



National Cycle Network Funding Scheme 2012/13

Project Proposal by Westmeath County Council
to Upgrade 23.45 Kilometers
of Royal Canal Towpath
- to Cycle Path-
(Shared Usage Specification),
as a major off-road section of the proposed
National Cycle Network
Dublin - Galway Route Corridor.

30th April 2012

National Cycle Network Funding Scheme 2012/13 – Application Form

Section 1: Project Outline	
Name and Address of Local Authority	Westmeath County Council, County Buildings, Mullingar
Contact person/proposed project manager	Mr. Barry Kehoe, Director of Services, Community & Enterprise
Telephone	044 9332296
e-mail	bkehoe@westmeathcoco.ie
Planned route start and end points (e.g. Newport to Mulranny). Detailed map to be included as appendix.	Upgrading of Royal Canal Towpath to Cycle Path Shared Usage Specification from (a) Boardstown Bridge (N52 jcn) over Royal Canal eastbound to Meath Border & (b) from Coolnahay Bridge westbound to Longford Border.
Proposed route distance (km)	(a) 11.3 kilometres of towpath to be paved (b) 12.15 kilometres of towpath to be paved
Estimated total project delivery costs (€)	(a) €451,250 (b) €473,750
Total grant funding being sought (€)	(a) €451,250 (b) €473,750
Planned duration of project/works (months)	To be determined
Planned start date and completion date	As soon as is practicable upon grant approval

<p>Brief outline of planned project</p>	<p>The proposed upgrading of the identified stretch of (southern bank) towpath of the Royal Canal eastbound (11.3km) from Boardstown Bridge on the N52 to the Meath County Border, is in line with the vision set out in the National Cycle Network Scoping Study, for the provision of a quality cycle route corridor from Dublin to Galway.</p> <p>The route corridor in Westmeath will utilise the Royal Canal (southern bank) Towpaths and will tie in with existing upgraded towpath sections under the Active Travel Project fund.</p> <p>On the western side of Mullingar, progressing from the already upgraded Canal towpath forming part of the Mullingar Cycle Hub (as part of the National Network of Cycle Hub Towns), the proposed canal towpath upgrading will extend (12.15km) from Coolnahay Bridge to the Longford County Border. This proposal will complete the upgrading works on all 46 kilometres (approx) of Royal Canal towpath (southern bank) in Westmeath. This can easily be linked in time to the proposed cycleway from Mullingar to Athlone via the disused Mullingar Athlone Rail Line, which run in parallel on the western side of Mullingar.</p>
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<p>Section 2: Project Detail</p>	
<p>Briefly outline how this route aligns with the corridors identified in the National Cycle Network scoping study, or links into or between the identified corridors.</p>	<p>The proposed route will form a major part of the off-road section of the National Cycle Network - proposed major route corridor from Dublin -to- Galway, utilising the Royal Canal towpath, as it traverses through Westmeath from the Meath Border on into Mullingar. The link westwards from Mullingar would provide an alternative route to the west.</p>
<p>Is this project proposal for a standalone route, or is it a single phase of a longer proposed route (outline details).</p>	<p>This project relates solely to the upgrading/construction of the identified Cycle Route Corridor, utilising the Royal Canal Towpaths and can, if necessary, be implemented in a phased approach.</p>

