Arklow to Shillelagh Recreational Trail

Shillelagh - Tinahely - Aughrim - Woodenbridge - Arklow

The river valleys to the south of the Wicklow Mountains meander along the foothills from the 17th century planned estate village of Shillelagh, past Tomnafinnogue Oak Wood to the market town of Tinahely, and to Aughrim where the Ow and Derry Rivers meet, and Woodenbridge where the Aughrim and Avoca Rivers join before continuing eastward to Arklow town and the Irish Sea.

This information leaflet is to inform the local community that a Feasibility Study is underway considering the potential development of a recreation trail along the valleys connecting the towns and villages, and to invite submissions and ideas on the project. Input from the public is important in ensuring that the project can be delivered by consensus and will also meet local expectation.

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National Transport Authority

Background / The story so far

In 2011, Wicklow County Council undertook an initial study considering the potential reuse of the Shillelagh branch railway line as a 'Greenway'. Arising out of the initial study, funding was secured from the NTA to carry out a detailed feasibility study and preliminary design for a potential 'Greenway' from Arklow to Woodenbridge and onwards to Shillelagh.

A multi-disciplinary Project Team was appointed this year, including Roughan & O'Donovan engineers, TDI tourism consultants, and Brady Shipman Martin landscape and environmental consultants.

The Project to Date

A feasibility study has been taking place to examine the potential of developing the project, and to date has included:

Mapping:

Existing walking routes, roads, rivers, towns and villages, amenities and places of interest, including the former Shillelagh branch railway line and associated stone bridges, train station buildings and goods buildings, and other walking trails and way-marked ways in the immediate and wider locality.

Land ownership boundaries - private and public;

Tourism Trade Survey:

Speaking to tourism trade operators in the area to get their views and ideas on the idea of a new walking and cycling 'product' in the area, and whether they would see it as beneficial to the area;

Benefits to local recreation and amenity, with economic benefits to towns, villages and businesses through increased visitor numbers to the area;

Preliminary Consultations:

The Project Team has been liaising with a Community Stakeholder Group, coordinated through Wicklow County Partnership.

The Stakeholder Group has met many landowners and other stakeholders to seek their initial opinions.

Feedback to date has been broadly positive, generally indicating the viability of the project subject to detailed agreements on the trail route and design considerations in various locations.

The process is ongoing, and the Project Team now wish to seek your input.

Nature. Trails. Recreation. Village Experience

The Wicklow Mountains are renowned for their natural beauty, and attract visitors from near and far for recreation activities. Today, with increased demand for outdoor tourism and recreation activities, there is a unique opportunity for Wicklow to develop a new premium off-road walking and cycling trail, catering for all ages and abilities.

The valley corridors and settlements south of the Wicklow Mountains showcase a wealth of natural, manmade and cultural heritage - evident in the landscape, woodlands and rivers; in the built heritage of the villages and towns; the people, their traditions and folklore; the working agricultural landscape; and remnants of the former railway line that was once the backbone of the local economy.

A New Recreation & Tourism Facility

The idea of the Arklow Shillelagh Amenity Trail is to develop a new walking and cycling amenity, building on the success of the Tinahely Railway Walk locally, and other 'Greenway' attractions, and extending that idea to connect the other villages and communities along the valley.

A high quality off-road amenity for walking and recreational cycling would have immediate local appeal, but with sufficient scale would attract visitors from the wider region also, making the valley corridor a new regional destination. The route of the trail should connect with towns and villages so as to bring economic benefit with increased demand for coffee shops, food and drink and accommodation, as well as new opportunities in bicycle hire and shuttle services.

Where possible, the trail could utilise sections of the former railway line as it offers a relatively flat, continuous and 'ready-made' route that runs between the settlements, and explores both the natural and built heritage along the route. Elsewhere, if the railway line is not available, deviations onto the local road or alternative routes for short sections will be examined to ensure continuity and a high quality, attractive facility.

Why we need your input..

The project is for the area, and for the people of the area. We would like to hear your views:

Do you think the project is a good idea and will benefit the area?

Do you have ideas on possible route options, or designs considerations?

Is there other relevant information you think should be considered?

Public Information Event

A Public Information Event will be held on Thursday 19th October 2017 at 8:00pm in Lawless's Hotel, Aughrim. During this event Project Team members will be available to discuss the project and to receive suggestions and feedback.

Have Your Say

We welcome members of the public and stakeholders to make submissions in person at the above event, or in writing (by email or post) to:

Email: arklow-shillelagh@wicklowcoco.ie

The Project Engineer
Arklow to Shillelagh Recreational Trail
Wicklow County Council
County Buildings
Wicklow Town

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