



# BLESSINGTON eGREENWAY

## WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Response to An Bord Pleanála RFI Item  
9(i)

### Outline Maintenance and Management Plan

January 2024



Wicklow County Council,  
County Buildings,  
Station Road,  
Wicklow,  
Co. Wicklow.

The scheme is proposed to provide a mainly off-road shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists. The scheme will cover approximately 33km and involve the development and enhancement of a greenway alongside forest and woodlands adjacent to the shoreline of the Blessington Lake/Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA.

This document has been prepared to outline the management and maintenance plan for the Blessington eGreenway, which will be further developed prior to the opening of the greenway to the public. The plan will address the following topics in more detail:

1. Operational Management Structure
2. Greenway Management Duties
3. Financial Resources
4. Inspection and Maintenance Plan and Activities
5. Monitoring
6. Complaint Management and Resolution
7. Code of Conduct
8. Control of Dogs
9. Water Safety
10. Operational Hours
11. Severe Weather Response Plan
12. Emergency Response Plan
13. Trail Accreditation and Insurances

### **1. Operational Management Structure**

The development, management, and operation of the proposed Greenway will be under the purview of Wicklow County Council, specifically overseen by the Municipal District in which the Greenway is located—namely, the Baltinglass Municipal District. Support and assistance for this initiative will be provided by various Directorates within Wicklow County Council, including the Transport, Water & Emergency Services Directorate (TWES) and Community, Cultural & Social Development (CCSD), who currently serve as the project's promoters.

Wicklow County Council plans to have staff for the Greenway who will be responsible for its day-to-day maintenance and management. The Municipal District Engineer, stationed at the Baltinglass Municipal District Office in Blessington Town, will assume the role of overseeing the Greenway's daily operation. Furthermore, the operational staff assigned to the Greenway will also be based at this location. Refer to Figure 1 below for an overview of the team structure responsible for managing the Greenway.

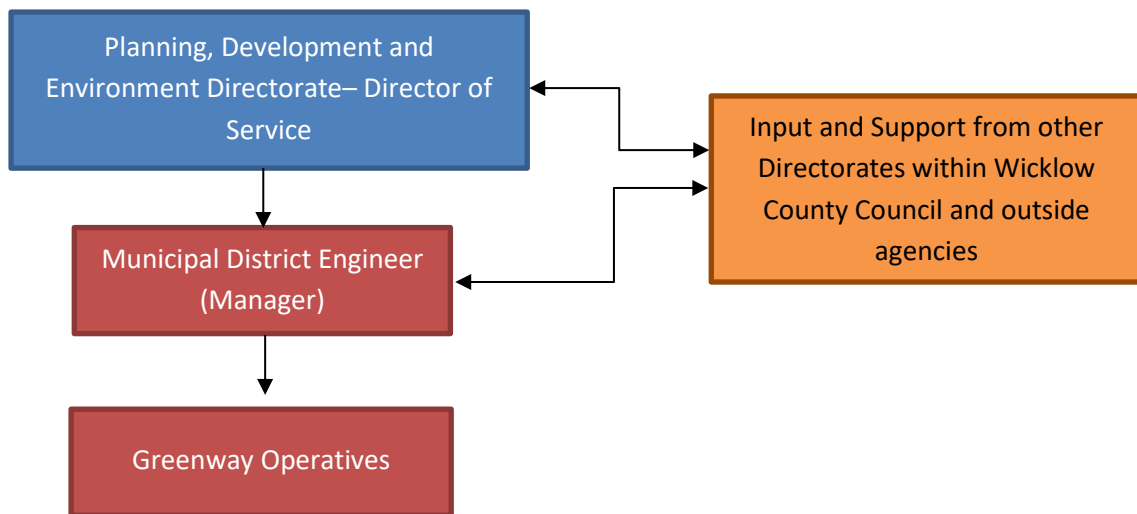


Figure 1 - Greenway Operational Management Structure

## 2. Greenway Management Duties

The Municipal District Engineer, holding the position of Senior Executive Engineer, will lead the management and operation of the greenway, undertaking the following key responsibilities:

