

GALWAY TO ATHLONE CASTLE NATIONAL CYCLEWAY SCHEME

Strategic Assessment Report



Greenway

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 **Galway to Athlone
CYCLEWAY**

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2	INVESTMENT RATIONALE.....	5
2.1	Project Vision	5
2.2	Context - Galway to Dublin Cycleway	5
2.3	Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.....	7
3	OBJECTIVES	8
3.1	Overview	8
3.2	Role of Scheme Objectives.....	8
3.3	Greenway Strategy Objectives	8
3.4	Common Appraisal Framework Criteria.....	10
4	POLICY CONTEXT.....	16
4.1	Overview	16
4.2	European Policy Context.....	16
4.3	National Policy Context.....	17
4.4	Regional Policy Context.....	20
4.5	Local Policy Context.....	21
4.6	Specific Tourism Initiatives.....	23
4.7	Conclusion	25
5	PRELIMINARY DEMAND ANALYSIS	26
6	LONG-LIST OF POTENTIAL OPTIONS.....	29
6.1	Do-Minimum	29
6.2	Management Options.....	29
6.3	Alternatives	29
6.4	Scheme Options.....	31
7	APPRAISAL PLAN.....	33
7.1	Option Selection.....	33
7.2	Option Impact Assessment	38
7.3	Traffic Modelling.....	39
7.4	Forecasting Requirements	40
7.5	Sources of Data	40
7.6	Forecasting Methods.....	41
7.7	Cost-Benefit Analysis Methodology	41
8	POTENTIAL COSTS	43
9	AFFORDABILITY	44
9.1	Project Cost Profile	44
9.2	Funding	44
10	IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS	45
10.1	Risk Identification and Management.....	45
10.2	High Level Risks	46
10.3	Lessons Learned from Previous Projects	46
11	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.....	48
11.1	Scheme Objectives and Outcomes.....	48
11.2	Key Performance Indicators.....	50
12	OUTLINE GOVERNANCE PLAN.....	54
12.1	Context.....	54
12.2	Sanctioning Authority	55
12.3	Sponsoring Agency	55
12.4	Working Group	55
12.5	Project Coordinator	56

12.6	Other Local Authorities.....	56
12.7	Technical Consultants.....	56
12.8	Project Controls and Assurances.....	56
12.9	Project Management.....	57
12.10	Approval Procedures.....	57
12.11	Cost, Risk and Value Management	58
12.12	Project Communication Strategy	58

Tables

Table 3.1: Project Objectives.....	14
Table 7-1: Appraisal criteria related to Project Objectives	35
Table 7-2: TII 7-Point Scale	36
Table 7-3: Appraisal Scope.....	38
Table 7-4: Appraisal Deliverables	39
Table 8-1: Feasibility Working Cost.....	43
Table 9-1: Estimated Spend Profile (excluding maintenance).....	44
Table 10-1: High Level Project Risks.....	46
Table 11-1: Key Performance Indicators.....	50

Figures

Figure 2.1: Project Vision	5
Figure 2.2: Eurovelo Cycle Route Network.....	6
Figure 4.1: Eurovelo Network.....	16
Figure 4.2: Galway City Proposed Cycle Network	22
Figure 4.3: Fáilte Ireland Regional Brands	23
Figure 5.1: 2019 Cycling Tourism Performance (Failte Ireland, 2019)	27
Figure 5.2: Trends in Cycle Tourism Germany 2018-2019 (ADFC Radreiseanalyse 2020)	27
Figure 5.3: Population Density in Scheme Area.....	28
Figure 6.1: Route Corridor Options	30
Figure 6.2: Galway to Athlone Cycleway Scheme Area	32
Figure 11.1: Draft Programme Logic Model.....	49
Figure 12.1: Project Management Structure	54
Figure 12.2: Phase, Gate, Sanctioning Authority Approval Points (PE-PMG-02042)	57

1 INTRODUCTION

This document is a Strategic Assessment Report for the Galway to Athlone Castle Cycleway Project. The project is being developed in accordance with TII Project Appraisal Guidelines (PAG).

The project is a Major scheme, which is currently at Phase 2 – Route Selection.

PAG guidelines are currently being amended to take account of requirements set out in the Public Spending Code (PSC) – Guide to Evaluating Planning and Managing Public Investment. The PSC mandates the production of a Strategic Assessment Report.

The Strategic Assessment Stage is the first stage of a project and includes early scrutiny of objectives, consideration of options and identification of risk. The stage forms an important element of the bridge between policy and project and is carried out as early as possible in order to meaningfully inform key decision points and should be informed by lessons learned on earlier schemes.

The purpose of the Strategic Assessment Stage is to examine the rationale for potential policy interventions and ensure the strategic fit of potential projects and programmes with government policy, in particular the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan.

This report sets out the output from the Strategic Assessment Stage and comprises the following sections:

- Investment Rationale
- Scheme Objectives
- Policy Context
- Long-list of Potential Options
- Potential Costs
- Affordability
- Identification of Risks
- Key Performance Indicators
- Appraisal Plan
- Outline Governance Plan

2 INVESTMENT RATIONALE

This section considers the reasons why the scheme is needed and what the current level of demand for the scheme is.

2.1 Project Vision

The vision for the project is to develop a world class cycle and walking trail, safe and accessible for all users, from Galway to Athlone, completing the Galway to Dublin route. It will be of a scale and with a unique character that will allow Ireland to tap into the growing international tourism market for cycling. It will be scenic, sustainable, be a strategic link, with lots to see and do, be substantially segregated from motor traffic and welcome a wide variety of users (**Figure 2.1**). It will be developed in co-operation with local communities and offer real benefits to them.



Figure 2.1: Project Vision

2.2 Context - Galway to Dublin Cycleway

The National Galway to Dublin Cycleway project commenced in 2013. Westmeath County Council is the lead authority working in partnership with Galway City, Galway, Roscommon, Meath and Kildare local authorities.

The project is being taken forward in several sections. The development of the Cycleway between Galway City centre and Ballyloughane is being undertaken by the NTA and Galway City Council as a separate project. The development of the Maynooth to Dublin city centre section is being undertaken by the NTA and Dublin local authorities.

This Strategic Assessment Report addresses the Galway to Athlone Castle section of the Cycleway. Project planning for this section was commenced in 2013 but was subsequently paused following the selection of an emerging preferred route corridor in October 2015, due to local landowner opposition. The main reasons cited by landowners for opposition to the project was the lack of public consultation and the proposed use of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the lands.

The 104km section between Whitegates Athlone to Maynooth, which runs along an old railway line and beside the royal canal, is now open to the public. The section from Athlone Castle to Whitegates which includes a new cycleway bridge across the River Shannon, is expected to be complete in 2023.

The cycleway is expected to interact with and enhance other leisure and transport initiatives in the region, including but not limited to:

- Eurovelo Route 1 – Atlantic Route, an on-road cycling route, shown in **Figure 2.2** below
- The River Shannon tourism corridor
- Other potential greenway corridors to the north and south of the region
- Cycling and leisure projects in Galway City and Connemara
- The Beara Breifne way long distance walking route



Figure 2.2: Eurovelo Cycle Route Network

2.3 Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways

The Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways issued in July 2018 was prepared by Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTaS) on behalf of the Government of Ireland. The purpose of this Strategy is to assist in the strategic development of National and Regional Greenways in appropriate locations, constructed to an appropriate standard, in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenway users. Over the next 10 years, the strategy aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways around the country, to be utilised as a visitor experience and recreational amenity.

A main focus of the strategy is on the potential of Greenways and cycle tourism to act as economic drivers in local areas by capitalising on the great tourism potential, that was identified by the market research carried out by Fáilte Ireland. To achieve these objectives, DTTaS are to ensure that project promoters will work with Local Communities, Local Landowners, Local Authorities and other relevant State Bodies and organisations to deliver:

1. A Strategic Greenway network of national and regional routes, with several high capacity flagship routes that can be extended and/or link with local Greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure;
2. Greenways of scale and appropriate standard that have significant potential to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland and are regularly used by overseas visitors, domestic visitors and locals thereby contributing to a healthier society through increased physical activity;
3. Greenways that provide a substantially segregated off-road experience linking places of interest, recreation and leisure in areas with beautiful scenery of different types with plenty to see and do;
4. Greenways that provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies; and
5. Greenways that are developed with all relevant stakeholders in line with an agreed code of practice.

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway is a high-capacity flagship route with the potential to appeal to overseas and domestic visitors as well as locals. The area between Galway and Athlone offers attractive scenery and plenty to see and do. There also appears to be plenty of scope for the development of local tourism-based industry in the area.

The cycleway is well placed to link with other infrastructure and initiatives in the region, such as the Shannon tourism master plan, Galway Tourism strategy, and the Bord na Móna 'brown to green' plan for the future management of the midlands bogs.

3 OBJECTIVES

3.1 Overview

This section sets out the objectives for the Cycleway. Based on the aspirations of European, National and Local Policy as outlined in **Section 2**, a series of defined objectives have been developed and are presented in the following sections. The objectives have been prepared using the framework of the Greenway Strategy, and the Common Appraisal Framework.

3.2 Role of Scheme Objectives

Good appraisal practice involves setting scheme objectives to guide the development of the project through the different stages of the project appraisal process, including option identification, selection of a preferred option, and scheme design. They are a statement of what the project is intended to achieve. It is not necessarily the case that all objectives will have equal weight in making project decisions.

3.2.1 Evaluation against Scheme Objectives

Additionally, scheme objectives form the basis of the evaluation of the project when it is completed. For this purpose, objectives should be Smart - Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Realistic and Timely.

TII Project Appraisal Guidance (PAG) recommends that the Business Case for each scheme should include an Evaluation Plan. That Plan sets out what is to be measured and when it is to be measured. It will be completed at a later stage of project development. At this stage, the scheme objectives should be such that measurable performance indicators can be developed as part of that Evaluation Plan.

3.2.2 Forecasting attainment of Scheme Objectives

The likely level of attainment of each objective will emerge over the course of the study and cannot accurately be specified in advance.

3.3 Greenway Strategy Objectives

The scheme will take cognisance of the 5 'S' criteria set out by the Government of Ireland for developing Greenways, i.e. the route should be Scenic; Sustainable; Strategic; with lots to See and Do; and Substantially Segregated.

The following paragraphs discuss these aspects. All of which are about different aspects of the attractiveness of the Cycleway, which will enable it to achieve its economic objectives.

3.3.1 Scenic

The Galway to Athlone corridor has many scenic locations that can provide the type of memorable experience cycling and walking tourists look for. While the area is generally low lying, there are some elevated areas, that offer scenic views across the landscape. These high points among some others could be established as scenic focal points with the development of potential viewing platforms that add value to the Greenway.

Away from specific viewpoints, the area is generally characterised by pleasant if unspectacular scenery of green rolling countryside and low intensity agricultural landscapes, forests and bogs.

It will be an objective in the planning of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway to route through the more scenic areas where possible, while also providing a variety of landscapes for the user.

3.3.2 Sustainable

This Greenway is to provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies in the area. It will promote cycle tourism which is more eco-friendly and sustainable than other forms of tourism. Part of the attraction in cycle tourism is the knowledge that it contributes to a reduction of carbon and transport emissions and promotes healthy lifestyles.

It will be an objective in the planning of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway to ensure that construction and operation of the Cycleway is consistent with the sustainability brand.

3.3.3 Strategic

This scheme will form part of a strategic network of Greenways that connect main urban centres. It will have links to other existing and future Greenways, along with connections to existing cycling and walking infrastructure. It will connect to the existing Athlone to Maynooth Greenway to form part of a longer strategic route that will eventually connect Galway to Dublin, and will facilitate the Eurovelo Capitals route. It will also connect to the Atlantic Route cycleway. This Greenway developed from the west coast of Ireland to the east will greatly enhance tourist activities for international and domestic visitors, delivering strategic opportunities for local economies.

It will be an objective in the planning of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway to link effectively to other tourist and transport facilities.

3.3.4 Offer Lots to See and Do

The Galway to Athlone area has towns with good visitor facilities including restaurants, accommodation and attractions. Connecting these facilities along with other attractions in more rural areas will ensure the Greenway offers its users lots to see and do.

It will be an objective in the planning of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway to route through areas that are well served by existing facilities, while also considering that such facilities can also develop organically following the establishment of the cycleway.

3.3.5 Substantially Segregated

Under this strategy, Greenways must be substantially segregated from vehicular traffic. This requirement is key to providing a good quality of service that ensures Greenway users have a safe and enjoyable experience. The provision of segregated facilities is key to attracting international cyclists to Ireland. It is also essential to compete with other international Greenways that are established as premier cycle holiday destinations.

It will be an objective in the planning of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway to provide a fully segregated cycle route. However, it is recognised that it may be impractical to achieve full segregation over the entire route length, especially in more urban areas.

The Eurovelo guidance suggests that in urban areas, a designated “Cycle Street” where vehicular traffic flows are less than 500 vehicles per day, a 30kph speed limit applies (and is observed), and signage warns drivers to expect numbers of cyclists, may form part of a long-distance cycle route.

3.4 Common Appraisal Framework Criteria

The framing of scheme objectives has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in the TII Project Appraisal Guidelines (PAG Unit 3.0: Project Brief). This recommends that scheme objectives are established which fall under the criteria included in the Common Appraisal Framework, which are:

- Economy
- Safety
- Physical Activity
- Environment
- Accessibility & Social Inclusion and
- Integration

The following paragraphs set out what the Cycleway aims to achieve in each of these areas, and summarizes this in terms of measurable objectives. The benefits may not be fully realised until 5 years after the Cycleway has been open; it is normal for visitor numbers to increase as awareness spreads through the target market. This therefore forms an indicative timescale over which the achievement of objectives might be measured.

3.4.1 Economy

The Cycleway is intended to form part of the Eurovelo Network of long-distance cycling routes and the National Cycle Network in Ireland. These networks aim to promote cycle tourism and act as economic drivers in local areas, by capitalising on the great tourism potential that these cycling networks can offer.

The value of cycle tourism in Europe is approximately €54 bn per year, with longer-distance cycle tourists generally spending on average €353 each per trip and day trip cyclists spending €16 per day (Lumsdon et al., 2009).

According to Fáilte Ireland figures from 2018, 450,000 visitors cycled while on holiday in Ireland, making it the second largest tourist activity after walking. It is projected that these figures will grow by 4% per annum to 2028.

The Cycleway will have beneficial impacts as it will attract people to the area. This will have a ripple effect for tourism businesses including hotels, restaurants, shops, cafés, etc. In order to achieve these benefits, it is necessary to attract the prospective users to the Cycleway in the first place. Meeting the Greenway Strategy objectives described above is fundamental to ensuring these users choose to visit the Cycleway rather than the many other recreational opportunities elsewhere in Europe and beyond. It follows that many of the Greenway strategy objectives can also be classed as economic objectives.

