



# N11/N25 Oilgate to Rosslare Harbour Option Selection

Newsletter - March 2021



# Dear local resident,

**First and foremost, we hope this finds you safe and well in these challenging times.**

We are getting in touch to update you on the current status of the N11/N25 Oilgate to Rosslare Harbour project.

Currently, Wexford County Council is in the process of studying feasible options for the development of the project, taking into account the feedback we received from local residents and community groups during the public consultation phase in July and August last year.

The main objective of this stage is to identify a preferred scheme option that will deliver a safe, sustainable, high-quality and effective solution to meet the future transport needs of County Wexford, the South East region, and the country generally. The selected scheme option will then be developed further and in more depth, before it is submitted for planning approval.

These are times of uncertainty and transformation, and the project must respond to these changes in order to ensure the development of a proposed scheme that meets the future needs of society in a sustainable and effective manner and in line with changing government policy. As a result, the option selection process is taking longer than was initially anticipated. This newsletter describes some of the complexities and challenges that have extended the option selection process, and presents some of the studies that are being carried out to assess the potential impacts that these changes may have on the project's development.

The selection of the scheme option to be further developed will set the future course of the project and is a critically important decision to secure planning approval for the delivery of a safe, high-quality and sustainable transport network. It is also an important decision for current and future transport users and for local residents and communities that may be impacted by the decision. The project is committed to ensuring that a thorough, future-proofed and evidence-based decision-making process is completed in as prompt a manner as possible. This will ensure that the best transport option is identified and that local residents and communities that may be impacted positively or negatively by the decision are informed as soon as possible.

Please be assured that the project will continue to provide the information you need in order to understand the ongoing development of this project. We are also committed to making available the necessary resources within our team to support engagement with local residents and other stakeholders. Information on the project can continue to be accessed on the project website [www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie](http://www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie).

In the meantime, please stay safe and well during these difficult times.