- **Community Engagement:** Facilitate and foster collaboration with the local community, ensuring their input and concerns are addressed.
- **Central Point of Contact:** Serve as the primary liaison for all Greenway-related matters, acting as the go-to person for inquiries and issue resolution.
- **Team Management:** Oversee the maintenance and operatives responsible for day-to-day operations on the Greenway.
- **Stakeholder Communication:** Liaise with landowners and adjacent property owners to address ongoing maintenance and other Greenway-related concerns.
- **Monitoring and Inspection:** Develop and implement a comprehensive program for monitoring and inspecting the Greenway to uphold quality and safety standards.
- **Maintenance Program:** Develop and execute a structured maintenance program to ensure the ongoing upkeep of the Greenway's infrastructure and amenities.
- **Severe Weather Response:** Collaborate with the TWES Directorate to formulate and manage a Severe Weather Response Plan for the Greenway.
- **Budget Management:** Take charge of the Greenway budget, ensuring effective allocation and utilisation of financial resources.
- **ESB Collaboration:** Engage regularly with ESB Management and ESB's Lake Wardens to discuss the management of ESB interests along the Greenway, particularly the lake currently under their control.
- **ESB Forest Management:** Liaise with ESB regarding the management of ESB forests, preparing and implementing a comprehensive management program.

The operatives responsible for the Greenway will perform various roles and duties, including but not limited to:

- **Maintenance Activities:** Undertake necessary maintenance tasks to ensure the continuous upkeep of the greenway.
- **Monitoring:** Keep a vigilant eye on the greenway and its users to ensure smooth operation and address any emerging issues promptly.
- **Litter Management:** Address and resolve litter issues that may arise along the greenway.
- **Regular Inspection:** Conduct routine inspections of the greenway to identify and rectify any potential issues or hazards.

### **3. Financial Resources**

Funding for the ongoing repairs and maintenance of the Greenway will be included in the Baltinglass Municipal District revenue budget. This budget allocation will ensure the sustained quality and safety of the Greenway infrastructure.

### **4. Inspections and Maintenance Plan and Activities**

A detailed maintenance plan will be developed for the Blessington eGreenway prior to its opening to the public. This plan will adhere to the guidelines provided in the 'Sports Ireland Trails 2017 Guidance Notes for Local Trail Monitors' and the 'Sustrans 2016 Greenway Management Handbook.'

All maintenance activities on the Greenway will be conducted by Baltinglass Municipal District or by appointed contractors.

The maintenance plan will include the following components:

- **Trail monitoring schedule:** This schedule outlines the frequency and specific activities for regular monitoring of the trail.
- **Trail monitoring forms:** Documentation forms should be provided to record any issues or concerns identified during trail monitoring. These forms will ensure consistent and thorough documentation of maintenance needs.
- **Route maintenance work:** Develop strategies and procedures for conducting maintenance work on the Greenway route. This includes guidelines for repairs, upgrades, and addressing any issues found during monitoring.
- **Planner templates:** Provide templates that assist in planning and scheduling routine maintenance tasks. These templates will streamline the maintenance process and ensure that tasks are adequately planned and executed.
- **Weekly record sheets:** Utilise record sheets to track the actual maintenance activities performed by the greenway management team or external contractors. These sheets should capture details such as the nature of the work, resources used, and the date of completion.
- **Comprehensive records of the greenway management team:** Maintain detailed records of all team members involved in greenway management, including their roles, responsibilities,

and training requirements. These records will help track personnel qualifications and ensure proper training for the team.

The greenway maintenance plan shall typically include the following greenway tasks:

- **Surface Maintenance:** Regular inspection and repair of the trail surface, including repairing potholes, cracks, or uneven areas to ensure a smooth and safe riding or walking surface.
- **Vegetation Management:** Trimming and pruning vegetation along the greenway to maintain clear sightlines, prevent overgrowth, and ensure the safety of users. This may also include the removal of invasive plant species.
- **Signage and Markings:** Inspecting, cleaning, and repairing signage, wayfinding markers, directional signs, and pavement markings to ensure they are visible and accurate.
- **Litter and Waste Management:** Regular cleaning and removal of litter and waste along the greenway, including emptying trash bins and maintaining a clean and pleasant environment for users.
- **Drainage Maintenance:** Clearing and maintaining drainage systems, such as ditches, swales, and culverts, to prevent water accumulation and ensure proper water flow and drainage along the greenway.
- **Bridge and Infrastructure Maintenance:** Inspecting and maintaining bridges, boardwalks, fencing, lighting, traffic light systems and other infrastructure elements to ensure their structural integrity, safety, and functionality.
- **Safety Inspections:** Conducting regular safety inspections to identify and address any potential hazards, such as damaged trees, damaged structures, slippery surfaces, or unsafe conditions.
- **Rest Area and Amenity Maintenance:** Cleaning and maintaining rest areas, benches, picnic tables, bike racks, and other amenities along the greenway to ensure they are in good condition for user comfort and convenience.
- **Wildlife and Habitat Management:** Monitoring and managing the impact of the greenway on wildlife and habitats, including implementing measures to protect sensitive areas and promote biodiversity.
- **Winter Maintenance:** Were appropriate the clearing snow and ice from the trail during winter months, ensuring safe passage for users.

