

Laura Behan
Principal Officer
Sustainable Transport Division
Department of Transport Tourism and Sport
44 Kildare Street
Dublin 2

12th April 2013

Dear Ms Behan,

Re: National Cycle Network (NCN) Funding Scheme –River Dodder Greenway

I write further to the recent request for applications to the multi-annual funding programme administered by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in respect of the National Cycle Network (NCN). South Dublin County Council wish to register our interest in securing seed funding to further develop proposals for the River Dodder Greenway.

Background

In 2012 South Dublin County Council took the role of lead agency in a project undertaken in conjunction with Dublin City Council and Dun-Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and supported by the National Transport Authority (NTA), to complete a Feasibility Study (copy attached) of developing a high quality cycle route along the River Dodder corridor between the River Liffey at Grand Canal Dock and the Dublin Mountains at Bohernabreena.

Initially the project focus was on the possibility of providing walking and cycling facilities for commuters from Firhouse to the Ballsbridge/Grand Canal Dock areas of Dublin City Centre along the River Dodder corridor. However, at an early stage of the project, the significant potential of the route to generate recreational, tourism and economic activity and the potential for the Dodder walking and cycling route to become a Greenway of international standard that would augment the more urban attractions of Dublin City Centre, became apparent.

Further to this, South Dublin County Council sought to extend the scope of the Feasibility Study further up-river to Bohernabreena, where the route then enters the Dublin City Council reservoir lands and joins the Dublin Mountains Way, walking route. The Feasibility Study incorporated this additional scope of work and was completed in 2012.

Potential to Develop an International Grade Greenway along the River Dodder

The journey along the Dodder River, even in its current incomplete stage, is mostly off-road, (it generally passes under the busier roads). For a route that is largely within an urban area, the safe, attractive, riverside location, the mature parks through which it travels, remnants of industrial heritage, the weirs, and an abundance of biodiversity and wildlife (a portion of it contains a proposed Natural Heritage Area) all make for a route with significant amenity, tourism and heritage as well as commuter potential. While

portions of it are badly in need of an upgrade and the whole route needs to be carefully designed in terms of developing coherence and completeness, there is a framework in place upon which to build.

The completed Feasibility Study highlights various reasons why the Dodder Route has the potential to generate recreational, amenity and tourist interest and become a tourist attraction in its own right:-

- Proximity to the following iconic landmarks in Dublin- Grand Canal Square & Bord Gais Energy Theatre with its high profile and through-put of visitors, Aviva Stadium, Herbert Park and the RDS, Milltown Weir and Aqueduct, Bushy Park, Rathfarnham Castle, Firhouse Weir, Kiltipper Woods, Bohernabreena Reservoirs, the Dublin Mountains and Dublin Mountains Way
- Its scenic and tranquil nature, even through quite built up portions of the city, and the very gradual gradient makes cycling quite enjoyable
- It is currently quite well used by anglers, and has the possibility to further develop angling opportunities
- It has the potential to link to the villages, towns and centres by which the proposed route passes (thus potentially benefiting the local economies of Tallaght, Oldbawn, Firhouse, Templeogue, Terenure, Rathfarnham, Dartry, Rathgar, Clonskeagh, Donnybrook, Ballsbridge Grand Canal Docks)
- Its route passes through many mature parks and has the potential to link to others nearby, such as Rathfarnham Castle & Park and the Bohernabreena Reservoirs
- There is potential for micro generation of electricity at weirs and other locations, that would augment the 'green' qualities of the route in a seamless and integrated way and could offset the cost of public lighting etc.
- The upstream section of the route, while not having significant potential in terms of commuter traffic, would have much greater potential in terms of recreation and amenity. (Bohernabreena, links to mountain trails, abundance of ecology etc.). There is therefore potential for future joint NCN - NTA funded project, that builds on all of the potential of the complete route.

Other Current, Complementary Schemes

In 2013 The National Transport Authority have funded to detailed design stage and implementation, a cycle route that traverses the Dodder River and extends from Tallaght to Ballyboden, this will include a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Dodder and will complete a section of the proposed Dodder route that does not currently exist within the South Dublin County Council area.

Once completed this route will link with the proposed Dodder Route and ensure connectivity along a high quality cycle route to Tallaght and to Ballyboden (and allows onward links to the Slang River Greenway, Marlay Park, and Dundrum etc. in Dun Laoghaire- Rathdown County Council).

Proposed Progression of the Project

During 2013 the National Transport Authority have funded the preliminary design of a key section of the Dodder Greenway route in each of the three local authority areas concerned and these will go towards the development of a overall route. These key sections are particularly focussed on the down-stream elements where commuter traffic would be accommodated and are of key importance in establishing commuter viability. In South Dublin this is from Tempelogue/Rathfarnham to the Dublin City boundary at Dartry.

However, the 2012 Feasibility Study also identified but did not develop a range of measures that would facilitate the development of the economic, tourism, amenity and health potential of the project. South Dublin County Council consider that the Dodder Greenway concept needs more detailed evaluation with a view to examining it's potential as an international standard leisure and tourism route that would appeal to residents and visitors alike. It is noted, for example that a recent Dublin Tourism Study identified a need to focus resources and develop attractions beyond Dublin City Centre, in order to encourage visitors to stay extra bed-nights rather than just a short two-night weekend break. The Dodder Greenway would provide an opportunity to get out of the City into the Mountains in a healthy, green, activity focussed manner.

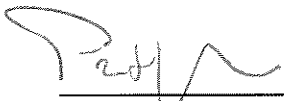
Further to this, seed funding of up to €25,000 is sought to develop the items listed below. As stated above, there may be potential for a joint Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and National Transport Authority backed Project and South Dublin County Council is prepared to play a key role delivering the overall Dodder Route.

We propose carrying out the following:-

1. Examine the route from the point of view of developing its economic, tourist and amenity potential,
2. Examine the Firhouse Weir area (feasibility of developing a mid-point heritage and visitor centre, as well as for micro-generation potential);
3. Develop user-friendly and web-based mapping to enable promotion of the concept and route to generate interest, garner local support and assist with public consultation;
4. Examine links to other routes of Greenway type or other popular tourists trails and attractions, such as the DCC Sutton to Sandycove Dublin Bay route;
5. Examine how the overall route could best be designed in terms of details to give a specific 'look' and 'feel';
6. Propose signage for the route (highlighting areas of local interest as one passes along the route). This would be complementary to the directional signage;
7. Carry out the preliminary design and part 8 development of the route from Oldbawn area to Bohernabreena.

In summary, the Dodder Greenway has the potential to deliver significant benefits as a high quality international standard greenway. We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss the Project and would be delighted to facilitate a site visit. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have queries in relation to this application.

Yours sincerely



Paul Hogan, Senior Planner
Development, Economic and Transport Planning Department

Cc Frank Nevin, Director of Development, Economic and Transport Planning
Teresa Walsh, Director of Roads and Water Services