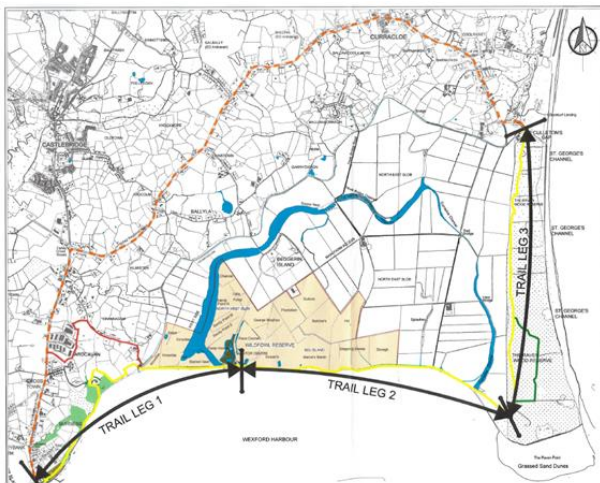




WEXFORD TO CURRACLOE GREENWAY

BOOK 1

PLANNING AND POLICY REPORT



Wexford to Curracloe Greenway

Planning and Policy Report

Contents

Contents	1
1. Introduction	4
2. Wexford County Development Plan 2013 – 2019:.....	6
2.1. Introduction	6
2.2. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 7 Tourism	6
2.2.2. Objective TM02	7
2.2.3. Objective TM03	10
2.2.4. Objective TM29	10
2.3. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 8 Transportation.....	11
2.4. Wexford County Development Plan -Chapter 13: Coastal Zone Management:	12
2.4.1. Objective CZM15	12
2.4.2. Objective CZM24	13
2.4.3. Objective CZM22	13
2.4.4. Objective CZM23	13
2.4.5. Objective CZM24	14
2.5. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 14: Heritage:	14
2.5.1. The Wexford Harbour and Slobbs SPA	14
2.5.2. The Slaney Valley SAC	15
2.5.3. The Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC.....	15
2.5.4. The Raven SPA	15
2.6. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 15: Recreation, Sport & Public Rights of Way:	18
2.6.1. Objective RS19.....	18
2.6.2. Objective RS23.....	18

2.6.3. Objective RS27.....	18
3. Wexford Town Development Plan 2009-2015 (As extended until 2019).....	19
3.1. Wexford Town Development Plan-Zoning	19
3.1.1. Zone 3 Ferrybank	19
3.1.2. Zone 2 Crosstown	19
3.1.3. Zone 3 Ardavan	20
3.2. Policy Objectives	20
3.2.1. Wexford Town Development Plan - Chapter 7 Recreation and Tourism	20
3.2.2. Wexford Town Development Plan-Chapter 8 Conservation & Heritage	20
3.2.3. Wexford Town Development Plan-Chapter 9 Infrastructure	21
4. Architectural Heritage	22
5. National Monuments.....	24
6. Tourism.....	25
6.1. Introduction.....	25
6.2 Accessible tourism.....	25
6.3 The Ancient East	26
6.4. Case Study – The Great Western Greenway	27
6.5. Case Study – Waterford Greenway	28
6.6. Trip to Norfolk.....	29
6.7. Cycling Tourism	31
7. Walking and Cycling Policies and Initiatives	35
7.1. Get Ireland Active (The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland).....	35
7.2. Get Ireland Walking.	39
7.3. National Cycle Policy Framework.....	40
8. Engagement with stakeholders.....	43
8.1. Landowners	43

8.2 Elected Members.....43

9. Conclusions44

Appendix A – Visit to Norfolk Natura 2000 sites45

A.1 Introduction.....45

A.2 Information from Holkham NNR46

 A. 2.1 General46

 A.2.2 Information on wintering birds48

 A.2.3. Visitors & Trails:49

A.3 Information from Blakeney NNR.....49

 A.3.1 General49

 A.3.2 Visitors and trails52

A.4 Tourism55

A.5 Measures applicable to potential Wexford to Curracloe Greenway55

A.6 Conclusions:.....56

1. Introduction

Wexford County Council subject to the grant of planning permission intends to develop a Greenway from Wexford to Curracloe.

Walking and cycling are becoming increasingly prominent in National, County, City and Town Development Plans. Throughout this planning and policy document the proposed Greenway will be examined in terms of Planning Policy and in terms of National Policies in the areas of walking/cycling and tourism.