By implementing this maintenance plan, Wicklow County Council aims to ensure the proper upkeep and preservation of the Blessington eGreenway for the benefit of its users.

## **5. Monitoring**

Wicklow County Council will create a comprehensive monitoring plan to assess the usage of the greenway. This plan will be developed in accordance with TII Publications Rural Cycleway Design (Offline & Greenway). In addition to monitoring greenway usage, the Council will implement an environmental monitoring plan specifically focused on evaluating the impact of the greenway on the local bird population.

## **6. Complaint Management and Resolution**

Wicklow County Council will establish complaint procedures to address issues that may arise during Greenway operations. These procedures will include:

- Wicklow County Council will promote and advertise the available channels for lodging complaints, utilising various platforms. Signage will be installed at all trail heads along the Greenway, providing contact details (telephone and email) for the Council. These contact details will be available during both office hours and out-of-hours.
- Wicklow County Council will record and document complaint details in a central register dedicated to the Greenway. This will allow for better understanding and resolution of the issues raised.
- The Municipal District Engineer will then investigate and assess each complaint to determine the facts of the case.
- The Municipal District Engineer will carry out an assessment and implement measures to address the complaint as quickly as possible. The Municipal District Engineer may engage with the person who raised the complaint to see if the proposed response is reasonable.
- Once the Municipal District Engineer has determined the appropriate response, they will engage with the person who raised the complaint to ensure the proposed solution is satisfactory.
- After resolving the complaint, the Municipal District Engineer will contact the person who made the complaint to verify their satisfaction with how the matter was handled. Upon confirmation of satisfaction, the complaint will be closed on the central register.
- In addition to the complaint management procedures, the Municipal District Engineer will develop and implement internal protocols to address various scenarios, particularly emergency or safety issues.
- Regular reviews of all complaints will be conducted to identify any recurring issues.

Alongside the complaint management procedures, Wicklow County Council will establish a feedback mechanism to gather suggestions and ideas for improving the Greenway from its users.

## **7. Code of Conduct**

Wicklow County Council will develop a greenway code and encourage all users to follow it. The greenway users' code will promote mutual safety and respect among pedestrians and cyclists, as well as responsible behaviour towards other users and the local environment. Users will be encouraged to observe all local bye-laws, notices, and practice the 'Leave No Trace' ethic. It will also give specific advice for cyclists and pedestrians, with regard to animals and wildlife and the environment. For example the code will remind users of the following:

### ***All Users Should:***

- Recognise pedestrians' priority over cyclists.
- Consider and respect other users and the local environment.
- Observe any local bye-laws and notices.

### ***Cyclists Should:***

- Ring their bell to catch the attention of pedestrians and other users.
- Pass people slowly and give people space.
- Ride at an appropriate and safe speed for all.
- Take special care at junctions and crossings.
- "be safe be seen".
- Take extra care with joining and cycling on the road and public car parks.
- Adhere to the Rules of the Road.

***Pedestrians Should:***

- Listen for cyclist's bells.
- Allow cyclists to pass safely.
- Keep dogs on a leash.

***Plan Ahead and Prepare***

- Respect any signs, regulations, policies and special concerns for the area. Where possible travel by public transport or share cars, consider the availability of parking.
- Ensure you have the skills and equipment needed for your activity and to cope with emergencies that could arise.
- Check the weather forecast and always be prepared for changing weather conditions.
- For environmental and safety reasons, and to minimise your impact on other users, keep group numbers small, split larger parties into smaller groups.