<p>What type of route will be delivered (i.e. on road or off road, usage of existing infrastructure such as abandoned rail lines, canal tow paths, state lands etc.)</p>	<p>This project will deliver an off-road, shared-use cycle path along identified Canal Towpath stretches (totalling 23.45km), that will involve upgrading/construction of towpath to a required 3m wide specification, together with ancillary works including: drainage works, pavement construction to include basecourse of CI 804 and surface course of quarry dust or tar & chips finish as required, fencing as required, ecology, trimming back of vegetation, signage, access barriers as required, traffic management & site safety & traffic counters - all in consultation with Waterways Ireland as regards specific requirements.</p>
<p>Is the land necessary to develop the proposed route currently in public ownership? Are there any land ownership issues along any section of the proposed route, and if yes how is it planned to address them?</p>	<p>The Royal Canal Towpaths are in the ownership of Waterways Ireland.</p> <p>Westmeath County Council has consulted with Waterways Ireland on the project proposal and will complete an Amenity Licence Agreement and Deed of Indemnity with Waterways Ireland, to allow the upgrading/construction works to proceed.</p> <p>Since 2008, other project work on upgrading sections of Royal Canal towpath in and around Mullingar has been successfully undertaken by Westmeath County Council in collaboration with Waterways Ireland and no issues were encountered. It is expected that this project proposal will be similarly managed.</p>
<p>Are there any other outstanding issues which could impact on deliverability of the proposed route (e.g. statutory requirements)?</p>	<p>Part 8 Planning Approval.</p>
<p>What is the proposed width of the route? (metres)</p>	<p>Maximum 3metres in width as per specification applied to other Royal Canal towpath upgrading works in Westmeath, in consultation with Waterways Ireland.</p>
<p>What is the proposed surfacing type for the route?</p>	<p>Quarry dust or tar& chips as required along specific stretches (e.g. to cater for farm access to lands adjacent to canal towpaths): See Key Costs/Works detail in Section 3.</p>

Section 3: Project Costs			
Key costs/works (e.g. land purchasing, clearance works, compacting and placing of surface material, bridges, crossing barriers, fencing)	Estimated cost (€)	Requested contribution (€)	Planned drawdown date (e.g. Sept 2012)
<u>EAST SECTION</u>			
<u>Boardstown to Baltrasna Bridge 0.75km</u>			As soon as is practicable on grant approval
Drainage	2,000	27,000	
CI 804	20,000		
Quarry Dust	3,000		
Barriers & signage	2,000		
<u>Baltrasna Bridge to Downs Bridge 3.45km</u>			
Sub-terrain formation	6,000	133,250	
CI 804	88,500		
Quarry Dust	17,750		
Surface Dressing	21,000		
<u>Downs Bridge to McNeeds Bridge 3.3km</u>			
CI 804	66,000	140,300	
Surface Dressing	69,300		
Fencing	5,000		
<u>Footys Bridge to Riverstown Bridge 1.7km</u>			
CI 804	38,000	51,000	
Specialist Matting	3,000		
Quarry Dust	10,000		
<u>Thomastown Bridge to Darcy's Bridge 1.3km</u>			
CI 804	29,000	41,200	
Quarry Dust	8,000		
Surface Dressing	4,200		
<u>Section 13 0.8km</u>			
Surface Dressing	16,000	16,000	
	s/t 408,750	408,750	
Ecology	15,000	35,000	
Contingency	20,000		
Cycle Counter System	7,500	7,500	
<u>Sub- Total (a) EAST SECTION</u>	451,250	451,250	
<u>WEST SECTION</u>			
<u>Coolnahay to Walshes Bridge 1.3km</u>			As soon as is practicable on grant approval
CI 804	29,000	61,300	
Surface Dressing	27,300		
Barriers & Ramps	5,000		

<u>Walshes to Kildallon Bridge 1.45km</u> Sub-terrain formation CI 804 Quarry Dust	4,500 43,500 10,000	58,000	Implementation Schedule will be put in place upon grant approval
<u>Kildallon to Balroe Bridge 3.4km</u> CI 804 Surface Dressing Quarry Dust Barriers	67,000 46,200 12,000 10,000	135,200	
<u>Balroe to Kiddys Bridge 2km</u> CI 804 Surface Dressing Quarry Dust	41,450 10,550 8,750	60,750	
<u>Kiddys to Bog Bridge 4km</u> CI 804 Quarry Dust Barriers	80,500 29,500 6,000	116,000	
	s/t 431,250	431,250	
Ecology Contingency	15,000 20,000	35,000	
Cycle Counter System	7,500	7,500	
Sub Total (b) <u>WEST SECTION</u>	473,750	473,750	
Total	925,000	925,000	

Section 4: Demand and benefit assessment: Provide an evidence based assessment of potential demand in terms of local users and potential visitor and tourist user numbers. Assessment should include evidence based estimate of annual user number, and impacts on local economy, including in terms of job creation.