The ‘Economy’ objectives of the project are:

EC1 – To increase the economic contribution of tourism to the Irish economy, by increasing the numbers of international visitors to the area and delivering a cycleway that is attractive by international standards.

International visitors increase spending in the Irish economy and therefore give an economic benefit, whereas spending by domestic visitors may be largely transferred from elsewhere in the economy.

This includes opportunities for Agri-Tourism within the area as a way of generating additional income within farming/rural communities.

Experience from the Waterford Greenway has shown that the presence of significant numbers of domestic and international visitors in an area can encourage the expansion of existing catering and other tourism-related businesses, and the start-up of new businesses at key nodes of the network.

Up to a point these new enterprises increase the quality of the tourist experience, leading to a “virtuous circle” of more visitors and more facilities.

The remaining objectives are about how this can be done in ways which contribute to the CAF criteria.

EC2 – To create local employment opportunities and wealth through new and expanded enterprises.

Route Corridor Options with more people living close to the route will be preferred under this objective, especially where the route can connect to significant employment or education locations.

EC3 – To deliver the cycleway in a cost-effective manner and deliver real value for money.

Cost effectiveness and value for money are closely related to the scheme costs and the numbers of users that are attracted to the scheme. Generally speaking, the cheaper the scheme and the greater the number of users, the greater the value for money. However, a cheaper scheme, that is less likely to attract visitors (say for example as it is less scenic), may not be optimum. There is a balance to be struck to maximise value for money and also to ensure that other scheme objectives are met.

EC4 – To encourage modal change to non-motorised travel modes, thereby reducing congestion and delivering travel time savings.

Congestion is a problem at the two ends of the scheme, in the urban areas of Athlone and Galway. Walking and cycling infrastructure can make a significant contribution to relieving congestion by attracting shorter journeys to more sustainable modes.

3.4.2 Safety

The ‘Safety’ objectives of the scheme are:

S1 – To provide a walking and cycling route that is segregated from motorised traffic (recognising that it may be impractical to achieve full segregation over the entire route length, especially in more urban areas).

Segregation provides both improved safety and user experience, especially in the context of leisure cycling, by being separated from motorised traffic. Segregation also protects greenway users from collisions with motor vehicles.

A fully segregated cycling and walking route is the ideal, and a route that falls a long way short of this ideal is unlikely to be attractive. However, it is recognised that 100% segregation is likely to be impractical. The degree of segregation achieved will be documented in terms of route length.

S2 – To provide a sense of security for cycleway users, e.g., through provision of secure bike parking facilities and public lighting (where needed) or reducing isolation along the route.

Secure bike parking facilities and public lighting will be incorporated into the design across all routes. A sense of security can also be reduced by the isolation of the route, which may make users feel vulnerable, and also limits the opportunity for quick help in emergencies.

S3 – To provide a high level of operational safety on the cycleway through high quality design, construction, and maintenance.

The third safety objective looks at safety from other forms of mishap, including:

- Minimising risk of collisions between cyclists and pedestrians, by good design ensuring clear visibility
- Minimising risk of other accidents (falls down steep embankments, encounters with livestock etc) by good-quality fencing of the route where required.

3.4.3 Physical Activity

This project will encourage activities such as walking and cycling, which will improve the physical health and wellbeing of greenway users. Increasing levels of walking and cycling is widely regarded as beneficial because of the improvements in public health, as a result of the increased levels of physical activity.

The health of our population is a major focus for the Government. For example, the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Get Ireland Active, states “physical inactivity is a demonstrated clear risk to health and wellbeing in Ireland”.

The physical activity objectives are:

PA1 - To increase the number of commuters within the study area who walk or cycle to work or education.

Measurement of this effect will be through the Census question on usual mode of travel to work or education.

PA2 - To increase the number of people in Ireland who choose to take part in physically active outdoor recreation and leisure activities.

Measurement of this effect will be through existing Fáilte Ireland surveys.

3.4.4 Environment

This project is to be designed to take into account the sensitivities of the natural, agricultural, and human environment. It is to be planned and constructed in compliance with the requirements of Irish and European law including, but not limited to, EU Directive 2014/52/EU. Walking and cycling generally have low levels of impact on the environment.

What the project aims to achieve under this heading is:

EN1 – To minimise impact to the natural environment, especially habitats in ecologically sensitive areas.

Measurement will focus on expert judgment of impacts on designated sites in proximity to the route.

This objective shifts the focus from the use made of the cycleway to the carbon emitted and other environmental impacts of its construction and maintenance, and how the project can be planned so as to minimise these impacts. Various methods of sustainability assessment for civil engineering projects are being developed, one of these will be used to assess the project at later stage in the scheme development.

EN2 – To minimise impact to cultural heritage sites.

Measurement will focus on expert judgment of impacts on designated sites in proximity to the route.

EN3 – To increase public appreciation of the natural environment and cultural heritage, by encouraging people to experience the countryside.

This objective recognises the value of the cycleway not just as a way to get from Athlone to Galway, but also as a way to experience the natural environment and cultural heritage in the area. The cycleway will link natural and cultural amenities along the route, as well as creating linkages between these amenities and towns and villages along the route.

EN4 – To minimise land holding severance and utilise public land.

The scheme will aim to achieve this by favouring routes that use publicly owned land, and by designing the route to follow landowner boundaries where possible, including mitigation measures where appropriate. The issue of severance of private land has been flagged as a particular issue on which the project planning will focus.

EN5 – To reduce air and noise pollution by getting people to cycle or walk rather than drive.

This objective again refers to use of the cycleway by people living and working in the area as well as tourists. Both markets will be considered in the appraisal process. The cycleway will connect sites of interest for tourists and will offer the option to walk or cycle to and between these amenities rather than driving. Links to public transport at multiple locations along the cycleway may further increase opportunity for tourists to avoid trips by car. People living and working in the area may use the cycleway to access natural and cultural amenities and/or for travel to and from work and education.

EN6 – To ensure that planning, construction, and operation of the cycleway is carried out in a sustainable manner.

It is an objective to route the cycleway on public lands, utilising existing roads/pathways/tracks, where possible. This will reduce the need for extensive construction works, minimising impact to the environment, reducing materials required and reducing carbon emissions.

It is an objective in the planning of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway to ensure that construction and operation of the cycleway is consistent with the sustainability brand.

3.4.5 Accessibility & Social Inclusion

The scheme has potential to create positive benefits for accessibility and social inclusion within the area. The Galway to Athlone Cycleway will provide key linkages to various communities, giving access for vulnerable road users and locals alike.

The development of open spaces within the area will offer a sense of place and encourage inclusiveness by reducing vehicular dominance, which can disrupt communities along busy routes. Facilitating local amenities such as coffee shops, pubs, restaurants, and bike rental shops will promote community inclusion.

Barriers to accessibility and inclusivity, such as kissing gates and bollards with narrow spacing, will be avoided at design stage to ensure that cycleway users who use non-standard bikes (e.g., hand cycles, tricycles, cargo bikes) or who use mobility aids do not face access issues at any point along the route.

Accessibility can also be considered in the context of its usability to all users, for example remote terrain and steep climbs would be less attractive to less able or less experienced cyclists.

The Accessibility and Social Inclusion objectives are:

ASI1 - To be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities, with multiple accesses to the route allowing use for long or short distances.

The success of the cycleway in achieving this objective will ultimately be measured by visitor surveys which will document the age range of users and the different lengths of cycleway that they use during their visit.

ASI2 - To benefit local communities through enhancing existing amenities and providing new linkages to adjacent town and village centres.

Similarly, surveys can identify facilities that did not exist prior to the cycleway and use of the facility by local people to access local centres.

The CLÁR programme for funding small infrastructural projects in rural areas covers most of south-east and north east areas of County Galway and South Roscommon. Such geographically disadvantaged areas can benefit from the project.

3.4.6 Integration

Four types of integration are appraised to ensure that investment across the transportation portfolio is integrated towards achieving a common goal. These are:

- Transport Integration - the promotion of the integration of transport infrastructure and services by focusing on gaps in the existing network and improving opportunities for interchange between modes.
- Land Use Integration - the compatibility between adopted land use objectives and the proposed scheme
- Geographical Integration - Improving connectivity within Ireland and to other parts of the world
- Other Government Policy Integration - Regional Balance

The proposed scheme aims to contribute to Regional Balance by encouraging international tourists to the West and Midlands of Ireland.

It aims to contribute transport integration and integration between transport and land use, as outlined in the following integration objectives:

I1 - To link to other existing and proposed cycleways within the area.

The number of other cycleways which the Athlone to Galway Cycleway connects to will be documented.

I2 - To be accessible to users arriving by public transport, including bus, rail, and existing or proposed passenger boat services.

This will be assessed by recording existing public transport facilities near to the route corridor options.

I3 - To connect to other tourist activities or attractions within the area, such as historic and cultural heritage sites, waterway activities and the Wild Atlantic Way.

The number of other facilities which the cycleway connects to will be documented.

3.4.7 Summary

The project objectives are summarised in **Table 3.1** below. They are grouped into Economic (EC), Safety (S), Physical Activity (PA), Environmental (EN), Accessibility/Social Inclusion (ASI) and Integration (I) categories.

Table 3.1: Project Objectives

Reference Objective	
Economy	
EC1	To increase the economic contribution of tourism to the Irish economy, by increasing the numbers of international visitors to the area, by delivering a cycleway that is attractive by international standards.
EC2	To create local employment opportunities and wealth through new and expanded enterprises.
EC3	To deliver the Cycleway in a cost-effective manner and deliver real value for money.
EC4	To encourage modal change to non-motorised travel modes, thereby reducing congestion and delivering travel time savings.
Safety	
S1	To provide a walking and cycling route that is segregated from motorised traffic (recognising that it may be impractical to achieve full segregation over the entire route length, especially in more urban areas).
S2	To provide a sense of security for Cycleway users, e.g., through provision of secure bike parking facilities and public lighting (where needed) or reducing isolation along the route.

S3 To provide a high level of operational safety on the cycleway through high quality design, construction, and maintenance.

Physical Activity

PA1 To increase the number of commuters within the study area who use the greenway to walk or cycle to work or education.

PA2 To increase the number of people in Ireland who choose to take part in physically active outdoor recreation and leisure activities.

Environment

EN1 To minimise impact to the natural environment, especially habitat in ecologically sensitive areas.

EN2 To minimise impact to cultural heritage sites.

EN3 To increase public appreciation of the natural environment and cultural heritage, by encouraging people to experience the countryside.

EN4 To minimise land holding severance and utilise public land.

EN5 To reduce air and noise pollution by getting people to cycle or walk rather than drive.

EN6 To ensure that planning, construction, and operation of the Cycleway is carried out in a sustainable manner.

Accessibility & Social Inclusion

ASI1 To be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities, with multiple accesses to the route allowing use for long or short distances

ASI2 To benefit local communities through enhancing existing amenities and providing new linkages to adjacent town and village centres

Integration

I1 To link to other existing and proposed Cycleways within the area

I2 To be accessible to users arriving by public transport, including bus, rail, and existing or proposed passenger boat services

I3 To connect to other tourist activities or attractions within the area, such as historic and cultural heritage sites, waterway activities and the Wild Atlantic Way.

4 POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Overview

This section outlines policies relevant to the development of the Galway to Athlone Cycleway. A summary is given below of the relevance of both Irish and European policies to this scheme, along with potential implications for the project.

4.2 European Policy Context

4.2.1 The European Cycle Route Network Eurovelo

Eurovelo is a European Network of long-distance Cycling Routes that promotes a sustainable form of cycle tourism in Europe (**Figure 4.1**). It is planned that the Galway to Athlone Castle Cycleway will facilitate the Eurovelo Capitals Route. The Eurovelo study issued in 2012, by the European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism, incorporated existing and planned cycle routes into a single European network, as shown in Figure 4.1, below.

This study highlights the key reasons for cycling to be for health, leisure and educational reasons. It determined that the key characteristics of a long-distance cycle route are safety, ease of use, route variety and the availability of accommodation / catering facilities. This aligns with the market research conducted by Fáilte Ireland and similarly the National Cycle Manual, in relation to the key principles of cycle corridor development. The study also highlights that the most important aspects of cycling infrastructure was segregation from traffic, clear signage and sightseeing information.



Figure 4.1: Eurovelo Network

4.3 National Policy Context

4.3.1 Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways

The Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways issued in July 2018 was prepared by DTTAS on behalf of the Government of Ireland. The objective of this Strategy is to assist in the strategic development of National and Regional Greenways in appropriate locations, constructed to an appropriate standard, in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenway users. Over the next 10 years, the strategy aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways around the country, to be utilised as a visitor experience and recreational amenity.

The focus of the strategy is on the potential of Greenways and cycle tourism to act as economic drivers in local areas by capitalising on the great tourism potential, that was identified by the market research carried out by Fáilte Ireland. To achieve these objectives, the DDTAS are to ensure that project promoters will work with Local Communities, Local Landowners, Local Authorities and other relevant State Bodies and organisations to deliver:

- A Strategic Greenway network of national and regional routes, with several high-capacity flagship routes that can be extended and/or link with local Greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure;
- Greenways of scale and appropriate standard that have significant potential to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland and are regularly used by overseas visitors, domestic visitors and locals thereby contributing to a healthier society through increased physical activity;
- Greenways that provide a substantially segregated off road experience linking places of interest, recreation and leisure in areas with beautiful scenery of different types with plenty to see and do;
- Greenways that provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies; and
- Greenways that are developed with all relevant stakeholders in line with an agreed code of practice.

The Galway to Athlone Cycleway is a high-capacity flagship route with the potential to appeal to overseas and domestic visitors as well as locals. The area between Galway and Athlone offers attractive scenery and plenty to see and do. There also appears to be plenty of scope for the development of local tourism-based industry in the area.

The strategy recommends that the preferred model is for future Greenways to use lands already available in the undisputed ownership or control of the State, either through Government Agencies, Government Departments or Local Authorities.

As there are limited opportunities to use land in State ownership within the Galway to Athlone area for Greenways, the route will be required to traverse land that is in private ownership. The strategy outlines that where Greenways are planned in areas of private land, they should be designed to traverse field boundaries and hedge lines, to avoid severance where possible. It is essential that proposals and routes are developed in a consultative and proactive manner with the affected landowners, that is sensitive to their needs, that maximises their support for, and goodwill towards, the proposed Greenway.

4.3.2 National Cycle Policy Framework (2009-2020)

The National Cycle Policy Framework was prepared by Smarter Travel and commissioned in 2009 by the Minister for Transport. The vision of this Framework is to “create a strong cycling culture in Ireland”. It sets out objectives and actions aimed to ensure the development of a cycling culture where 10% of all journeys in

Ireland will be by bike. A specific objective of this Framework is for the provision of designated rural cycle facilities, especially for tourist and recreational cycling.