***Be Considerate of Others***

- Respect the people who live and work in the countryside.
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Let nature's sounds prevail - keep noise to a minimum.

***Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife***

- Dogs should always be kept on a lead.
- Observe wild animals and birds from a distance and avoid disturbing them.
- Keep wildlife wild, don't feed wild animals or birds.

***Leave What You Find***

- Respect property - for example, leave gates as you find them (open or closed).
- Preserve the past – examine, without damaging – structures of interest, viaducts, tunnels, points of interest.
- Conserve the present, leave rocks, flowers, plants, animals and all habitats as you find them.

***Dispose of Waste Properly***

- "Pack it in Pack it Out" - take home all litter and waste.
- Litter and dog fouling receptacles will only be available at Trail head locations.

### ***Respect the water***

- Observe the water safety guidance and signage for your safety.
- Swimming in the lake is prohibited for safety reasons.
- Fishing is allowed by the way of a permit issued by the ESB.
- For the usage of a boat on the lake, a boat permit application must be made to the ESB. No inflatables are allowed on the lake.

The greenway code will be available on the dedicated website and displayed on greenway signage at all entry points.

### **8. Control of Dogs**

Wicklow County Council, in conjunction with the code of conduct, would like to remind all dog owners of their responsibilities, which are outlined below:

- Keep your dog on a leash. Have consideration for others, such as guide dogs, the elderly and children, and by keeping your dog on a lead on the Greenway.
- All dog owners must keep their dogs under effectual control.
- All dog owners must have a licence for each dog in their possession or a general dog licence to cover all dogs in their possession - you can purchase a dog licence from the Post Office or from your local authority.
- All dog owners must ensure that every dog under their control shall at all times wear a collar bearing the name and address of the owner and that the name and address are legible.
- All dog owners must collect and properly dispose of faeces deposited by their dog on the Greenway.

For Dog owners that have a restricted dog breed or strains and crosses of them, those dogs must be:

- Kept on a short strong lead (only up to 2m long) by a person over 16 years who is capable of controlling them.
- Muzzled whenever they are in a public place.
- Wear a collar bearing the name and address of their owner at all times.

In accordance with The Control of Dogs Regulations 1998 (S.I. No. 442 of 1998)

### **Why the control of dogs is necessary?**

- Dog faeces are foul-smelling, unsightly and are a potential source of serious disease, particularly for children. Dog faeces is a particular nuisance on greenways where it is likely to be rolled on by cyclist, wheelchair users or by prams or buggies and stepped on by other users of the greenway, or handled by small children along the greenway.
- A barking dog will frighten livestock and increase the likelihood of them running away and dogs will chase any animal that runs away from them, it is a natural instinct of dogs. By chasing livestock, dogs are likely to cause the animals to be injured on barbed wire fencing or to get stuck in drains, or even drowned in rivers. Chasing pregnant animals can cause abortions, stillbirths and other difficulties at birth. Animals that have been chased, particularly where it happens repeatedly, suffer from stress and will not feed or thrive properly. Where a dog corners an animal, it will attack the animal by biting it. This often



results in serious injuries and, in the case of sheep, frequently causes the death of the animal.

Wicklow Council will also commit to the following actions:

- Providing appropriate signage at all trailheads to remind Greenway users of their responsibilities regarding the control of dogs.
- Installing suitable receptacles at all trailhead locations to allow dog owners to dispose of dog faeces in a safe and sanitary manner.
- Monitor compliance with these dog control measures.

## **9. Water Safety**

Wicklow County Council is committed to promoting water safety along the greenway. To enhance safety measures, swimming and the use of inflatables in the lake are strictly prohibited. Water safety signage will be strategically installed at appropriate locations to reinforce this directive.

Furthermore, individuals seeking to use a boat on the lake must submit a boat permit application to the ESB.

## **10. Operational Hours**

It has been assessed that the operation of the Greenway should occur during daylight hours and therefore the following operational hours will apply, which will be subject to periodic review and adjustments based on user demand:

- Summer Daylight Saving Time (typically 9am to 8pm)
- Winter Daylight Saving Time (typically 9am to 5pm)

By aligning the operational hours with daylight, we aim to provide optimal visibility and reduce potential safety hazards that may arise during low-light conditions. However, we are aware that user demand and preferences may vary, so we are committed to regularly evaluating these hours to ensure they best meet the needs of our users and community.