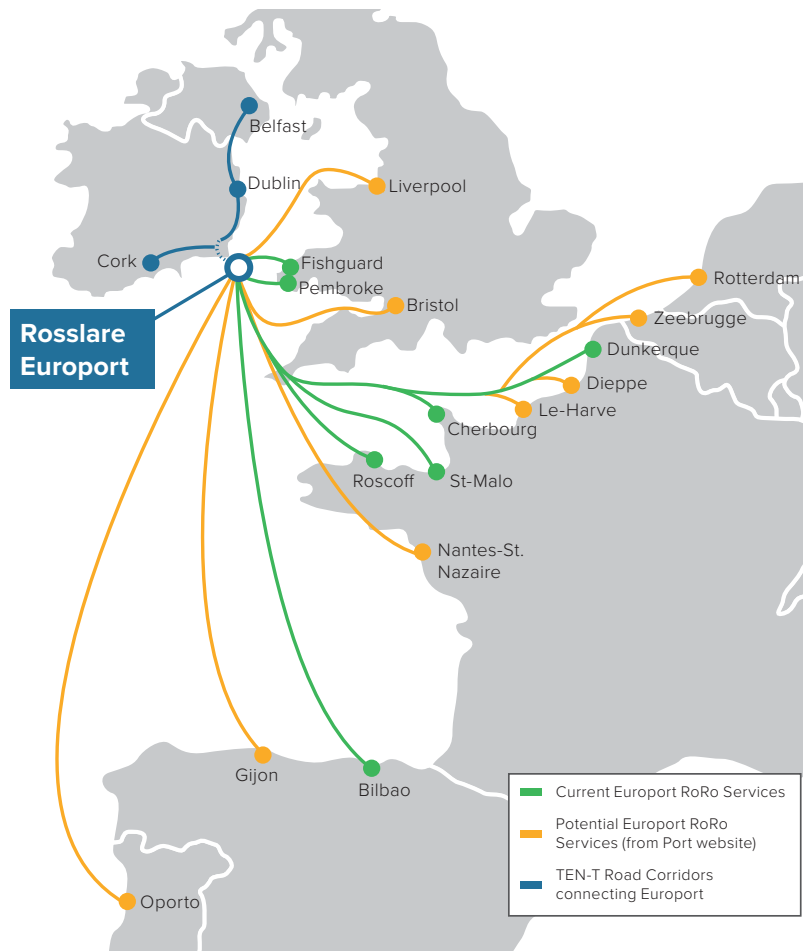
Yours sincerely

**Wexford County Council**



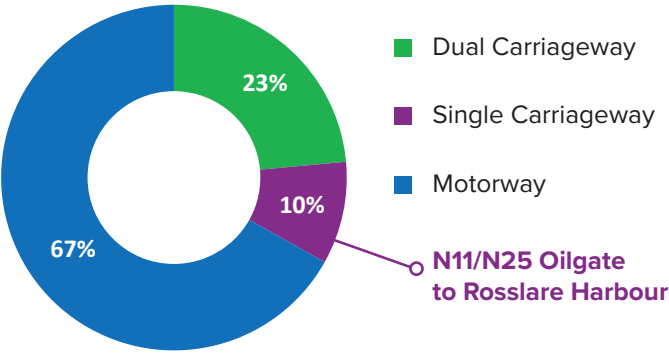
### Travel Demand Forecasting

Forecasting future transport needs and demand levels is a critical element of the project’s development. Making future forecasts is inherently uncertain, and the further into the future forecasts are made, the more uncertain they become. In the case of this project, forecasts are being made for transport, economic and environmental assessments more than 30 years into the future. To reflect this uncertainty, detailed forecast modelling is being undertaken to create a picture of how and where we will be living, working and travelling in the future. Data from national transport models, the Central Statistics Office and other government departments is being used to forecast future demographics, employment, vehicle ownership, travel demand, freight demand etc. Some recent developments have added to the uncertainty of this forecasting process and enhanced studies are being undertaken to ensure that a range of possible future scenarios are being captured in the future forecasting models. Some of these enhanced studies are described below for your information.



Rosslare Europort ‘Gateway to Europe’ The N25-N11-M11-M50-M1-A1 Road Corridors connect Rosslare Europort with Dublin & Belfast to the north and Cork & Waterford to the west and form part of the TEN-T European Transport Network. Rosslare Europort provides the shortest sea crossing between Ireland & mainland Europe and connects these land corridors via the TEN-T Sea Corridor to the TEN-T Transport Network on mainland Europe.

### TEN-T Road Corridor Belfast-Dublin-Rosslare Europort



The EU TEN-T Regulation requires member states to develop the TEN-T Network to a high-quality standard. The section of N11 & N25 from north of Oilgate to Rosslare Europort is the only section of the TEN-T Road Corridor connecting Belfast, Dublin & Rosslare Europort not to have been completed to a high-quality standard.

### Brexit Impacts

The ending of the Brexit transition period on the 31st of December 2020 has had a very significant and immediate impact on the volume of road freight using Rosslare Europort. Figures for January 2021 show an immediate 45% increase in road freight traffic using the Port compared to the same period in 2020, with a significant proportion of this traffic re-routing from Dublin Port. Rosslare Europort is a critical strategic gateway between Ireland and mainland Europe and its importance is likely to further increase when the Port Master Plan development increases its capacity and efficiency.

This significant current and future increase in freight traffic puts added pressure on the existing N11/N25 road corridor and on the local communities that use it. Together with Rosslare Europort, the N11/N25 corridor also forms part of the TEN-T Trans-European Transport Network. TEN-T requires member states to develop designated corridors to a high-quality standard in order to strengthen social, economic and territorial cohesion in the EU. The project is consulting with national agencies and Rosslare Europort to ensure that the forecasting of future freight travel demand adequately accounts for the future growth of Rosslare Europort.

## Changes to Working Patterns

Covid-19 restrictions have profoundly changed the way we live our lives and some of these changes may have longer lasting impacts after we leave the pandemic behind us. Working patterns have changed significantly, with many people working from home rather than commuting to work. The reduction in the number of people travelling to and from work has also contributed to the reduced levels of traffic on national roads during the pandemic. These significant temporary changes to working patterns over the past year have led to increased focus on potential future changes to working patterns and the potential for increased home and remote working as digital connectivity improves nationwide. The project is studying the potential impacts that increased levels of future home and remote working may have on journeys made travelling to and from work.

## Planning Policy & Guidelines

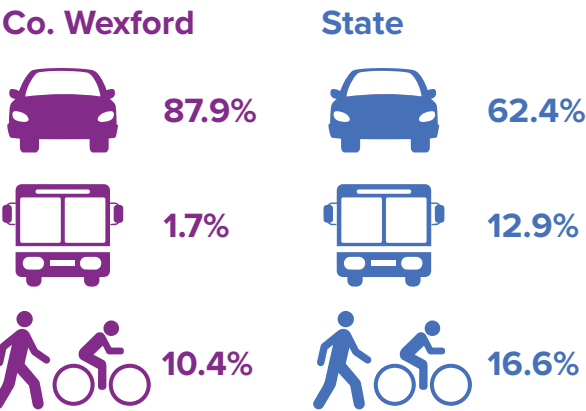
The planning policy landscape under which the project is being developed is subject to ongoing transformation, particularly in the areas of sustainability and climate action. The European Green Deal, the National Climate Action Plan, the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region, and the draft Wexford County Development Plan 2021-2027 are just some of the policy documents that have been published recently with an increased focus on securing a sustainable future. The project is required to respond to this changing policy landscape in order to adhere to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Ongoing studies are being undertaken to establish how the project can best be developed to support this rapidly evolving policy framework.