The promotion of Sustainable Transport solutions, including clean transport modes, is a key component of the National Development Plan (NDP) and investment in green transport corridors for walking and cycling is one of the key transport goals. The achievement of such goals is critical if Ireland is to meet its international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In implementing National Smarter Travel Policy, Westmeath County Council and its strategic partner agencies, Waterways Ireland and Westmeath Sports Partnership are utilising the resource that is the safe surroundings of the Royal Canal towpaths around Mullingar Town, as an ideal platform for promoting safe cycling and offering opportunities for safe training areas for new cycling enthusiasts.

The attraction of the safe and scenic surroundings of the Royal Canal towpaths and the upgrading works that have already been undertaken, have seen exponential usage of the resource by walkers and particularly cyclists. The Royal Canal is becoming a very popular and well utilised publicly accessible local recreational asset, but also has the potential to be developed into a valuable cycling and walking tourism product that Westmeath will capitalise on, in moving this project forward, particularly given the National Vision context of the East West Cycling Corridor.

The project aims to provide the necessary safe, off- road cycling & walking infrastructure that will encourage and promote increased cycling and walking activity in Westmeath and will also encourage commuters to park their cars on the outskirts of the town and either walk or cycle to their destination in town.

Under the Active Travel Mullingar Project being implemented by Westmeath County Council with the support of Westmeath Sports Partnership, there has been a huge increase in recreational cycling, particularly in Mullingar, involving the use of the off-road and safe environment of the upgraded Royal Canal towpaths. Hundreds of cyclists and walkers are using the sections of towpath already upgraded, each day. While there are no definite usage figures as yet, there is no doubt but that the numbers using the Royal Canal Towpaths around Mullingar for recreational Cycling and Walking would be in the 10's of thousands per annum.

Westmeath County Council is proactively seeking to deliver a long-term strategy for sustainable movement in Mullingar, based on a Green Routes Strategy and Smarter Travel Policy. This strategy seeks to reduce pressure on the environment and to offer alternatives to travelling by car, promoting safe travel, improving health and increasing tourism.

The vision is to establish Mullingar as a sustainable movement centre, using best practice principles with a view to promoting "Green Routes" to achieve sustainable growth both economically and physically, thereby promoting safe travel, improving health, reducing emissions and increasing tourism in the greater Mullingar area.

In addition to the National Vision of the Royal Canal Towpaths forming part of the East-West Cycle Route Corridor, there is also wonderful opportunities to deliver on the visions for sustainable movement, based on the Green Routes Strategy and Smarter Travel Policy, as well as offering benefits from increasing tourism, to improving our populations health and well-being.

This Project is intended to provide lasting impact, via infrastructural works in developing the cycle paths along upgraded Canal Towpaths, thereby providing the quality off-road section of the proposed major National Cycle Network Route Corridor between Dublin and Galway.

Sustaining jobs in the infrastructural works to be undertaken and providing a platform for increased tourism activity in Westmeath, while supporting the local economy through increased economic activity and maintaining/increasing the job base particularly within the tourism sector, are key objectives also.

Section 5: Outline (i) alignment with other transport, tourism and sport programmes/locations (e.g. other infrastructure, greenschools, work place travel plans, tourism visitor centres etc.) (ii) route management and promotion plans and (iii) planned route user monitoring

(i) Alignment with other Transport, Tourism and Sport programmes

Mullingar Cycle Hub Project

The development of a National Cycle Network is about renewing the popularity of cycling in Ireland and involves a strategic partnership approach to encouraging both domestic and overseas visitors to come to cycle in Ireland and to ensure cycle tourism revenue can be generated as a result.

In the Strategy for the development of Irish Cycling Tourism (March 2007), the concept of Cycle Hub Towns was introduced and these towns were described as being attractive destinations in their own right, accessible by public transport and with plentiful visitor accommodation. In this regard, Mullingar was identified in the report as one of several locations in Ireland, that could be established as Cycle Hub Towns, as part of a National Cycle Network, proposed for development throughout Ireland and being championed by Failte Ireland.

