

Blueway Feasibility Study along the Lower Bann from Newferry (West) to Toomebridge.



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Summary

The basis of this proposal is to carry out a feasibility study for the development of an intended Blueway trail between Newferry (west) and Toome. The proposal will also refer to the significant sites in the Mid Ulster Council area namely, Lough Beg and Church Island, Newferry West, Hutchinson's Quay and Portna. This will build on an already developed stage one trail along the Lower Bann from Portglenone to Newferry which was completed in 2019. Mid Ulster District Council are also the main client for this proposal and are working in collaboration with Waterways Ireland.

The proposed Blueway will not only form part of a full multi-use trail running alongside part of the river Bann but will also act as a linkage between recreational hubs, and villages and provide a real tourism asset for the Mid Ulster District area.

This study attempts to provide a variety of trail options, together with a preferred option, based on the limitations and barriers that exist along the shoreline. These barriers and limitations include potential quick shoreline flooding, access permissions from landowners, and the tight statutory planning and environmental regulation because of strict European and local environmental legislation.

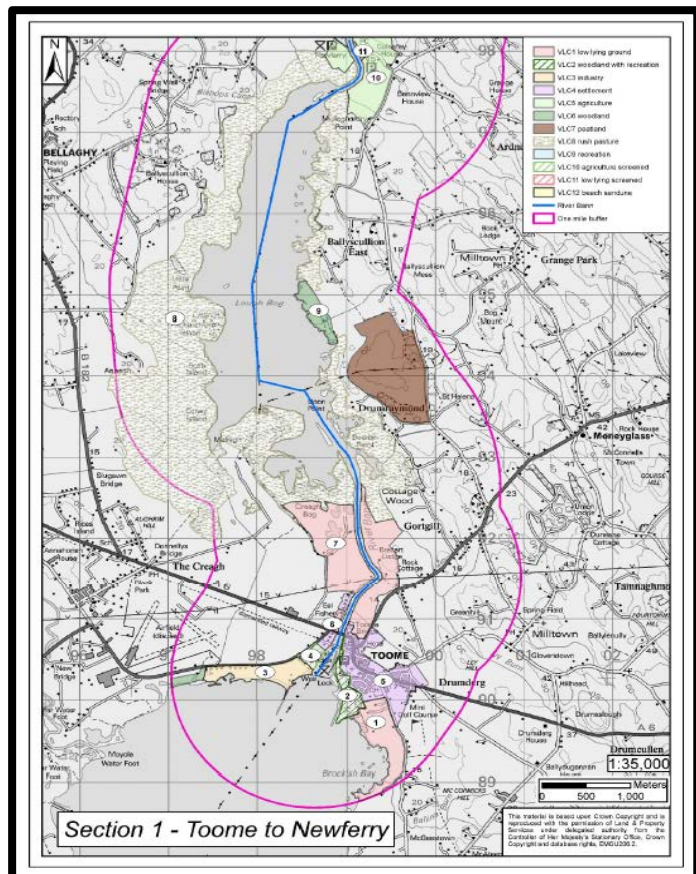
It is hoped that this new proposed trail will link in with other and potential trails along the whole of the Bann to create a full 60 km Blueway with potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas along its length.

Chapter 1: Context

Site Description

The types of landscape that are to be found in this study area are both varied and unique. They include types such as woodland, agricultural, peatland, and rush pasture. The rush pasture around the main shoreline of Lough Beg has a particularly high environmental value and sensitivity due to their unique ecosystem. The Lough itself is less than 2m deep and because it floods in winter it provides a particularly important habitat for wintering

Figure 1: Different Types of Landscape



wildfowl and then in the spring, as the levels decrease, the same habitat supports large numbers of breeding waders (redshank, lapwing, curlew, snipe.) Breeding populations of snipe, redshank and curlew are among the highest in Northern Ireland. In spring and autumn Lough Beg is important for migrating birds to rest and feed on their way through. The area is also home to large areas of cut-over raised bogs such as Culnafay Bog and its associated aquatic vegetation form part of the internationally important Lough Neagh Ramsar site. The wet grasslands and rush

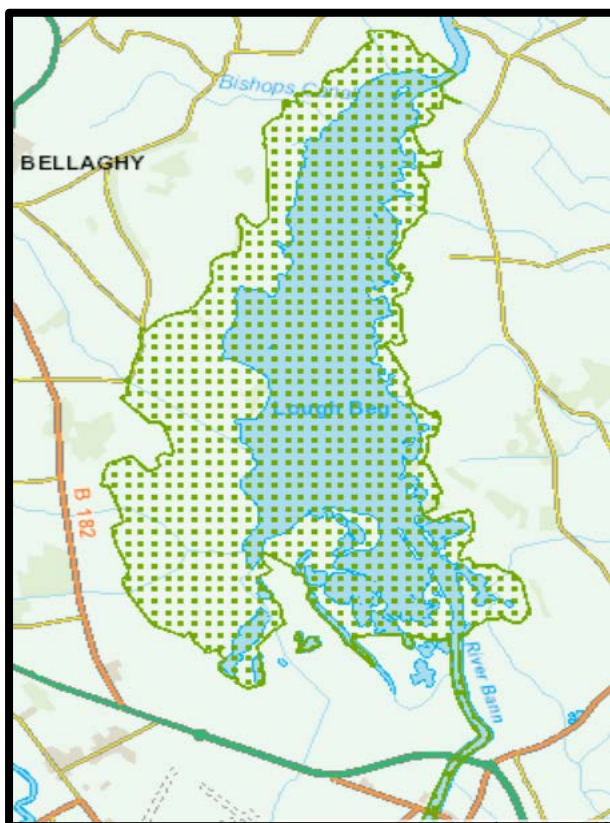
pasture also contain rare vascular plant assemblage including Irish ladies' tresses. Northern small reed, and water wort, pennyroyal,

Chapter 2: Environmental Designations

Lough Beg which is in the main central landscape type within the study area has several different and important designations associated with it, including local, UK and European. It is linked and taken to be part of the wider Lough Neagh designations. These include, RAMSAR, Special Protected Area (SPA) and an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). It also holds some satellite ASSI designations due earth science quality and other habitat or species importance. These will be identified later.

Designation Boundaries and Shoreline Focus

Figure 2 SPA Area



The Lough Beg SPA boundary takes in the main waterbody of the lough together with all adjoining natural and semi-natural habitat of conservation significance. All islands within the lough are also included. Adjoining agriculturally improved areas utilised by swans are not included but their importance is significant and these are identified separately. The SPA boundary is based on the ASSI boundary although there are some

small variations around the shoreline. The Ramsar designations round the shoreline of the Lough also follows the ASSI boundary except for the southern part of the Lough where it extends.

Special Protected Area

Under Article 4.1 of EC Directive 79/409, Lough Beg qualifies as Natura 2000 and Special Protected Area site by regularly supporting whooper swans and under Article 4.1 by regularly supporting nationally important numbers of breeding common tern.

Under Article 4.2 of the Directive, it qualifies as a Natura 2000 site along with Lough Neagh as a wetland of international importance by regularly supporting a variety of species of waterfowl in winter including Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Scaup, And Coot.

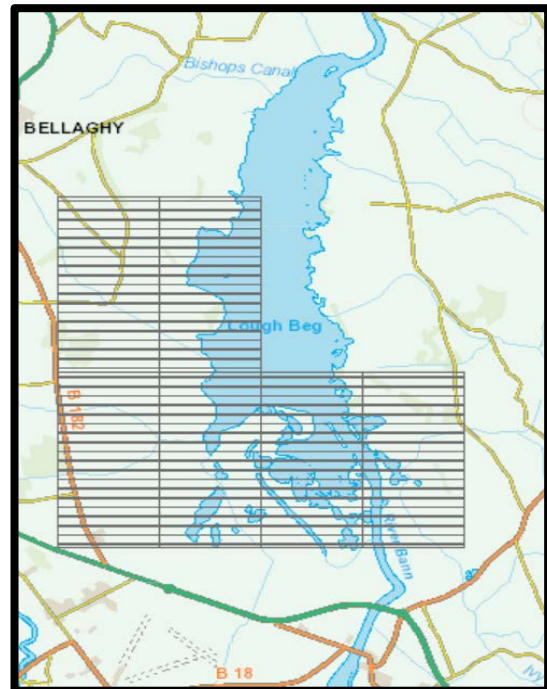
Lough Beg is also notable for supporting an important assemblage of breeding birds, some species which occur in nationally important numbers - great-crested grebe, gadwall, pochard, tufted duck, snipe, redshank common include, Lesser Black-Backed Gull and Black-Headed Gull. Other Important Breeding Wetland Species Include Shelduck, Teal, Shoveler, Lapwing and Curlew.

ASSI Features

The ASSI designation of Lough Beg is different from the SPA designation in that it identifies important habitats as well as species and it is based on UK and not EU law. Furthermore, species features are not just confined to birds but include fish, invertebrates, and flora.

The Lough Beg site is designated under the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Article 28(2) and contains the main features detailed below. A more detailed view on how the features should be managed is provided in the NIEA document “Views about Management”. This is detailed in Appendix 1 The area identified in the study includes a large area of wet grassland which is home to an important amount of breeding wader birds such as Lapwing, Curlew, Redshank and Curlew. The RSPB are working in the area to help revive these priority species bird. These breeding bird areas can be seen in figure three. The main species and habitats include:

Figure 3 Lough Beg Breeding



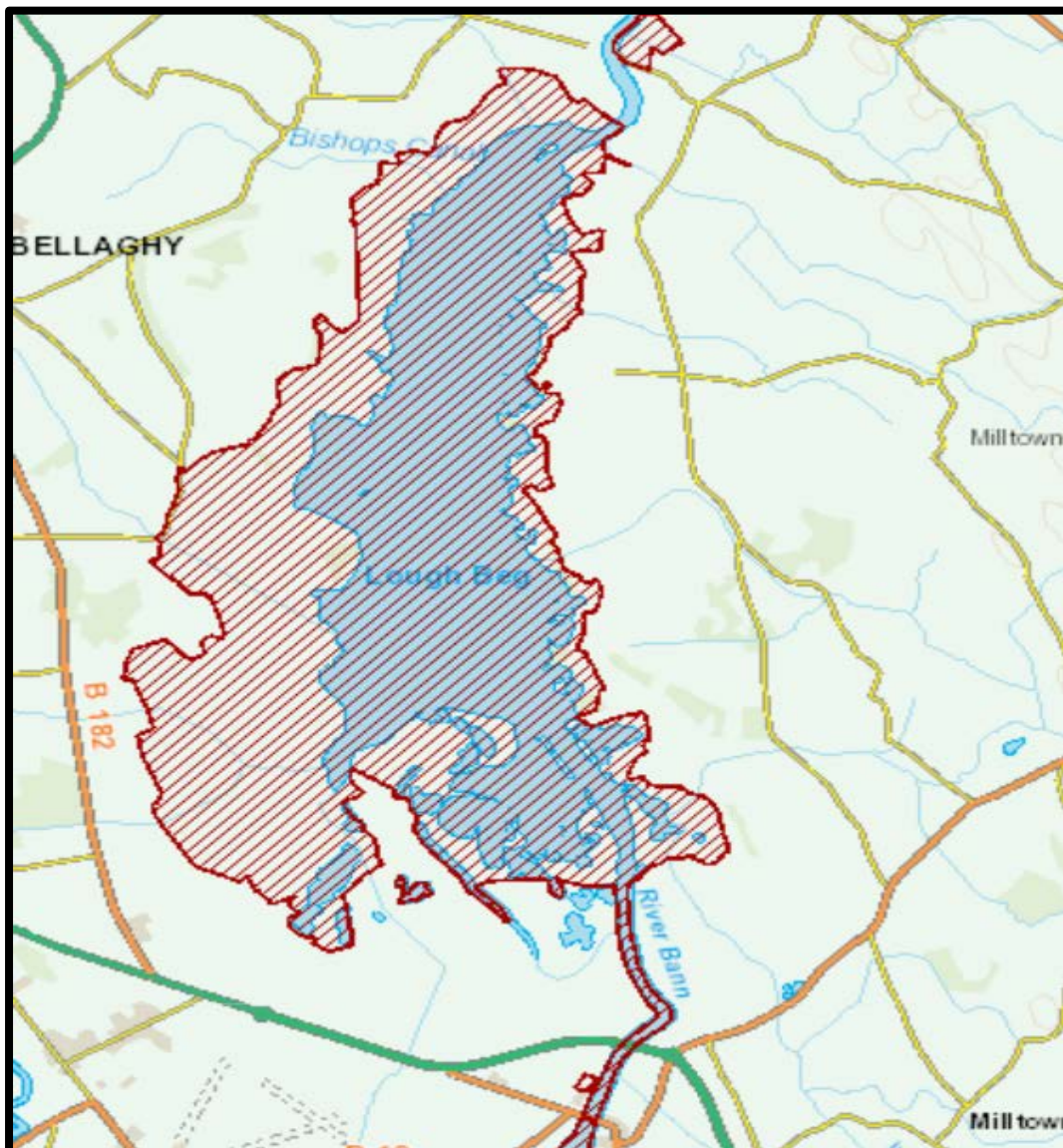
1) Habitat

- Species rich wet grassland
- Wet woodland
- Fen and Swamp

2) Species

- Wintering Water birds
- Breeding Water Bird
- Breeding Common Tern
- Breeding Waders
- Fish Assemblage
- Rare Plants

Figure 4 Lough Beg ASSI Boundary



Whooper Swans

A large amount of whooper swan rest and feed in the Loughs Neagh/Beg area over winter. These iconic birds migrate from Iceland in mid-October, with swans wintering at the same sites each year. They feed predominantly on improved or wet grassland and arable stubbles. The Swan's return migration takes place in March and April.

The birds are a feature of the Special Protected Area and are an Amber-listed species with more than 20 per cent of the UK population wintering in Northern Ireland.

Because they feed almost in the same area this could come into conflict with any possible trail development. Their presence in winter also minimises the period in which any potential work could be carried out. The map below indicates where the feeding areas are identified.

Figure 5 Whooper Swan Feeding Areas



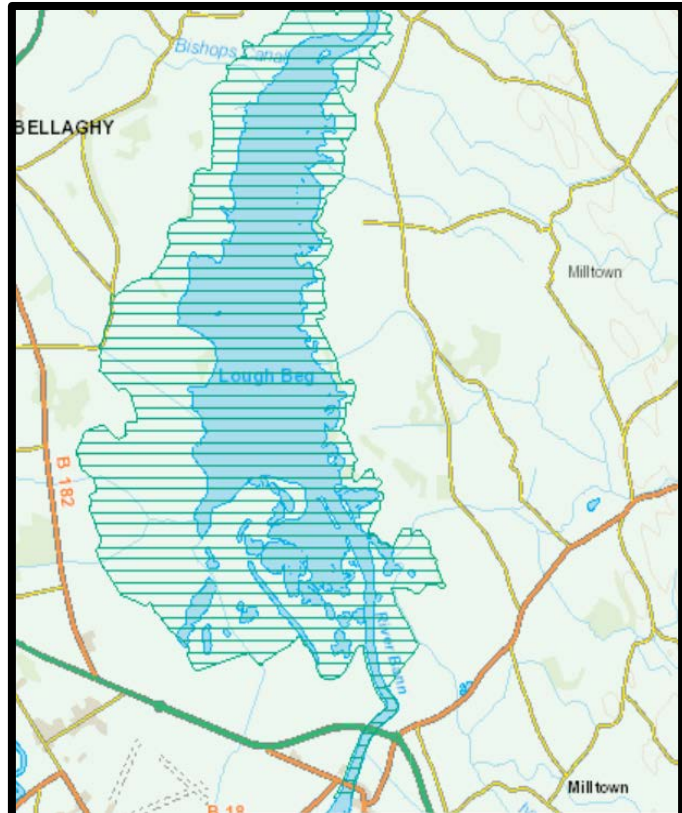
Ramsar

Lough Beg and Lough Neagh are Ramsar sites which means they are designated under the terms of the Ramsar Convention. The Convention covers all aspects of wetland conservation and 'wise use' and has three main 'pillars' of activity:

- The designation of wetlands of international importance as Ramsar sites.
- The promotion of the wise use of all wetlands in the territory of each country.
- International co-operation with other countries to further the wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Figure 6 Ramsar area

Lough Beg qualifies under the Ramsar convention by a few criteria but mainly because it is a particularly good representative example of natural or near-natural wetlands and supports an appreciable assemblage of rare, vulnerable, or endangered species or sub-species of plant or animal. As with the ASSI and SPA designation RAMSAR could impinge on the direction of any Blueway trail.