## Public Transport Alternatives

The biggest technological revolution in transport for over a century is currently underway, primarily in response to the global challenge of climate change. The transport sector will play an important role in meeting this challenge. This project must support targets for sustainable transport while also meeting the future needs of transport users on the N11 & N25 corridors, in addition to the needs of the local communities that also live close by the road corridors. A modal shift from private to public transport is one of the key targets in all of the policy documents mentioned above to achieve a high-quality, sustainable transport network. The project is giving particular consideration to feasible public transport alternatives that could potentially meet the future needs of transport users.

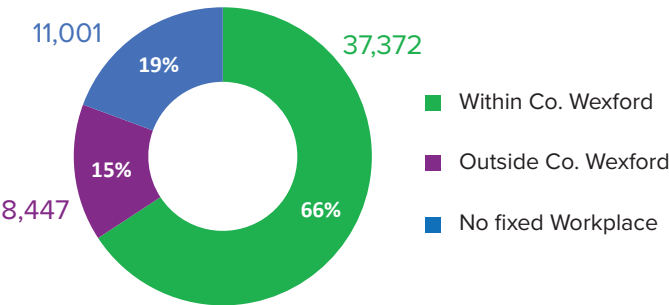
A study of existing rail infrastructure and services on the Dublin to Rosslare Europort railway line is being carried out to assess its potential ability to meet future transport needs for passenger and

## Mode of Travel to Work



Statistics taken from Draft Wexford County Development Plan 2021-2027 & Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

## Workplaces of Co. Wexford Residents



Statistics taken from 2018 County Wexford Socio-Economic Profiles – Wexford County Council/AIRO

freight traffic as an alternative to an upgrade to the N11/N25 road corridor. The actual delivery of improvements to rail infrastructure and services is outside of the scope and means of this project.

However, should it be confirmed that a rail alternative is capable of meeting future transport needs and would achieve better outcomes than a road-based option, then the future progression of this project will be the subject of further review.

## Demand Management Measures

Studies are also being undertaken to examine how future improvements to bus services could contribute to the delivery of a high-quality, sustainable transport network to meet future transport needs. While increased public transport services alone may not have sufficient additional capacity to provide an alternative that would fully meet future transport needs, a modal shift due to an increased frequency and volume of services could contribute to meeting future need by reducing the volume of private vehicles on the roads. Improvements to the road corridor may also make bus services more attractive and competitive and a synergy may therefore exist between improvements to the road infrastructure and improvements to bus services.

While the actual delivery of improvements to bus services is outside of the scope and means of this project, consultations are taking place with service providers on any planned or possible upgrades or improvements to existing services.

## Active Travel

A modal switch from private transport to active travel (cycling & walking) also forms an important part of planning policy objectives to deliver a safe, high-quality, and sustainable transport network. The incorporation and/or facilitation of high-quality active travel infrastructure is also being examined as part of the option selection process. Such infrastructure could take the form of online or offline cycleways and footways depending on the scheme option being examined. Possible connections with the proposed Waterford to Rosslare Harbour Greenway project as well as the existing EuroVelo cycle route are also being considered. The potential positive impacts of the scheme options on opportunities for active travel and resulting benefits to health and wellbeing are being studied as part of the overall assessment of scheme options.

## Carbon Assessment

Another aspect of the future proofing of the project to meet sustainability targets is the assessment of carbon emissions that may be generated by the road-based scheme options (including the “Do-Minimum” option outlined in the public consultation) during the lifetime of the project. The potential future contribution of low and zero carbon fuels and services is also being considered

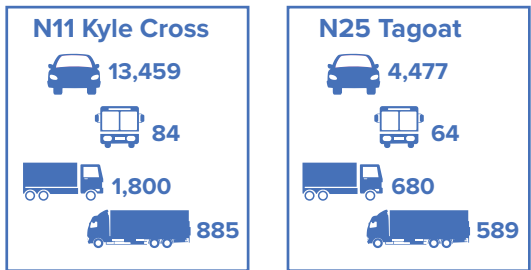
as part of the objective towards a sustainable future transport network.

