



People will be able to cycle, walk, use a wheelchair or push the baby buggy along this dedicated new cycleway. Linkages with ongoing and future Active Travel Schemes will enable local people to travel to school, college and work, or simply to enjoy the outdoors.

Spring 2023

GALWAY TO ATHLONE CYCLEWAY PROJECT:

COMMUNITY UPDATE

Preferred Route Published

Since the project team published an emerging preferred corridor in December 2021, extensive studies and landowner engagement have been underway to identify a preferred route for the cycleway.

The preferred route starts near Ballyloughane Beach to the East of Galway City and then proceeds close to or through the following settlement areas: Oranmore, Rinville, Clarinbridge, Kilcolgan, Kinvara, Gort, Woodford, Portumna, Meelick, Clonfert, Ballinasloe, Shannonbridge, and Athlone Castle. It links places of interest, established tourism centres, public parks, and outdoor amenities.

Where feasible, the route has been amended to address identified issues whilst ensuring the continuity of the route, end to end.

The project team continues to engage with landowners along the preferred route. Meeting one-to-one is most beneficial for all parties as specific and personal issues can be discussed in confidence.

Contact the Project Team

Galway to Athlone Cycleway Project Office, Society Street, Ballinasloe, County Galway, H53 T320

Email: info@galwaytoathlonecycleway.com

Telephone: 091 509 267

Website: www.galwaytoathlonecycleway.com

Public Information Events in March 2023

Everybody is welcome to the upcoming Public Information Events to view the preferred route and meet the project team:

Oranmore

Oranmore Lodge Hotel
Tuesday 28th March @ 3-8pm

Gort

Lady Gregory Hotel
Wednesday 29th March @ 3-8pm

Portumna

Town Hall
Thursday 30th March @ 3-8pm

Ballinasloe

Shearwater Hotel
Friday 31st March @ 3-8pm



What is the Galway to Athlone Cycleway?

The Galway to Athlone Castle National Cycleway project will see the creation of a segregated cycling and walking route linking Ballyloughane Beach in Galway City to Athlone Castle, where it will connect to the existing Athlone to Dublin Cycleway.

The Cycleway will be Ireland's first dedicated inter-city route for cyclists and walkers. Stretching across the country from Galway to Dublin, the Cycleway will be a world class amenity for families, communities and tourists to enjoy.

To identify the preferred route, a series of project objectives were set, including the '5S' criteria set out in the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, published by the Government of Ireland in 2018. The '5S' criteria outline that Greenways should be Scenic, Sustainable, Strategic, Segregated, and with lots to See and do.



The popularity of recently opened Greenways throughout Ireland demonstrates the many benefits that they bring to rural areas. Greenways are providing wonderful new experiences of Ireland's beautiful countryside for both visitors and local people alike. Our network of Greenways contributes to Ireland's health and wellbeing, enhances local communities with opportunities for new and existing businesses, strengthening regional economies and offering an alternative means for tourists and locals to access a hidden Ireland.

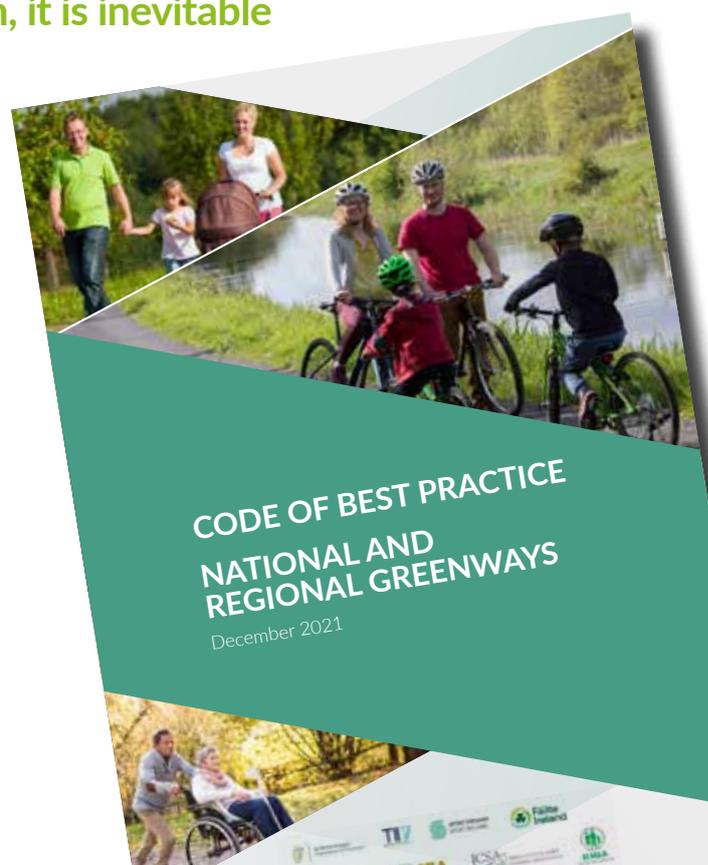
“During the pandemic we've all realised how important it is to get out into nature on foot, by bike or on a wheelchair or mobility device, and to find safe places to do so”, says Eamon Ryan, T.D. Minister for Transport.