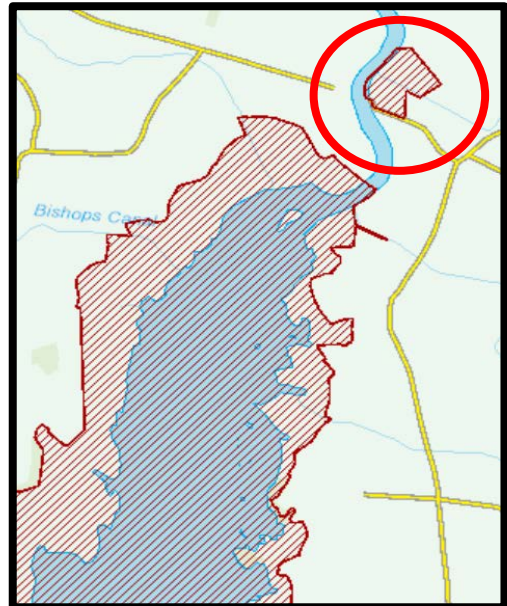


Other Close by ASSI,s

Culnafay ASSI

Figure 7 Culnafay ASSI Map

Culnafay ASSI is an area of special scientific interest because of its deposits of diatomite. Diatomite consists of accumulated diatom frustules with differing amounts of clay, silt, sand, and peat.



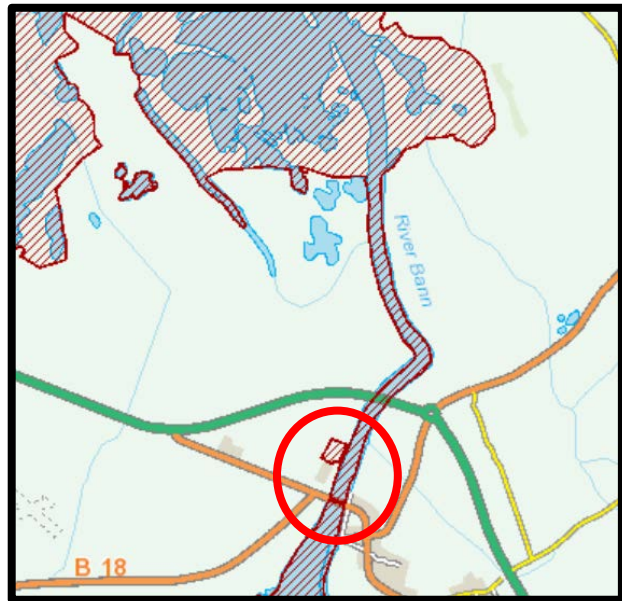
The diatomite which was extensively mined and extracted is also known as Bann clay. At Culnafay, as in much of the Bann valley, the diatomite was probably deposited in an elongated lake, and could contain remains or evidence of Mesolithic occupation sites. In relation to the potential Blueway trail the site is on the other side of the Bann and should not impinge on any development

Toome ASSI

The area is of special scientific interest because of its diatomite deposits as at Culnafay. Past commercial exploitation in the Lough Neagh basin has reduced the area of intact material to a small site like these.

At Toome, the diatomite forms part *Figure 8 Toome ASSI*

of the lowest lake terrace of Lough Neagh and is up to 2m above the present lough level. This site contains the longest total sequence of diatomite and associated deposits (3-4m thick in places) encountered in a recent survey of the remaining diatomite deposits of the Bann valley. This remaining site is amongst the



most important deposits of freshwater diatomite in the British Isles and are unique when considered with the associated materials. Because of this rare site again caution would be needed if developing a trail through this area or an alternative way around it could be identified

Built Heritage

There are several important buildings and historical monument sites scattered throughout the proposed study area. Most of these are on the west side of Lough Beg and the river Bann. The most important scheduled site is without doubt Church Island. This is marked red on the map.

The Large green area identified on North of the map is Ballyscullion House and Domain. The house is listed. The important Church Island site consists of a church and graveyard standing on the highest part of the island. The graveyard is enclosed by a stone wall and the church is dated late medieval but sits on an earlier church. There is also a late 18th century

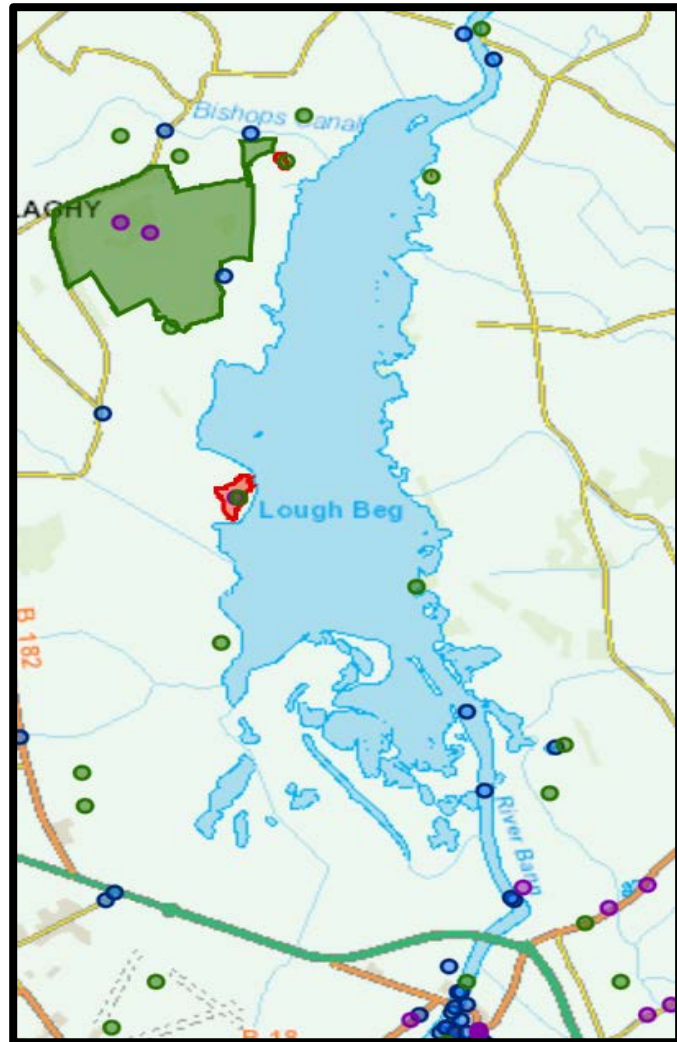
tower/folly built on the site. The site is of local cultural importance with pray and pilgrimage visits by local people carried out in the summer when the land is dry enough to be walked to.

Toome Village and the nearby area also has a high concentration of industrial heritage ranging from old

Figure 9 Built Heritage Sites

diatomite processing buildings to important historic fishing quays and the Lough Neagh Eel Co-operative. Mid Ulster Council have been promoting and linking many of the sites to the places and people mentioned in poetry of Seamus Heaney. This “Openground” trail also offers the opportunity for visitors to link with the Seamus Heaney Home Place. The potential Seamus Heaney sites are located at:

- Lough Neagh
- Toome and Toomebridge
- Lough Neagh Eel factory
- The Lower River Bann, as it flows into Lough Beg
- Church Island on Lough Beg
- The Strand at Lough Beg (west side)



Chapter 3: Strategic fit and Regulatory Framework

Planning

The development of a Blueway trail within the defined the study area should give due consideration to the wider strategic context and in particular the regulations of the planning system, as these can place strong limitations of any actual physical development. Any trail development should also fit and match the main aims and objectives of associated strategic documents such as tourism plans or other relevant existing studies

It is important to note that the Strategic context to any proposed development on the whole of the Bann has already been explained and detailed in the “Lower Bann Corridor Study Volume 1 and 2 2017” and it is not the intention of this document repeat this exercise. However, it did highlight several important strategic documents and programmes which should be referred to in this study. The important and relevant strategic and planning programmes include:

- Programme for Government
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) - Planning for Sustainable Development, September 2015
- Regional Development Strategy, 2035 (prepared by Department for Infrastructure¹¹)
- Planning Policy Statements on a wide range of planning related topics (prepared by Department of the Environment)

- Local Development Plans for new district areas (when they come into being).

The Programme for Government, Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) and the Regional Development Strategy, 2035 whilst important for setting context are somewhat distant from the real regulatory framework needed to assist with the development of tBlueway trails on the ground. On the other hand, the Planning Policy Statement, Local Development Plans and Village Plans provide a much more practical tool to help with the development of projects such as an activity trail and these will now be examined in more detail.

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

Planning Policy Statements are important in that they set out the policies on land-use planning in Northern Ireland and have a strong influence on the development of the Local Plan. The main PPS, s that are relevant to this proposal include:

- PPS 2: Natural Heritage - specifically related to environmental designations
- PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development – development in the countryside, should benefit economic activity while protecting or enhancing the environment
- PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage – Identified the importance of landscape quality or buildings and monuments of local significance are therefore worthy of protection
- PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation – where Policy OS 6 will permit the development of facilities ancillary to water sports

adjacent to inland lakes, reservoirs, and waterways where a number of criteria are met (as specified in the document)

- PPS 16: Tourism – gives guidance on the development of tourist accommodation

However, while the PPSs support economic tourism and recreational development, outdoor recreation, and tourism, they also set policy for landscapes and habitats and buildings that need protection and set the agenda for what is included in the Local development Plan.

Local Development Plans

Mid Ulster Community Plan

The Council's Community Plan seeks to bring about the conditions that will enable citizens to live in a "welcoming place where people are content, healthy and safe; educated and skilled; where the economy is thriving; the environment and heritage are sustained; and where public services excel". The plan has been produced in partnership with statutory partners including Tourism NI. The proposal fits with Theme 1 Economic Growth though improving the attractiveness of the area as a tourism destination, capitalising on the tourist assets of activity and heritage. An extension of this is reflected in the plans associated supporting document, the Mid Ulster Tourism Strategy, which has a core objective of getting more people to visit and stay overnight in the District. Critically, the project will maximise tourism investment and employment concentrating on Mid Ulster strategic tourism themes of Activity and Heritage. The project will also contribute to Theme 2 Infrastructure by increasing access to and

development of the natural heritage assets at Newferry, Lough Beg, Toome village (west) and Lough Neagh.

Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019

The project fits with Mid Ulster District Council's corporate plan 2015 – 2019 particularly through the theme of “Creating Growth” which identifies support for rural communities and the regeneration of towns and villages. The purpose of this theme is to promote the towns and villages of Mid Ulster as a good place to shop, visit, invest, and live in. Further priorities include:

- Forming and encouraging collaborative partnerships to deliver positive outcomes for the people and the district.
- Create and build a sense of civic pride in towns and villages across Mid Ulster Connecting communities and forming collaborative partnerships through community planning.
- Maximise our natural & built attractions & facilities, building collaborative partnerships & strategic alliances.

The project is consistent with facilitating regeneration of rural villages, in this case Bellaghy, Castledawson and Toome and the desire of council that rural villages act as an economic and service hub for their rural hinterland.

Mid Ulster Economic Development Plan 2015–2020

The Mid Ulster Economic Development Plan 2015 – 2020 sets out Mid Ulster District Council's key priorities for growing the local economy over five years and explains how we aim to achieve them. Identified themes for growth include:

- Enabling Economic Growth/Sectoral Diversification
- Enabling Employability and Skills
- Enabling Town and Village Regeneration
- Enabling Infrastructure and Connectivity

Theme 3 aligns to the key priorities of the Rural Development Programme and the Village Renewal Scheme. Community Planning in Mid Ulster District Council has outlined its vision encompassing working together, taking the long-term view, and tackling difficult issues such as balanced growth and development; community cohesion and safety, disadvantage, poverty, regeneration; sustainability; and well-being.

The Plan has identified 15 outcomes to be achieved in Mid Ulster the life of the plan. This project supports the following specific outcome – “Our towns and villages are vibrant and competitive”. The project uses disadvantage as its focus in addition to the regeneration and renewal themes and this we believe is innovative. It is a project that is embedded in a bottom-up approach and is a true partnership between civic leaders and community, from development of the project through to delivery and management. The project will not only seek to improve the infrastructure

on the ground but create groundwork for the newly implemented Community Plan. A result of this joined –up approach, the community groups will be geared up for exploiting the potential of the Community Plan in a way which will impact on their local communities in terms of increased socio -economic benefit. The development of a quality walking and cycling product between Newferry and Toome will provide a quality off-road access. This coupled with way-marking and interpretation will enable visitors and locals to explore the shoreline and learn about its ecology.

Mid Ulster District Council - Our plan to develop tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021

The Mid Ulster Tourism Strategy and Action Plan provide a framework to guide destination development, planning, management, and marketing over the period 2016 - 2021. The strategy recognises that tourism performance is largely based on rural and outdoor activities and tied into the area's natural attributes and the region is a developing destination that in recent years has not fulfilled its potential to contribute to economic growth.

Lough Neagh and its Waterways Destination Management Plan

The Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 (DETI) provides the strategic direction and targets for Northern Ireland tourism and sets out a range of priorities which fall under four key themes – People, Product and Places, Promotion and Partnership. The aim is to provide a vision for the development of Northern Ireland's tourism experience to the year 2020 and an action plan to deliver it. At the core of the strategy is the intention to grow income from visitor numbers. As part of the delivery of the

strategy, Tourism NI aimed to support tourism stakeholders in local regions throughout Northern Ireland in the production and delivery of “Destination Development Plans”. The Lough Neagh and its Waterways Destination Management Plan aims to advance the tourism product within the destination area and is the blueprint to drive the tourism experience in the region. The Lough Neagh Partnership, lead body in this destination, aims to ensure that the tourism and leisure potential of the Lough is maximised. Lough Neagh’s main tourism strength lies in its diversity of water-based sports and activities which is a focal point for tourism in the area. The development of a new Blueway connecting the Lower Bann with Lough Neagh via Lough Beg will contribute significantly to this through the provision of infrastructure that contributes to attracting those interested in ‘slow adventure’ and engagement with local heritage such as canoeing, walking, and cycling on a destination focused approach.

Mid Ulster Tourism Plan

The Mid Ulster Tourism Strategy and Action Plan was drawn up by Mid Ulster Council in 2016 and provides a framework to guide destination development, planning, management, and marketing over the period 2016 - 2021. The strategy recognises that tourism performance is largely based on rural and outdoor activities and tied into the area’s natural attributes and the region is a developing destination that in recent years has not fulfilled its potential to contribute to economic growth.

It identified several important tourism issues in relation to Mid Ulster and a number of these are specifically relevant to the Blue -way study area. These include:

- The poor visibility of Mid Ulster's natural heritage, outdoor activity, and historic and archaeological heritage
- Lough Neagh and its Waterways suffers from a lack of developed product, with difficult access to the water and a complex shared decision making amongst 5 local authorities.

Equally several important opportunities were identified and more importantly, opportunities that support the development of trails. Linkages to the heritage of the area, the importance of landscape and demand for more outdoor recreational activity were highlighted and include:

- The development of the Seamus Heaney tourism product and experience associated with the new Seamus Heaney Homeplace in Bellaghy has provided a strong new heritage experience very close to the study area and will closely link with the Blueway
- The very high concentration of Neolithic, and Bronze age sites across Mid Ulster, offer a unique tourism and the study area contains a significant amount of built heritage sites. The new Blueway should include as far as possible access to important heritage monuments and sites.
- Outdoor tourism sites and experiences, such as Davagh Forest Mountain bike track and the stage 1 Blueway development are already in place, and this suggests that the outdoor tourism product can be exploited further right across the area.
- The Seamus Heaney Trail development offers exciting opportunities to integrate tourism in the landscape.

In conclusion the strategy identifies three main strategic pillars on which the Blueway Trail can link into and these should be duly recognized and give priority in relation to the development of any the new stage 2 Blueway trail. These include

- Seamus Heaney Centre
- Archaeological sites, history, and heritage
- Outdoor Recreational Activities such as walking and cycling.

Waterways Ireland Lower Bann Corridor Study

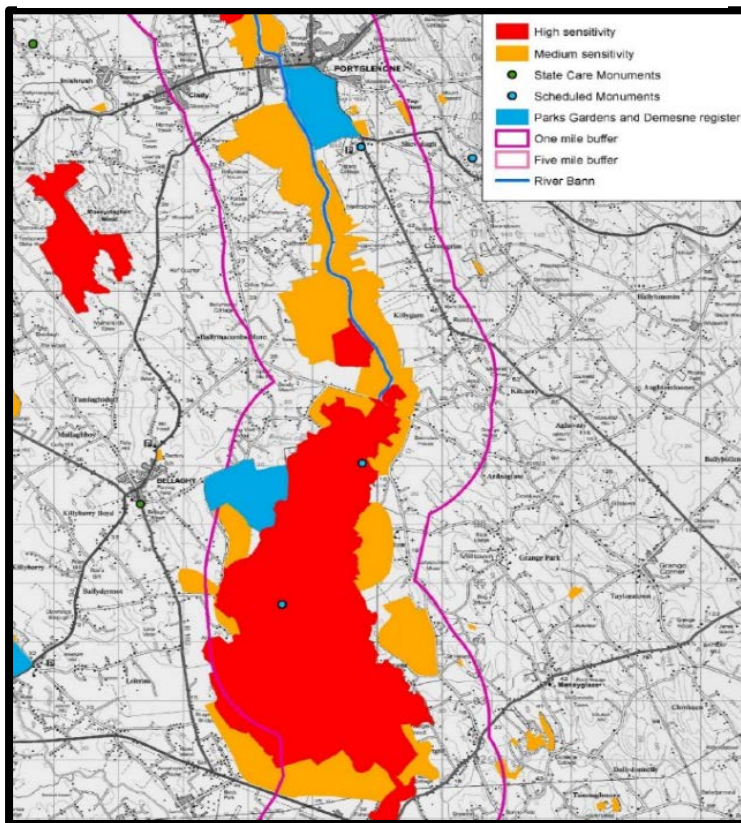
The Lower Bann Corridor study was commissioned by Waterways Ireland and had the official title of “Recreational Tourism and Commercial Product Identification Study for the Lower Bann. The main aims of the study are to identify commercial tourism products and opportunities along the whole of the Bann corridor, identify existing users and future tourism development sites for product development together with potential sources of funding.