The Framework identifies the need for inter urban cycling routes in the form of a National Cycling Network that delivers high quality routes to encourage cycling for transport, leisure and recreational purposes. This policy recommends that cycle friendly planning principles are to be incorporated into all national, regional and local plans.

4.3.3 National Cycle Network Scoping Study

This scoping study was prepared by Smarter Travel and commissioned in 2010 by the Minister for Transport, following the specific objectives outlined in the National Cycle Policy Framework. An advisory group was set up for this study with members from local authorities, Fáilte Ireland, NTA, OPW and Coillte, in order to agree a vision for the National Cycle Network. The vision identified by this advisory group was to:

“Develop a National Cycle Network that will allow users to cycle between the main urban areas throughout the country. The network will be built to best practice standard, follow routes that maximise the number of potential users and its attractiveness to users, facilitate access for all, and ensure that short and long trips can be engaged in. The routes will, where possible, avail of existing routes and State-owned lands, share use with walking and form the basis for linkages to more comprehensive rural and urban local networks”.

The Study identified an overall framework for the delivery of some 2,000km of high-quality cycle corridors, divided into 13 potential route corridors between urban areas with a population of over 10,000. Key urban areas for inclusion on the proposed cycle route between Galway and Dublin include Athlone, Ballinasloe and Oranmore. These routes are intended to provide a skeleton for National Cycleways to be developed along with potential links between these corridors, particularly where existing infrastructure allows cost effective delivery.

The study was superseded in 2018 with the publication of the Greenway Strategy.

4.3.4 Fáilte Ireland Strategy for the development of Irish Cycle Tourism

Fáilte Ireland's Strategy for the Development of Irish Cycle Tourism was produced in 2007 and observed that cycle tourism had been in decline since 2000 in Ireland. Research conducted as part of this Strategy found that cycling on Irish roads is not perceived to be safe, particularly where cyclists face dangerous bends, fast cars, intimidating HGVs, high traffic volumes and high speeds.

The Strategy identified the following needs for cycle tourists:

- Safe places to cycle and consideration from other road users;
- Attractive routes with good scenery;
- Well-connected and signposted routes and destinations avoiding long detours;
- Opportunities to visit local attractions and specific places of interest;
- Food, accommodation and refreshments available at intervals, which reflect comfortable distances for stopping off / overnight stops;
- Accessible maintenance and repair facilities;
- Routes to be promoted on maps and websites including route planner facility; and
- Easy access to alternative cycle-friendly modes of transport.

As part of the Strategy, it is stated that “of particular significance is the need to address the imbalance in the development of the visitor economy and the associated need to engage in long-term planning for the development of rural areas”. This highlights that the development of cycle tourism presents an opportunity to bring the economic benefits of tourism to rural areas of Ireland.

The area between Galway and Athlone is generally rural, and currently does not receive large numbers of visitors. It would seem well matched with the general principle of balancing the visitor economy and promoting the development of rural areas and business opportunities for people in these areas.

4.3.5 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Framework (2018) prepared by Rialtas na hÉireann is the Government’s plan to cater for the extra one million people that will be living in Ireland, the additional two thirds of a million people working in Ireland and the half a million extra homes needed in Ireland by 2040.

The Framework focuses on:

- Growing our regions, their cities, towns, and villages and rural fabric;
- Using state lands for certain strategic purposes; and
- Better outcomes for communities and the environment, through more effective and coordinated planning, investment and delivery.

As a strategic development framework, Ireland 2040 - Our Plan sets the long-term context for our country’s physical development and associated progress in economic, social and environmental terms and in an island, European and global context.

The vision for Ireland in 2040 is:

- For the highest possible quality of life for people and communities, underpinned by high quality, well managed built and natural environments; and
- Sustainable self-reliance based on a strong circular economy and significant progress towards a low carbon, climate-resilient society while remaining an open, competitive and trading economy.

Some relevant National Policy Objectives which the proposed Cycleway supports include:

- National Policy Objective 16 - Target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes;
- National Policy Objective 21 - Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the sustainable diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and in particular those with a low or zero carbon output;
- National Policy Objective 22 - Facilitate the development of a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level; and
- National Policy Objective 27 - Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

4.3.6 Programme for Government 2020

The Programme for Government 2020 committed to allocate 10% of the total transport capital budget each to Walking and Cycling projects, translating to €360M per year in total, for the lifetime of the Government. It also committed to developing an integrated national network of greenways. It specifically *'commits to fund long term projects, like the Galway to Dublin greenway'*.

4.3.7 Climate Action Plan 2019

The Climate Action Plan, published in 2019 by the Government of Ireland contained an action (number 91) to *'Undertake an expansion of cycling infrastructure.....'*

4.4 Regional Policy Context

4.4.1 Northern and Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2020)

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly made the first Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region in January 2020. The Northern and Western Region includes all of Counties Galway and Roscommon.

The RSES supports the provision of the Dublin to Galway Greenway, and also an Oranmore-Galway-Bearna greenway, through its specific objectives, as follows:

- *RPO 3.6.13 The Assembly supports the delivery of a strategic Greenway Network for the GTS to include National Dublin to Galway Cycleway, Oranmore to Bearna Coastal Greenway and the Galway to Clifden Greenway (S/M)*
- *RPO 3.7.4 Support the development of a cross-sectoral approach to promote Athlone as a key tourism destination in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and the forthcoming Shannon Tourism Masterplan to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.*

The RSES addresses tourism in detail and provides a Tourism Strategy. Key elements are listed as:

- A tiered hierarchy of Tourism provisions in both rural and urban areas, to support the sustainable development of 'Destination Towns', following Fáilte Ireland's Development Guidelines for Destination Towns.
- Additional tourist supporting leisure and amenity infrastructure in the areas of recreation, entertainment, culture, catering, accommodation, transport and water services.
- Explore shared provision of access, parking, public transport to designated key rural sites for target activities (e.g. walking, cycling, water sports and golf).
- Make the best use of locally distinctive cultural attributes, bringing a unique visitor experience (language, music, crafts, arts, food).
- New proposals for activity tourism, particularly in rural areas, National Park's, uplands, coasts and rivers.
- Proposals for county-based monitoring and management structures. This will allow for the identification of threats/effects on popular sites, and mitigation where necessary.

Specific tourism objectives are set out in The RSES for the 'Hidden Heartlands' as follows:

- *RPO 4.12 Develop the water-based leisure sector in the region in a sustainable manner making the best use of existing and planned infrastructure and resources, in a manner that is sensitive to the natural and cultural heritage resources.*
- *RPO 4.13 The Assembly supports the implementation of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan and the securing of adequate resources and investment to achieve this.*
- *RPO 4.14 Promote the development of integrated walking, cycling and bridle routes throughout the Region as an activity for both international visitors and local tourists in a manner that is compatible with nature conservation and other environmental policies.*
- *RPO 4.10 To ensure Orientation and Information Points targeted at 'Slow Tourism' market is provided at key Towns, such as Carrick on Shannon, Athlone, and Ballinasloe as an enabler for increasing bed-nights, and visitor numbers.*
- *RPO 4.11 To upgrade Public Transport infrastructural facilities in Destination Towns, including the provision of Transport Hubs/Links, and additional accommodation.*

The Galway to Athlone cycleway is a good strategic fit to these objectives and strategy.

4.5 Local Policy Context

4.5.1 Galway County Development Plan

The Galway County Development Plan (2015-2021) outlines policies to develop its recreation and amenity base to increase tourism potential. Economic Tourism and Development Objective 14 aims to support the provision of tourism infrastructure through the support of Greenway amenities.

The Plan also highlights its support to develop “*the National Cycle Route between Dublin, Ballinasloe, Galway City and Clifden along a mostly offline route*”.

4.5.2 Roscommon County Development Plan

The Roscommon County Development Plan (2014-2020) highlights policies and objectives that encourage local investment in safe cycleways, secure parking for bicycles and rented bicycles in the vicinity of existing developments.

Policy 4.10 and Objective 4.21 of the Plan specifically outlines the support and provision of a Cycleway through south Roscommon as part of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway Scheme. The plan also promotes via the developmental management process that proposed public offices and commercial developments provide bicycle parking along with showering facilities for cyclists (Objective 4.15).

It is noted that the plans emphasis on the modal shift required to alternative means of travel such as public transport, cycling and walking, presents significant challenges at local levels in rural counties such as Roscommon.

4.5.3 Westmeath County Development Plan

The Westmeath County Development Plan (2014-2020) highlights policies and objectives that promote walking and cycling routes as sustainable modes of transport (Objective P-TR2 & P-WC1).

The plan supports the provision of a Cycleway between Mullingar and Athlone, as part of the National Cycleway Network (Objective P-WC2 & P-WC6) and wishes to further the development of an integrated cycle network in Athlone (O-WC1 & O-WC4).

It is noted that the new draft Westmeath County Development Plan (2021-2027) also supports the development of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway through Athlone (CPO 5.14) as a key tourist destination in the midlands.

4.5.4 Offaly County Development Plan

The Offaly Development Plan (2014-2020) was reviewed due to the potential corridor connection to Shannonbridge located within the area for the scheme. This Plan includes policies to provide cycleways and walkways as part of new developments.

It also further investigates the potential development of trails within County Offaly to include a mixture of walking and cycling, along with the provision of adequate services along these trails.

4.5.5 Galway City Development Plan

The Galway City Development Plan (2017–2023) highlights that there is “*now a demand for coastal and recreation facilities on the east side of the city*”. The plan aims to “*ensure the reservation of a substantial bank of land for recreational purposes*” and for potential future “*coastal walks to Oranmore*”.

There are a number of specific objectives contained within the Plan in relation to an improved cycle network and developing a strategic coastal Greenway from east to west linking the riverside walkways (Policy 3.6 & 4.5.1).

The Plan also includes reference to the Oranmore to City Centre Greenway connecting with the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, as shown in **Figure 4.2** below.

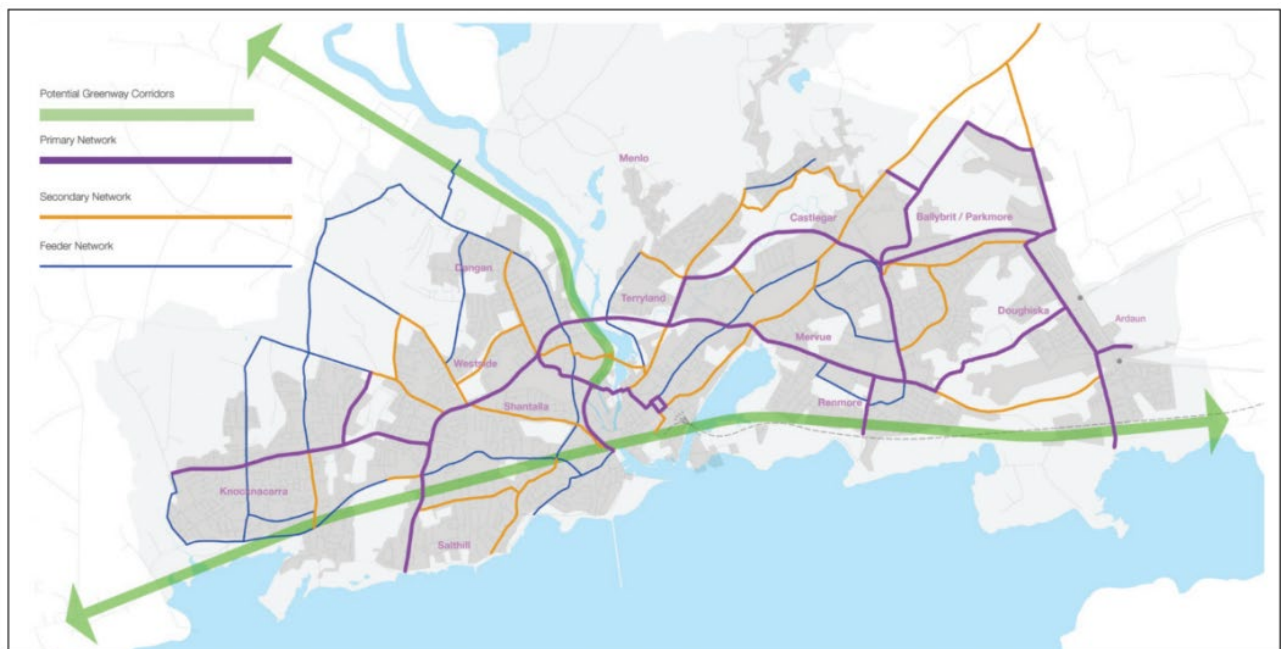


Figure 4.2: Galway City Proposed Cycle Network

4.6 Specific Tourism Initiatives

Fáilte Ireland have developed a number of regional tourism brands, as shown in **Figure 4.3** below, presenting four distinct tourist offerings: Dublin; Ireland's Ancient East; Ireland's Hidden Heartland; and the Wild Atlantic Way.

These brands are used to promote and market tourism in the regions both nationally and internationally. The brands capitalise on the particular strengths and attractions of the regions.



Figure 4.3: Fáilte Ireland Regional Brands

4.6.1 Wild Atlantic Way Region

The Wild Atlantic Way is one of Fáilte Ireland's signature projects to rejuvenate Irish tourism. The brand encompasses the entire west coast of Ireland. The brandings goals are to:

- *assist in increasing visitor numbers, dwell time, spend and satisfaction along all parts of the route*
- *re-package the Atlantic seaboard as a destination to overseas and domestic visitors*
- *improve linkages between, and add value to, a range of attractions and activities*
- *improve on-road and on-trail interpretation, infrastructure and signage along and around the route*
- *direct visitors to less-visited areas*
- *...assist businesses, agencies, local groups and other stakeholders along the area to work together*
- *reinforce the particular strengths and characteristics of all of the areas located along the west coast, while offering the visitor one compelling reason to visit*

The western section of the Galway to Athlone route will be within the Wild Atlantic Way region. It will help in achieving these goals, in particular by providing an attractive tourism product in the Galway area, linking well with the other cycling destinations, and directing visitors away from the more heavily visited areas directly on the coast.

4.6.2 Irelands Hidden Heartlands

Fáilte Ireland's brand destination 'Ireland Hidden Heartlands' presents significant opportunities for counties Roscommon, Leitrim, west Cavan and east Galway rebranding the midlands as 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' as a way to boost tourism in the area. The area extends beyond the northern and western region into County Longford and parts of counties Westmeath, North Tipperary and Offaly.

The River Shannon will be a central focus of the brand, and a 'Shannon Masterplan' is proposed to focus tourism concentration on and around the river and in surrounding towns. It will focus on the River Shannon; the development of new food networks and trails and the creation of new walking hubs are part of the campaign to attract a larger number of visitors. The plan is to entice visitors with the area's walkways and lakes, and the campaign will promote activities like walking, cycling, fishing and boating.