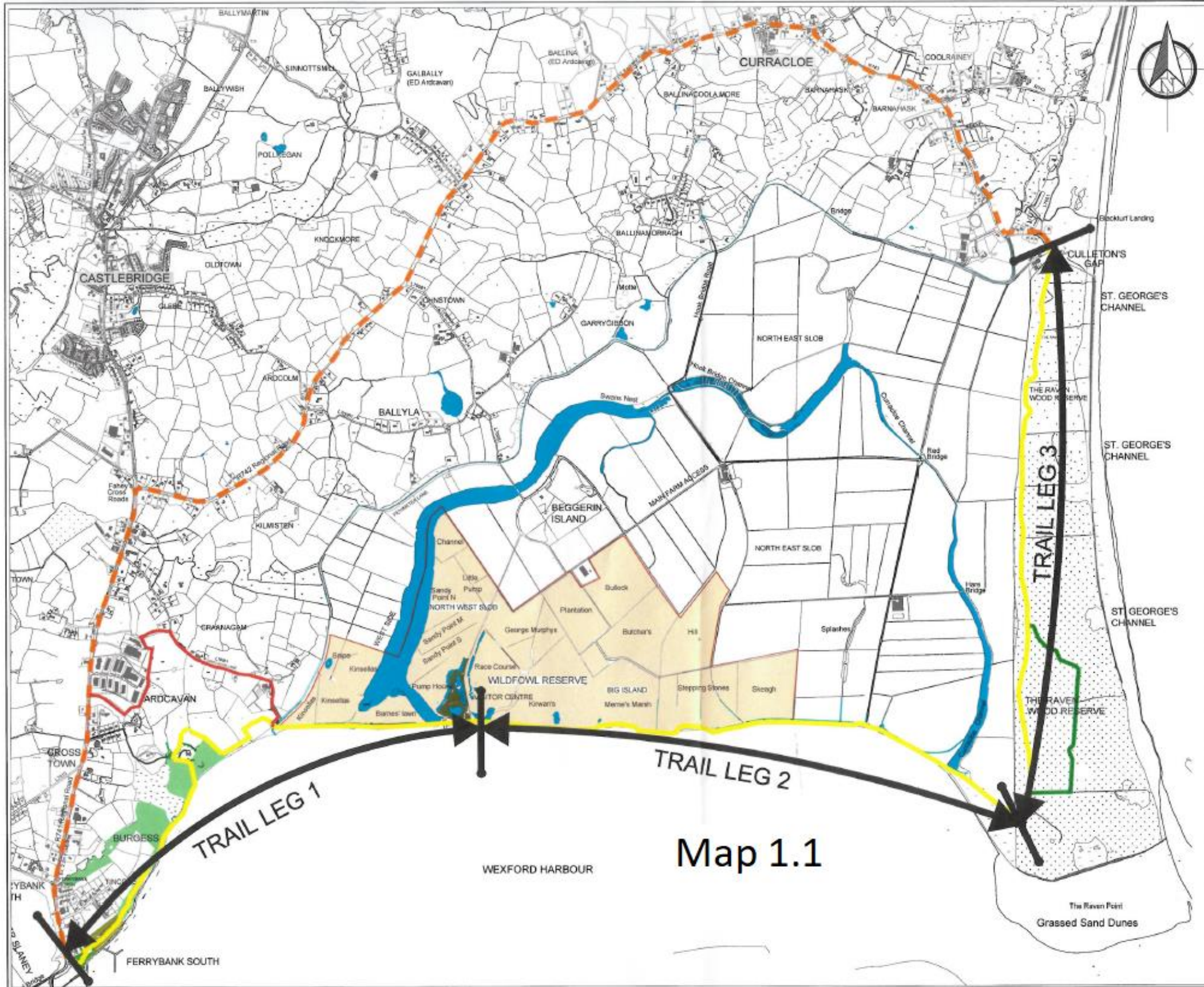
The proposed Greenway (length 10.7 Km) will link Wexford Town with the renowned beach area of Curracloe at Culleton's Gap. The Greenway has three distinct legs.

1. Leg 1 Wexford Town to the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (also a return route through Ardavan). Length 3.7 Km
2. Leg 2 Wexford Wildfowl Reserve to the Raven Wood. Length 3.4 Km
3. Leg 3 The Raven Wood to Curracloe (Culleton's Gap) Length 3.6 Km.

Map 1.1 below is an overall map of the proposed route indicating the 3 different legs

Legs 1 and 3 are to remain open all year but Leg 2 will close from the 15th September until April 15th the following year, to protect the important wintering birds that use the North Slob area in particular the Greenland White-fronted Geese. The NIS submitted with the planning application covers in detail the issues relating to the Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity of the proposed Greenway.

Of the 10.7 Km route, 4.8 Km is on existing roads or established trails, approximately 1 km is on existing unsurfaced agricultural vehicle route and approximately 4.9km is through agricultural land.



Map 1.1

NOTES:
 All locations in miles O.D. and refer to 1:50,000 OS maps.
 All distances are in miles unless otherwise stated.
 Figures in brackets only to be used if in doubt check with the Engineer prior to construction.
 Contractor to check location of existing services with service provider, prior to construction.

- LEGEND:**
- 6m wide Greenway Corridor
 - - - Existing Raven Wood Trail
 - - - Existing Footpath
 - - - - - Extent of Site
 - Slaney River Valley SAC 761
 - Wexford Harbour & Slab SPA 4076
 - The Raven SAC 710
 - The Raven SPA 4075
 - Wexford Wildfowl Reserve
 - Open space and amenity zone
 - YELLOW COASTAL ROUTE OPTION
10.75 km
 - BLUE CENTRAL ROUTE OPTION
9.75 km
 - - - - - GREEN PERIMETER ROUTE OPTION
10.45 km
 - - - - - PURPLE INLAND ROUTE OPTION
11.05 km
 - - - - - R472 ROAD ROUTE OPTION
10.25 km
 - - - - - ARDCAVAN LOOPED GREENWAY
6.1 km
 - - - - - RAVEN LOOP

Rev.	Revision Description	Date	By	Chk


Wexford County Council Environment
 County Hall, Carristown, Wexford Tel: 053-9196000
 J. Carley, B.E. C. Eng. F.I.E.I. Director of Services

