towards climate adaptation and flood risk management arising from the preservation of natural floodplains</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximising positive effects on sustainable mobility</li> </ul>  |
| Material Assets                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases in the use of existing underutilised or disused infrastructure e.g. towpaths and railway lines</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need to provide adequate and appropriate water services (it is the function of Irish Water to provide for such needs)</li> <li>Increases in waste levels</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Irish Water</li> <li>Construction Waste</li> <li>Waste Creation</li> <li>Waste Disposal</li> <li>Key Measure: Environmental Constraints and Opportunity Mapping</li> <li>Key Measure: Corridor and Routeway Selection Process</li> </ul>  |
| Population and human health      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution towards the protection of human health as a result of improving the quality in environmental vectors (e.g. improvements in air quality as a result of contributions towards sustainable mobility)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential interactions if effects upon environmental vectors such as water are not mitigated</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Health</li> </ul>   |
| Biodiversity and flora and fauna | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A visitor management strategy during the implementation of the Greenway project could contribute positively to advancing the attainment of conservation objectives along and adjacent to the route, thereby benefitting the management of designated sites.</li> <li>Continuation of and further contribution towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna</li> <li>Enhancement of ecological connectivity by protecting certain areas from the encroachment of development</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arising from both construction and operation of the greenway and associated facilities/infrastructure: loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna</li> <li>Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects</li> <li>Disturbance and displacement of protected species and coastal squeeze</li> <li>Effects in riparian zones where new crossings of waters, if any, are progressed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor Management Strategy</li> <li>Protection of Biodiversity including Natura 2000 Network</li> <li>Appropriate Assessment</li> <li>Protection of Natura 2000 Sites</li> <li>Areas of geological interest</li> <li>NPWS &amp; Integrated Management Plans</li> <li>Coastal Zone</li> <li>National Peatlands Strategy</li> <li>Biodiversity and Ecological Networks</li> <li>Waters</li> <li>Protection of Riparian Zone and Waterbodies and Watercourses</li> <li>Non-Designated Sites</li> <li>Non-native invasive species</li> </ul> |

Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement for the Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan

| Environmental Component | Likely Positive effect  | Potentially Significant Adverse effect, if unmitigated (these effects will be mitigated)   | Primary Indicator(s) for Monitoring   |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|
| Water                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of and further contribution towards the protection of water resources along greenway route by protecting certain areas from the encroachment of development</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential interactions with the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas, arising from:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes in quality, flow and/or morphology at construction stage (including of greenway and associated facilities/infrastructure); and</li> <li>- Increases in outflow at waste water treatment plants as a result of increases in numbers of visitors to settlements along the route.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Increase in the risk of flooding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directives and Regulations</li> <li>River Basin Management Plan</li> <li>Bathing Water</li> <li>Flood Risk Management Guidelines</li> <li>Improvement and/or Restoration of Natural Flood Risk Management Functions</li> <li>Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs)</li> </ul> |
| Soil                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preservation of hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource by protecting certain areas from the encroachment of development</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adverse impacts on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource as a result of construction of associated facilities/infrastructure</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soil Protection and Contamination</li> </ul>   |
| Cultural Heritage       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of and further contribution towards the protection from development of cultural heritage structures which are located within and adjacent to the greenway corridor</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction activities (for both greenway and associated facilities/infrastructure)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Archaeological Heritage</li> <li>Protection of Archaeological Sites</li> <li>Consultation</li> <li>Underwater Archaeological Sites</li> <li>Architectural Heritage</li> </ul>  |
| Landscape               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of and further contribution towards the protection from development of landscape designations which are located within and adjacent to the greenway corridor</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape Designations</li> <li>Coastal Areas and Seascapes</li> <li>National Landscape Strategy</li> </ul>  |

## Section 4 Determination

### **Appropriate Assessment Determination under the:**

### **European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)**

### **for the:**

### **Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan**

An Appropriate Assessment determination [pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether or not a plan or project would adversely affect the integrity of a European site and Regulation 42 (11) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended)] is being made by the Minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

In carrying out this Appropriate Assessment, the Minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport is taking into account the relevant matters specified under Regulation 42 (12) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), including:

- Written submissions made on the Draft Greenway Plan and associated documents while they were placed on public display; and
- The Natura Impact Statement (which considers other plans and projects and has taken into account submissions and observations received during public display).

It is determined that the risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of European Sites have been addressed by the inclusion of achievable mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and will reliably mitigate effects where they cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Greenway Plan will themselves be subject to Appropriate Assessment when further details of design and route are known.

Having incorporated these mitigation commitments; the Minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport considers that the Greenway Plan will not significantly affect the ecological integrity of European Sites<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

a) no alternative solution available,  
b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and  
c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.