The document is important for the purposes of this study in that it identified sensitivities with regards to natural and built heritage sensitivities and provides recommendations and protocols which should be applied to the development of any future recreational tourism projects. These should be equally applied to the development of any Blueway Trail development within the confines of this study area.

- Any developments proposed located where habitats have important EU designations should show a strategic need for development

- Any developments proposed to be located where habitats designated as being of importance at a national or local level, or sites where species of national importance are known, should carefully consider the reasons for designation of the site and reflect this in the proposal.
- Where possible, proposed developments should be in areas where existing settlement recreational development has taken place, to minimise habitat disturbance
- Habitats should not be fragmented, and where possible, development should seek to further enhance the natural riverine environment within which they are proposed to be sited
- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) should be sought from the department where development is proposed within the vicinity of a scheduled site
- Historic parks, gardens, and demesnes by their nature, are a designed landscape and represent different development challenges to that of the natural landscape. Given that the majority are privately owned, effective partnership working will be required to take forward any proposed developments at these sites
- Enhancing visitor numbers to heritage sites (archaeological or environmental) can bring about unpredicted damage to them. The relevant European Conventions and other International Charters that inform heritage work should be adhered to when considering or completing development work

Figure 10 Landscape Sensitivity Map



Newferry to Toome which can be seen here on this page.

Together with these protocols, the Waterways Ireland Study also provides prepared Landscape and Environmental Sensitivities maps for the whole of the river providing a full overview of the sensitivity of the landscape to development in relation to the Lower Bann. A map was prepared for the area from

Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland Promotion Strategy

In order to achieve the vision outlined in the Department for Economy's Draft Tourism Strategy to 2020, Tourism NI has placed a focus on moving from a tourism sector which emphasises the attributes of the landscape or the standalone infrastructure assets on offer, to one which focuses on the emotions, feelings and sensations that visitors will have on their journey, the stories they will learn and the connections they will make i.e. experiential tourism.

To do this, Tourism NI has developed a set of five core experience themes that are unique and authentic to Northern Ireland. Of these themes the

Blueway trail from Toome to Newferry has the potential to contribute to the 'Unique Outdoors' core experience theme.

Tourism Ireland and Tourism NI have also developed a segmented approach to marketing and promoting tourism products. This focusses on people's preferences and motivations looking at why people take holidays and what they want to do. The main segments that could relate to a Blue Ways Trail would include the "Culturally Curious" and the "Great Escapers"

Chapter 4: Existing Products

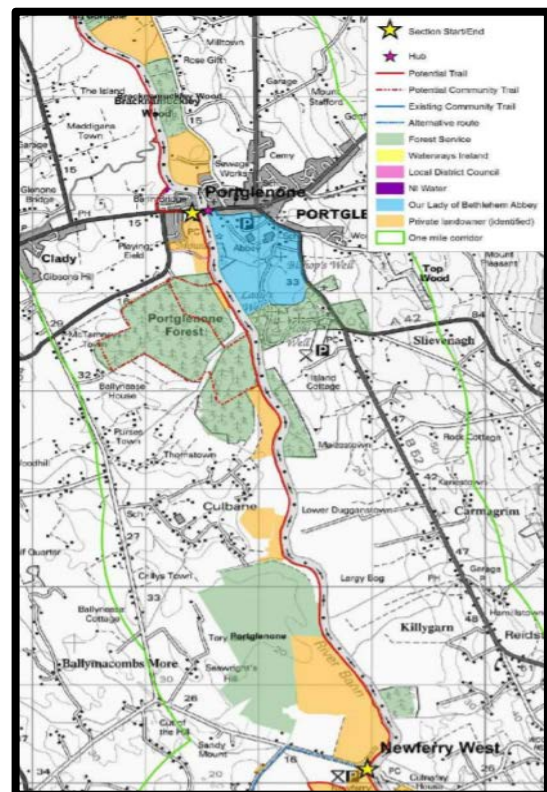
For a relatively small area the Blueway study area in this proposal has a surprisingly large amount of recreational and tourism activity, either present or in the process of being developed. The following is a summary of these activities and indication of their priority in relation to the development of a new Blue way trail from New Ferry to Toome. These should be given some sort of priority in relation to fitting in with the proposed new Blueway.

1 Waterways Ireland Stage One Blueway (Portglenone to Newferry)

Waterways Ireland has already developed the Blueway concept on many of its other waterways. The basis of the concept is to develop an activity trail in parallel to its existing waterway canals or rivers. The trail along with the rivers and canals creates connections between the water and land and on small towns and villages along the way. It is also important to note that the Blueway's scheme is also promoted and developed through a new guideline and accreditation scheme. Details of the management and accreditation criteria can be found in Appendix 2.

Waterways Ireland have also carried out a path feasibility study identifying a possible path from Toome to Coleraine. A study was titled “Feasibility Study into the Development of a Walk and Cycle Route along the River Bann, from Toome to Coleraine”. It was this proposed phase one route that was developed by the Mid Ulster Council Waterways Ireland and other partners.

Figure 11 Stage One Path from Portglenone to Newferry West



Phase one of the River Bann development incorporated a new Blueway pathway from Portglenone to Newferry West. This is a new multi-use 7 Km public path accessing new and existing angling stands and the stands were host to the 2019 European Coarse Angling Championship.

The phase one is intended to link naturally at Newferry West to this study area phase 2 project.

2) Ballyscullion Park

Ballyscullion Park is situated at the north of the study area and consists of a private property and parkland which offers use of its beautiful historic gardens and grounds for weddings, civil ceremonies, and receptions. Accommodation is available in five Courtyard Cottages. Each cottage sleeps 6 people and it also caters for corporate events, private parties, and private tours. It has also been the location for some Game of Thrones

Scenes. Any path development would probably have to bypass the parkland due to its listed status but the owner is keen to work with local tourism operators and so some linked products could be developed particularly with people interested in visiting the house or the Game of Throne Scenes.

3) Church Island

Church Island is a small island on the west side of Lough Beg Lough Beg - 1.5 miles from Bellaghy. It has a lot of historic monuments including a thirteenth century church, Balluan Stone and a 18th century Folly Spire built by the then Bishop Hervey. The actual Church Ruin has been recently restored by the Historical Environment Division through funding from the Lough Neagh Partnership.

The fields and strand surrounding the Island are equally important in terms of breeding wader birds and plants such as rare orchid "Irish Lady's Tresses. Any proposed pathway would probably have to skim around the boundary of the ASSI which covers the Island and surrounding strand or if permission could be granted a walkway from Longpoint could also be developed. Better access by boat should be considered as the Island is difficult and dangerous to access from land. Waterways Ireland are examining the possibility to the mitigating use of any sand or silt raised from any dredging operations. A possible causeway proposal could at least be examined as long-term option once the technology for this has been fully developed.

4) Seamus Heaney Open Ground Sites

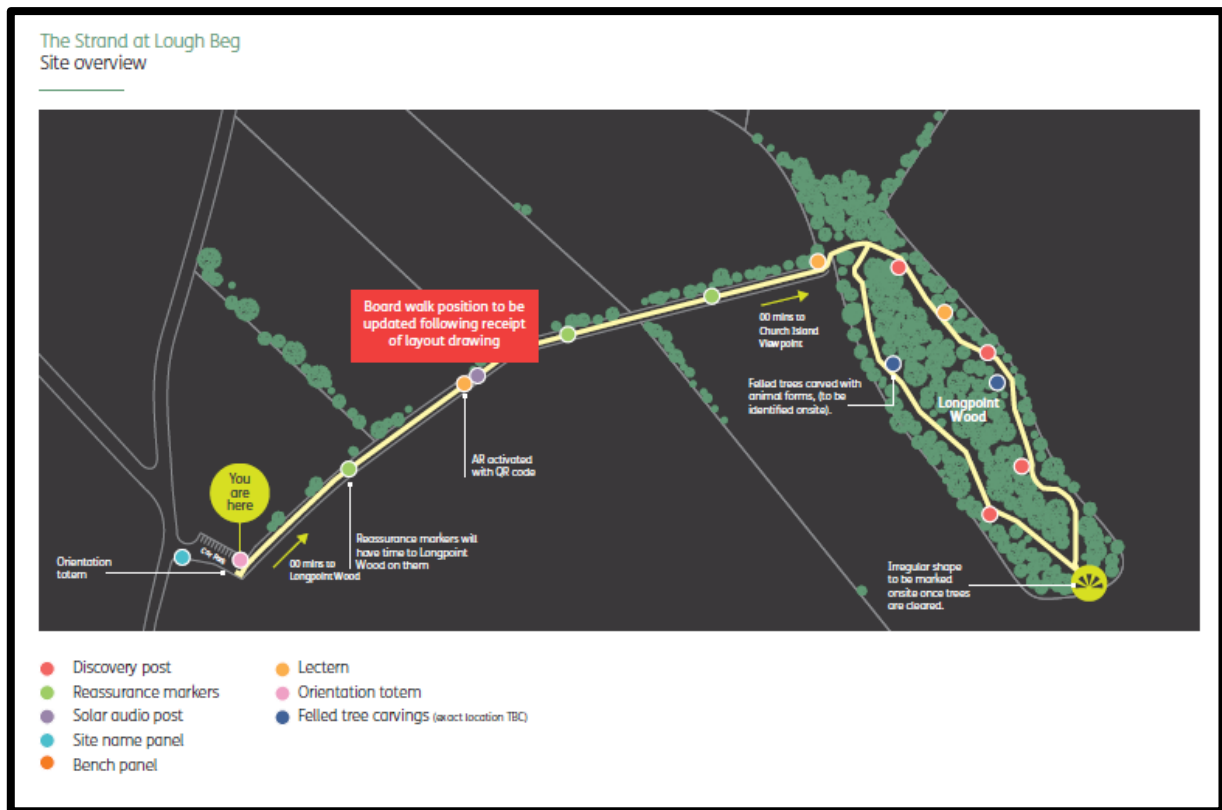
Figure 12 Relevant Open Ground Sites



The Seamus Heaney Open Ground Project is a proposed network of locations and sites that are associated with the poetry of Seamus

Heaney. The sites will be upgraded to provide seating and interpretation on each of the landscapes, views, and relevant poem. The sites will provide a small space to reflect both on the interpretation of the landscape location and the meaning and sentiment of the words of the associated poem. The sites will also include a sculptural interpretation and digital info point and all will link and relate back to the main Hub of the Seamus Heaney Homeplace Center in Bellaghy. There are two main sites that relate to the area and these are the Lough Neagh Fishermen's Cooperative site at Toome and the site at Lough Beg Strand. The site at Lough Beg Strand will include a walk to Long Point Wood subject to access agreement. This will be probably one of the most inspiring sites in the study area and it is important that there is some linkage to the new Blueway Trail.

Figure 13 Access to Long Point



5 Seamus Heaney Home Place

Figure 14 Seamus Heaney Home Place



The Seamus Heaney Home Place is a new interpretation centre celebrating the life and poetry of Seamus Heaney. The £4.2 million centre is based in the village of Bellaghy which is about 5 km away for the proposed Blueway trail. It also contains a café and small

theatre, known as the Helicon. The centre is the focus and hub associated the Open Ground project and is the main Tourism product in the Study I area and is of fundamental importance in promoting and marketing the

trail. Unfortunately, the Centre is too far away physically to link by an access path as this would increase the costs of the project considerably.

6) Lough Neagh Tours

The Lough Neagh Partnership has recently developed an experiential Food tour focusing in on wider Lough Beg area. The tour involved visits to local pubs and sites including the Toome Lockhouse, the Thatch pub, Ballyscullion House, Toome eel fishery, and the Crosskeys pub. Local food is tasted along with an explanation of local folklore and interpretation of the landscape.

The Partnership also has developed and provides a Seamus Heaney Tour visiting sites and locations associated with the Poet Seamus Heaney. Locations that are visited include Seamus Heaneys Homeplace, Bellaghy Bawn, his graveside, the Strand at Lough Beg, Toome Eel fishery and a small local historic forge. Most of the sites have associations with Seamus Heaney poems. Some of these locations will cross with sites associated with the Heaney Open Ground project and of course the new potential Stage 2 Blueway. There are opportunities to work with the Partnership to help cross promote the new Blueway along with Waterways Ireland and Mid Ulster Council

7) Toome Eel Fishery and Interpretation Centre

Figure 15 Toome Eel Fishery



Toome Eel Fishery is based in Toome on the shores of the River Bann. In the summer of 2019, a new interpretative centre was developed inside the fishery, explaining the work of the fishermen's cooperative and the journey of the Lough Neagh Eel. The facility is also one of the sites associated with the Seamus Heaney Open Ground project. It

would therefore be important for this facility to be linked in some way any new trail proposal.

8) Toome Lockhouse

Figure 16 Toome Lockhouse



Toome Lockhouse is a new café and interpretation facility. The project involved the restoration of the original Lock house and was funded by the Lough Neagh Partnership and Waterways Ireland.

This new recreational and tourism facility has proved successful and will be a perfect starting or finishing point for the Blueway trail.

Chapter 5 Consultation with stakeholders

Due to the limitations and restrictions imposed on head-to-head meetings with people by Coronavirus, consultation with landowners could not happen and meetings with the main partners was restricted to digital Zoom meetings.

The requirement to engage with landowners on the ground could not be carried and this therefore this means that the final route identified in this study will still require access negotiation and agreements with landowners to be made. Hopefully as the restrictions of Coronavirus come lesser as the year progresses then this could possibly be followed up.

Details of known landowners will be provided separately to Mid Ulster Council as the names and addresses of individuals cannot be published in public. Some new landowner details may also have to be found based on the final agreed route. The opportunity to do this has unfortunately been restricted by the Coronavirus pandemic and this will have to be followed up later.

Chapter 6 Blueway routes and options

Route Options

Having considered the strategic context in which Blueway routes could be developed together with the constrictions and existing opportunities it is important to examine several potential Blueway Routes so that we can try to assess which would be the most viable and best value for money. In preparing the route options the following methods were use

- Desktop research - to inform the trail requirements process and review information previously gathered specifically relating to the project.
- Site surveys and analysis - to complete the trail options assessment.
- Mapping using QGIS to illustrate the route corridor and required route infrastructure.

In identifying the optional location for the trail, six criteria were established to assist with selection. These included:

- Access Status
- Safety
- Sustainability
- Accessibility
- Enjoyment
- Cost

Each route is appraised and given a score of how well it performs against each criterion set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Appraisal Criteria and Scoring for Preferred Route

No.	Criteria	Considerations/Explanation	Score
1	Access Status	<p>What is the permission status of the route?</p> <p>Are there formal access agreements in place?</p> <p>What is the ability to achieve formal access agreements along entire route?</p> <p>Is the route close to private residential property?</p>	<p>1 – No permission is likely to be granted for some/all the routes.</p> <p>2 – Unlikely to obtain permission for full route.</p> <p>3 – Some permissions in place</p> <p>4 – Likely to get / already have in place permission for most of route.</p> <p>5 – Permission guaranteed for full route</p>
2	Safety	<p>How hazardous is the route – on technical and personal safety basis?</p> <p>Technical – how much of the route is on road?</p> <p>Is the route perceived as dangerous?</p> <p>Personal - Is the route through fields with cattle in? Is the route secluded</p>	<p>1 – Least safe</p> <p>5 – Most safe</p>
3	Sustainability	<p>How environmentally sustainable is the route?</p> <p>How much maintenance/management will be required?</p>	<p>1 – Least sustainable</p> <p>5 – Most sustainable</p>

4	Accessibility	Is the route across steep and difficult terrain? Is the gradient and path surface suitable for all/most abilities?	1 – Least accessible 5 – Most accessible
5	Enjoyment	How enjoyable is the route to walk? Does the route take in scenic views? Is it away from traffic? Does it take in points of interest, e.g., monuments etc?	1 – Least enjoyable 5 – Most enjoyable
6	Cost	What costs would be involved to develop the path?	1 – Highest cost 5 – Lowest cost

A total of four options were identified:

- Option 1: Use of existing road network (baseline)
- Option 2: New build route between Newferry and Toome
- Option 3: New build between Newferry and Long Point Wood/Church Island
- Option 4: New build between Long Point Wood and Toome

These options are discussed overleaf.

Route Option 1: Use existing road network (Figure 17)



Table 2: Option 1 Existing Road Appraisal

No.	Criteria	Considerations/Explanation	Score
1	Access Status	Utilises the existing road network to link Newferry with Toome. No permissions are required.	4
2	Safety	Entire route is on a combination of narrow 'B' Class roadways and major 'A' Class arterial routes including a dual carriageway. There is an absence of pedestrian footpaths and safe crossing points and traffic volume is extremely high. The roads are therefore dangerous and unsuitable for recreational walking or cycling.	1
3	Sustainability	Little management or maintenance is required.	4
4	Accessibility	This route would not be accessible to all abilities due to the absence of suitable safety infrastructure. However, it is flat terrain with no significant gradient change and the tarmac would be suitable well experiences cyclists. The absence of a footpath and the narrow nature of the road impacts negatively.	2
5	Enjoyment	The route is on the main road network and, albeit bounded by mature hedgerows in places, it is not an enjoyable route to walk because of the traffic.	1
6	Cost	The cost of developing this as the Blueway is minimal requiring way markers only.	4
Total Score			16

This option has been discounted as it does not reflect the aspirations of a functioning Blueway.