In 2007/08, Mullingar was established as the first Category One Cycle Hub Town in the Failte Ireland East and Midlands Region and three associated cycle routes (117kilometres) around the town and environs of Mullingar for recreational cycling & cycling tourism, were officially opened.

The Mullingar Cycle Hub infrastructure includes signage work on the 117 kilometres of roadway that makes up the 3 distinct cycle routes around Mullingar and its environs; stretching to Multyfarnham on the northern loop, to Castletown-Geoghegan on the western loop and to Dalystown on the southern loop.

In addition, the upgrading of the Royal Canal southern towpath for some 6 kilometres between Mullingar to Ballinea was undertaken in conjunction with Waterways Ireland and was necessary to ensure the safety of all users of the loop 2/3 towpath section of the cycle route. Interpretation Boards were erected at 7 strategic locations on the cycle routes and promotional material was also produced by Failte Ireland. Supporting infrastructure includes local accommodation and catering facilities, bike stands, bike hire and repair services.

Mullingar, as a Category One Cycle Hub Town, proudly takes its place in the National Cycle Network, to compete nationally and overseas as a cycling destination. The Mullingar cycle routes include a range of half-day to full-day cycling opportunities along three inter-linked and particularly scenic routes with stunning views of rich pastureland and beautiful lakes and amenity areas and not forgetting the strategic and very pleasant towpath along the Royal Canal.

Active travel Mullingar Project

The project proposal also compliments the Active Travel Mullingar Project, part funded by the Department of Transport, Sport & Tourism over a 3 year period 2010 – 2012, (Phases I & II complete and work on Phase III ongoing). The overall project objective is to provide cycling and walking infrastructure along specific sections of the Royal Canal towpaths around Mullingar town, in collaboration with Waterways Ireland and Westmeath Sports Partnership.

The project aims to provide the necessary, safe off-road cycling infrastructure that will encourage and promote increased cycling and walking activity in the Mullingar area and to encourage commuters to

park their cars on the outskirts of the town and either walk or cycle to their destination in town.

Over the course of the three year project, “Active Travel Mullingar” branded bike shelter facilities are being installed at strategic points within participating Primary and Secondary schools and around Mullingar, particularly at shopping centres. The integral “Bike Start” training within participating Primary and Secondary schools and walking and health education within local communities are being delivered via Westmeath Sports Partnership Ltd.

The main aims of the “Active Travel Mullingar” project being managed by Westmeath County Council are:

- To establish Mullingar as a sustainable movement centre, using best practice principles.
- To Promote “Green Routes” in order to achieve sustainable growth both economically and physically.
- To reduce pressure on the environment
- To offer realistic and viable alternatives to travelling by car.
- To promote safe travel
- To improve health
- To increase tourism in the greater Mullingar area.

The Active Travel Mullingar Project is delivering on several objectives and policies within the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014, which supports the development of pedestrian and cyclist routes.

The Active Travel Mullingar Project under the Smarter Travel Project funding stream, has so far delivered:

- Phase I and II – incorporating two sections (totalling 2.022kilometres) of Canal Towpath upgraded to promote cycling and walking in a safe environment
- 6 Trained Bike Start Tutors
- 12 schools signed up to participate in the project
- 700 school children trained to date.
- Ongoing educational “Bike Start” programme in schools via 5th, 6th and transition year student population in Mullingar.
- Upgraded Canal towpaths being used as part of the training programme.
- Upgraded Canal towpaths now being extensively used by pedestrians and cyclists.
- New Walking Group established in Mullingar.
- Installation of branded Cycle Shelters in participating schools and at strategic locations around Mullingar.
- “Active Travel Mullingar” branded van for dedicated use on the education aspects of the project.
- New & exciting dedicated Active Travel Mullingar Website www.activetravelmullingar.ie
- “Active Travel Mullingar” Project a central focus for National Bike Week Celebrations in Mullingar
- Increasing the possibility of National/international cycling events as a result of the project focus on cycling and infrastructure being provided. (e.g. National Criterium Cycle Race held in Mullingar in 2011 and will also be held in Mullingar in June 2012)

Destination Sport Mullingar

“Destination Sport Mullingar” was the winning project in the Sports Development Category, in the Chambers Ireland, Excellence in Local Government National Awards 2011 and is a festival event designed to place Mullingar firmly on the map for sporting events, for family fun as well as serious competition, but also attracting increased tourism activity to the Town (e.g. cycling tourism to Mullingar as a Category One Cycle Hub town).