Project Title: **WEXFORD TO CURRACLOE GREENWAY**

Drawing Title: **TRAIL LEGS**

Drawing Issue: <input type="checkbox"/> Final <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Drawn: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> J. Ward Checked: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> G. Firth Date: September 2017 Scale: 1:10 Drawn By: JAW	Drawing No: ATR/142 Rev:
--	---	------------------------------------

2. Wexford County Development Plan 2013 – 2019:

2.1. Introduction

The Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 sets out Wexford County Council's intentions for the future development of land, including measures for the improvement of the natural and physical environment and the provision of infrastructure. In the introduction to the plan it states "Wexford County Council intends to take a positive approach to development". New development opportunities will not be restricted unless there are strong, persuasive justifications for doing so having regard to European, national and regional policies".

The Wexford County Development Plan outlines various policies and objectives which relate to greenways and coastal paths and to the promotion of walking and cycling throughout the County. In the following parts of Section 2 of this report the various objectives relevant to the Wexford to Curracloe Greenway in the development plan will be outlined.

2.2. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 7 Tourism

Tourism plays an important economic and social role within the county of Wexford. The tourism potential of the greenway is covered in detail in Section 6 of this report. In Table 17 of the County Development Plan, under "Natural Tourist Attractions", sandy beaches are listed with Curracloe specifically mentioned, with the Raven Point Nature Reserve and the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve also on the list. The proposed greenway links these three important tourist amenities but the winter/spring closure of Leg 2 of the greenway reflects the environmental sensitivity of the Wexford Harbour and Slob SPA.

Under "Recreation Tourist Attractions" bird watching is listed and the promotion and development of the Greenway will improve access for visitors to the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve which will highlight the international importance of the slob area for wintering birds including the Greenland White-fronted Geese.

The following are the specific objectives in the Development Plan in the chapter on tourism of relevance to the Greenway project.

2.2.1. Objective TM01

"To protect and sustain those natural, built and cultural features that form the basis of the county's tourism industry, including landscapes of greater sensitivity, local scenic landscapes, areas of important wildlife interest, historic buildings and structures."

Relevance to Greenway

The proposed greenway and the operational management plan for the greenway including the winter closing of Leg 2 of the route will help to sustain and protect the "areas of important wildlife interest" and the educational and awareness programme to

be run in tandem with the Greenway will enhance the importance of the Natura 2000 sites adjacent to the proposed route.

2.2.2. Objective TM02

“To facilitate the development of a diversified tourism industry subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contain in Chapter 18”

Relevance to Greenway

County Wexford and the Wexford Town Environs area already has a fairly diverse tourism product. One area of weakness in particular in the Wexford Town area is the lack of an established or dedicated walking/cycle path to cater for tourists in this particular interest area.

Map 2.1 shows the extent of the existing cycle paths and footpath in the Wexford Town area on the main routes into the Town. As can be seen from the map there are no off road dedicated walking and cycle routes and the cycle routes are extremely limited. The tourism potential of the proposed greenway is covered in detail in Section 6, but the development of the proposed greenway would be a considerable enhancement and diversification of the tourism product in the area.

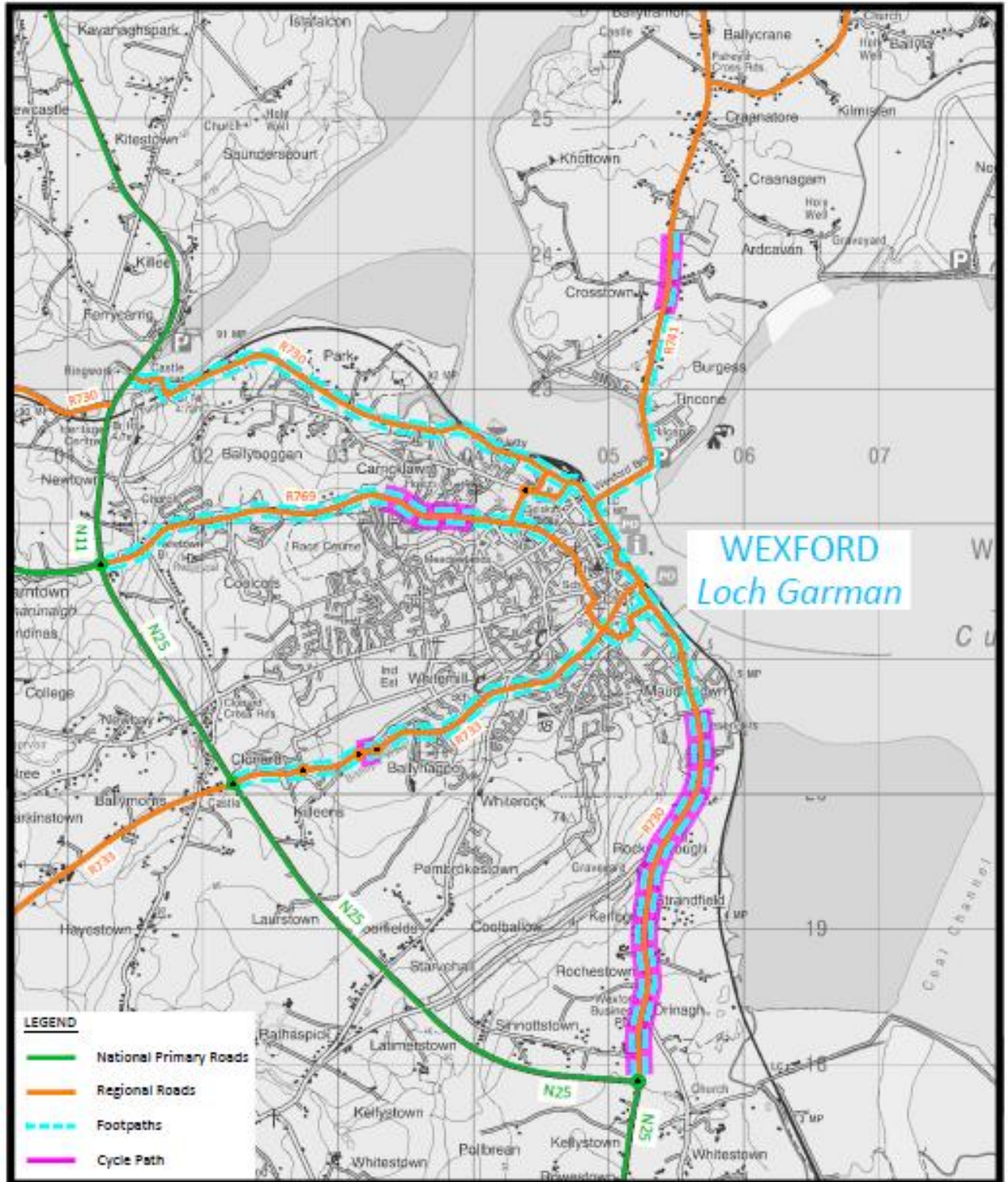
Map 2.2 indicates the route of the proposed Greenway and also indicates the locations of current cycleways and footpaths on the main routes into and out of Wexford Town. The route of the proposed Greenway is indicated in yellow on the map.