Route Option 2: New build between Newferry and Toome (Figure 18)

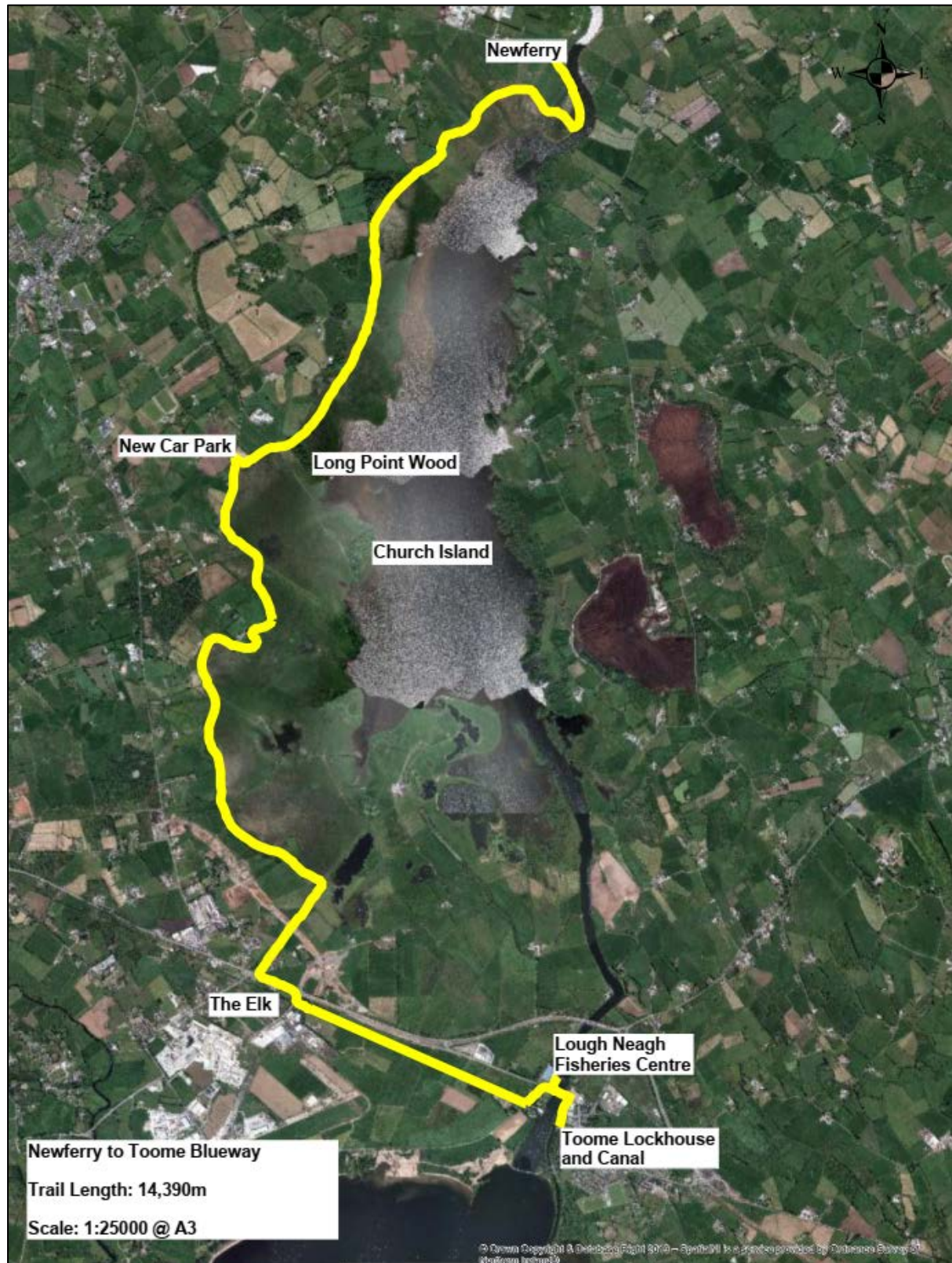


Table 3: New build between Newferry and Toome Appraisal

No.	Criteria	Considerations/Explanation	Score
1	Access Status	Much of the access is over land in private ownership and will subsequently require a longer process of engagement with the landowners to agree permissive path conditions. This is a significant risk that requires a well-planned methodology to secure agreement. MUDC have experience in progressing this approach having already secured agreement for access to Long Point Wood from the Ballydermot Road. Access is also required through lands designated for their natural heritage. This may also have implications for securing planning consent and will require the completion of an Appropriate Assessment to ensure no damage or loss is incurred on the designation features because of route development and construction. Similarly, much of the northern section is prone to flooding which may impact 'all year' access. The line of the route takes the user near private residencies which is likely to be problematic. With widespread future community engagement and ongoing consultation with statutory agencies and NGO's, it may be possible to address these access constraints	3
2	Safety	The route is 9% on road with the remaining 81% through fields and along existing tracks. Cattle are seasonally grazed along parts of the trail so appropriate fencing will be required to ensure public safety. The	3

		route is isolated and there are occasional water hazards.	
3	Sustainability	The option traverses the boundary of the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA for much of its length so there is a risk regarding negatively impacting the site designation features both during construction and use. Appropriate methodologies will have to be put in place to mitigate against this. The northern portion of the trail may be subject to seasonal flooding so this will have an impact on whole life costs which must be budgeted for. To minimise these longer-term management and maintenance costs it is recommended that either a lower cost substrate is used for the trail or a higher specification raised boardwalk be installed to reduce the impacts of water damage.	2
4	Accessibility	This route would be accessible to all walkers, cyclists, and others. Ground is flat terrain with no significant gradient change. Gates are located at various points along the path.	4
5	Enjoyment	90% of the route offers scenic views of the shoreline and Lough. Moderately flat terrain makes it an enjoyable walk for majority of users. Enjoyment is only reduced by the wetter conditions midway along the trail	5
6	Cost	The cost of developing this option is constrained by the site's designations and issues of flooding. A combination of raised boardwalk and gravelled path for up to 90% of the route will increase costs significantly.	3
Total Score			20

Option 3: Newferry to Long Point Wood Appraisal (Figure 19)

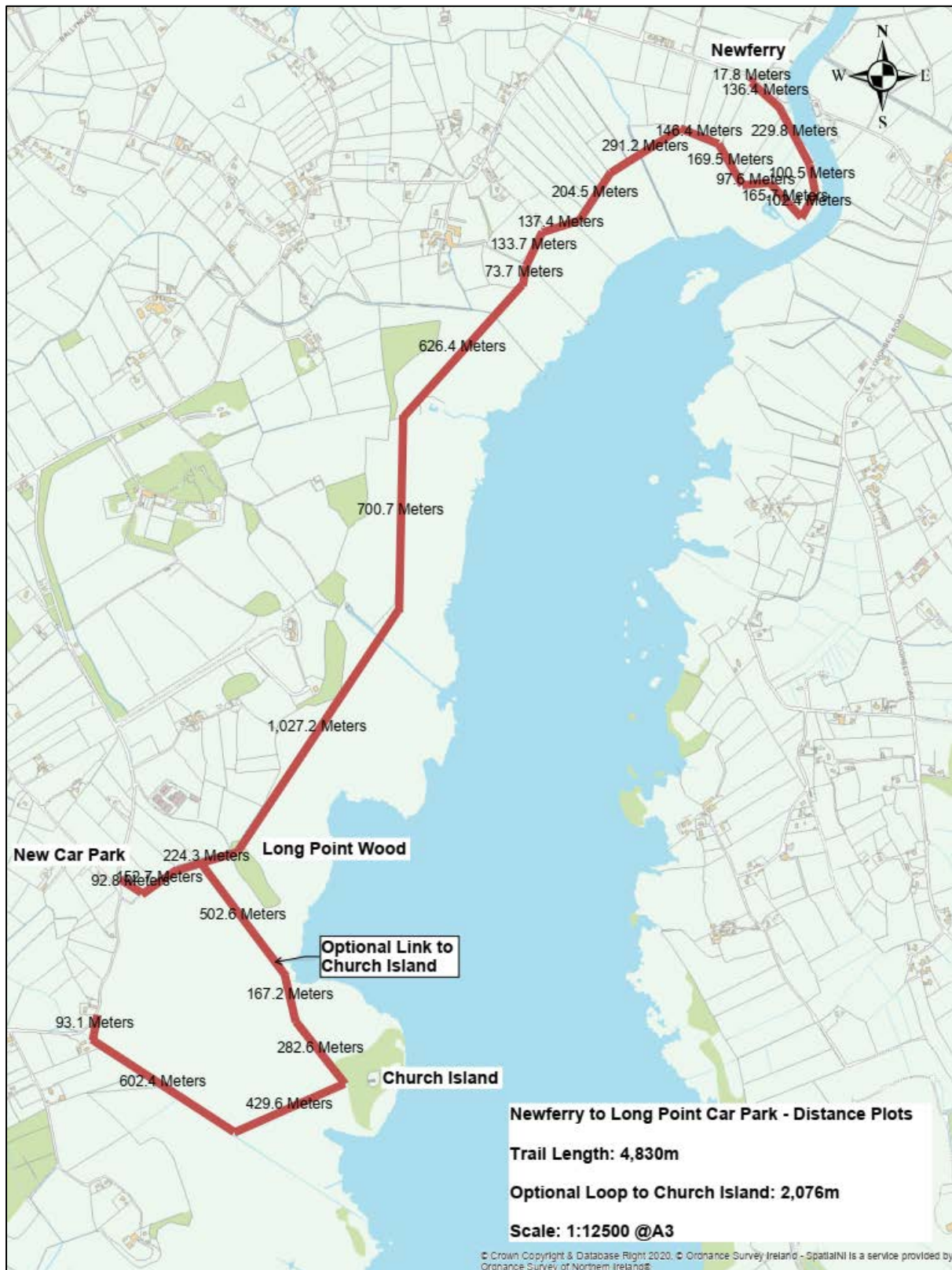


Table 4: Newferry to Long Wood Point Appraisal

No.	Criteria	Considerations/Explanation	Score
1	Access Status	Informal permissions in place along certain parts of the route. Much of the remaining access is over land in private ownership and will subsequently require a longer process of engagement with the landowners to agree permissive path conditions. This is a significant risk that requires a well-planned methodology to secure agreement. MUDC have experience in progressing this approach having already secured agreement for access to Long Point Wood from the Ballydermot Road. Access is also required through lands designated for their natural heritage. This may also have implications for securing planning consent and will require the completion of an Appropriate Assessment to ensure no damage or loss is incurred on the designation features because of route development and construction. Similarly, much of the section is prone to flooding which may impact 'all year' access. The line of the route takes the user near private residencies which is likely to be problematic. With widespread future community engagement and ongoing consultation with statutory agencies and NGO's, it may be possible to address these access constraints	3
2	Safety	The route is 100% off road traversing through fields and along existing tracks. Cattle are seasonally grazed along parts of the trail so appropriate fencing will be required to ensure public safety. The route	3

		is isolated and there are occasional water hazards.	
3	Sustainability	The option traverses the boundary of the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA for much of its length so there is a risk regarding negatively impacting the site designation features both during construction and use. Appropriate methodologies will have to be put in place to mitigate against this. The trail may be subject to seasonal flooding so this will have an impact on whole life costs which must be budgeted for. To minimise these longer-term management and maintenance costs it is recommended that either a lower cost substrate is used for the trail or a higher specification raised boardwalk be installed to reduce the impacts of water damage.	2
4	Accessibility	This route would be accessible to all walkers, cyclists, and others. Ground is flat terrain with no significant gradient change. Gates are located at various points along the path.	4
5	Enjoyment	100% of the route offers scenic views of the shoreline and Lough. Moderately flat terrain makes it an enjoyable walk for majority of users.	5
6	Cost	The cost of developing this option is constrained by the site's designations and issues of flooding. A combination of raised boardwalk and gravelled path for up to 60% of the route will increase costs significantly.	3
Total Score			20

Option 4: Long Point Wood to Toome Appraisal (Figure 20)



Table 5: Newferry to Long Wood Point Appraisal

No.	Criteria	Considerations/Explanation	Score
1	Access Status	This option utilises both portions of the existing road network and land in private ownership. The development and construction of the new A6 dual carriageway is a major constraining factor to securing a more direct connection to Toome. As a result, the route deviates away from the Lough to utilise the safest crossing point which will be a new footbridge just north of Creagh roundabout. Much of the remaining access is over land in private ownership and will subsequently require a longer process of engagement with the landowners to agree permissive path conditions. Access is also required through lands designated for their natural heritage. This may also have implications for securing planning consent and will require the completion of an Appropriate Assessment to ensure no damage or loss is incurred on the designation features because of route development and construction. The line of the route takes the user near private residencies which is likely to be problematic.	3
2	Safety	The route is 86% off road traversing through fields and along existing tracks. Cattle are seasonally grazed along parts of the trail so appropriate fencing will be required to ensure public safety. The route is isolated and there are occasional water hazards. Of greatest concern is the proximity of the new A6 dual carriageway which represents a significant danger	2

3	Sustainability	The option traverses the boundary of the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA for much of its length so there is a risk regarding negatively impacting the site designation features both during construction and use. Appropriate methodologies will have to be put in place to mitigate against this. The trail may be subject to seasonal flooding so this will have an impact on whole life costs which must be budgeted for. To minimise these longer-term management and maintenance costs it is recommended that either a lower cost substrate is used for the trail or a higher specification raised boardwalk be installed to reduce the impacts of water damage.	2
4	Accessibility	This route would be accessible to all walkers, cyclists, and others. Ground is flat terrain with no significant gradient change. The exception will be the new A6 footbridge which is ramped to facilitate disabled access. Gates are located at various points along the path.	3
5	Enjoyment	60% of the route offers scenic views of the shoreline and Lough. Moderately flat terrain makes this section an enjoyable walk for majority of users. The remaining 40% follows the A6 which is noisy and unpleasant	3
6	Cost	The cost of developing this option is constrained by the site's designations and issues of flooding. A combination of raised boardwalk and gravelled path for up to 50% of the route will increase costs significantly.	3
Total Score			16

Chapter 7 Agreed Route

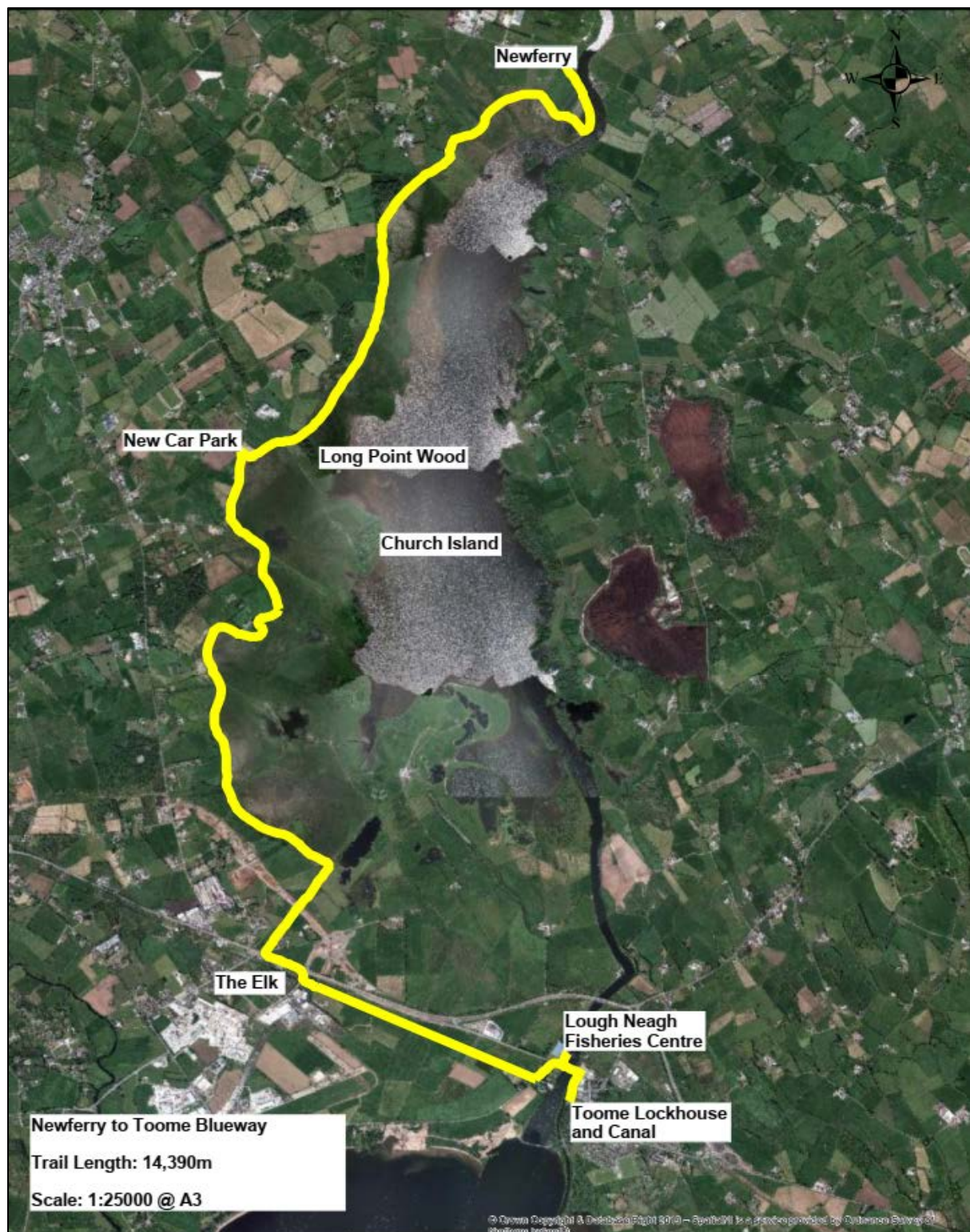
Route Description

The preferred new Blueway (Option 1) will run from Newferry (west) located on the River Bann southwards along the western shore of Lough Beg for a length of 14.4 Km where it will connect with the recently developed Lock keepers Cottage Heritage Centre and Café, adjacent to Toome Canal.