It is expected that the Galway to Athlone cycleway will be able to help achieve these objectives and integrate well into the overall tourism plan for the region.

4.6.3 Shannon Masterplan

The draft Shannon Masterplan (2020), led by Waterways Ireland, sets out an integrated framework for sustainable tourism development along the Shannon to promote it as a compelling tourism destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. This plan considers strategic connectivity with the Galway to Dublin National Cycleway as an exceptional opportunity for visitors to be active in nature.

Indicative trails highlighted for development by this Masterplan include a cycle route from Athlone to Shannonbridge which may also form part of the Galway to Dublin National Cycleway.

4.7 Conclusion

This scheme is well supported by policies at all levels. Tourism is strongly emphasised as a source for economic development in the region. Internationally there is now an ever growing need to support more sustainable forms of transport and tourism, that contribute to the reduction of emissions and combat climate change.

Policy makers in Ireland and Europe are providing strong support towards cycle tourism. The policies and plans outlined above aim to:

- Increase popularity of cycling in Ireland;
- Contribute to a healthier society through increased physical activity;
- Provide substantially segregated off road cycling experiences linking places of interest;
- Improve infrastructure for recreational cycling through greater capital funding into the tourism sector;
- Use existing or disused suitable infrastructure and public lands where possible in the development of Greenways;
- Consult in a proactive manner with landowners to maximise their support for, and goodwill towards, the proposed Greenway;
- Provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies through an increase in active tourism, particularly in rural Ireland; and
- Establish Ireland as a premier destination for recreational tourism globally, while contributing towards the Eurovelo network of long-distance transnational cycling routes.

5 PRELIMINARY DEMAND ANALYSIS

In 2013, Market research consultants were commissioned by Fáilte Ireland to undertake a Target Cycling Market Survey in Germany, Britain, Netherlands, France and Ireland. The objectives were to:

- Understand the scale of potential for cycling holidays in Ireland by overseas visitors;
- Investigate the key requirements of the target market for cycling holidays; and
- Understand the characteristics of the target cycling market.

More than 15,000 online surveys were taken with representative samples from each country, identifying a maximum core potential of 19.5M foreign visitors over three years. In addition, a domestic market of 721,000 over three years was identified.

More than 15,000 online surveys were taken with representative samples from each country. The survey targeted a maximum core potential of 19.5 million foreign tourists over three years. In addition, a domestic market of 721,000 over three years was identified.

This data was used in the Galway to Dublin Greenway Business Case (Client NRA, October 2013) in order to estimate the total economic benefits of the scheme and compare these to the scheme costs to determine value for money. The economic benefits were determined by estimating the total number of visitors per year and multiplying this by the average visitor spend.

Of the 19.5 million potential foreign visitors, it is estimated that 571,000 have a high level of interest in cycling on holiday in Ireland. It was then assumed, based on survey responses, that 50% could effectively be targeted by marketing of Ireland as a cycling destination and that 12.5% of those will make a trip on the Galway to Dublin route. This gives total estimated annual number of foreign tourist users of approximately 35,600.

In the 2013 Galway to Dublin Greenway Business Case a similar calculation to determine the number of domestic users was not undertaken. The spend by domestic users was not considered to be a benefit (as they would spend this amount of money whether or not they used the scheme). The surveys carried out identified that 196,000 potential domestic users have a high level of interest in cycling on holiday in Ireland. If we apply the same assumptions above, then the total estimated annual number of domestic visitors is about 12,200. In addition, significant numbers of domestic users will be local, using sections of the route for leisure/commute reasons and these were not captured in the market surveys.

Surveys on the Waterford Greenway in 2017, showed that over 250,000 trips were made on the greenway in the period March to December, immediately after its opening. These overall user figures were sustained throughout 2018 and 2019, though there is no breakdown of domestic v overseas users for these years. However, only 2% of users came from outside the Republic of Ireland. 68% of people from outside Waterford said that the greenway was the sole reason for their trip to Waterford.

In general, cycle tourism in Europe is showing an upward trend since 2013, as reported by Allgemeiner Deutsche Fahrrad Club (ADFC Bicycle Travel Analysis 2020), and reported by the European Cycling Federation, and also similar surveys in France and Hungary.

Failte Ireland has reported a threefold increase in cycle tourism from 2009 to 2018, and projected an annual growth rate of 4% to 2028. They also report that 361,000 overseas tourists engaged in cycling in Ireland in 2019 (**Figure 5.1** and **5.2**).

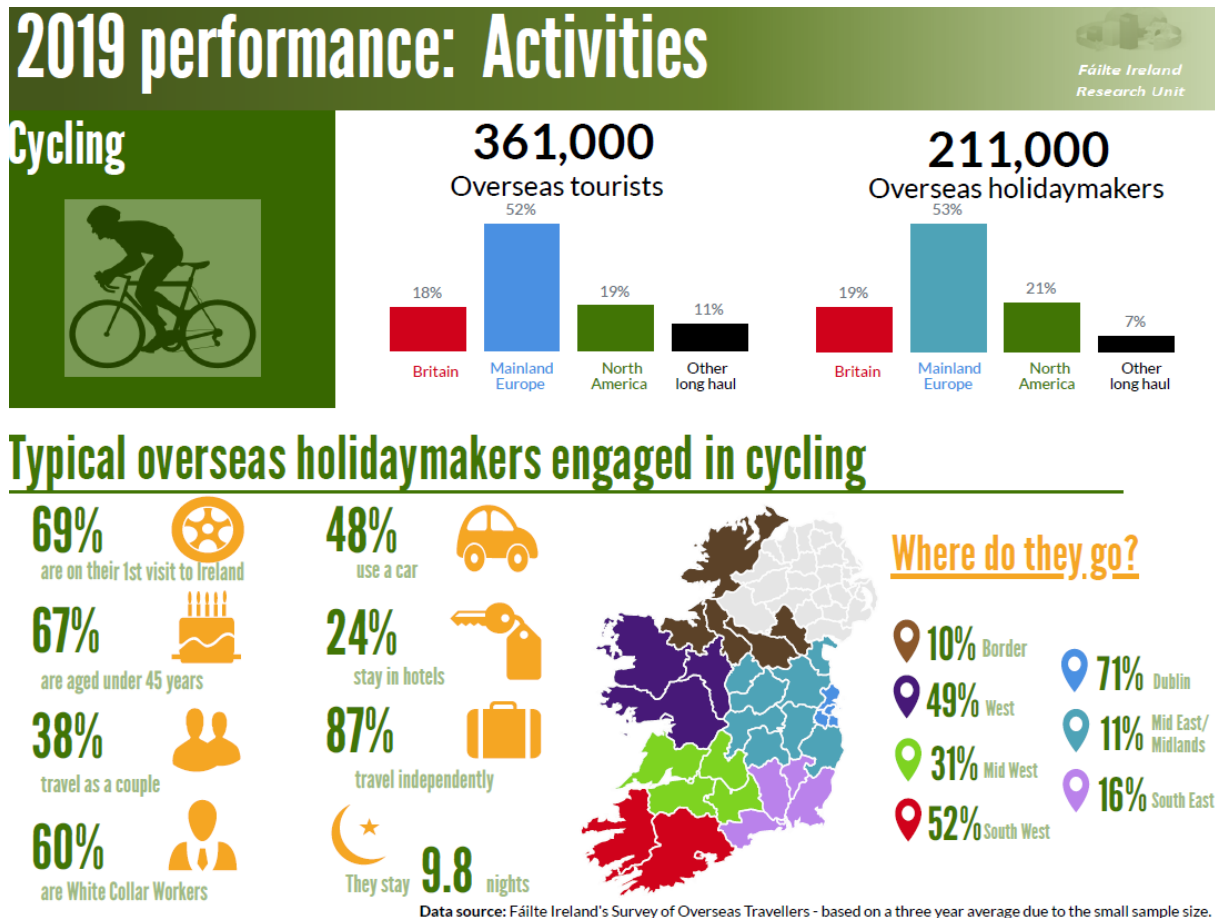


Figure 5.1: 2019 Cycling Tourism Performance (Failte Ireland, 2019)

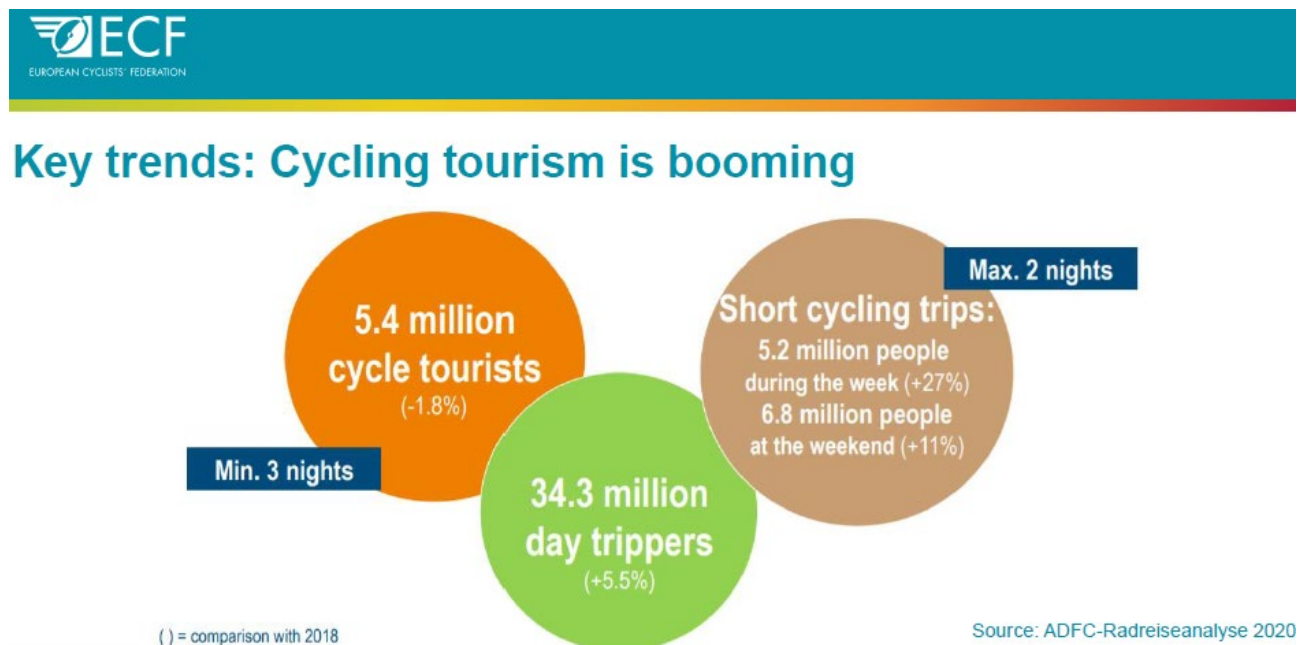


Figure 5.2: Trends in Cycle Tourism Germany 2018-2019 (ADFC Radreiseanalyse 2020)

The Old Rail Trail Greenway at the Whitegates counter in Athlone recorded a daily flow of over 900 users (cyclists and walkers) in 2019 with an annual usage of over 330,000 Greenway users. This includes both leisure and commuter walkers/cyclists. The Old Rail Trail Greenway recorded approximately 80,000 Greenway users annually outside of Mullingar. It's likely that a significantly higher number use the facility in the immediate environs of Mullingar.

Overseas holiday maker engaging in cycling activities in Ireland grew by 50% from 2013 (241,000) to 2019 (361,000). (Failte Ireland)

The cycleway will also attract local recreational users and non-recreational users. There is potential for significant commuting use, particularly near Galway City. The cycleway will also provide an attractive alternative to car use for short trips around towns and villages, especially for children and young adults.

The scheme area has a population of approximately 100,000, not including Galway City and Athlone. There are several large towns, as shown in **Figure 5.3** below. There are also some sparsely populated areas. The population within easy reach of the cycleway will vary on the route chosen. However, all routes serve the two major population centres, i.e. Galway City and Athlone.

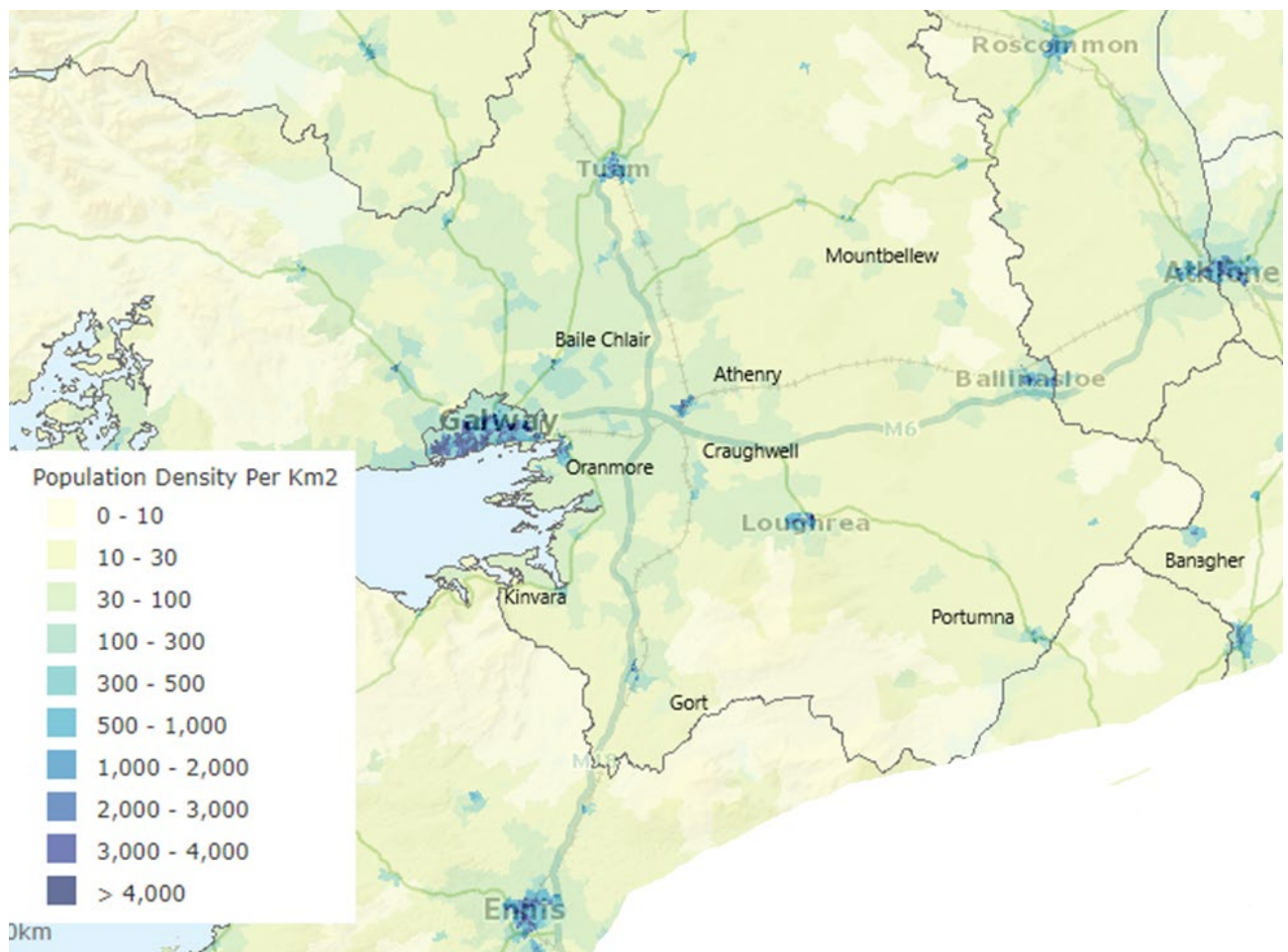


Figure 5.3: Population Density in Scheme Area

6 LONG-LIST OF POTENTIAL OPTIONS

6.1 Do-Minimum

Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders in order to understand whether there are any significant infrastructure schemes or land-use changes that could be considered to be “committed” and might be relevant.