## Road-Based Scheme Options

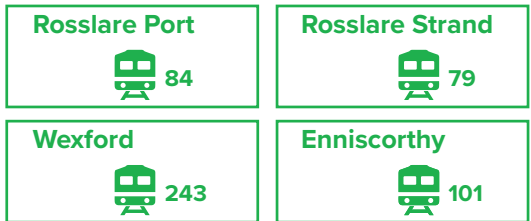
Apart from the studies outlined above, the detailed assessment of the road-based scheme options presented at the public consultation in July & August 2020 is progressing towards completion. The first step in this process is to consider if the current road corridor is capable of meeting future transport needs without any upgrade or improvement, particularly in terms of safety, capacity, and environmental impacts. This is termed the “Do-Minimum” option. If the existing road is found to be capable of meeting future needs then no further intervention is required. The next step is to consider if the existing road could be improved or upgraded to meet future transport needs, this is termed the “Online Management” Option.

Six options for new road corridors are also being examined and some of these also utilise parts of the existing N11/N25 road corridor. 97 different possible combinations have been identified by combining different parts of the seven corridor options where they overlap (existing road corridor + six new option corridors). This exercise ensures that the optimal option combination can be identified which will optimise positive impacts and reduce negative impacts. All of these 97 option combinations are being assessed under the pre-determined selection criteria to identify the preferred road-based scheme option. All options can be reviewed via the project website at [www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie](http://www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie)

## Daily Road Traffic Volumes



## Daily Rail Passenger Numbers



Note: Figures taken from Rail Census Data & TII Traffic Counter Data for 21st November 2019.

### Covid-19 Disruption

While the enhanced studies outlined above have contributed to the extended option selection process, ongoing Covid-19 restrictions are also having some impact. These are being managed to reduce disruption and to keep workflows progressing. The current option assessment process is being undertaken by a large number of specialist sub-teams that carry out the separate assessments that inform the overall selection process (e.g. transport analysis, economic analysis, ecology, archaeology, air quality, climate, noise, landscape, road and bridge design etc.).

The findings of all of these sub-team assessments then feed into the overall assessment of the scheme options. Some of these teams use modelling and analysis software that requires high performance computers and restrictions to normal working practices are causing some disruption to the processing and analysis of data. Some targeted environmental and ground surveys to inform the option selection process have only been fully completed in recent months in compliance with Covid-19 restrictions and guidelines.

### Completion of the Option Selection Process

To comply with the requirements of proper planning and sustainable development, the

option selection process must identify the most appropriate type and level of intervention that is required to meet future transport needs. The most appropriate level of intervention will produce outcomes that will meet future transport needs in a sustainable manner and that will also produce good value for money outcomes.

The selection of the scheme option to be further developed will set the future course of the project and is an important decision for the delivery of a safe, high-quality and sustainable transport network. It is also an important decision for current and future transport users and for local residents and communities that may be impacted by the decision.

The project is committed to ensuring that a thorough, evidence-based decision-making process is completed in as prompt a manner as possible in order to ensure that the best option is identified, and that local residents and communities that may be affected by the chosen option are informed as soon as possible. The option selection process is now drawing to a conclusion and will then be subject to an independent peer review process. This independent process is very comprehensive and depending on the outcome it is currently anticipated that the preferred scheme option will be confirmed and announced by week ending 18th of June.

### What Happens Next (indicative timescale)



### Further Enquiries & Contact Details

Additional information in relation to overall progress, current news items, and project reports can be found on the project website [www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie](http://www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie). The project team can also be reached at the following addresses:

**N11/N25 Oilgate to Rosslare Harbour Scheme**  
**Wexford County Council, Carricklawn, Wexford, Y35 WY93, Ireland**  
**Email:** [nrlo@wexfordcoco.ie](mailto:nrlo@wexfordcoco.ie) | **Phone:** 053 92 32358  
**Website:** [www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie/contact-us](http://www.oilgate2rosslareharbour.ie/contact-us)

Option Selection Process

The option selection process is a complex, multi-disciplinary process with many different aspects, considerations and sub-processes that inform the selection of the transport solution that will best meet the identified future needs of transport users and local communities.

The process flow chart to the right shows how the option selection process develops from start to finish and presents some of the aspects that inform the process. Some of these aspects are overarching requirements e.g. Policy, Legislation, Standards & Guidelines. Others are interdependent processes, e.g. Future Travel Demand Forecasting informs the six appraisal criteria. Many individual criteria have multiple sub-criteria, e.g. the environmental appraisal includes 11 sub-criteria as follows:

- Population and Human Health
- Ecology & Biodiversity
- Soils & Geology
- Hydrogeology
- Hydrology
- Landscape & Visual
- Noise and Vibration
- Air Quality and Climate
- Archaeology, Architecture & Cultural Heritage
- Material Assets and Land - Agriculture
- Material Assets and Land - Non-Agriculture

Upon completion of the process an Option Selection Report will be published which will document the process followed to confirm the selected scheme proposal.