To ensure value for money, mitigate against damage to protected habitats and species and to meet the connectivity objectives of the scheme, the proposed route has attempted to utilise existing farm tracks, following the periphery of the Special Protection Area (SPA) boundary, and will be strategically placed to achieve maximum connectivity with other built, cultural, and natural heritage assets.

Materials and methodologies selected for new build and path refurbishment works reflect the natural setting of the Blueway which will be fully fenced and constructed of a compacted gravel trail or elevated boardwalk with handrails if sensitive areas are present. The route will be fully waymarked in both directions and appropriate safety signage installed. Infrastructure such as bridges and gates will also be installed where necessary.

Figure 21 Agreed Route



Figures 22



Figure 23



Figure 24

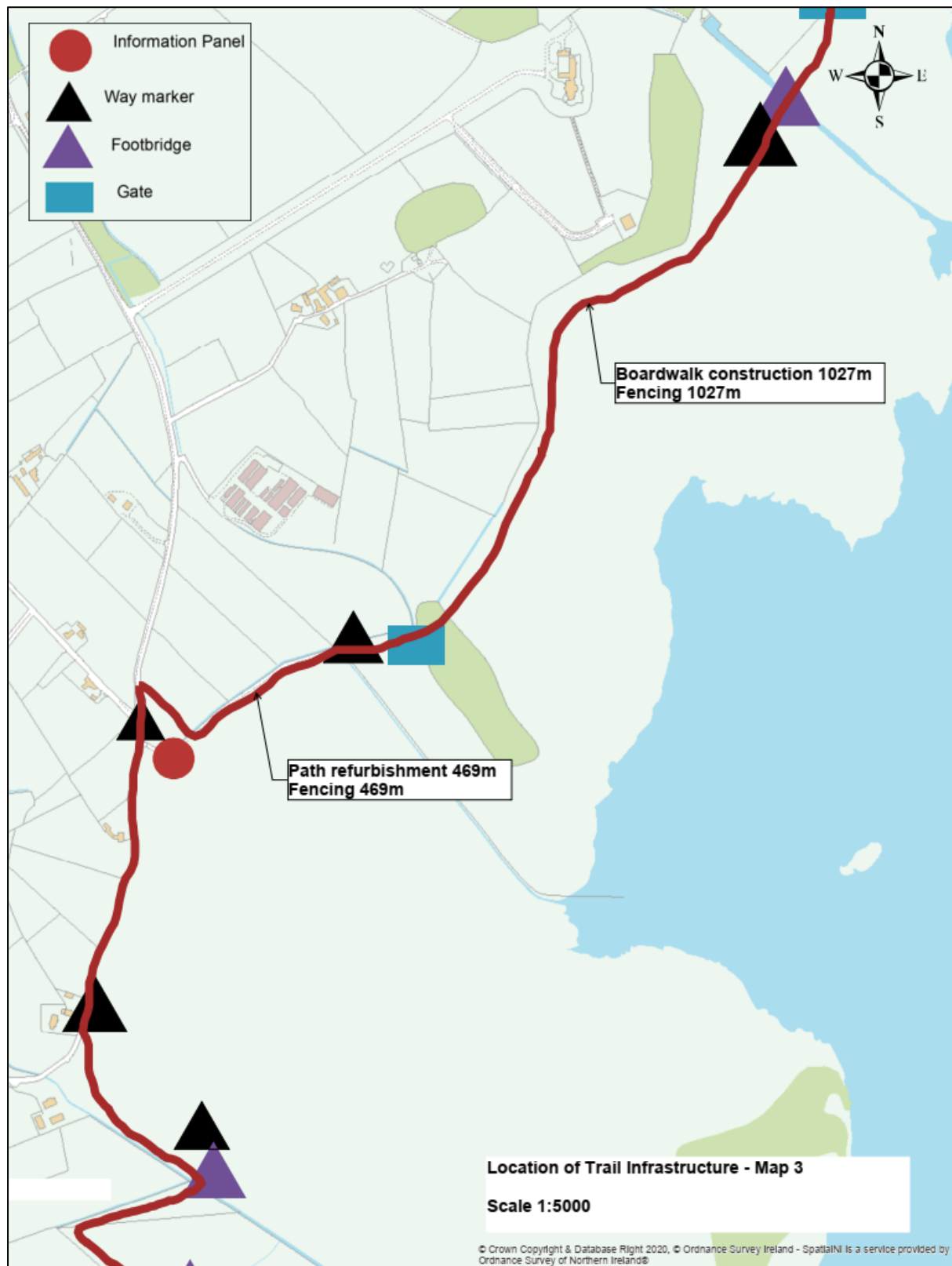


Figure 25

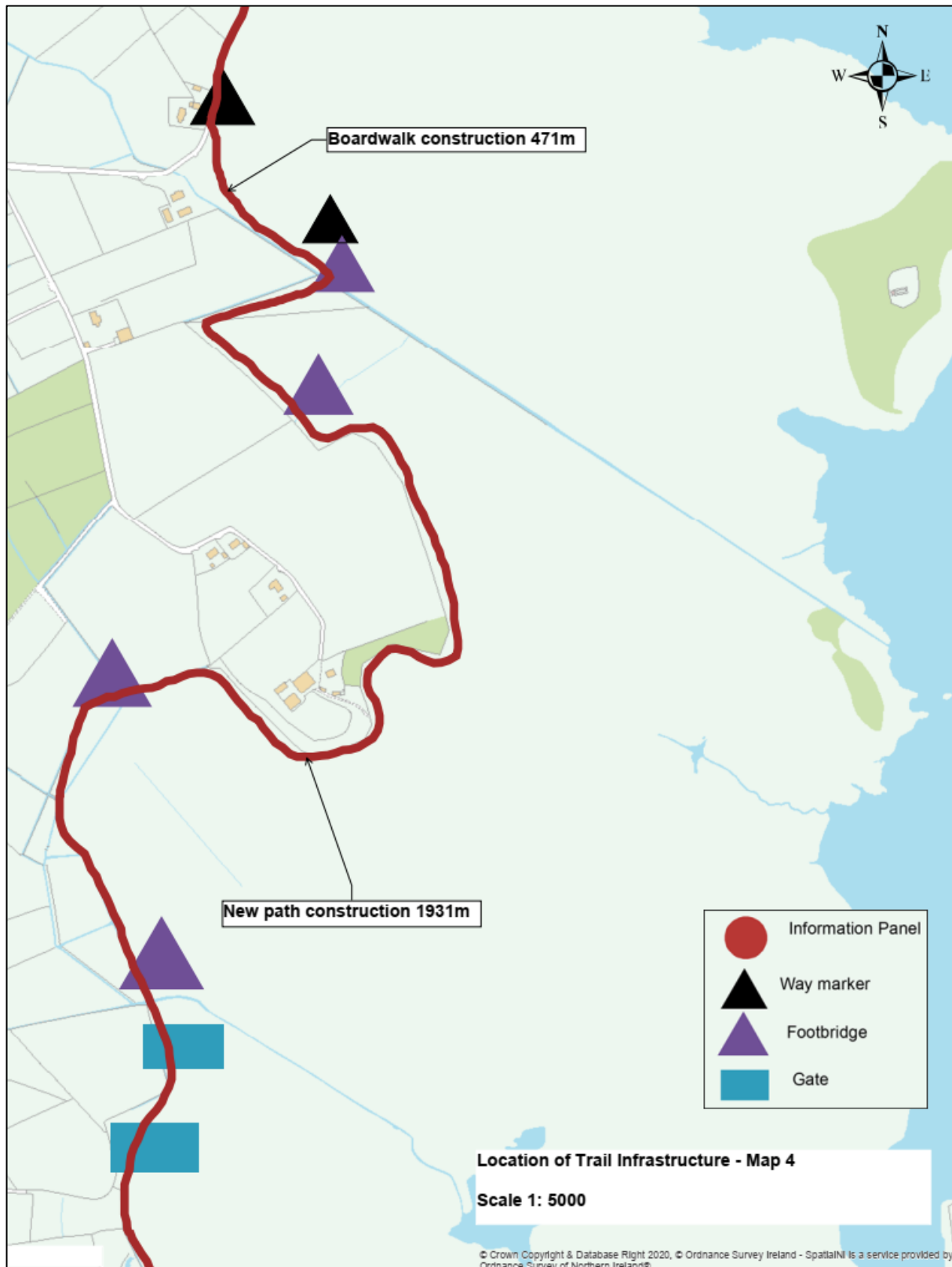


Figure 26

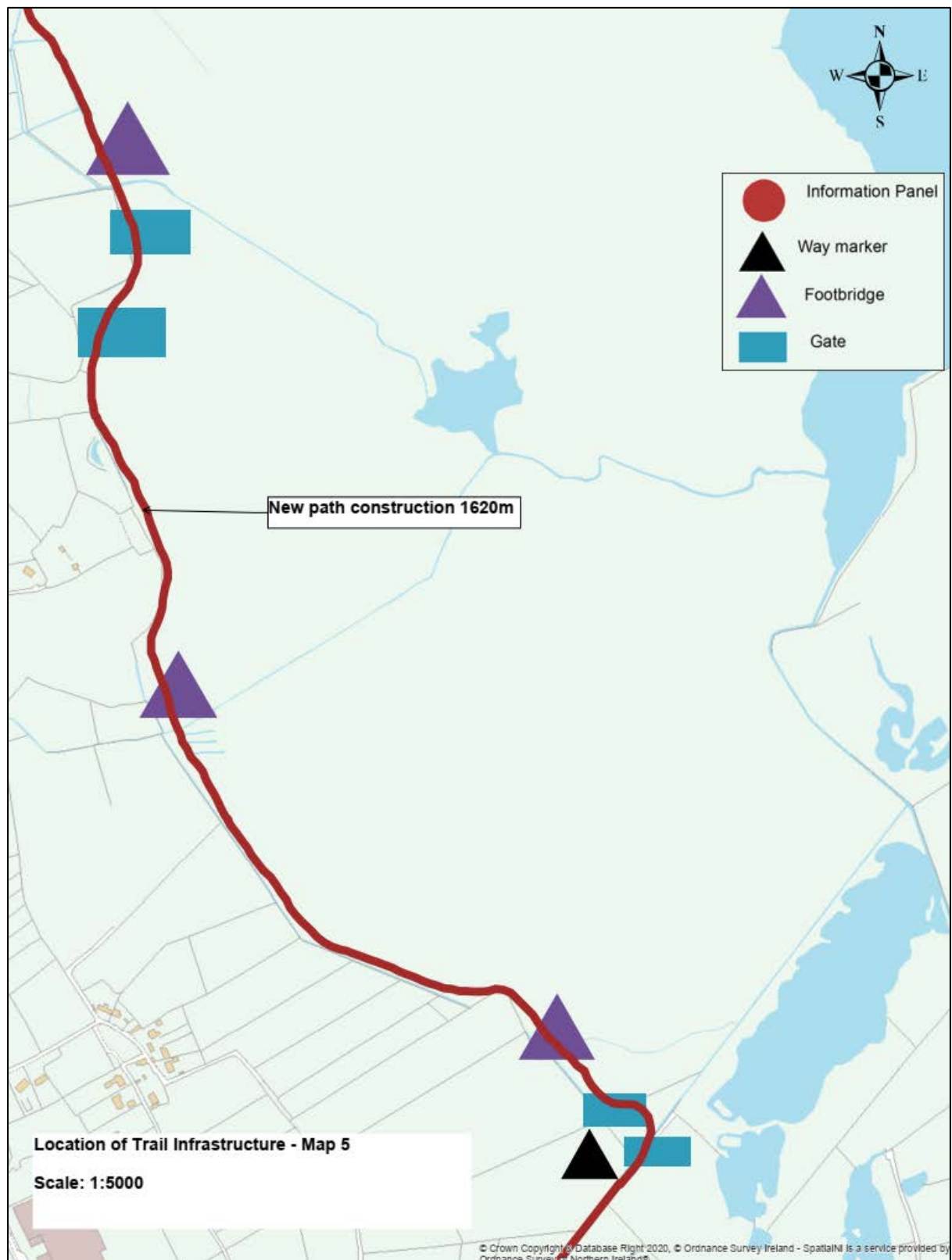


Figure 27

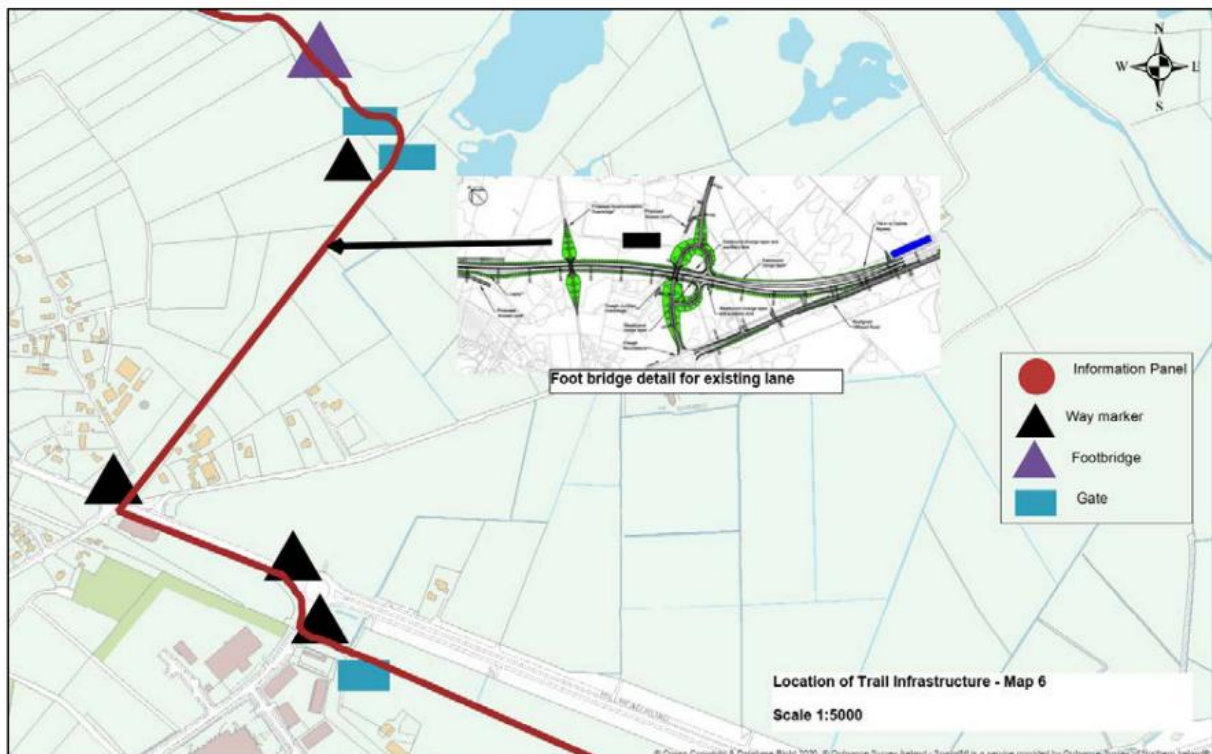
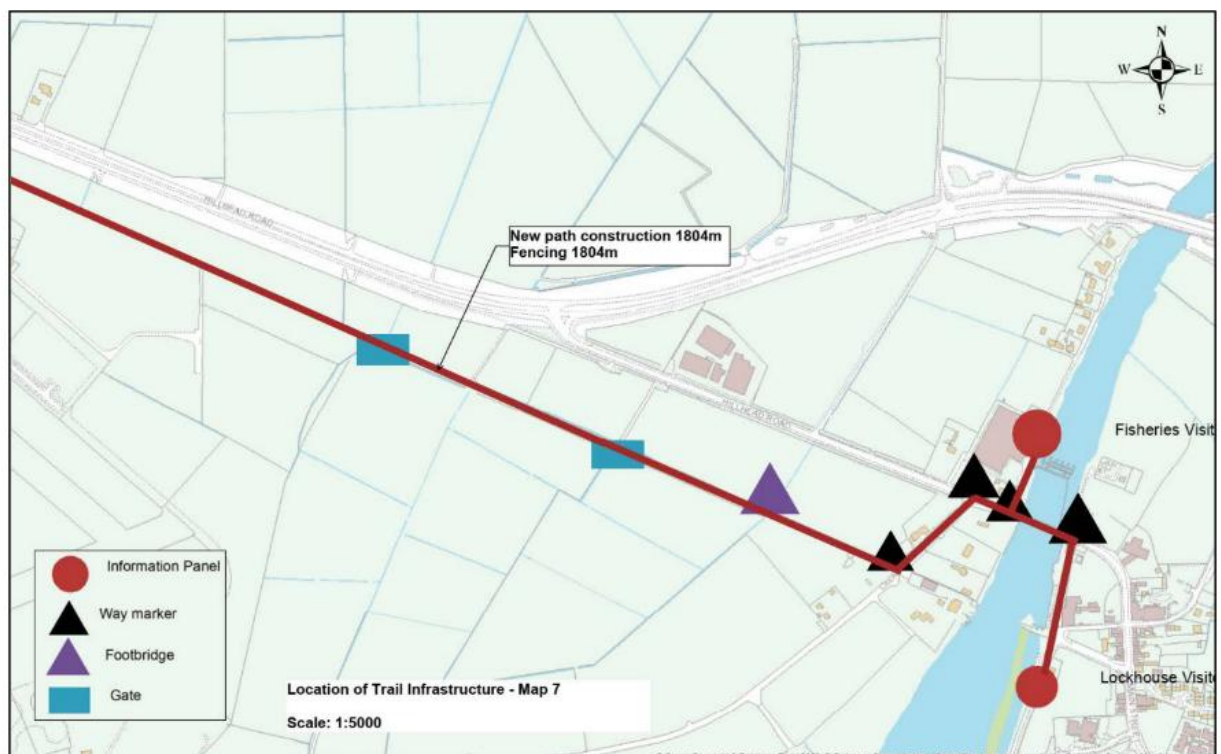