The Royal Canal in Mullingar is a focal point for Destination Sport Mullingar and events like the “Sport on the Royal Canal Festival” and “Sports Zone” have been staged at Harbour Bridge and indeed the Canal towpaths have been utilised to maximum effect with cycling, walking and history events taking place in conjunction with festival events in Mullingar and proving extremely popular and successful.

In 2012, The Royal Canal and upgraded towpaths will again be at the centre to Destination Sport Mullingar, in terms of activities utilising the upgraded sections of towpath.

Westmeath Way and Royal Canal Way

Mullingar is the starting point for the Westmeath Way – the National Waymarked Way from Mullingar to Kilbeggan, over a distance of 33 kilometres. The Westmeath Way follows over 6 kilometres of upgraded Royal Canal Towpath, boasting a picturesque and serene section of the walking route, that also forms part of the Mullingar Cycle Hub infrastructure. In addition, the Royal Canal Way currently follows some grassy towpaths, gravel and now tarmac canal towpaths from the Dublin suburb of Ashtown 105 kilometres to the village of Abbeysrule in County Longford.

Wellness Activity Route Mullingar

The “Mullingar Wellness Activity Route”, comprises of outdoor exercise equipment sited at various locations or pods, starting in Mullingar Town Park and also at four other locations along the upgraded and well travelled sections of the Royal Canal towpaths.

Increasing healthy activity levels can have a significant and positive effect on our populations’ health and overall wellbeing. A key component in achieving this is to improve the quality and flexibility of our communal outdoor spaces and the “Mullingar Wellness Activity Route” offers flexibility and engaging exercise activities in the safe environment along the Royal Canal towpaths.

(ii) Route Management and Promotion Plans

Route Management for the Canal towpaths will be the responsibility of Westmeath County Council in line with the Amenity Licence agreement with Waterways Ireland. The Active Travel Mullingar Project delivers on several objectives and policies within the Westmeath County Development Plan 2008 – 2014, which supports the development of pedestrian and cycling routes. The Mullingar Cycle Hub is promoted locally and nationally by Westmeath County Council and Failte Ireland and is extensively used by locals and visitors alike and provides opportunities to increase tourism activity in the greater Mullingar area.

The Project is providing lasting impact via infrastructural works in developing cycle lanes, cycle paths (along upgraded Canal Towpaths) the installation of cycle racks and branded cycle shelters, all for use by current and future generations.

Information, awareness and education campaigns will continue to be an integral part of the implementation process for the project proposal.

(iii) Planned Route User Monitoring

It is intended to install automated counters as part of the upgrading works, to provide data on usage and usage patterns. Given the success of the other projects involving upgrading of the Canal Towpaths, it is anticipated that usage will increase exponentially as a result of the upgrading process. Westmeath Sports Partnership are delivering on the educational and training aspects of the Active Travel Mullingar Project and it is anticipated that surveys and monitoring will show the benefits of the investment in upgrading the Royal Canal Infrastructure as a resource of immense importance both locally and nationally in the context of the vision for the East West Cycle Route Corridor.

The closing date for applications is 5.00pm on Friday 27th April. Completed application forms should be emailed to Michael Falvey michaelfalvey@dtas.ie

To assist the assessment process, in addition to emailing the completed form, 4 hardcopies of each completed application should be sent to:

National Sustainable Travel Office
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2.

The assessment procedure will be completed as promptly as possible, and successful Local Authorities must be in a position to commence proposed projects immediately.