In the absence of any such proposals, the Do-Minimum – the baseline against which options should be assessed – will be a Do-Nothing situation in which no cycle facilities will be developed within the study area.

6.2 Management Options

PAG Unit 4 requires that:

“A Do-Something Option which seeks to utilise the existing asset where feasible... ...must be considered. Given the crucial role of this option (which can be referred to as the Management Option), as both a realistic near-term package of improvements, it deserves significant attention in its definition and refinement. In many respects this option can be the most difficult option to define and develop... ...the Management Option is designed to represent the “best” that can be done using existing infrastructure, a wide variety of possible interventions may need to be sifted through to identify a package that represents an optimum mix.”

For the project the feasible alternative to a major investment scheme is considered to be set of lower-cost measures that would designate a cycle route between the two endpoints along existing roads.

This “management option” will comprise:

- Selection of a cycle route between Athlone and Galway along existing roads;
- Signposting of the route at each junction;
- Cycle lanes adjacent to the road or in the roadside verge for those sections of the routes where traffic volumes exceed some threshold (to be determined); and
- Minimal widening of the road where required in order to accommodate such a cycle lane.

Clearly, over the route being considered there will be a large number of such route options.

6.3 Alternatives

In the context of this SAR, an ‘alternative’ refers to a means of solving the problem by use of a different transport mode or demand management proposal (fiscal, control, ITS measures etc.) or investment in a different corridor which could address the need for the scheme.

Similarly, ‘options’ refers to potential schemes within the remit of TII that may be developed at Phase 2: Option Selection stage and that are considered and brought through a structured appraisal process in order to identify a single preferred option.

PAG unit 4 advises that:

“It’s important that a wide range of alternatives are identified and considered, including all modes, infrastructure, regulatory and demand management alternatives.”

6.3.1 Alternative Transport Modes

Given the objectives of the project, it is clear that a road improvement scheme reducing journey times between Athlone and Galway will not provide an attractive option to encourage international active tourism and will therefore not meet the objectives of the scheme. Similarly, provision of a rail or bus facility to transport walkers and cyclists will not meet the scheme objectives.

6.3.2 Alternative Transport Corridors

The endpoints of the current project are fixed by its status as one section of a larger project, so there is no scope for meeting the objectives by investment in a different corridor. However, there is a broad range of corridors available, and an indirect route is not considered inherently unfavourable, as the quality of the experience is more important than minimising journey time.

The options progressed onto the Route Corridor Option Public Consultation for further consideration are shown in **Figure 6.1** below. These vary in length between approximately 80km for the brown route, to approximately 180km for the red and yellow routes.

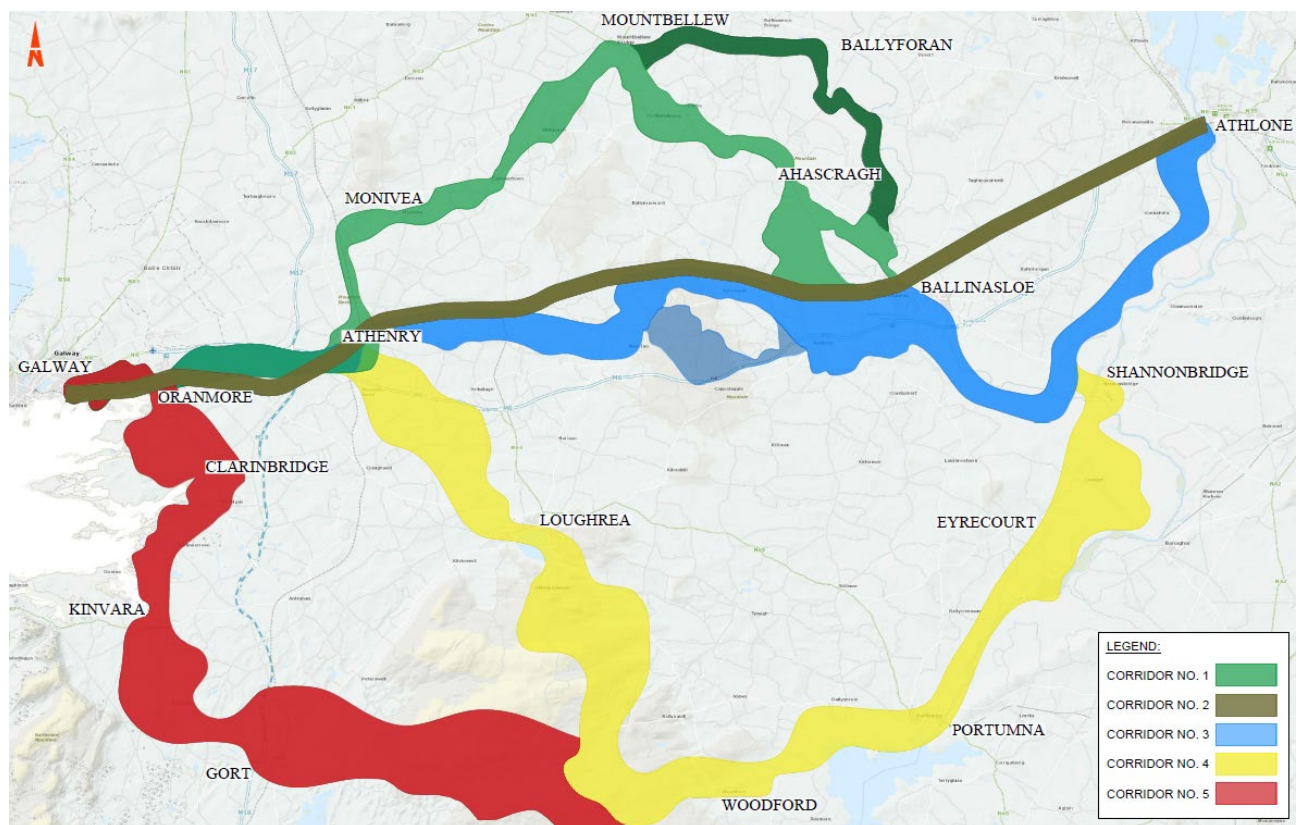


Figure 6.1: Route Corridor Options

The following alternative options were rejected at an early stage in the project:

- A Northern Route Corridor through Tuam;
- A Central Route Corridor through Monivea avoiding Kilconnell and New Inn;
- A M6 Route Corridor beside the Motorway;
- The previous Preferred Route Corridor from 2014;

- A R446 Route Corridor along the hard shoulder of the old Dublin Road.

A Management Option using existing local roads was considered, but it is not considered credible that it would meet the project Objectives. However, it will remain as an option in the appraisal process.

6.3.3 Demand Management

Although the proposed scheme is intended to be attractive to commuters who currently use the car to get to work, the primary objective is to encourage international active tourism. A solution that seeks to manage down the demand for travel by other modes will not attract international cycling tourists.

Accordingly, all the alternatives to investment in provision of a long-distance cycle route were sifted out at an early stage as not providing a viable means of meeting the scheme objectives.

6.4 Scheme Options

This scheme forms part of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, designed as a long-distance through route for the use of pedestrians and cyclists. The endpoints of the are fixed by the need to connect to adjacent sections. The Galway to Athlone section will commence at Ballyloughane Road on the east side of Galway City and end at Athlone Castle in County Westmeath.

The Target Cycling Market survey conducted by Fáilte Ireland indicates that the length of the Cycleway is very important in attracting international cycling tourists. Cyclists will typically wish to partake in a weeklong holiday. The minimum length required for a cycle route to be marketable internationally is 250 km. A route could be up to 300 km in length. The already-established route from Dublin to Athlone is approximately 130km long, to cover a crow-fly distance of approximately 110km.

It is considered that the Galway to Athlone section could be up to 180km long to give an overall length of 300km. The crow-fly distance between Galway and Athlone is approximately 75km, allowing considerable scope for the route to deviate from a straight line between the two endpoints.

Allowing for the likely difference between route length and crow-fly distance covered, the above criterion leads to a study area that is roughly circular, going no further north than Ballygar and Tuam, and no further south than Portumna or Gort. This indicative area is shown in **Figure 6.2**.

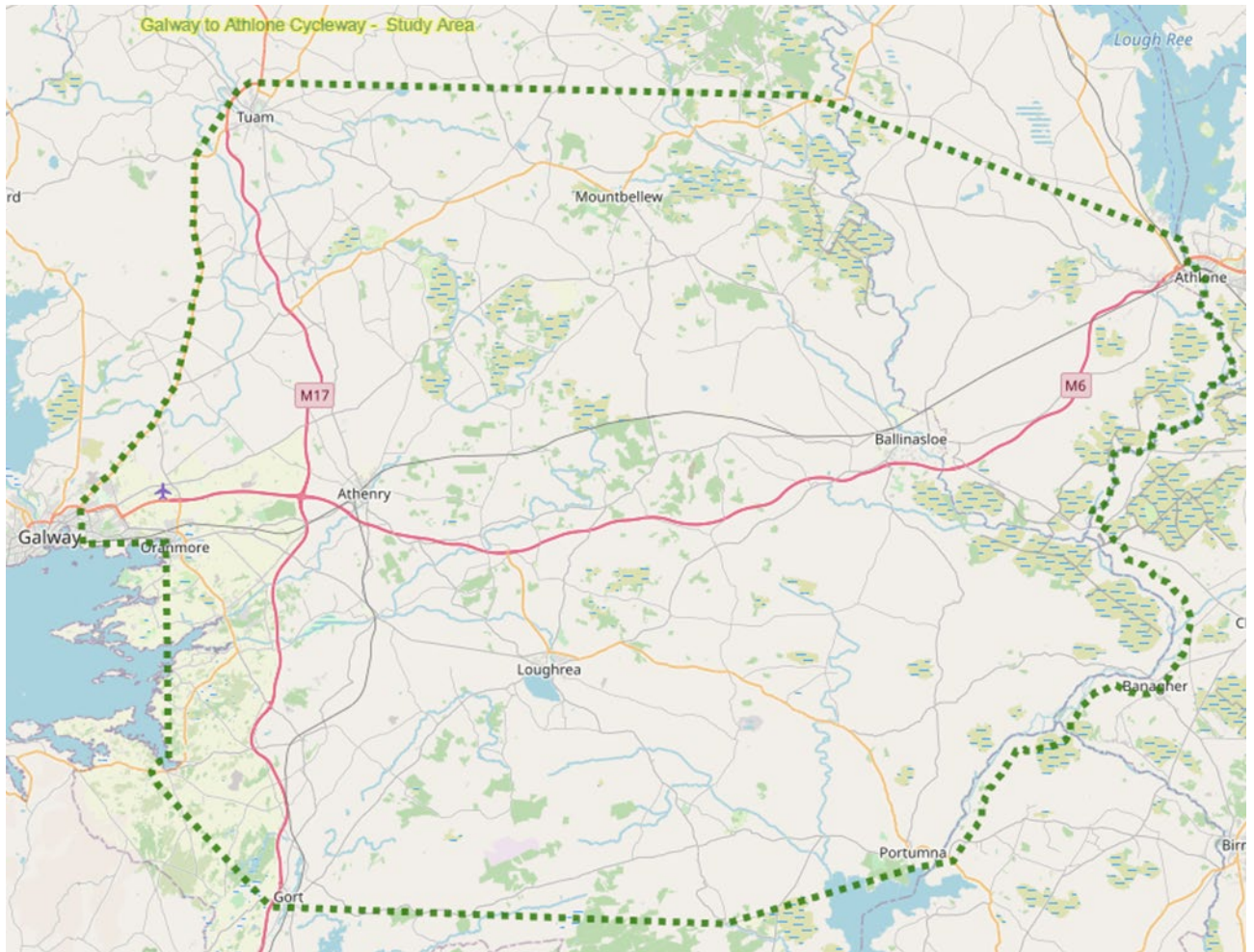


Figure 6.2: Galway to Athlone Cycleway Scheme Area

There are clearly many possible routes that a cycleway between Athlone and Galway could take. Any route within this area is a potential option.

A structured option selection process is necessary in order to narrow down the multiplicity of potential options to a manageable number.

The choice between options at each stage of this structured process will be made in a transparent and evidence-based way that gives appropriate weight to environmental and other objectives.

7 APPRAISAL PLAN

The appraisal of the scheme will follow as far as possible the good-practice guidance in TII Project Appraisal Guidelines. These are a transport-infrastructure focused implementation of the Public Spending Code and the Common Appraisal Framework.

The PAG guidelines make a clear distinction between

- The use of multi-criteria appraisal to select the option that best meets the objectives of the scheme, referred to as a “project appraisal matrix”
- The use of multi-criteria appraisal to summarise the total impacts of a project in order to decide whether that project is a good investment, referred to as a “project appraisal balance sheet”.

This section sets out the proposed approach to both elements of appraisal.

7.1 Option Selection

The proposed approach has three stages:

1. Preliminary Appraisal - choice of strategic corridor

The idea here is to identify a set of “key nodes” – point locations that it would be desirable for a cycleway to connect. Either settlements that offer some minimum level of facilities (coffee shop & toilet facilities) or significant tourist attractions. These will be used to generate a network of possible routes, by looking at all sets of key nodes which don’t involve a route going back on itself. This assessment would also consider how to maximise the use of State owned lands.

A strategic corridor in this context is not even a line on a map. It is a list of key nodes defining a route (e.g. *Galway City – Oranmore – Athenry – Loughrea – Ballinasloe – Shannonbridge – Athlone*)

2. Detailed Appraisal - choice of route corridor

The second stage is comparable with the level of geographic detail that would be normal for a road scheme. For each node in the strategic corridor, there will be a limited set of options as to how the cycleway will pass through that node (or pass close to it with a short link from the main route to the facilities in the settlement, **Figure 7.1**). A number of broad corridor options linking those nodes will then be developed, that seek both to avoid constraints and to traverse scenic areas away from traffic.