Figure 28



Chapter 8 Costings

Introduction

The following outlines the capital project costs for the proposed trail including technical development (based on % rate), path build, infrastructure requirements and contingency. The figures do not take into consideration account resource costs (managing, maintaining, and marketing the path) or costs associated with securing access either land purchase or permissive access, Land purchase would involve arriving at a figure that a strip of land is deemed to be worth based on current market values. Permissive access will involve a cost to the landowner as compensation towards the permissive access agreement. Compensation may include the loss of land value (actual not perceived), loss of farm payments and/or loss of earnings from the production of that land including lease to third parties and/or tenant farmer(s). The rate was taken to be £8.00 per linear metre (for a 3m wide strip). The specifications for the boardwalk, path and associated gates and furniture can be found in appendix 3.

Table 6

Cost Estimate				
Newferry to Toome Lockhouse				
Development of a 14.4Km x 2.5m Blueway Trail and associated infrastructure				
Item	Unit	Rate	Quantity	Cost
SITE CLEARANCE, DEMOLITIONS & EARTHWORKS				
General site clearance	m2	£ 1.75	£ 4,550.00	£ 7,692.00
Excavation to levels	m3	£ 2.90	£ 3,427.00	£ 9,938.00
Disposal of excavated material	m3	£ 12.00	£ 1,700.00	£ 20,400.00
PAVING - NEW BUILD				
Geotextile	m2	£ 1.20	£ 17,140.00	£ 20,568.00
Type 3 Blinding	m2	£ 43.00	£ 17,140.00	£ 737,020.00
Recycled PVC Boardwalk (incl. piles, joists, bridging etc)	m2	£ 104.50	£ 5,500.00	£ 574,750.00
PAVING - REFURBISHMENT				
Type 3 Blinding	m2	£ 27.20	£ 3,983.00	£ 108,337.00
FENCING				
Stock proof fencing 1.2m high (BS1722-2:2006)	m	£ 11.25	£ 11,980.00	£ 134,775.00
Metal Gate incl. Posts	ea.	£ 395.00	£ 26.00	£ 10,270.00
Kissing gates	ea.	£ 550.00	£ 12.00	£ 6,600.00
BRIDGING				
4m wooden footbridge	ea.	£ 2,885.00	£ 4.00	£ 11,540.00
5m wooden footbridge	ea.	£ 3,395.00	£ 3.00	£ 10,185.00
6m wooden footbridge	ea.	£ 4,370.00	£ 1.00	£ 4,370.00
7m wooden footbridge	ea.	£ 10,950.00	£ 2.00	£ 21,900.00
12m wooden footbridge	ea.	£ 18,650.00	£ 1.00	£ 18,650.00
Abutment and anchor works	ea.	£ 450.00	£ 22.00	£ 9,900.00
LANDSCAPING				
Reseeding	m2	£ 1.90	£ 3,427.00	£ 6,512.00
SIGNAGE				
Trailhead panel design and installation	ea.	£ 2,100.00	£ 2.00	£ 4,200.00
Waymarker posts (incl. discs)	ea.	£ 110.00	£ 15.00	£ 1,650.00
Directional signage	ea.	£ 70.00	£ 9.00	£ 630.00
FURNITURE				
Litter bins	ea.	£ 190.00	£ 12.00	£ 2,280.00
Seating	ea.	£ 320.00	£ 4.00	£ 1,280.00
SUBTOTAL				£ 1,723,447.00
Preliminaries (7.5%)				£ 129,258.00
Contingency (10%)				£ 172,344.00
Design Team Fees (10%)				£ 172,344.00
Other Technical Fees (5%)				£ 86,172.00
TOTAL				£ 2,283,565.00

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Recommendations

The development on a Blueway trail within the area identified will without doubt be a hard task to implement on the ground, particularly considering the large amount of natural and built heritage designations that exist. However, there is a real potential way to take the project forward by following the agreed route in this study. The following are additional recommendations which will add value and recreational variety to the Blueway experience.

- 1) If the Blueway trail is to be developed, it will cross the main priority designations at several points which include SPA, ASSI and RAMSAR. Contact should be made with NIEA Designations section to discuss the proposal in more detail and ascertain any fundamental objections, arrange environmental impact analysis and agree permissions
- 2) The development of any new Blueway from Newferry West must be formally accredited under the Blueway accreditation scheme. See Appendix 2 for details of the accreditation scheme and process for application.
- 3) A new steering should be put in place with the main partners to ensure the full marketing and promotion of the new Blueway. The main Partners would include, Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Waterways Ireland, and Mid Ulster Council. Arrangement for joint promotion would be agreed
- 4) Full head to head engagement with landowners and stakeholders should take place once the Coronavirus crisis is over and access agreements worked up.
- 5) New funding opportunities should be investigated particularly from the new SEUPB Peace programme and the Rural Development Programme, Sport Northern Ireland and the National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund, Northern Ireland and the DFI.
- 6) Support and develop new tourism and recreational products and experiences by linking with commercial operators and community based

organisations such as Lough Neagh Tours, Open Ground Ballyscullion House, Lough Neagh Artisans Group, the Thatch Pub, TIDAL and Mid Ulster Literary Cluster.

7) There is a need to coordinate and develop walking and cycling tours with a variety of accommodation providers around the Lough Beg area.

8) At times of the year flooding of the path or walkway may be a problem so it is important to have contact and liaise regularly with DAERA over control of water from Toome Sluice Gates.

9) In future, liaise closely with the Lough Neagh Partnership and the RSPB in relation to the development of facilities on Lough Beg for wildlife watching, particularly for the Whooper Swans in the winter.

10) Develop and promote a programme of Events for the Blueway Trail linking with Waterways Ireland, Bellaghy Community Association the Seamus Heaney Homeplace.

Appendix One

ASSI “Views on Management”

Appendix 2

Blueway Management and accreditation

Appendix 3

Boardwalk and Path Specifications

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT LOUGH NEAGH,

COUNTIES ANTRIM, ARMAGH, DOWN, LONDONDERRY AND TYRONE. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (the Department), having consulted the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside and being satisfied that the area delineated and described on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the 'Lough Neagh area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because it is a large shallow eutrophic lake occupying a downwarp in Tertiary basalt with its associated physical, chemical and biological characteristics. More specifically it is of interest for: wintering and breeding birds; its wetland vegetation, which includes a large number of rare plant species; and the presence of a number of rare invertebrate and fish species.

The site includes the whole water body of Lough Neagh, the largest lake in the British Isles at 38,500 ha, and a marginal fringe of land totalling 39,800 ha together. The shallow, eutrophic Lough is supplied by seven main tributary rivers and is drained by the Lower Bann.

The Lough lies within a downwarped block of Tertiary basalt which is at least 35 million years old and has a number of associated geological and physiographical features of scientific interest e.g. the Lough Neagh Clays, evidence of Holocene water-level changes, and contemporary phenomena including mobile sand bars.

Most of the shoreline and shallow margin of the Lough is exposed to wave action and has a rocky or sandy character. The submerged and floating aquatic vegetation is confined to sheltered bays and inlets and includes very extensive stands of Fennel-leaved Pondweed Potamogeton pectinatus and Slender-leaved Pondweed P. filiformis intermixed with smaller quantities of additional species.

Swamp vegetation generally consists of a mosaic of small stands of Common Spike-rush Eleocharis palustris, Reedmace Typha latifolia, Branched Bur-reed Sparganium erectum, Flowering Rush Butomus umbellatus, Bulrush Scirpus lacustris and Bottle Sedge Carex rostrata. Locally, large stands of Common Reed Phragmites australis have developed.

The tall fen occurring along the water's edge mostly consists of a thin, generally species-poor band of Reed Canary-grass Phalaris arundinacea, Hemlock Water Dropwort Oenanthe crocata, Yellow Loosestrife Lysimachia vulgaris and Purple Loosestrife Lythrum salicaria, but in places there are a number of more uncommon plant species.

Some of the lough shore is fringed by a fragmented, swampy woodland of Alder Alnus glutinosa and Willow Salix spp. related to successive lowerings of waterlevels. This woodland is among the best of its type in Northern Ireland. It is extensive and locally contains a diversity of plants including many notable species.

The remainder of the shore is mostly covered by a variety of grassland types ranging from improved and reseeded grassland to species-rich hay meadows, with the most characteristic type being wet marshy grassland with Soft Rush Juncus effusus and Brown Sedge Carex disticha as the most prominent species.

Other interesting vegetation types present include those associated with pockets of cut-over bog, basalt rock outcrops and boulders, and mobile sandy shores.

Exceptional numbers of rare plant and animal species are found in the above habitats in and around the Lough. Over forty rare or local vascular plants have been recorded for the site since 1970, the most notable being Eight-stemmed Waterwort Elatine hydropiper (open water), Marsh Pea Lathyrus palustris (tall fen), Many-seeded Goose-foot Chenopodium polyspermum (lake shore), Large Bittercress Cardamine amara (swampy woodland), Irish Lady's Tresses Orchid Spiranthes romanzoffiana (wet grassland), Buckthorn Francula alnus (swampy woodland), Narrow Smallreed Calamagrostis stricta (wet grassland), Holy Grass Hierochloa odorata (wet grassland) and Elongated Sedge Carex elongata (swampy woodland).

The Lough and its margin also contain an exceptional number of rare or local invertebrates, including aquatic and terrestrial molluscs, a freshwater shrimp Mysis relicta, beetles and hoverflies. Of the rare beetles recorded, two, Stenus palposus and Dyschirus obscurus, have their only known Irish location around the Lough. The Lough also supports twelve species of Dragonfly, a high proportion of the total known to occur in Northern Ireland. These invertebrates are mostly associated with open water, swampy woodland or sandy shorelines.

Fifteen species of fish are found in the Lough, several of which are commercially fished, including large numbers of Eel Anguilla anguilla. Two rare species occur, the River Lamprey Lampetra fluviatilis, and the Pollan Coregonus autumnalis, the former with a limited Irish distribution, the latter with a European distribution confined to Ireland.

Internationally important numbers of waterfowl regularly winter on the Lough, with the peak number averaging over 66,800 birds in the five years between 1986/87 and 1990/91. Species which qualify as internationally important (with their percentages of the North-west European flyway population) are Whooper Swan Cygnus cygnus (1.6%); Pochard Aythya ferina (8.4%); Tufted Duck Aythya fuligula (2.5%); Scaup Aythya marila (1.1%) and Goldeneye Bucephala clangula (3.8%). Other significant species are (with their percentages of the Irish population) Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus (32.8%); Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo (6.7%); Mute Swan Cygnus olor (17.3%); Bewick's Swan Cygnus columbianus (3.7%); Shelduck Tadorna tadorna (2.4%); Gadwall Anas strepera (14.6%); Teal Anas crecca (1.8%); Mallard Anas platyrhynchos (6.9%); and Coot Fulica atra (16.5%). These birds are mostly associated with open water, shallow lough shore and wet grassland.

In the summer the Lough supports important numbers of breeding birds, including the largest number of Black-headed Gull Larus ridibundus and the largest concentration of Great Crested Grebe in Ireland; the largest number of Redshank Tringa totanus in Northern Ireland, as well as significant numbers of Snipe Gallinago gallinago, Common Tern Sterna hirundo, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Gadwall and Shoveler Anas clypeata. These birds are mainly concentrated on islands, fens and swamps and fen meadows.

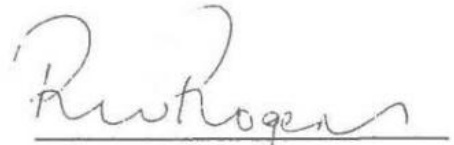
SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features of the area:

1. Any activity or operation which involves the damage or disturbance by any means of the surface and subsurface of the land, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including sand, gravel, peat, lignite and diatomite.
2. Any change in the present annual pattern and intensity of grazing, including any change in the type of livestock used or in supplementary feeding practice.
3. Any change in the established method or frequency of rolling, mowing or cutting.
4. Any change in the annual pattern of application of manure, slurry or artificial fertiliser.
5. The application of herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill any form of wild plant, other than plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (NI) Order 1977.
6. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under (4) or (5).
7. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for
 - (i) plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (NI) Order 1977;
 - (ii) normal cutting or mowing regimes for which a consent is not required under (3).
8. The release into the area of any animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice) or plant. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates; 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore.
9. Burning.
10. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
11. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
12. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.
13. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands (including marsh, fen, bog, rivers, streams and open water) e.g.
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;

- (ii) modification in the structure of any watercourse;
 - (iii) lowering of the water table, permanently or temporarily;
 - (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
14. The killing or taking of any animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
15. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area:
- (i) Educational activities;
 - (ii) Research activities;
 - (iii) Recreational activities;
 - (iv) Exercising of animals.
16. Changes in game, waterfowl or fisheries management or fishing or hunting practices.

SEALED WITH THE OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND ON 30 November, 1992.


R W ROGERS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

FOOTNOTES

- Jo Anne Stuckman
Civil Servant
Buthof Stormont, Belfast
- (a) Please note the consent by the Department to any of the above operations or activities does not constitute planning permission. Where required, planning permission must be applied for in the usual manner to the Department under Part IC of the Planning (NI) Order 1972. Operations or activities covered by planning permission are not normally covered in the list of Notifiable Operations.
 - (b) Also note that many of the operations and activities listed above are capable of being carried out either on a large scale or in a very small way. While it is impossible to define exactly what is "large" and what is "small", the Department would intend to approach each case in a common sense and practical way. It is very unlikely that small scale operations would give rise for concern and if this was the case the Department would give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.

LOUGH NEAGH

Views About Management

The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Article 28(2)

A statement of Environment and Heritage Service's views about the management of Lough Neagh Area of Special Scientific Interest ("the ASSI")

This statement represents the views of Environment and Heritage Service about the management of the ASSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the area's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. Environment and Heritage Service has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the ASSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the ASSI and there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. It is also very important to recognise that management may need to change with time.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation or activity. The written consent of Environment and Heritage Service is still required before carrying out any operation or activity likely to damage the features of special interest (see the Schedule on pages 3 and 4 for a list of these operations and activities). Environment and Heritage Service welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the ASSI to ensure that the management of this area maintains and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Wintering Waterbirds

Lough Neagh ASSI is a wintering site for large numbers of migratory waterbirds. It supports internationally important populations of waterbirds including Great Crested Grebe, Whooper Swan, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Scaup, Goldeneye and Golden Plover together with numbers of Little Grebe, Great Cormorant, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, Coot and Lapwing that are significant in an all-Ireland context.

Swans, geese, ducks and waders are attracted by a rich food supply and secure roost sites. Wildfowl make use of both open water and surrounding open habitats, particularly wet grassland, for feeding. Aquatic vegetation and invertebrates are important food sources for many ducks while swans, geese and some ducks obtain a proportion of their food on land. Waders such as Lapwing and Golden Plover feed predominantly on worms, insects and other invertebrates in wet grasslands. The quality of feeding areas is, however, susceptible to the influence of operations undertaken both within and outside the ASSI that may result in pollution or changes in water quality or



unacceptable levels of disturbance to feeding birds. It is therefore important that damaging practices are minimised around the ASSI.

