



National Cycle Network Funding Scheme

Application for Financial Assistance

Cork to Kinsale Greenway

Name & Address of Local Authority: Cork County Council
County Hall
Cork

Project Manager: Clare Cronin

Telephone: 021 4285889

Email: clare.cronin@corkcoco.ie

Summary Project Description

The Cork to Kinsale Greenway represents the first phase in the opening up of the abandoned lines of the Cork Bandon and South Coast Railway. The Cork Bandon and South Coast Railway incorporating over 188km of former rail lines has the long term potential to be developed as Ireland's premier off-road cycling destination, connecting as it does all the towns in West Cork and linking the large catchment population to this important recreational resource.

The proposed 36km Cork to Kinsale Greenway will be developed as a dedicated off-road cycle and walking route linking Cork and the iconic tourism town of Kinsale. This flagship route provides a unique opportunity to link Cork to Kinsale, a Heritage Town and established visitor destination. Kinsale currently attracts weekend, recreational and overseas visitors and the planned Greenway will serve to sustain and grow the tourism sector both in the town and in the villages in the vicinity of the proposed route, generating significant benefits for the local economy, supporting local businesses and providing opportunities for new enterprise development. The availability of an off-road cycle route to Kinsale, widely recognised as the gourmet capital of Ireland, with its many heritage and maritime attractions will draw recreational cyclists from the populated Cork metropolitan area in addition to appealing to international visitors. Similarly, the Greenway incorporates the impressive Chetwynd and Halfway Viaducts and Ireland's longest railway tunnel at Ballinhassig that will act as visitor attractions in their own right which, together with the scenic landscape and the built and natural heritage of the area, will provide for the development of a cycling route of world class standing.

The Cork to Kinsale Greenway has the potential to link to the proposed Tramore Valley Park in Cork City which will act as hub for wider connectivity within the Cork area, providing links to the proposed Passage West to Carrigaline Greenway which incorporates connection to the passenger ferry port at Ringaskiddy with direct access for visitors from mainland Europe, demonstrating the compatibility of the proposed Cork to Kinsale Greenway for integration within the wider proposals for cycling provision in the Cork Metropolitan area.

Economic Case for Cork to Kinsale Greenway

Experience elsewhere shows that there is a strong economic rationale for the development of projects such as the planned Cork to Kinsale Greenway. The Great Western Greenway in Mayo is widely recognised to be very successful. Research carried out on behalf of Fáilte Ireland in October 2011 to quantify the economic outcomes of that project estimates that the Greenway

attracts 80,000 visits or uses annually, generating an estimated direct expenditure of €7.2m to the local economy as well as creating and sustaining local employment.

In order to estimate the level of use and expenditure that could be associated with the Cork to Kinsale Greenway, the methodology used in the Mayo example provides a valid starting point. As survey data is unavailable, Fáilte Ireland and CSO data was factored up in line with the Mayo survey results to provide visitor numbers. Assumptions were made in relation to average length of stay (based on a West Cork walking survey in 2012) and in the absence of local data, daily spend is assumed to equal that in Mayo. It is clear from the table below that the potential annual economic impact of a Cork-Kinsale Greenway on the local economy is significant, with a projected direct expenditure of €19.5 million. While this methodology could be further refined to give more accurate projections, even assuming a margin of error of 50%, the potential expenditure remains considerable at just under €10m.

Table : Cork to Kinsale Greenway - Potential Visitor Numbers and Projected Expenditure

	Local Users	Domestic Users	Overseas Visitors	All
Market Origin	44%	35%	21%	
Share of Visits	136,809	105,960	64,780	307,549
Persons (visits/2)	n/a	52,980	32,390	
Av. Length stay in local area (days)	n/a	3.68	3.68	
Average daily spend in local area	€27.31	€49.85	€50.71	
Direct Expenditure	€3,736,254	€9,719,022	€6,044,389	€19,499,665

Social Case for Cork to Kinsale Greenway

While the economic data case supporting the development of the planned Cork to Kinsale Greenway is clear and quantifiable, the social dividend of the proposed Greenway cannot be underestimated. This proposed project is age-neutral, gender neutral, ability neutral and financially neutral for the user. As well as helping to achieve national modal shift targets, there are huge quality of life benefits to be achieved through increased physical activity. As well as allowing younger people a greater independence on a safe off-road route, regular exercise, particularly for older people, can accrue immense health benefits not only for physical well-being but also for mental health. The development of the Greenway will also create opportunities for greater social interaction and foster a greater sense of community spirit and a reduction on rural isolation.

Project Status

In February 2012 the feasibility study investigating the proposed development of a Greenway between Cork and Kinsale, utilising where possible the abandoned rail lines of the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway concluded that the Greenway has the potential to be the first amenity route to be developed along the extensive West Cork rail network and stated that the route would be a major attraction in itself but would also form part of a wider amenity route linking through Cork City to Passage West and ultimately the passenger ferry at Ringaskiddy.

In view of the substantial positive benefits to be gained in developing the Cork to Kinsale Greenway by greatly enhancing the cycling infrastructure of the area, meeting the increasing demand for recreational cycling facilities arising from the large urban population base in and around Cork City and responding to the demand for cycling based tourism infrastructure utilising

the spectacular route of the former railway line, Cork County Council is actively pursuing the development of the proposed Greenway.

Following from the preliminary investigation of the route, land registry searches have been completed and discussions with landowners are commencing which will be progressed in tandem with a detailed survey of the entire route. As this survey is advanced work will be progressed concurrently on the detailed design of the route which will be required for the statutory planning process. Similarly, work on the development of a maintenance and management plan, the preparation of a signage, way-marking and marketing strategy, and pursuing all potential sources for funding will be progressed at this time.

In summary, the progress to date on the overall route is as follows:

- West Cork Abandoned Rail Line Greenways Preliminary Feasibility Assessment Report completed.
- Cork to Kinsale Greenway Feasibility Report completed.
- Variation to Cork County Development Plan to support Greenways development adopted.
- Land ownership survey completed.
- Support of elected representative of Cork County Council for development of Greenway obtained.
- Preliminary route surveys and structures assessment complete.
- Discussions with landowners and detailed route survey commencing.

Purpose of Funding Request

There are several distinctive features located along the route of the proposed Cork to Kinsale Greenway including the viaducts at Chetwynd and Halfway and the Ballinhassig tunnel. These structures will require specialist engineering input to assess both their structural stability for prepare recommendations for best methods for adaptation for use as part of the proposed route. A preliminary visual survey of all the existing bridges along the route has been undertaken and initial assessment suggests that these structures are capable of use as part of the Greenway. As this element requires specialist engineering input which is outside the experience of the project team, Cork County Council requests funding for this purpose. It is estimated that the cost of this element will be in the region of €30,000.