3. Design Stage - selection of an exact route

Choice of an exact route within the preferred corridor is part of the design process. This third stage involves negotiations with landowners along the preferred corridor to develop a firm route (**Figure 7.2**). Some of the critical success factors for the project (such as the ability to satisfy landowners regarding fencing & liabilities) will come into play only at this third stage.



Figure 7.1: Illustration of Concept – possible routes between settlements



Figure 7.2: Illustration of Concept – possible routes through a settlement

7.1.1 Appraisal Criteria for Route Selection

The options at each stage will be assessed against the following criteria, in no particular order. A route option should score well to the extent that it:

- a. Offers more to “See and Do” - connects to existing tourist attractions; ecological, historic and cultural heritage sites
- b. Is Scenic – offers both views of highest-quality landscapes and a variety of landscapes
- c. Is low-cost - whilst some of the cost relates to design issues, other things being equal a shorter route will probably cost less than a longer route. Costs of acquiring private land will be a substantial proportion of the total, so strategic corridors, route corridors and routes which can make more use of publicly-owned land should score well under this criterion.

- d. Is Segregated, i.e. traffic-free – where possible neither sharing a road with local traffic nor having to cross a road at-grade
- e. Is accessible, provides multiple opportunities for joining the route part-way along. Whilst taking a bike by bus is difficult, bus and rail connections along the route offer opportunities for walkers. Trail heads can be provided along any route as part of the design process, to facilitate car parking and other services.
- f. Is connected to other significant existing or planned cycleways (other than endpoints of this scheme), providing a choice of routes (Strategic)
- g. Is served by tourist facilities – cafes and overnight accommodation – within some threshold distance of the route
- h. Serves residents & commuters along the route as well as attracting tourists (Sustainable transport).

At a greater level of detail, a route option within a corridor should additionally score well to the extent that it:

1. Maximises the use of State owned land and avoids severance of private land
2. Avoids impact on sensitive habitats

Route choices will be based on an “appraisal matrix”, using the relevant criteria at each stage. Not all these criteria will necessarily have equal weight.

The following table shows how these criteria relate to the scheme objectives.

Table 7-1: Appraisal criteria related to Project Objectives

Scheme Objective	Appraisal Criteria
EC1 – attract international visitors local employment opportunities	A - See and Do B – Scenic D – Segregated G – facilities E – multiple access points G - facilities
EC2 - value for money.	C – Low Cost
S1 - perceived safety	D - Segregated
PA1 - commuter use	E – multiple access points H – serves local demand
PA2 - local active outdoor leisure	B – Scenic D – Segregated E – multiple access points F – cycleway connections
ENV1 - protect natural environment	J – avoid sensitive habitats
ENV2 - countryside appreciation	B – Scenic E – multiple access points
ENV3 – Use of public lands and avoid severance of private land	C – Low Cost I – avoids severance
ASI1 - all abilities	D – Segregated E – multiple access points G - facilities
I1 - other Cycleways	F – cycleway connections
I2 - bus, rail, boat access	E – multiple access points
I3 - tourist attractions	A - See and Do

7.1.2 Choice of Preferred Route

In most cases, an economic appraisal of the route options will be carried out that then informs the choice of preferred route; often in combination with the multi-criteria appraisal set out above. This is consistent with the approach set out in the Public Spending Code, and further developed for transport proposals in TII Project Appraisal Guidelines.

For this scheme it is not proposed to carry out economic appraisal of the alternative route options as there is insufficient data to allow separate forecasts of patronage that will take account of the different route characteristics. There is no recognised general methodology for forecasting cycling patronage that takes account of different characteristics such as scenery, points of interest, facilities etc. As a result, any cost benefit analysis would simply be assessing schemes on the overall costs.

Given this limitation it is proposed to determine the preferred route based on a multi criteria analysis as set out above, considering all the scheme objectives. This approach is consistent with the guidance in the Department of Transport Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes, section 4.2.3 which states:

“MCA can be used as an alternative or complementarily to appraisal techniques which primarily use monetary valuations (Financial Analysis, Cost-Effectiveness Analysis and Cost-Benefit Analysis) when there are different impacts that may be quantified but not monetarily valued, such as social impacts or environmental impacts (for example, impacts on landscape)”

Each shortlisted option will be awarded a score reflecting its performance against each of the scheme objectives, in a “project appraisal matrix”. The standard TII 7-point scale will be used for this (**Table 7.2**).

Table 7-2: TII 7-Point Scale

Multi-Criteria Analysis Scale	
Major or Highly Positive	7
Moderately Positive	6
Minor or Slightly Positive	5
Not Significant or Neutral	4
Minor or Slightly Negative	3
Moderately Negative	2
Major or Highly Negative	1
Unviable in this context	0

The scheme objectives that will form the basis of the multi-criteria analysis are reproduced below.

- **To increase the economic contribution of tourism to the Irish economy, by increasing the numbers of international visitors to the area, by delivering a cycleway that is attractive by international standards**
- **To create local employment opportunities and wealth through new and expanded enterprises**
- **To deliver the Cycleway in a cost-effective manner and deliver real value for money**
- **To encourage modal change to non-motorised travel modes, thereby reducing congestion and delivering travel time savings**
- **To provide a walking and cycling route that is segregated from motorised traffic (recognising that it may be impractical to achieve full segregation over the entire route length, especially in more urban areas)**
- **To provide sense of security for Cycleway users, e.g. through provision of secure bike parking facilities and public lighting (where needed)**

- To provide a high level of operational safety on the cycleway through high quality design, construction and maintenance
- To increase the number of commuters within the study area who walk or cycle to work or education
- To increase the number of people in Ireland who choose to take part in physically active outdoor recreation and leisure activities
- To minimise damage to the natural environment and cultural heritage sites, especially habitat in ecologically sensitive areas
- To increase public appreciation of the natural environment and cultural heritage, by encouraging people to experience the countryside
- To maximise the use of State owned land and minimise land holding severance
- To reduce air and noise pollution by getting people to cycle or walk rather than drive
- To ensure that planning, construction and operation of the Cycleway is carried out in a sustainable manner
- To be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities, with multiple accesses to the route allowing use for long or short distances
- To benefit local communities through enhancing existing amenities and providing new linkages to adjacent town and village centres
- To link to other existing and proposed Cycleways within the area
- To be accessible to users arriving by public transport, including bus, rail, and existing or proposed passenger boat services
- To connect to other tourist activities or attractions within the area, such as historic and cultural heritage sites, waterway activities and the Wild Atlantic Way

The preferred option will then be subject to economic appraisal to ensure that the scheme provides value for money. Clearly, the extent to which the preferred option provides value for money will be dependent on the scheme costs and the usage of the scheme. It is difficult to forecast usage accurately for a new cycle route when there is no strong evidence for the level of demand. There will be a significant level of uncertainty associated with any forecasts and as a result, a wide range of sensitivity tests will be carried out with different forecast assumptions. This will demonstrate how robust the cost benefit analysis is changes in usage.

In principle it would be possible to carry out additional surveys that would further inform the development of cycle patronage forecasts. This would require respondents to review reasonably detailed alternative options providing information on what impact alternatives would have on their likelihood of travelling to Ireland for a cycling holiday. These could be either market research type questions or stated preference surveys seeking to determine a relationship between usage and specific route characteristics.

Carrying out these surveys in the near future would be difficult given current Covid-19 restrictions. It is also difficult to anticipate whether these surveys would provide greater confidence in usage forecasts. Market research type questions might give more information on what factors are important but are not easily applied to usage forecasts and stated preference surveys might not give statistically reliable information.

Given these limitations it is proposed that a wide range of sensitivity tests around the forecasts is appropriate rather than carrying out additional surveys to further refine the forecasts.

7.1.3 Public Consultation

Public consultation will be an important part of the process and will inform the choice between the best-performing options.

At the preliminary appraisal stage, the choice of strategic route corridor is potentially of interest not only to those across a large study area who operate a tourist related business, or who might consider doing so, but also to potential recreational users of the route across Ireland and abroad. For this we will carry out an online consultation exercise, presenting the emerging preferred strategic corridor, and how well each of the other options considered performed. All consultation will be extensively advertised in local media and in specialist cycling magazines.

At the second stage, traditional public consultation events will be focussed on the set of settlements located within the selected corridor. It is envisaged that this process will follow standard TII approaches for road schemes – an initial consultation that presents a small number (typically 4-6) options, and a follow-up consultation presenting the emerging preferred route corridor, which may be some hybrid or variant on those originally presented.

7.2 Option Impact Assessment

A Project Appraisal Balance Sheet will be completed for the Emerging Preferred Option.

Table 7.3 sets out the envisaged scope of the appraisal.

Table 7-3: Appraisal Scope

Criteria	Sub Criteria	Minimal impact expected	Descriptive impact – scaling statement	Calculated forecast scale of impact
Environment	Air Quality and Climate		✓	
	Noise and Vibration		✓	
	Landscape and Visual (including light)		✓	
	Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna		✓	
	Waste		✓	
	Soils and Geology		✓	
	Hydrology		✓	
	Hydrogeology		✓	
	Archaeological and Cultural Heritage		✓	
	Non-agricultural properties		✓	
	Agriculture		✓	
Safety	Collision Reduction	✓		
	Security		✓	
Physical Activity	Ambience			✓
	Absenteeism			✓
	Reduced Health Risk			✓
Economy	Efficiency and Effectiveness	✓		
	Wider Economic Impacts/Spin off			✓

	Transport Quality and Reliability	✓
	Funding Impacts	✓
Accessibility & Social Inclusion	Deprived Geographical Areas	✓
	Vulnerable Groups	✓
Integration	Transport Integration	✓
	Land Use Integration	✓
	Geographical Integration	✓
	Other Government Policy Integration (particularly Tourism)	✓

The standard project appraisal deliverables at each project stage are set out in **Table 7.4**.

Table 7-4: Appraisal Deliverables

National Roads Project Management Guidelines - Project Phase	PAG deliverable					
	Strategic Assessment Report	Project Brief	Traffic Model Report	Cost Benefit Analysis	Project Appraisal Balance Sheet	Business Case
Phase 0: Scope and Pre-Appraisal / Phase 1: Concept & Feasibility	✓	✓				
Phase 2: Option Selection		Update	✓	✓	✓	Preliminary
Phase 3: Design & Environment / Phase 4: Statutory Processes		Update	Update	Update	Update	Detailed
Phase 5: Enabling and Procurement		Update	Update	Update	Update	Update

For this project, it will be appropriate to replace the Traffic Modelling Report and CBA Report by a Forecasting & Economic Appraisal Report. This will provide the detail that underpins the “Analysis Tools” and “Economic Appraisal” sections of the Business Case.

7.3 Traffic Modelling

It is proposed that no traffic modelling as such will be undertaken.

The impacts of the cycleway on general traffic are likely to be limited to small delays where a signalised pedestrian/cycle crossing is introduced to take the Cycleway across a road at-grade. These delays are not likely to result in any significant re-routing of traffic, and therefore route choice modelling is unnecessary.

Such delay to traffic is a negative impact of the scheme which should be quantified and reported in the PABS table. Traffic levels on the affected roads will be estimated from available models or count data once the proposed route of the cycleway has been established.

For option selection, a simpler more broad-brush approach will be used in which number of roads (at different levels of the route hierarchy) to be crossed at-grade will be one of the sub-criteria.

7.4 Forecasting Requirements

The appraisal of the project should include forecasts of the numbers of walkers and cyclists likely to use the facility. Methods of deriving such forecasts are less well-established than methods for forecasting growth in vehicular traffic, and a wider range of uncertainty should apply.

For cycling we propose to distinguish two trip purposes:

1. “Travel Cycling” – cycling as a means of transport, a way of getting from A to B, an alternative to travel on foot or by car.
2. Leisure Cycling (cycling for its own sake as an enjoyable means of exercise). This can be further broken down into four market segments:
 - leisure cycling from home on own bikes by those who live within the immediate corridor
 - leisure cycling on own bikes by residents of Ireland outside the immediate corridor, who travel to a trail head along the Cycleway, on a weekend or day off work, and cycle from there
 - leisure cycling on bikes hired by the hour from a cycle-hire shop within the immediate corridor
 - long-distance cycling as part of a cycle-based holiday.

The forecasting process will consider each of these market segments separately.

7.5 Sources of Data

The forecasts will draw heavily on data from existing cycle facilities in Ireland. An initial review has identified four existing sources of data:

- Census data on usual mode of travel to work/school (to inform forecasts of travel cycling);
- Bord Fáilte surveys (to inform forecasts of cycle-based holidays);
- Local authority data on usage of existing Cycleways, particularly the Old Rail Trail Greenway, the Great Western Greenway, and the Waterford Greenway.
- Work from the National Secondary Roads Needs Study, which developed household-based models of usage of cycle facilities by households near to an existing cycleway (to inform forecasts of use by those who live within the corridor).

It is proposed to supplement this with new data, based on

- interviews with the operators of cycle-hire shops; and
- interviews with users of existing cycleways, including counts of walkers and cyclists to establish sampling factors.

These surveys will be used to assess the proportion of walkers and cyclists in each category, as a way of deriving estimates for those segments of the market that are harder to forecast by relating them to market segments that are easier to forecast. However, these will need to be postponed until post-Covid19 normality is established.

7.6 Forecasting Methods

Appropriate methods and data sources vary by market segment.

7.6.1 Forecasting Travel Cycling & Leisure use by Corridor Residents

For travel cycling, we propose to use 2016 Census data to look at maximum achievable cycling and walking mode shares as a function of journey distance and household car ownership. Our understanding is that this type of analysis requires the Sample of Anonymised Records. We propose to apply to CSO for access to this data as a research project.

However, Census covers only usual mode to work/education.

Work for the NSRNS included household surveys along existing cycle routes. Reported analysis of this data includes the conclusion that *“On these routes, there is ten times as much walking and six times as much cycling as would be estimated from Census (which covers work & education trips only)”*. The additional trips include both travel cycling for discretionary purposes (such as visiting friends and relatives) and leisure cycling.

7.6.2 Forecasting National and International Leisure Cycling

In the preliminary business case, the basis for this will be existing Fáilte Ireland surveys. We will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the existing data, and will consider whether, for the detailed business case, it would be appropriate to work with Fáilte Ireland to carry out new surveys that are more closely tailored to the needs of the current project.

Talking to existing bike-hire businesses on the existing greenways will give a clearer picture of the relative importance of:

- tourists who visit an area and then on the spur of the moment hire a bike to see more of the greenway,
- tourists who arrange to hire a bike as part of their trip planning
- tourists who buy a holiday package that includes bike hire.