Secure roost sites, free from disturbance, are essential to allow the birds to conserve energy when not feeding. Some of these roosts may lie outside the ASSI. Undisturbed roosts are particularly important during severe winter weather. Wildfowl usually roost on open water, while waders tend to use islands or isolated headlands. The variety of habitats present within the ASSI should be managed in order to safeguard the wintering waterbird population.

Specific objectives include:

Feeding habitats – it is important to maintain the quality and extent of habitat used for feeding by the birds, in particular the open water and surrounding reedbed, fen and grassland where present.

Disturbance around known roost sites and frequently used feeding areas should be minimised.

Breeding Waterbird Assemblage

Lough Neagh ASSI supports numbers of breeding waterbirds, especially Great Crested Grebe, that are significant in an all-Ireland context. Maintenance of these populations is dependent upon the extent and condition of undisturbed vegetation that provides cover for nests, especially reedbeds, swamps, areas of tall fen and shoreline wet woodland. Islands can be particularly important nesting sites as these are often safe from land-based predators such as foxes. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance or enhancement of habitat used for nesting and the implementation of measures to minimise disturbance of such areas.

Specific objectives include:

Nesting habitats for waterbirds, especially reedbeds, swamps, areas of tall fen and wet woodland, should be maintained and, where possible, extended.

Human disturbance to waterbirds breeding on islands should be minimised by discouraging landing at nesting sites through appropriate signage or by creating marked “buffer zones” to prevent close approach by boats and other craft. Access to nesting sites on the mainland shoreline should be restricted, where possible, during the breeding season.

Breeding Common Tern

Lough Neagh ASSI supports internationally important numbers of breeding Common Terns. These migratory seabirds are present between April and September and feed on fish in inshore waters. Breeding terns are highly susceptible to disturbance and predation and consequently often choose to nest on islands or isolated man-made structures surrounded by water. They are particularly attracted to areas of shingle or broken shells. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance or enhancement of habitat or structures used for nesting by terns.

Specific objectives include:

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance or enhancement of sites currently used by breeding terns and the creation of potential new sites. Shingle areas should not be allowed to become overgrown. Nest sites can be extended, or new sites created, by provision of a layer of broken shells. Chick survival would be enhanced by creating shelter structures within the breeding sites to provide refuges from aerial predators or inclement weather. Such activities should only be undertaken in consultation with Environment and Heritage Service.

Human disturbance to breeding terns should be minimised by discouraging landing at nesting sites through appropriate signage or creating marked "buffer zones" to prevent close approach by boats and other craft.

Species-rich wet grassland and breeding waders

Species-rich wet grassland is an important habitat for wildlife. The wet grassland in the ASSI is also notable for the rare plants, important invertebrate communities and breeding birds that it supports. The latter include concentration of breeding waders (Snipe, Lapwing Curlew and Redshank) in parts of the site. Such important concentrations of breeding waders have become scarce in Northern Ireland.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the wet grassland through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. In general, sensitive management of the habitat should ensure that its component communities of plants and animals are protected.

Many of the more sensitive plant species can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments such as fertiliser and herbicide application. However, grassland generally needs some management to retain its interest. Although occasional small patches of scrub can be valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates, in the absence of management, coarse grasses can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant.

Grazing by cattle is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous plant species and helping to maintain open areas and a diverse sward structure, which also benefits breeding waders. In the absence of grazing, cutting of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses and rushes is desirable.

There are some specific management practices relating to factors, such as vegetation structure, grazing levels, soil moisture and predators, that are of particular importance for breeding waders. For example, limited rush cover can help provide good habitat for breeding waders, while heavy infestations can mean that shorter areas useful for feeding are lost. Rush-topping may be necessary.

Sward height is also important. This often determines which species of wader will make use of the area, with longer vegetation attracting Snipe and short vegetation being more suitable for Lapwing. Use of fertiliser should be discouraged, as this can increase early season grass growth, thus reducing the suitability of the site for waders such as Lapwing, which prefer shorter swards. Such use also means livestock could move onto the land early, at high stocking rates, which would increase the risk of trampling of nests.

The breeding productivity of ground nesting waders can be reduced by the presence of tall hedges or mature trees in the immediate vicinity of the nest site as they provide lookouts and nest sites for predators such as Hooded Crow.

Specific objectives include:

Low intensity grazing has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the continuation of this practice.

Prevent the loss of more sensitive grassland plant species and breeding waders through the control of scrub, bracken and rushes. In general, maintaining a species-rich sward that is also suitable for breeding waders can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases other methods of control, such as cutting or rush-topping, may be required. Such activities must not be carried out during the wader breeding season.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the species-rich grassland by ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide to the site.

Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the grassland from drying out.

Limited scrub and tree management may be required as appropriate to deter predators such as Hooded Crow.

Wet Woodland

Wet woodland is an important habitat for wildlife. It provides food and shelter for a wide variety of mammals, birds and invertebrates.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the woodland through the development of its structure and the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. These include higher plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and important invertebrate communities.

Specific objectives include:

Encourage the woodland to become more "mature" by avoiding disturbance to the trees. The structure of the wood will gradually become more diverse, with well-developed canopy, shrub and ground layers, and an abundance of species like Ivy, mosses, liverworts and lichens that live on the trees themselves.

Encourage the retention of dead wood both on the woodland floor and still standing in the canopy. Dead wood is a very important habitat for some of the less conspicuous woodland species, such as fungi and invertebrates.

Encourage regeneration of woodland and discourage damage to trees and shrubs through the control of grazing and browsing. In general, natural regeneration is preferable to planting.

Increases in the nutrient status of the water and underlying peat soils can lead to a decline in some of the more valuable plant communities. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and artificial enrichment.

Where necessary, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the wood from drying out.

Fens and Swamps

Fens and swamps are important habitats for wildlife. They develop on the fringes of open water and represent a stage in the process of succession from open water to dry land. Swamps often consist of a single dominant plant species (such as reeds, sedges, or bulrushes), with a few other plants growing amongst them whilst fens are often very diverse and rich in species. The Lough contains a number of different fen and swamp vegetation communities. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the fen and swamp through the conservation of these communities and their associated native plants and animals. These include higher plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and important invertebrate communities.

Fen vegetation requires water levels to be at, or just below, the surface all year round, while swamps generally occur in slightly deeper water. Increases in the nutrient status of the water and underlying peat soils can lead to the dominance of species, such as Bulrush, at the expense of other, more important plant communities. Therefore it is important to maintain good water-quality.

Fen and swamp communities are susceptible to successional change and generally need some management to retain their interest. In the absence of management, coarse grasses such as Common Reed can quickly spread from the swamp into the fen and ultimately, woody species may become dominant. Over a period of time, these species may shade out more important plant communities and cause the fen to dry out. Occasional small patches of scrub can be valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates, but widespread conversion of fen and swamp to wet woodland would generally be undesirable.

Low intensity summer grazing by cattle (or ponies) that are more adaptable to wet conditions is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain species-rich fen vegetation and a diverse sward structure. In the absence of grazing, cutting and removal of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses is desirable.

Specific objectives include:

Where appropriate, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the vegetation from drying out.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and artificial enrichment.

Where feasible, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the grazing of fen and swamp although overgrazing should be avoided as the wet soils are particularly susceptible to poaching. Where grazing is not possible other

management practices, such as cutting, may be used, especially on extensive stands of reedbed.

In general, the control of scrub within fen and swamp communities can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases additional scrub control may be required.

Freshwater Fish Assemblage

Lough Neagh supports an important freshwater fish assemblage which includes the largest population of Pollen in Ireland, one of a handful of known European populations of non-migratory River Lamprey and the Dollaghan, a form of brown trout thought to be unique to the lough.

Environment and Heritage Service recognises the important economic and social roles of fishing and welcomes sustainable fishery management that is sensitive to the special interests of the ASSI.

Specific objectives include:

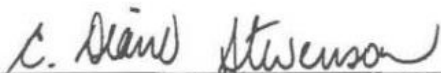
Environment and Heritage would promote the protection of spawning grounds of the three named fish species both in the lake and its tributary rivers and ensure migratory routes to and from spawning grounds are kept open and free of artificial barriers.

Management principles applicable to all habitats throughout the site

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage all activities associated with site maintenance, management, access and recreation to be undertaken in a sensitive manner that ensures disturbance to the site and its wildlife is minimised.

Discourage non-native species, especially those that tend to spread at the expense of native wildlife.

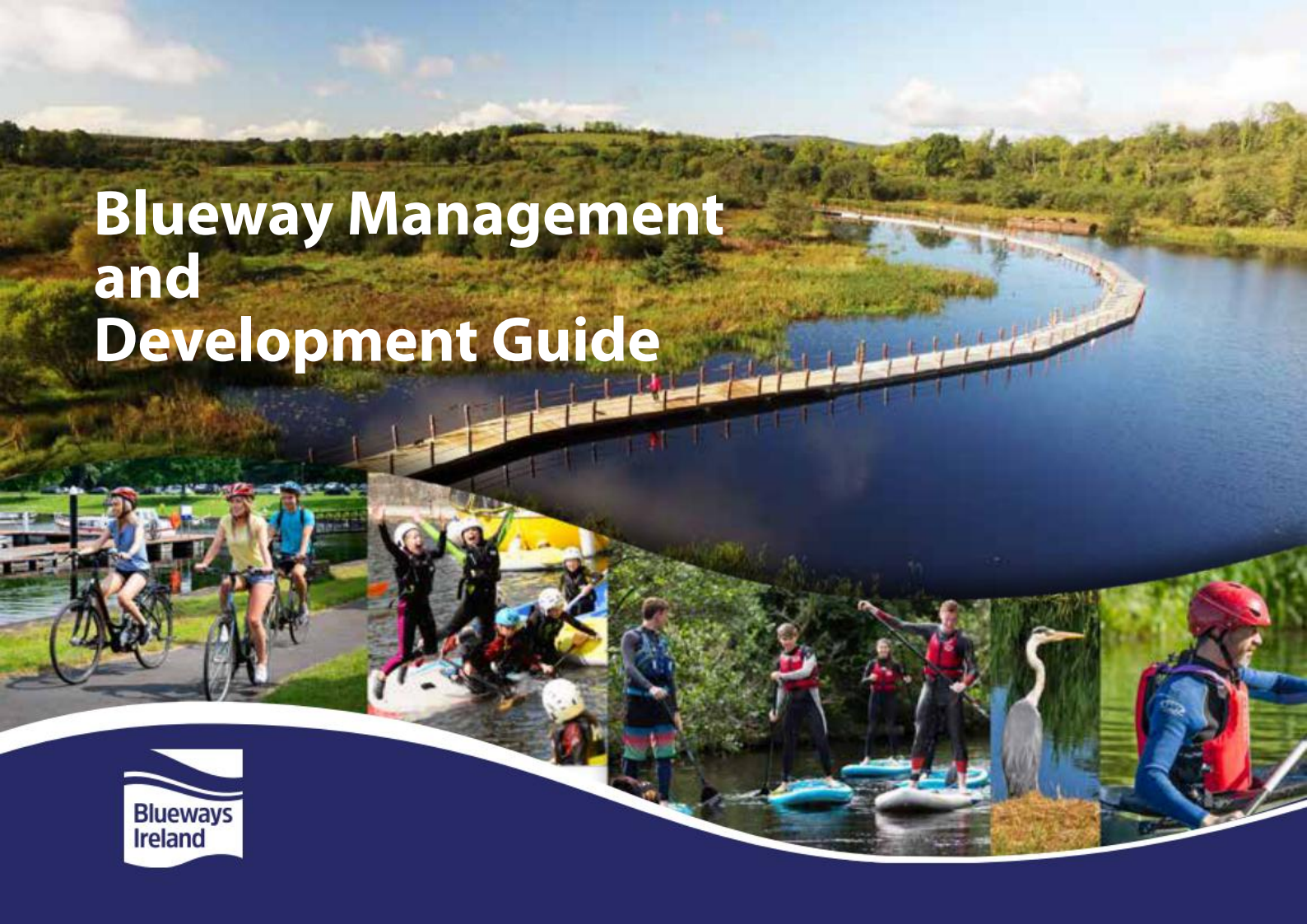
Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the main habitats, such as open water and scrub, through sensitive management. These adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife, especially breeding birds, invertebrates and rare plants.



E Diane Stevenson
Authorised Officer

Dated the 01st of February 2008

Blueway Management and Development Guide







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Introduction

The rivers, canals, loughs and coastline on the Island of Ireland provide a vast array of opportunities for exploration and enjoyment by visitors and locals alike. The relatively recent development of Blueways in Ireland has sought to maximise this opportunity.

This Blueway Management and Development Guide has therefore been designed as a resource to:

- assist developers to develop, manage and promote Blueways more effectively
- outline the accreditation criteria, process and support mechanisms

Further details are provided on
www.bluewaysdevelopment.org



AIM

The guide has been designed with the aim of providing detailed information and advice in order to answer the following queries:

- **Definition** – What is a Blueway?
- **Target Market** – Who will be attracted to a Blueway?
- **Accreditation** – Who is managing the accreditation process?
- **Benefits** – Why become accredited?
- **Criteria** – What are the fundamental components of a successful Blueway?
- **Achieving Success** –
How to achieve Blueway Accreditation
- **Planning** – How to plan the development and management of a successful and sustainable Blueway

WHAT IS A BLUEWAY?

A Blueway is defined as:

“ A network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on, and closely linked with the water, together with providers facilitating access to activities and experiences. ”

The Blueways Ireland brand represents:

- Being active in nature
- Exploration of waterscapes
- Service providers enabling easy access for all
- Multi-activity trail options
- Set within the context of places to stay, eat and go
- Enriched by local culture, heritage, arts and visitor attractions
- Responsible recreation within the environment

The Blueway User

Whether a Blueway user is a member of the community enjoying their local waterway or a visitor exploring a new destination, it is essential the Blueway delivers a memorable experience.



TARGET MARKET - WHO WILL BE ATTRACTED TO A BLUEWAY?

Blueways in Ireland are designed for a range of users from those who have **little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities right through to experienced participants.**

Therefore a Blueway needs to offer the following:

Features

- A mixture of land and water activities
- A rich opportunity to experience the culture, history and scenery on the island of Ireland
- A safe experience

Locations

- Attractive locations - not simply just anywhere with water, but scenery unique to the island of Ireland which visitors do not find closer to home
- Coastal locations – especially important to attract overseas visitors
- Sheltered waters - i.e. not the brunt of the ocean

Water-based activity offering - should be:

- Delivered by guides
- Focus on the easier entry level
- Follow high safety standards

It is clear that potential Blueway users are attracted by the proximity to water, however it is evident the preference remains to be alongside water rather than in or on the water. Hence the importance of multi-activity options.

TOURISM

It is important to realise that a visitor to a Blueway is set in the context of holistic visitor segmentation. It is recognised that the physical activities (whether water or land based) will not be enough on their own to differentiate the island of Ireland from many other destinations. Therefore the tourist will require a full package of unique cultural and historical attractions and experiences to be enticed to visit.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

The attachment of the Blueway brand to a local waterway should act as a catalyst for local participation initiatives for example through school, youth organisations, clubs and sports partnerships.

Criteria - What are the Fundamental Components of a Successful Blueway?

Extensive international benchmarking has identified the external assessment of high quality recreation trails utilise a holistic criterion encompassing all aspects of the visitor experience.



As such, the Accreditation Criteria for Blueways on the island of Ireland combines a visitor focused approach with fundamental safety, technical, access and environmental components. All of these are underpinned by sustainable management techniques and processes.

In summary:

EXPERIENCE

Are the visitors' expectations met?

SAFETY

Is risk being appropriately managed?

TECHNICAL

Does trail infrastructure and signage follow best practice?

CONSERVATION / ENVIRONMENT

As a minimum does the Blueway avoid any negative impact on the environment or ideally how does it add to or improve the environment e.g. through education and access?

ACCESS

Will the Blueway be open for public use for at least ten years following accreditation?

SUSTAINABILITY

Are the management structures / partnerships, plans and processes in place to ensure the Blueway can continue to meet the required standard?

In order to achieve accreditation, a Blueway must demonstrate how it meets the criteria (see pages 16-17).

Detailed guidance on how to achieve the criteria is provided within **www.bluewaysdevelopment.org**



Accreditation - Who is Managing the Accreditation Process?

Accreditation has been identified by the Blueway Partnership as fundamental to ensure a consistent high standard of Blueway development on the island of Ireland.

AWARDING BODY

The Blueway Partnership has set the criteria required for Blueway accreditation and will also act as the awarding body.

The accreditation panel will be supported by a Blueways Accreditation Inspector who will carry out required inspections of Blueways on the island of Ireland.

A Blueway Technical Advisory Panel is being created encompassing key organisations that can provide technical advice on specific aspects of Blueway development (sports specific advice, safety advice etc.)

Detailed guidance for Blueway Developers is available at www.bluewaysdevelopment.org



BLUEWAY DEVELOPMENT AND ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK



Benefits - Why become Accredited?

The accreditation of a Blueway by the Blueway Accreditation Panel will bring the following benefits:



BRAND

An accredited Blueway will be afforded the opportunity to avail of the official Blueway brand which can be utilised within user information and signage. External accreditation will also provide enhanced consumer recognition of the proposition.