## **11. Severe Weather Response**

A site-specific severe weather plan will be developed in coordination with the Local Authority Safety Management Committee. The plan will be set out in accordance with Guidance Document 14 – A Guide to Severe Weather Emergencies (February 2020), published by The National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management of the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government, as well as Wicklow County Council's Policy and Procedure for the Management of the Local Authority Response to Storms (SMS PP S12 – January 2019). The primary purpose of this plan is to ensure the safety of greenway users by outlining the council's response to severe weather events.

## **12. Emergency Response**

An emergency access response plan will be developed and implemented and will deal with how the Council and Emergency Services will respond to such emergencies which may include accidents, medical emergencies or any other incident that requires the emergency services. The plan will include and address the following:

### ***Emergency Response Procedures***

Emergency Services will be tasked on foot of calls to the emergency response number.

### ***Vehicular Access Points***

There is no vehicular access on the greenway from the public access points. Only designated personnel and the emergency services will have access for maintenance and emergency response.

Where the Greenway interfaces with the public road network there will be locked chicanes/demountable bollards installed. These access points are designed to be unlocked by emergency services as needed. The key or code required for unlocking these chicanes/bollards will be made readily available to the emergency services, ensuring swift and unimpeded access when required.

### ***Emergency Routes***

Emergency services will be capable of using the Greenway as a means to reach any emergency on the Greenway. The paved width of 3m will be sufficiently wide enough to allow those emergency vehicles (ambulances, fire service and mountain rescue etc.) to travel on the Greenway. A table and map will be prepared detailing the maximum distances from a public access point to any given point on the Greenway and will be provided to the emergency services.

### ***Signage and Identifying Markers***

The greenway will be divided into sections and represented on an overall route map. Each section will be color-coded and numbered for easy reference. To ensure user safety, marker posts or signage with unique identifiers will be placed at trail heads and regular intervals along the route. In case of an emergency, these markers will help users communicate their location accurately. Additionally, details of these unique marker positions will be shared with emergency services, enabling them to promptly respond to incidents.

### ***Emergency Services at Signalised Controlled Bridges***

Wicklow County Council aims to promote the Road Safety Authority's (RSA) booklet, titled "Sharing the Road with Emergency Service Vehicles." This booklet provides valuable guidance to motorists on how to effectively interact with emergency service vehicles on the road. It offers advice on summoning emergency services, when necessary, appropriate actions when encountering emergency vehicles, and ensuring safe road sharing with these vehicles. To the best of our abilities, we intend for all emergency services to adhere to the "ESDS Tactical Response Guidelines" as published by the RSA.

Considering the information provided in both documents, we propose the following procedure for emergency response vehicles arriving at red stop lights on bridges while using their emergency lights and sirens. In such situations, the emergency response vehicle will wait until the driver is certain that the way is clear and no other road users will be endangered or forced to take extreme avoidance actions.

Based on our assessment, it is anticipated that the maximum duration an emergency response vehicle would have to wait before the bridge is cleared to proceed will be approximately 32 seconds. This estimation is derived from the scenario of a slow vehicle, such as agricultural machinery, traveling at 30 km/h across the bridge under a green light. The anticipated wait times at each bridge for vehicles traveling at different speeds are as follows in table 1 below:

Bridge Name	Distance between Signals (m)	Estimated Wait Time (Seconds) with motorised vehicles travelling at the following speeds		
		@ 30km/h	@ 50km/h	@ 65km/h
Blessington (Knockieran) Bridge	266	32	20	15
Baltyboys Bridge	234	29	17	13
Valleymount Bridge	221	27	16	13

Table 1 – Anticipated wait time on bridges.

### **13. Trail Accreditation and Insurances**

Prior to the Greenway becoming operational and open to the public, Wicklow County Council will pursue the accreditation of the Greenway by Sports Ireland. Once Sports Ireland has conducted an inspection of the Greenway and identified any issues, Wicklow County Council will rectify them before registering the Greenway with Sports Ireland.

Upon receiving accreditation from Sports Ireland, the Greenway will be included in the Irish Public Bodies (IPB) insurance policy, which provides coverage for public liability insurance. The Sports Ireland inspection process is a requirement of the insurance policy, and routine inspections of the Greenway will be conducted annually to maintain the insurance coverage.