The provision of a dedicated cycle path/walkway for a distance of 10.7km in the heart of the main county town, Wexford will involve a considerable enhancement of the Wexford tourist product.

WEXFORD TOWN & ENVIRONS

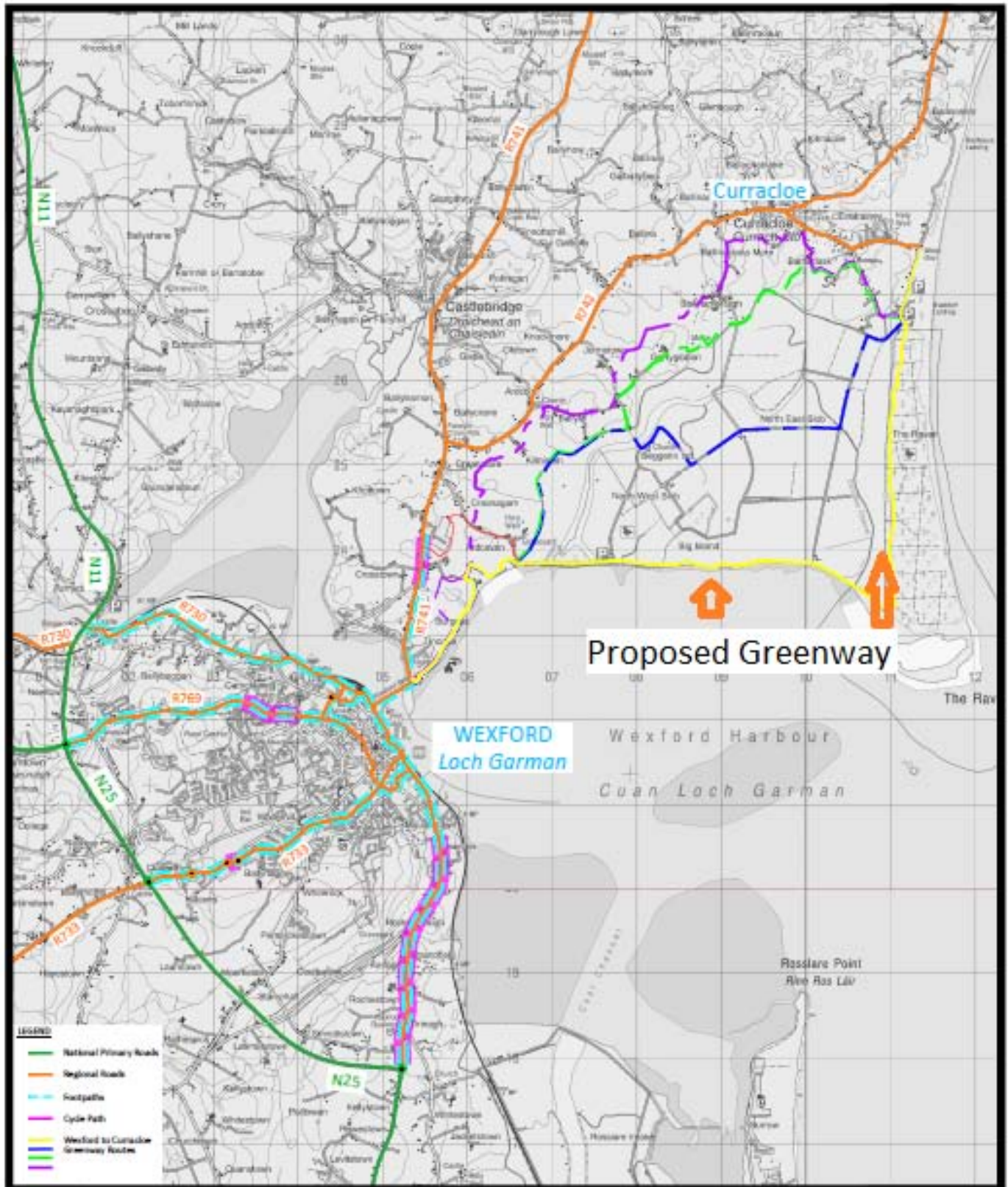
Location of Cycle Paths and Footpaths on Main Routes