For further information on brand guidelines see the Blueway Design & Brand Guidelines at **www.bluewaysdevelopment.org**

QUALITY STANDARD

External accreditation will help reassure key stakeholders that a best practice approach is being implemented. This may include:

- Key decision makers within your organisation
- Key funders
- Local community and business

In addition, an approved brand is more marketable.

SUPPORT

Those engaging in the accreditation process will be able to avail of the support of the Blueway Development Advisor and also best practice knowledge sharing from other Blueway developers / managers through an annual Blueway Forum meeting.

PROMOTION

External accreditation will also provide enhanced consumer recognition of the proposition. Blueways remain a relatively new concept on the island of Ireland, therefore a critical mass of accredited Blueways which follow the same high standard will help raise awareness. This in turn will generate a cross sell effect, particularly within the domestic market i.e. visitors who have a positive experience on one accredited Blueway will be attracted to visit another.

OPPORTUNITIES

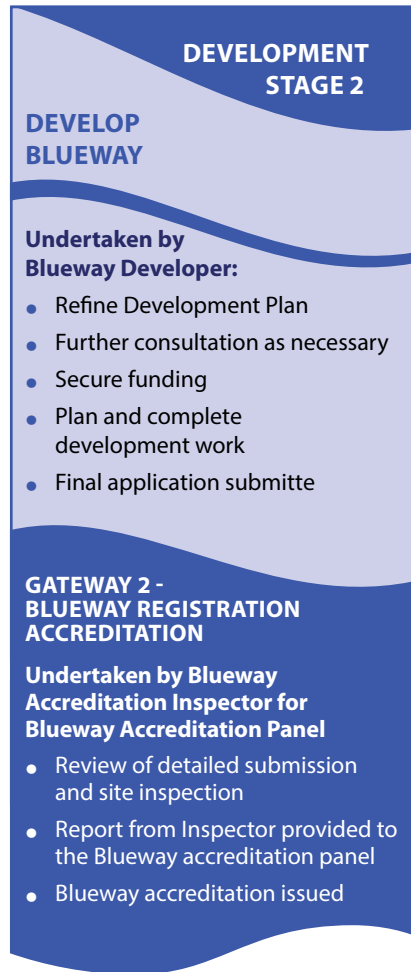
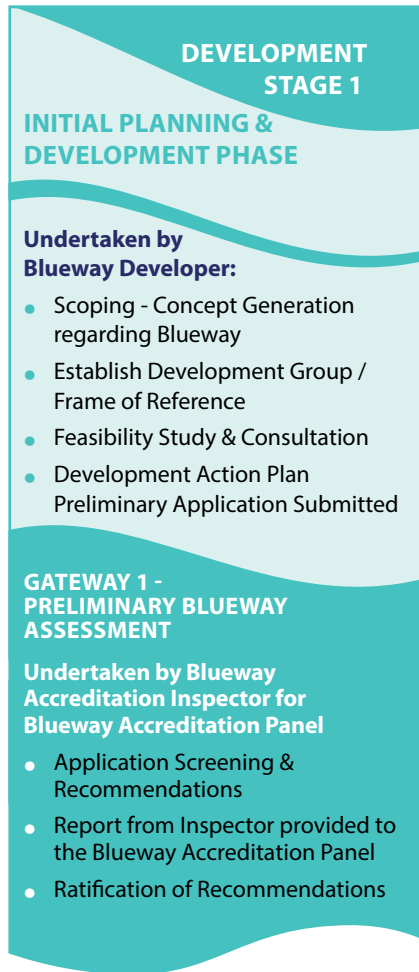
The Blueway Partnership will continue to engage with relevant funding bodies to ensure the recognition of the importance of accreditation within funding measures. Developers can also use the accredited and quality Blueways to lever further funding for additional developments and increasing the offer of services. There is recognition within local and national tourism development plans for Blueways and for quality, accredited facilities.

Planning - How to plan the Development and Management of a Successful and Sustainable Blueway

The recommended process for successfully planning and developing Blueways in Ireland is outlined on page 15.

The reality of outdoor recreation means the steps in this process may not be delivered in a linear fashion i.e. there will inevitably be overlap, however, it is important each step is delivered.





BLUEWAY ACCREDITATION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

EXPERIENCE		✓
Engaging Landscape / Culture and Heritage	Offers an opportunity to appreciate and explore an attractive landscape and engage with the unique heritage and culture of the area	
Multi-activity	Offers a combination of water and land based trail (with connectivity to water) options	
Capacity Building	A programme is in place to develop 'Eat / Stay / Go' and 'Activity / Experience' opportunities	
Eat / Stay / Go	Bars, Cafés, restaurants and attractions are easily accessible from trail heads and / or trails	
Activity / Experience Providers	Guided activity experiences appropriate for 'novice' are available and can be booked in advance	
Length of time	Offers a minimum experience duration of between half a day to one day	
Visitor Information	The visitor can access information to allow them plan and enjoy their Blueway experience	
TECHNICAL		
Walking Trails	Walking Trails are compliant with the Sport Ireland – Management Standards for Recreational Trails	
Cycling Trails	Cycle Trails are compliant with the Sport Ireland – Management Standards for Recreational Trails	
Shared Use Trails	Shared Use Trails are compliant with the Sport Ireland – Management Standards for Recreational Trails	
Snorkel Trails	Snorkel Trails follow the guidelines of the Irish Underwater Council	
Paddling Trails	Paddling Trails follow the Blueway Paddling Trail Guidelines	
Sailing & Windsurfing Sites	Sailing & Windsurfing Activities will be compliant with Irish Sailing and/or RYANI Accreditation standards	
Signage	All signage follows with Blueway Signage Guidelines	
Trailhead Facilities	Trail heads are clearly identified and offer adequate parking Toilet and changing facilities are available within close proximity of water based trail heads	
Managing user conflict	Consideration and identification of steps to mitigate against potential conflict with waterway / trail users has been undertaken	
Accessibility/Inclusivity	Reasonable steps have been undertaken to provide disabled access	

BLUEWAY ACCREDITATION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

ACCESS		✓
Landowner / Authority Agreement	Access is permitted by all landowners and relevant authorities – public and private for a minimum period of 10 years	
Insurance	Public liability insurance is in place providing indemnity for all infrastructure, land-based trails and water trails' access and egress points	
SAFETY		
Suitability	The experience is suitable for the 'novice' with little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities	
Responsibility	Visitors are not exposed to hidden dangers Visitors should be aware of the risks they will face and that safety is a shared responsibility between the visitor and the Blueway Developer/ Responsible Authority	
Activity Providers / Experiences	A programme is in place for activity providers to demonstrate their safety credentials	
CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT		
Statutory Approval	Evidence of consultation and approval with appropriate statutory bodies can be demonstrated	
Biosecurity & Invasive Species	Proactive measures are in place to stop the spread of invasive species and harmful pathogens	
Environmental Education	The Leave No Trace Ireland Principles have been incorporated	
Litter	The Blueway is free from litter and fly-tipped waste	
SUSTAINABILITY		
Management Group	A Blueway Management Group is in place – led by a Local Authority or State Agency	
Management Plan	A Blueway Management Plan is in place	
Visitor Feedback	A formal process is in place to monitor visitor feedback	

BLUEWAY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

Blueway Development Groups will be required to cover the cost of preliminary and registration assessments to be carried out on Blueways.

It is anticipated that all accredited Blueways on the island of Ireland will also require re-inspection every three years. This cost must be considered during feasibility and planning stages on all projects and should be included in project budgets and funding applications.

Detailed information on the planning process is provided within
www.bluewaysdevelopment.org







THE BLUEWAY PARTNERSHIP COMPRISES:



www.sportireland.ie



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

www.failteireland.ie



www.waterwaysireland.org



**tourism
northernireland**

www.tourismni.com



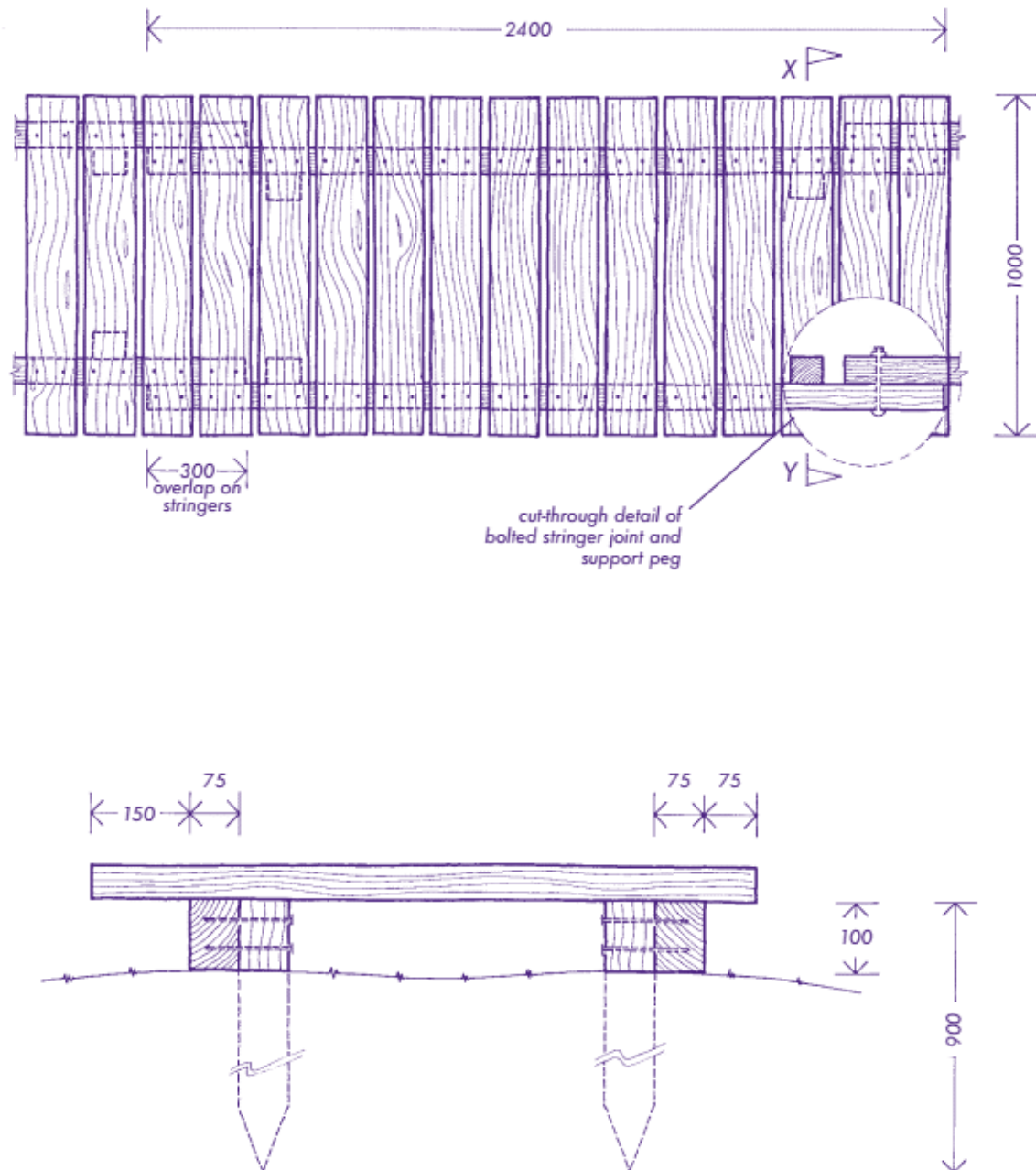
www.sportni.net

DISCLAIMER

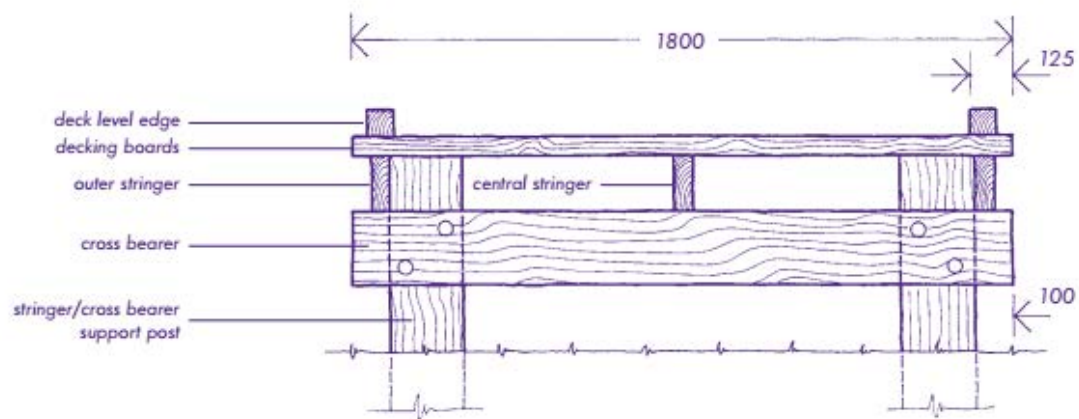
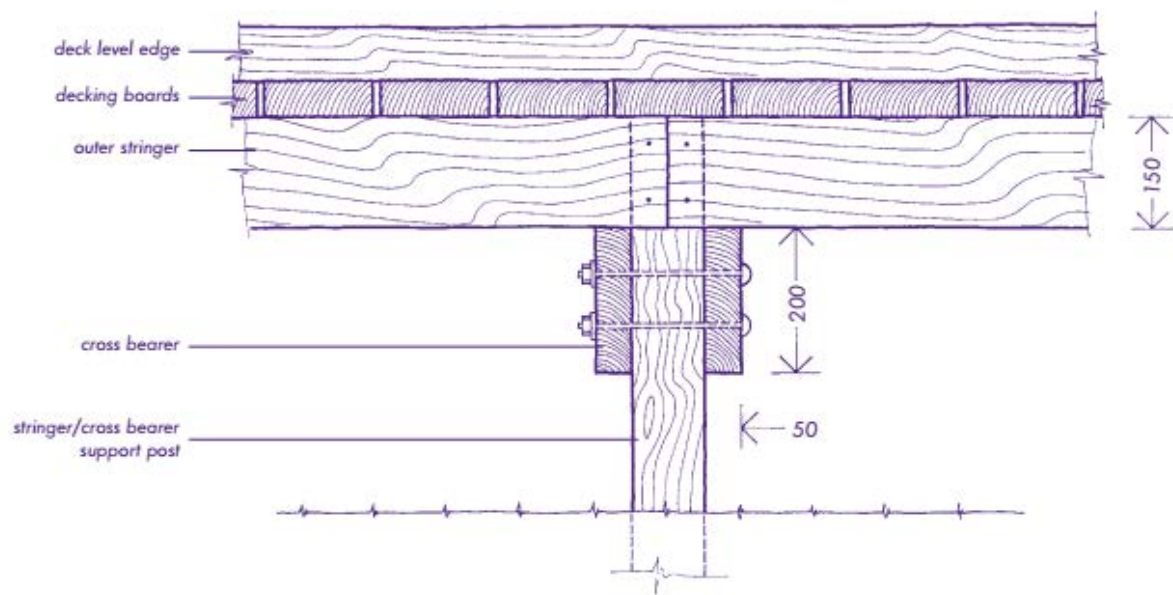
Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this publication. The Blueway Partnership cannot, however, accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, future publications will be amended accordingly.

Basic Specifications for Boardwalks, paths and associated gates and furniture

Low level Boardwalk



Raised Boardwalk



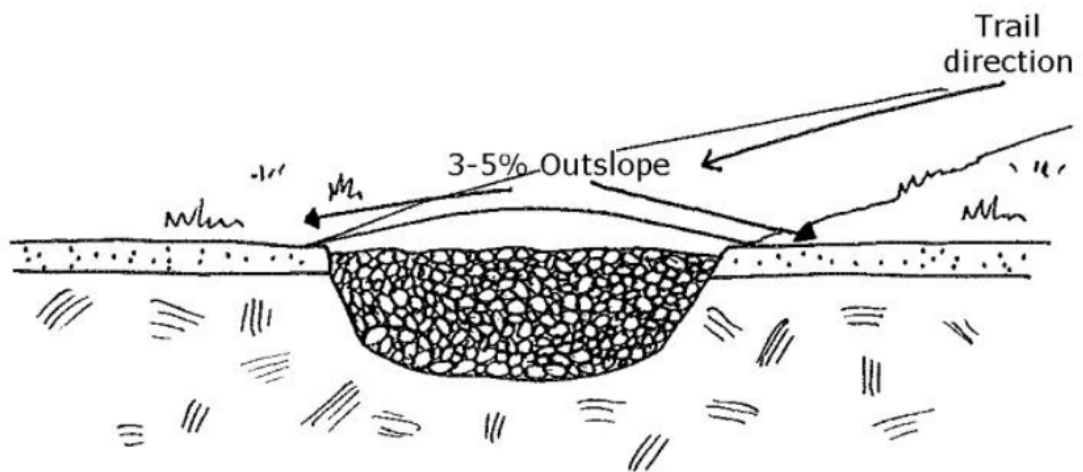


Image illustrating a raised camber path

Examples of trail furniture