Code of Best Practice for Landowner Engagement

While we strive to route much of the proposed Galway to Athlone Cycleway on State-owned lands, due to its length, it is inevitable that acquisitions of private land will be necessary to complete the project.

A Code of Best Practice for National and Regional Greenways has been agreed with the main farming organisations and published by the Government. This is to ensure that landowners are treated respectfully and fairly at all stages including construction and operation. The Code of Best Practice includes a payment mechanism to address early engagement and cooperation in an effort to agree upon a route that minimises the impact on respective farm/property holdings and to enter into Voluntary Land Acquisition Agreements where possible. The Code of Best Practice is available from the Galway to Athlone Cycleway Project Office in Ballinasloe, in both Irish and English.

It is also available to download at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6b6a0-code-of-best-practice-for-national-and-regional-greenways/>



Landowner Engagement is a Top Priority

Despite the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus Covid-19 outbreak, consultations on the project, identifying options and selecting the preferred route have been undertaken both virtually and in-person.

The project team includes dedicated project liaison officers who have been engaging directly with landowners since 2021. They have undertaken well over 1,800 consultations (either face-to-face meetings or telephone calls) with landowners since May 2021.

This engagement with landowners has informed the identification of a preferred route that is over 205km in length. The preferred route starts near Ballyloughane Beach to the East of Galway City and then proceeds close to or through the following settlement areas: Oranmore, Rinville, Clarinbridge, Kilcolgan, Kinvara, Gort, Woodford, Portumna, Meelick, Clonfert, Ballinasloe, Shannonbridge, and Athlone Castle. It links places of interest, established tourism centres, public parks, and outdoor amenities.

Approximately 490 potentially impacted private landowners have been identified along the preferred route and extensive engagement is on-going. Where landowners have engaged with this process, they have been listened to and their thoughts and potential

issues identified. Where feasible, the route has been amended to address identified issues whilst ensuring the continuity of the route, end to end.

Where possible, the preferred route is on State-owned lands including Coillte, Bord na Móna, ESB and Local Authority lands. This is to minimise the need for voluntary land acquisition of private landholdings.

We will continue to engage with landowners along the preferred route to discuss their specific issues in confidence, and together identify possible solutions.

Providing maps to landowners is part of the process of ongoing engagement and facilitates informed discussions with landowners willing to engage with the consultation process; and does not imply acceptance or agreement of the preferred route on lands.



Public Consultation Underway Since the Start

There has been active engagement with communities, individuals, businesses and landowners throughout the project study area. Since the project commenced in 2020, three focused public consultations have been held.

The project team understand that some landowners would prefer to meet them with one or two direct neighbours. The project team are willing to facilitate these meetings in small groups to address specific concerns of those impacted landowners.

Three focused periods of non-statutory public consultation have been held so far:

August 2020: Study Area public consultation

January - February 2021:
Five Route Corridor Options

December 2021 - January 2022:
Emerging Preferred Route Corridor



The Galway to Athlone Cycleway: a world-class amenity to benefit local communities

- Dedicated cycling and walking route for local people – including wheelchairs, babies in buggies, bicycles and pedestrians.
- Safer route to cycle and walk to school, college, work, and for leisure.
- Improved health and wellbeing.
- More sustainable travel options, to help tackle climate change.
- Make Counties Galway, Clare, Offaly, Roscommon and Westmeath more attractive for international activity-based tourism.
- Boosts local jobs and local economies in the West of Ireland and the Midlands.



The project team have undertaken several technical studies and published a number of reports outlining its findings – all reports are available on the project website.

Next Steps

- Further public information events will be held during March 2023.
- To finalise the preferred route for the proposed cycleway, the project team will continue to engage with landowners over the coming weeks and months.
- Further design and environmental evaluation will continue, alongside landowner and community engagement.
- A preliminary design of the proposed Galway to Athlone Cycleway scheme will be prepared, and more precise land acquisition requirements determined. This will allow a clearer picture to emerge by identifying specific characteristics such as vertical and horizontal alignments.

The Greenway will typically be 8 metres wide but this may vary in width, depending on topography and drainage requirements. The project liaison officers will be available during this phase to discuss issues relating to the proposed Greenway scheme and potential issues of concern with individual property owners.
- A planning application will be prepared and it is intended to lodge the application with An Bord Pleanála in 2024.
- An Bord Pleanála are likely to hold an Oral Hearing, before it makes its decision on the proposed cycleway.
- If approved by An Bord Pleanála, the project will then move to Phase 5: Enabling and Procurement of a contractor for the construction phase.