Map 2.1



WEXFORD TOWN & ENVIRONS

Location of Cycle Paths, Footpaths and Wexford to Curracloe Greenway Map 2.2



2.2.3. Objective TM03

“To work with Fáilte Ireland, the County Wexford Tourist Board, the Arts Council and other relevant bodies including the National Parks and Wildlife Service to promote and maximise the tourism potential of Wexford, while ensuring the protection of the natural, cultural and built heritage of the area.”

Relevance to Greenway

It is premature in advance of a decision on the planning application to interact with all of the above agencies but should permission be granted detailed discussions with all of the above bodies will be developed. Detailed talks and consultations have taken place with the NPWS to discuss the important Natura 2000 sites adjacent to the proposed greenway, and concerns in respect of the proposed Greenway from the NPWS have been taken into account in the design and operational management regime for the Greenway. The design team have informed the NPWS that the proposed winter/spring closure of the route will be firmly enforced. .

2.2.4. Objective TM29

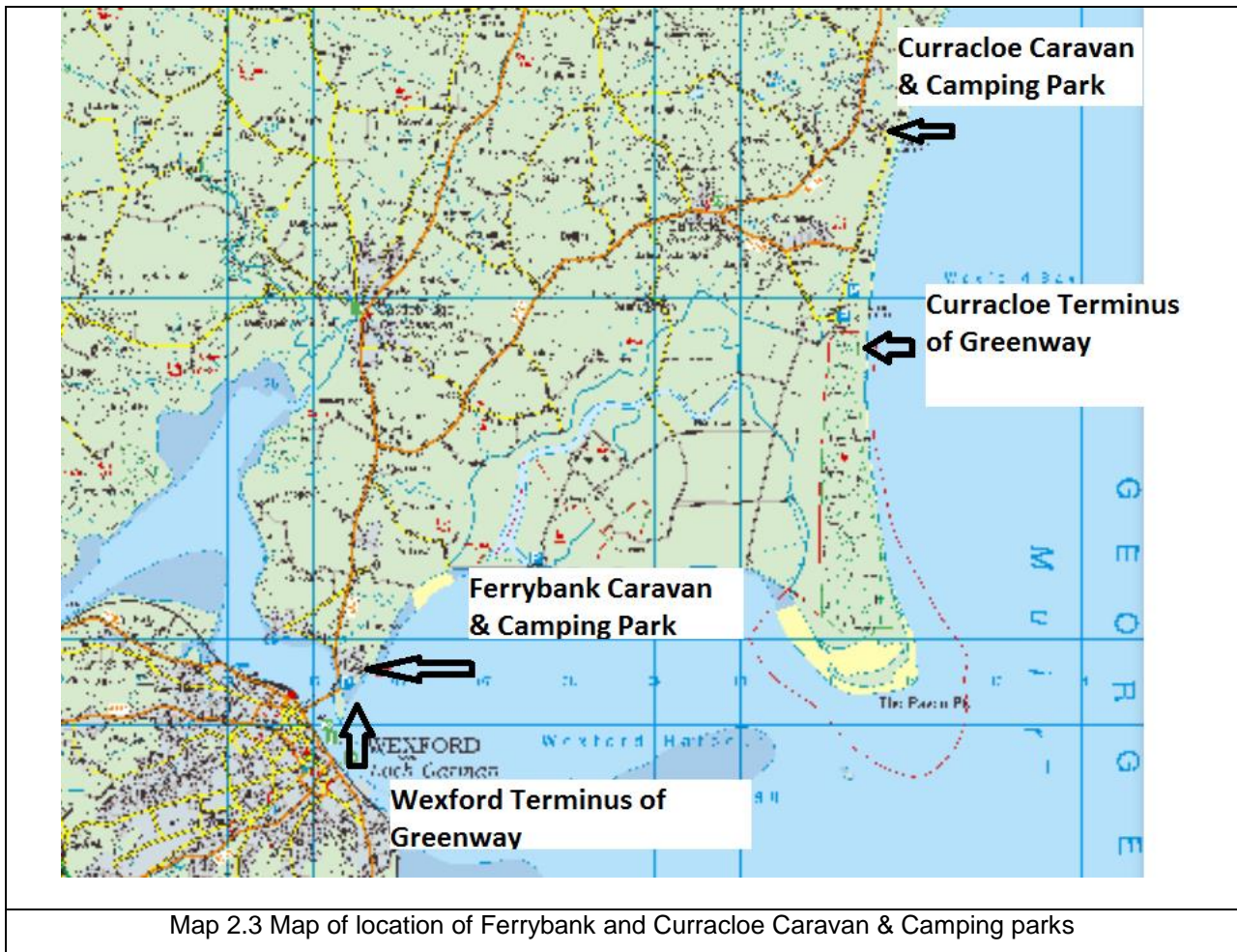
“To generally restrict the development of new camping/glamping and caravan parks to built-up areas subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18”.