7.7 Cost-Benefit Analysis Methodology

The previous feasibility study of the Galway to Dublin scheme used a simple estimate of benefits, equal to the product of the numbers of additional tourists attracted to Ireland multiplied by an average spend per tourist (estimated from Bord Fáilte surveys carried out in 2011 amongst users of the Great Western Greenway). Additional work using a larger sample size and 2012 data, is presented in “Greenways as a tourism resource: A study of user spending and value”, Manton, Hynes and Clifford, published 2016.

A similar approach will be followed, using the more recent study data, in order to estimate the economic benefits from the increase in cycle-based holidays forecast to result from the scheme. This will be reported under the “wider economic benefits” heading within the PABS table. This needs to be supplemented by consideration of benefits to other users.

There are established methods of estimating the health benefits of taking additional exercise. These estimates are particularly uncertain, because the proportion of forecast users who are taking additional exercise (rather than substituting cycling for some other form of exercise) is difficult to ascertain. Where these benefits exist, some accrue to employers (in the form of reduced absenteeism) and some to the cyclists themselves.

The benefits to users resulting from journey ambience will be assessed using standard PAG methodology will also be assessed. This will take account of the vast majority of benefits accruing to new users, and as a result the 'rule of half' will apply to these benefits.

For each element of the cost-benefit analysis, results will be presented as a Low-High range on the benefits side, as well as the standard representation of uncertainty on the cost side, as a Total Scheme Budget cost and a Target Cost.

Because the numbers are particularly uncertain, it will be important to explore a range of possible outcomes, to establish the relationships between the assumptions made and the resulting BCR for the scheme.

8 POTENTIAL COSTS

A preliminary business case for the Galway to Dublin cycleway was prepared by ROD/AECOM in 2013. This concluded that the total project costs over a 30-year appraisal period would be approximately €102M, (including land, design and construction costs at 2013 prices of €60M) that the Benefit to Cost Ratio would be 2.6, and that the project represented good value for money.

The current feasibility working cost for the construction of the Galway to Athlone scheme is approximately €83M, including land and design costs. This is a rough estimate only at this stage, based on an assumed length of 120km, and is not a total project costs over a 30-year appraisal period. It corresponds to an approximate cost of €0.7M per kilometre.

The breakdown of estimated costs is presented in **Table 8.1** below.

Table 8-1: Feasibility Working Cost

Cost Element	Total cost (incl VAT)
Main contract construction	€47M
Main contract supervision	€1M
Archaeology	€2M
Advance works and other contracts	€1M
Land and property	€21M
Planning and design	€7M
Programme risk	€4M
Total Cost	€83M

The above costs exclude inflation and are in 2020 prices.

Adding ongoing maintenance costs could increase this figure over the 30-year appraisal period by about €11M assuming €3,000/km per year).

The costs may differ significantly between alternative options. The length of the route could vary from 75km, were the route to follow the Galway Athlone railway exactly, to approximately 180km for the less direct routes. The Total Costs (covering table 6.1 above, but not including future maintenance) are likely to be in the range of €52M to €128M.

Given this scale of cost, the PAG guidance for Major projects applies. However, the principles have been adapted to the particular characteristics of this project.

9 AFFORDABILITY

9.1 Project Cost Profile

As discussed in the previous section, the scheme is at an early stage and a preferred route and detailed design are yet to be determined. A relatively wide range for potential scheme costs has therefore been estimated which could change significantly depending on the route and potential land purchase costs.

Using the feasibility working cost identified in the previous section gives the following spend profile for the scheme (**Table 9.1**). An opening year of 2025 has been assumed.

Table 9-1: Estimated Spend Profile (excluding maintenance)

Year	Cost
2021	€3M
2022	€4M
2023	€10M
2024	€56M
2025	€10M

In addition to the above there will be ongoing maintenance costs of about €3,000 per km per annum. There will also be ongoing marketing costs to attract the maximum number of users to the scheme.

9.2 Funding

The Galway to Athlone Cycleway project is being funded solely by the Exchequer, currently through the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport Greenways budget.

The Galway to Athlone Greenway is specifically referenced in the current National Development Plan (under NSO 3 Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – Tourism – Greenways Strategy (pg. 50).

The goal of an iconic coast-to-coast greenway from Dublin to Galway remains a priority for the Government and in light of the development of the Greenways Strategy.

In general, cycleways and greenways are supported in the National Development Plan, under NSO 8 Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate Resilient Society.

10 IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS

10.1 Risk Identification and Management

The identification and management of risk will be a key element in the successful delivery of this project. A Value Risk Management process will be adopted that adds value, reduces risk exposure, identifies opportunities and increases the confidence of all stakeholders. Key features of the approach to risk management include:

- A SWOT-based risk analysis and extensive scheme review at commencement, with a structure approach to identifying and managing risk,
- A risk register, with regular reviews and updates,
- Bi-weekly risk management meetings throughout each phase of the project,
- An iterative and developing qualitative and quantitative risk analysis with risk categorisation and management strategies, such as;
 - Avoidance/prevention: e.g. designing ‘out’ risk, such as avoiding contaminated lands and ‘in’ opportunity such as routing to ‘capture’ heritage sites,
 - Mitigation/reduction: e.g. providing construction stage constraints on impacts on local traffic,
 - Transfer/share: assign the risk to the party best able to deal with the risk, for example the scheme will not guarantee a tourism ‘boom’, but stakeholders can be facilitated to achieve this, and
 - Acceptance: understanding the potential for risks like policy or legal changes and valuing these.
- An approach that seeks to convert risk into opportunity, for example encouraging landowners to take alternative business opportunities such as cycle hire, tea rooms and accommodation provision,
- Through Reference Class Forecasting, use the experience of other similar projects to predict risk outcomes, and provide more accurate risk assessments and greater cost certainty, avoiding the natural tendency to overestimate benefits and underestimate impacts. This will lead to greater programme and cost certainty and realistic budget establishment.
- A collaborative effort leading to improved stakeholder relationships and enhanced client reputation, creating a sense of project ownership.



10.2 High Level Risks

Table 10.1 presents the high-level generic risks that have been identified.

Table 10-1: High Level Project Risks

Identified Risk	Potential Impact
Marginal Business Case for the project	If project does not demonstrate value for money it will not proceed
Stakeholder buy-in is not achieved	High level failure of project
Resistance to routes on private land	Failure of project
Route is not attractive to the target user groups (tourists, local communities, etc)	Expected project benefits are not realised as facility is under-used.
Project is implemented with unresolved large-scale local stakeholder resistance	Completed project may not be attractive to users and have a negative public perception
Unacceptable impacts on protected sites	Rejection of preferred route by ABP
Designation of new protected sites/amendments to existing designations	Project delays and cost overruns
Competition between towns and villages for access to route	Project delays and political difficulties

10.3 Lessons Learned from Previous Projects

Several Greenways have been developed and planned in Ireland in the last decade. These projects have generally been successful. However, a number of key lessons have been learned from these project, and these will be considere in the development of the Galway Athlone greenway:

The principal ones, in relation to preliminary design and route selection are:

Stakeholder Consultation

The Galway Athlone cycleway project was stalled in 2015 due to significant stakeholder concerns, principally the landowners through which the then proposed route would travel.

This route corridor was selected without adequate public consultation, and the preferred route corridor was perceived by the public as being imposed without consultation. The preferred route corridor was perceived as being a specific route, and many landowners were concerned that this route would sever farms and endanger the viability of farm enterprises.

Since the project was relaunched in 2020, there have been 2 rounds of public consultation, in advance of the selection of a route corridor. A project office has been established in Ballinasloe, with a team of Project Liaison Officers available to respond to queries on the project. The project team has fielded close to 15,000 submissions and queries on the project, and the PLOs have been active in meeting landowners on the potential route options since May 2021.

Infrastructure versus experience

It has been felt on the Old Rail Trail, part of the Galway Dublin Greenway, that the route was somewhat lacking in facilities, such as trail heads, car parks, information board and toilets. These have been progressively added since the route opened, but it is felt that it would be better to provide these and similar amenities during the route construction.

Segregation

It has been found that route is that are fully segregated from traffic and not adjacent to busy roads are most popular. On the Great Western Greenway in Co Mayo, the route comprises roughly 50% of the route being fully segregated and quite distant from any road, between Newport and Achill. The other 50%, while being segregated from traffic, is very close to the N59, a busy National Secondary route. It has been observed that most recreational users overwhelmingly choose the more isolated section. Many cycling tour operators choose to bus users through the N59 section, from Westport to Newport, and only cycle the isolated section from Newport to Achill.

11 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

11.1 Scheme Objectives and Outcomes

The objectives of the scheme have been developed with reference to the Common Appraisal Framework Criteria, which are:

- Economy
- Safety
- Physical Activity
- Environment
- Accessibility & Social Inclusion; and
- Integration

A total of 20 specific objectives have been identified, and these are presented in **Section 3, Table 3.1**.

For each of the objectives identified, Key Performance Indicators will be developed that will be used in post implementation evaluation to determine how successful the scheme was in meeting the objectives.

At this stage in the design process the quantities to be measured have been identified but target KPI levels cannot be reasonably identified. These will be developed as the project progresses and forecasts of outcomes are developed.

The PAG guidance recommends that a “programme logic model” setting out the links between the project deliverables and the intended outcomes. For the purpose of clarifying the objectives of the scheme, a draft programme logic model is shown in **Figure 11.1**. This may be further developed during the course of the project.

The scheme objectives have been derived from the opportunities that the project presents and are directly related to deliverables and outcomes.

For this scheme the aim of the project is to grasp an opportunity rather than solve a problem. That opportunity is inextricably linked to walking and cycling both as modes of transport and as leisure pursuits. The objectives and KPI's are therefore related to improvements and benefits rather than the resolving of problems.

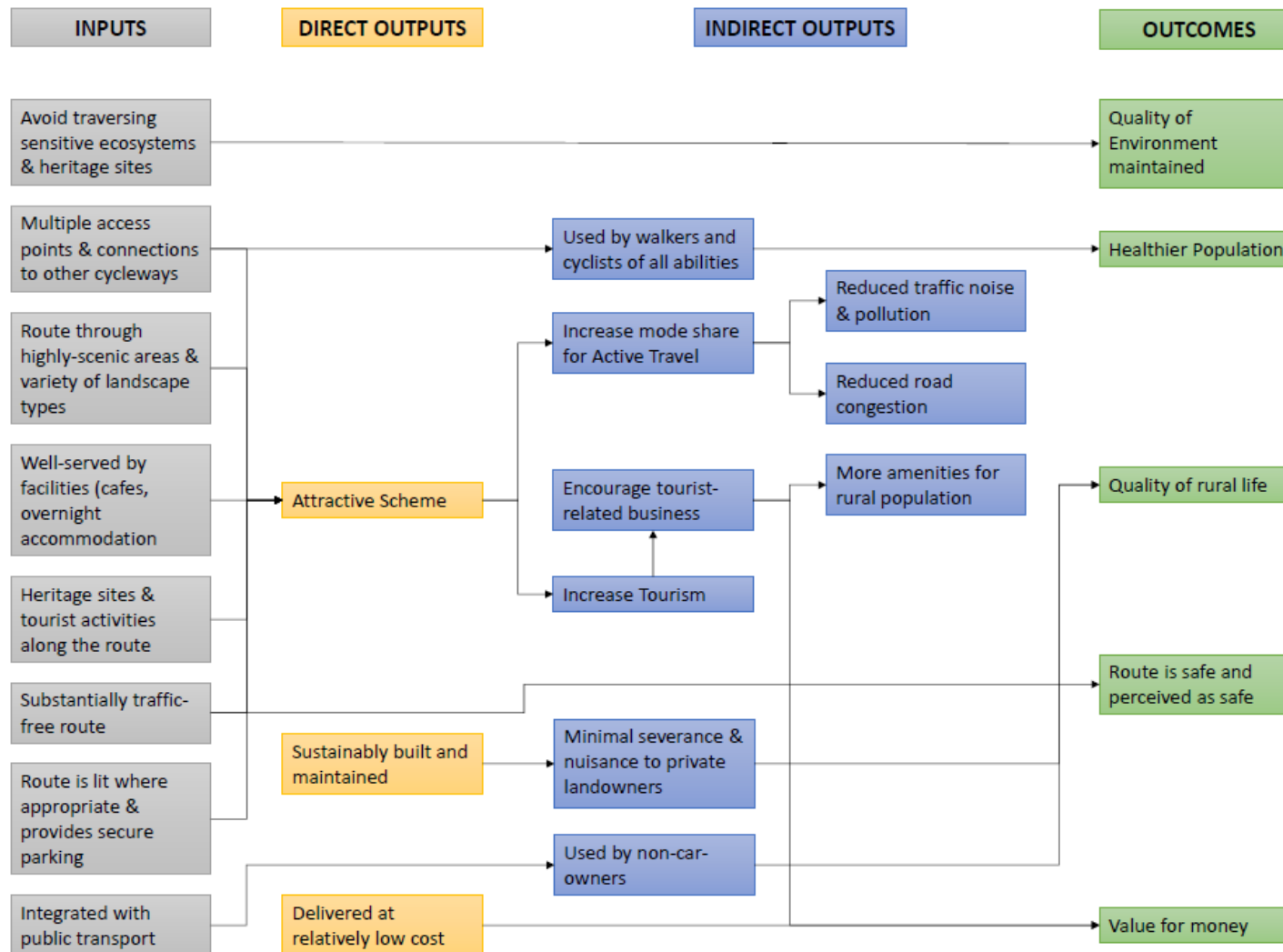


Figure 11.1: Draft Programme Logic Model

11.2 Key Performance Indicators

For each of the individual scheme objectives, suggested key performance indicators by which to measure the attainment of the objective are set out in **Table 11.1**.

Table 11-1: Key Performance Indicators

Heading	Objective	KPI
Economy	EC1 – To increase the economic contribution of tourism to the Irish economy, by increasing the numbers of international visitors to the area, by delivering a cycleway that is attractive by international standards	Failte Ireland regularly survey visitors from abroad. It is proposed to measure the numbers attracted by “piggybacking” on their existing survey programme. As the scheme is developed, together with forecasts of usage, a target KPI will be developed.
	EC2 - To create local employment opportunities and wealth through new and expanded enterprises.	Monitoring of numbers of businesses along the route corridor is proposed for this objective.
	EC3 - To deliver the Cycleway in a cost-effective manner and deliver real value for money.	The value for money of transport projects is generally measured in terms of the Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR). A BCR for the scheme will be determined at the various stages of the scheme development and will be a key factor in demonstrating that the scheme is worth building. It is proposed to determine the BCR after the scheme is constructed using actual scheme costs and observed usage figures to determine the scheme economic benefits in a cost benefit analysis. The target BCR will be closely related to the final estimated BCR prior to construction.
	EC4 - To encourage modal change to non-motorised travel modes, thereby reducing congestion and delivering travel time savings.	Traffic counters could be used to determine if modal shift is occurring.
Safety	S1 - To provide a walking and cycling route that is segregated from motorised traffic (recognising that it may be impractical to achieve full segregation over the entire route length, especially in more urban areas.)	As perceived safety is key to attracting users, rather than attempting to record all incidents and near misses, it is proposed to survey visitors about their perception of how safe the new route is and what, if any are the perceived risks.