Relevance to Greenway

At the Wexford Town terminus of the Greenway there is an existing caravan and camping park at Ferrybank which will help service the proposed Greenway. In the Curracloe area at the other end of the Greenway route, there is an existing caravan and camping park at the Northern end of Curracloe at Ballinesker.

Map No 2.3 shows the locations of the Ferrybank and Curracloe Caravan and Camping Parks.

Both ends of the proposed Greenway are serviced by existing camping parks and should the Greenway potential be realised in terms of tourist numbers, a number of the other caravan parks in the Curracloe area may provide camping facilities in addition to the above two established sites.



2.3. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 8 Transportation

A specific section of this report, Section 7 covers the area of walking and cycling. While the walking and cycling aspects of the proposed development and in particular the societal benefits are covered in detail in Section 7 of this report the following are objectives and policies included in the Development Plan which are of particular relevance to the proposed Greenway.

Objective T10 - To encourage walking and cycling by all sections of the community through:

- *'Promoting walking and cycling as sustainable transport modes and healthy recreation activities throughout the county.'*
- *'Promoting cycling and pedestrian friendly development layouts, provide facilities at public transport nodes, towns and villages, plan for and make provision for the integration of cyclist and pedestrian needs when considering new development proposals.'*
- *"Promoting cycling and walking facilities as integral to the provision of vehicular traffic facilities;*

- *“Supporting the installation of infrastructure measures (for example new/wider pavements, road crossings and cycle parking facilities), retrofitted if necessary, which facilitates and encourages safe walking and cycling;*
- *“Ensuring that the needs of walkers and cyclists are given thorough consideration in all planning documents, including town development plans, local area plans, village design statements and public realm plans produced by or in conjunction with the Council;*

The proposed Greenway provides a dedicated and safe walkway/cycleway, length of 10.7 km linking Wexford Town to the Blue Flag Beaches at Curracloe and Ballinesker and also linking zoned residential lands in Leg 1 of the route which meet many of the above objectives.

2.4. Wexford County Development Plan -Chapter 13: Coastal Zone Management:

In this chapter of the development plan key objectives and policies in terms of development along the approximate 250km of Wexford coastline are outlined. Some of the objectives relevant to this project are outlined below.

2.4.1. Objective CZM15

“To prohibit the development of any building (including caravans or temporary dwellings) outside the boundary of existing coastal settlements where the development is within 100m of the ‘soft shoreline’, that is, shorelines that are prone to erosion, unless it can be objectively established based on the best scientific information available at the time of the planning application, that the likelihood of erosion at the location is minimal taking into account, inter alia, any impacts of the proposed development on erosion, or deposition, and that the development will not pose a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features. This objective will not apply to minor extensions to existing buildings”

Relevance to Greenway

No new buildings are proposed within 100m of soft shoreline as part of the development of the Greenway.

2.4.2. Objective CZM24

“To promote access, including public walkways, to beaches and the seashore where environmentally appropriate, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18”.

Relevance to Greenway

This objective is very relevant to the Greenway Project. This greenway links the main county town, Wexford to the green coast beach at Culleton’s Gap and the renowned Blue Flag Beaches at Curracloe and Ballinesker with a safe dedicated walking and cycling route. The normal environmental criteria have been taken in account with the Greenway proposal. Leg 2 of the route passes through the North Slob SPA renowned for the Wintering Greenland White-Fronted Geese. The NIS submitted as part of the application covers this issue in detail and the winter/spring closure of Leg 2 of the route is to protect the wintering birds in the SPA.

2.4.3. Objective CZM22

“To ensure that there is appropriate public access to the coast including the provision of coastal walkways and cycle ways subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18”

Relevance to Greenway

Similar to previous objective but this specifically mentions the provision of coastal walkways and cycle ways which the Greenway project provides.

2.4.4. Objective CZM23

“To encourage tourism and recreational facilities and developments to be accessible for pedestrians and cyclists and take advantage of sustainable of transport alternatives through the provision of pathways, cycleway and links to the public transport system where possible, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18”.

Relevance to Greenway

Similar to previous objective but this also mentions the provision of walkways and cycle ways which the Greenway project provides. The greenway links the existing key Blue Flag beaches in the Curracloe area to the principal tourist destination in the County, Wexford Town, and its many recreational and hotel facilities.

2.4.5. Objective CZM24

“To promote access, including public walkways, to beaches and the seashore where environmentally appropriate subject to normal planning and the development management standards contained in Chapter 18.”

Relevance to Greenway

Similar objective to previous, promoting access to beaches and the seashore through walkways.

2.5. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 14: Heritage:

The Natura 2000 sites are a network of sites of the highest biodiversity importance in Europe designated under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) and the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The Natura 2000 sites are composed of Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The key objective of the designation of these Natura 2000 sites is to protect the habitats and species listed.

There are four Natura 2000 sites of particular relevance to the Greenway and while the issue is addressed in detail in the NIS the following is a brief summary of the 4 sites.

2.5.1. The Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA

The Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA (site no 004076) covers the Wexford Harbour area and slob area in general and Map 2.4 indicates the extent of the SPA. The Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (194 hectares) is located within this SPA. It is owned jointly by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Bird Watch Ireland and the Reserve and other lands within the SPA form a wintering ground of international importance for a number of migratory water fowl species including in particular the Greenland White-fronted Goose. This reserve was established in 1969 and was extended by 84 hectares in 1989, to its present size of 194 hectares.

Relevance to Greenway

In terms of the greenway Leg 1 is adjacent to the SPA and part of it runs through a section of the SPA. All of Leg 2 passes through the SPA and Leg 3 is adjacent to but does not run through the SPA.

The NIS submitted with this planning application covers in detail the qualifying interests of the SPA including mitigation proposals, the key provision of which is the winter/spring closure of leg 2 of the route

2.5.2. The Slaney Valley SAC

The Slaney Valley SAC (000781) covers the general area of Wexford Harbour and Map 2.5 indicates the extent of this SAC .

Relevance to Greenway

In terms of the greenway Leg 1 is adjacent to the SAC and part of it runs through a section of the SAC. Proposals to address the possible impact on this part of the SAC are addressed in the NIS. All of Leg 2 is adjacent to the SAC but does not pass through it.

The NIS submitted with this planning application covers in detail the qualifying interests of the SAC.

2.5.3. The Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC

The Raven (589 hectares) Site No 000710, situated 8 km north-east of Wexford town, is a large, well developed sand dune ecosystem, foreshore and seabed. Part of the reserve was planted with commercial conifer forest in the 1930s and 1950s. The Raven Point SAC is indicated on Map No 2.5

Relevance to Greenway

Leg 3 of the proposed Greenway runs through this SAC. It follows the route precisely of the existing established walking/access route through the forested part of the SAC.

The NIS submitted with this planning application covers in detail the qualifying interests of the SAC.

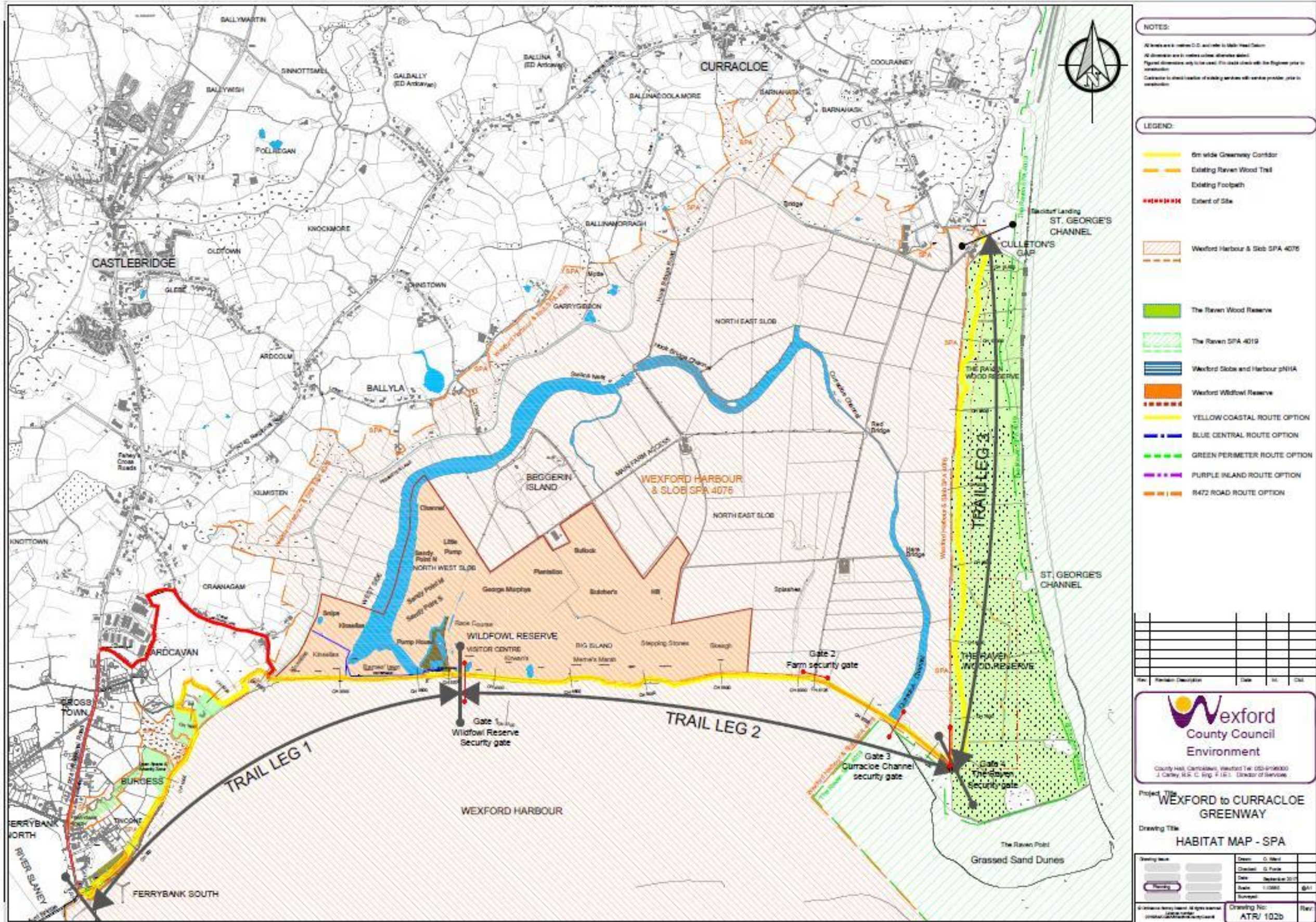
2.5.4. The Raven SPA

The Raven SPA covers the sand dune area to the South of the Forestry at the Raven and includes the entire coastline almost as far as Blackwater Head to the North, it is indicated on Map No 2.5 .