	S2 - To provide a sense of security for Cycleway users, e.g., through provision of secure bike parking facilities and public lighting (where needed) or reducing isolation along the route.	
	S3 - To provide a high level of operational safety on the cycleway through high quality design, construction, and maintenance.	Measurement of this outcome will be ongoing post construction and during maintenance.
Physical activity	PA1 - To increase the number of commuters within the study area who walk or cycle to work or education.	Measurement of this outcome will be through existing Fáilte Ireland surveys.
	PA2 - To increase the number of people in Ireland who choose to take part in physically active outdoor recreation and leisure activities.	The extent to which the scheme attracts commuters will be determined via the Census question on usual mode of travel to work or education.
Environment	ENV1 - To minimise impact to the natural environment, especially habitat in ecologically sensitive areas.	The preferred route will have been chosen taking into account it's impact on the natural environment, and the extent to which it will minimise impacts where possible. It is important that the scheme delivered is successful in mitigating it's impacts and meeting the aims set out in the scheme appraisal.
	ENV2 - To impact to cultural heritage sites.	The preferred route will have been chosen taking into account it's impact on cultural heritage sites, and the extent to which it will minimise impacts where possible. It is important that the scheme delivered is successful in mitigating it's impacts and meeting the aims set out in the scheme appraisal.
	ENV3 - To increase public appreciation of the natural environment and cultural heritage, by encouraging people to experience the countryside	This will be determined through attitudinal surveys of users of the cycleway, combined with measurement of the number of users. These will determine how many people are making new trips to experience the countryside, how many additional trips are made and whether people's attitudes have changed as a result of the scheme.

	ENV4 - To minimise land holding severance and utilise public land.	The success of the cycleway in achieving this objective will be measured by attitudinal surveys of landowners along the route who have been affected by the scheme. These will identify what they perceive to be the damage due to the scheme and whether it is greater or less than they anticipated.
	ENV5 - To reduce air and noise pollution by getting people to cycle or walk rather than drive.	Measurement of this outcome will be through existing Fáilte Ireland surveys.
	ENV6 - To ensure that planning, construction, and operation of the Cycleway is carried out in a sustainable manner.	The preferred route will have been chosen taking into account it's impact on the natural environment, and the extent to which it will minimise impacts where possible. It is important that the scheme delivered is successful in mitigating it's impacts and meeting the aims set out in the scheme appraisal.
Accessibility and Social Inclusion	ASI1 - To be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities, by providing for low speed, family-oriented cycling activities, with multiple accesses to the route allowing use for long or short distances	The success of the Cycleway in achieving this objective will be measured by visitor surveys which will document the age range of users and the different lengths of Cycleway that they use during their visit.
	ASI2 - To benefit local communities through enhancing existing amenities and providing new linkages to adjacent town and village centres	This will be determined through attitudinal surveys of users of the cycleway, combined with measurement of the number of users in relation to linkages between towns and villages.
Integration	I1 - To link to other existing and proposed Cycleways within the area.	The numbers of other facilities which the Cycleway connects will be documented. The attitudinal surveys of visitors proposed for other objectives will also gather information on the number of users who have also used connected facilities.
	I2 - To be accessible to users arriving by public transport, including bus, rail, and existing or proposed passenger boat services.	The numbers of other facilities which the Cycleway connects will be documented. The attitudinal surveys of visitors proposed for other objectives will also gather information on the number of users who have also used connected facilities.
	I3 - To connect to other tourist activities or attractions within the area, such as historic and cultural heritage sites,	The numbers of other facilities which the Cycleway connects will be documented. The attitudinal surveys of visitors proposed for other objectives will also gather

	waterway activities and the Wild Atlantic Way.	information on the number of users who have also used connected facilities.
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The numbers of other facilities which the Cycleway connects will be documented. The attitudinal surveys of visitors proposed for other objectives will also gather information on the number of users who have also used connected facilities.

12 OUTLINE GOVERNANCE PLAN

12.1 Context

This section of the SAR details key authorities, project roles and responsibilities for project development and delivery. The Project Sponsor for the scheme is Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), and the Project Client is Westmeath County Council (WCC).

Key groups within the Project Management process are highlighted in the **Figure 12.1**.

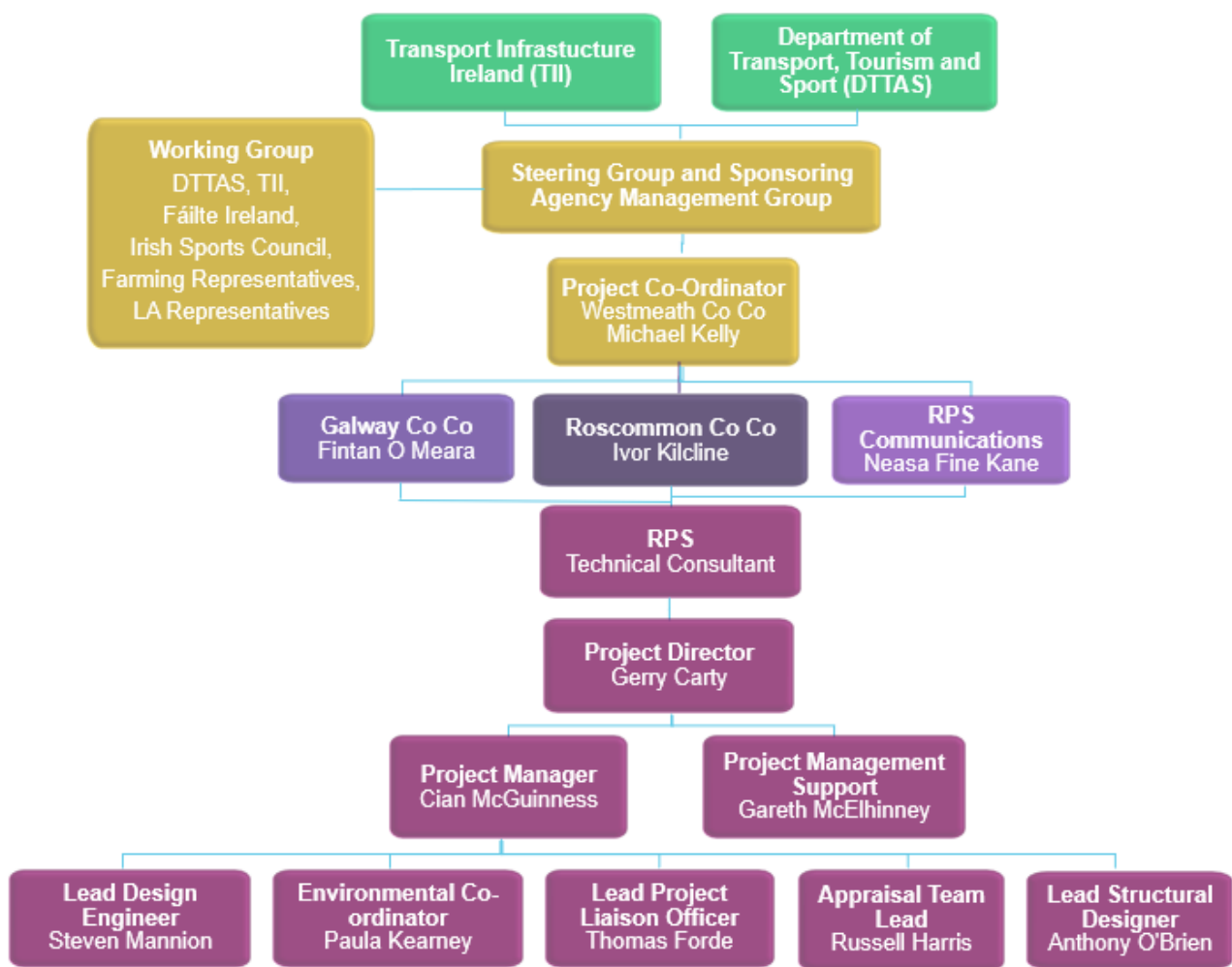


Figure 12.1: Project Management Structure

Further details of the governance process are summarised below and are available in more detail in the Project Execution Plan.

12.2 Sanctioning Authority

TII are the Sanctioning Authority and their functions on the project include the following:

- Evaluating the business cases and project proposals against strategic objectives;
- Determining the requirement for a Steering Group and, if required, clearly defining and communicating its role, composition, level of delegated authority, responsibilities and structure;
- Considering requests for changes in the Scope from the Sponsoring Agency;
- Monitoring the progress of project with emphasis on cost, programme, quality and impacts;
- Assessing Project reviews; and
- Making and informing of decisions in relation to project reviews in a timely manner.

12.3 Sponsoring Agency

Westmeath County Council are the Sponsoring Agency. They have overall responsibility for the proper appraisal, planning and management (including current expenditure) to ensure the project proceeds along the lines approved by the Sanctioning Authority. The Sponsoring Agency's functions include:

- Nominating and appointing a Project Coordinator;
- Managing the overall planning and delivery of the Project;
- Appointing a Project Supervisor Design Process (PSDP) and Project Supervisor Construction Stage (PSCS) as required under Health and Safety legislation;
- Obtaining approval from the Sanctioning Authority for the Project proposals and for any changes to Scope;
- Acting as the Contracting Authority to procure the planning, design and construction/implementation of the Project; and
- Assuming the role of Contracting Authority for Public Works Contracts and PPP Projects.

12.4 Working Group

The Working Group will include members of DTTAS, TII, Fáilte Ireland, Irish Sports Council, Farming Representatives and Local Authority Representatives.

The working group functions on the project as outlined in the Governments Greenway Strategy include:

- Agreeing the consultation process;
- Agreeing the factors to be considered when choosing a route;
- Agree a Code of Best Practice for National and Regional Greenways
- Agreeing on the level of ongoing maintenance and payment required;
- Developing mechanisms to minimise disruption and to ensure the smooth and timely delivery of the Cycleway project.

12.5 Project Coordinator

Michael Kelly of Westmeath County Council is the appointed Project Co-ordinator. He is responsible for the execution of decisions taken by the Sponsoring Agency regarding delivery, quality and budget. The Project Co-ordinator's duties include:

- Overall responsibility for the management, delivery and implementation of the Project;
- Supervising the PEP execution through the planning, design and construction phases;
- Checking all documentation produced for compliance with TII policies, guidelines and requirements in advance of submission to TII;
- Managing the procurement and appointment of Technical Advisors, Service Providers and Contractors, as required;
- Liaising with and providing status reports to the Sponsoring Agency, Steering Group and Stakeholders (as required) and ensuring the Project meets their needs; and
- Obtaining Sanctioning Authority approvals and other statutory approvals necessary to progress the Project.

12.6 Other Local Authorities

Galway County Council and Roscommon County Council form part of the Steering Group with Senior Executive representation to guide the project phased developments in accordance with applicable requirements and guidelines.

12.7 Technical Consultants

RPS Consulting Engineers are the Technical Consultants responsible for the production of design and documentation associated with the delivery of the Project along with all requirements as outlined in the Project Brief. RPS are responsible for completion of the following:

- Stage (i) – Phase 0/1 (Scope and Pre-Appraisal)
- Stage (ii) – Phase 2 (Options Selection)
- Stage (iii) – Phase 3 (Design & Environmental Assessment)
- Stage (iv) – Phase 4 (Statutory Procedures)

12.8 Project Controls and Assurances

At the end of each Project phase a Gate Review is required to move to the next phase. Gate Reviews will allow the Sponsoring Agency to review the project at key development stages and provide assurance to TII that the project is being delivered in accordance with the applicable approvals and conditions. The main purpose of each gate is to ensure that a Project has met certain requirements before it can proceed to the next phase.

At the end of each Phase a Gate Review Statement will be prepared confirming that the required documentary evidence has been issued to TII. The Sponsoring Agency will review documentary evidence submitted by RPS to confirm that the required level of project maturity has been reached for each phase. This confirmation will be endorsed by the Sponsoring Agency and submitted to TII along with a request to proceed to the next phase.

The Gate Review Statement at the end of each phase will be accompanied by the applicable finalised deliverables. **Figure 12.2** hereunder outlines the summary of phases, gates, and Approval Points for the project.

Project Phase	Gate at End of Phase	Sanctioning Authority Approval Points
Phase 0 Scope and Pre-Appraisal	Gate 0	Approval Point
Phase 1 Concept and Feasibility	Gate 1	
Phase 2 Options Selection	Gate 2	
Phase 3 Design and Environmental Evaluation	Gate 3	Approval Point
Phase 4 Statutory Processes	Gate 4	Approval Point

Figure 12.2: Phase, Gate, Sanctioning Authority Approval Points (PE-PMG-02042)

12.9 Project Management

The project will be delivered using the framework of the TII Project Management Guidelines 2019 and the Project Appraisal Guidelines (PAGs). The RPS Project Manager (PM) will prepare the Project Programme and Monthly Progress Reports. The Project Programme will identify the key deliverables required for each phase and set realistic targets for their completion. The PM will proactively manage delivery of the project. At the commencement of each stage, a schedule of deliverables will be produced and shared amongst the project team.

12.10 Approval Procedures

The project will be reviewed at key development stages and assurance provided to TII that the project is being delivered in accordance with the applicable approvals and conditions. This process will be aligned with the requirements within the following documents:

- Project Managers Manual for Major National Roads Projects (PE-PMG-02042)
- Project Management Guidelines (PE-PMG-02041)
- TII Project Appraisal Guidelines
- TII Cost Management Manual
- TII Construction Contract Administration Manual
- TII Environmental Assessment & Construction Guidelines
- TII Chargeability of Expenditure to National Road Grants

12.11 Cost, Risk and Value Management

The Cost, Value and Risk Management process for this scheme will be the responsibility of RPS and is to be aligned with the TII PMG and Cost Management Manual (CMM) to take account of key management guidelines. This process aims to add value, reduce risk (including obstacles and surprises) and exposure, while identifying opportunity and increasing the confidence of stakeholders in an effective manner.

12.12 Project Communication Strategy

A Project Communication Plan has been prepared and is included in the Project Execution Plan. This sets out proposals to inform stakeholders in a timely manner and to provide effective opportunities to participate in decision making procedures.

A number of public consultation events seeking submissions and observations in relation to the project from stakeholders will be held during the project. These are listed below:

- **PC1:** Study Area Public Consultation;
- **PC2:** Route Options Public Consultation;
- **PC3:** Preferred Route Corridor Public Consultation.
- **PC4:** Preferred Route Individual landowner meetings & Preferred Route Public Consultation.