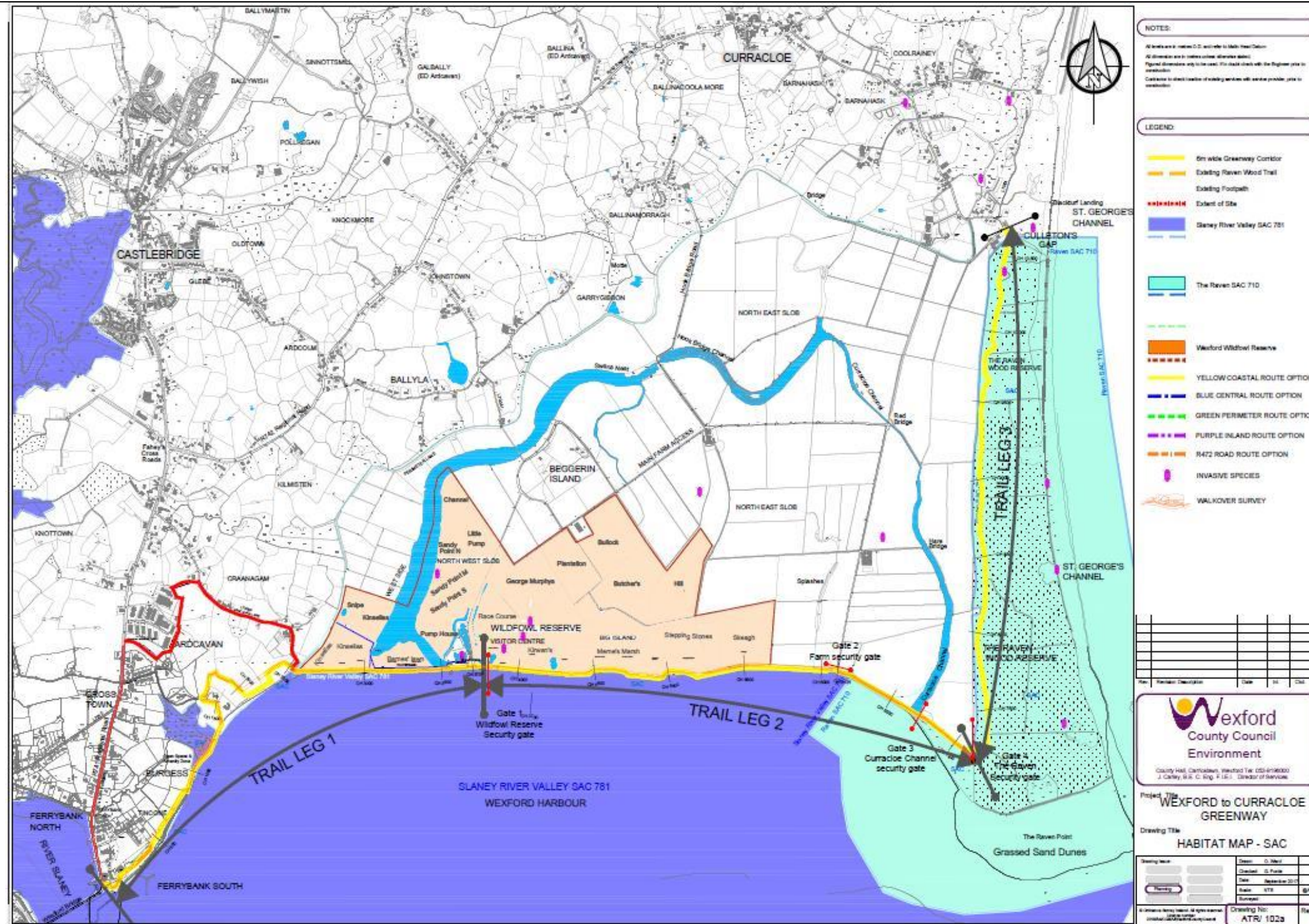
Relevance to Greenway

No part of the proposed Greenway runs through the SPA. The proposed route passes close to the SPA near the entrance to the Raven Forest.

Any possible implications for the qualifying interests for this SPA are included in the NIS.



Map 2.4 Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA and the Raven SPA



Map 2.5 Slaney River Valley SAC and the Raven Point SAC

2.6. Wexford County Development Plan - Chapter 15: Recreation, Sport & Public Rights of Way:

There are a number of established forest trails, scenic mountain passes, coastal paths and heritage walks in County Wexford, some of which traverse into adjoining counties. Wexford's Coastal Pathway (Slí Charman), which was established in 1993, extends for 221km from Kilmichael Point in the North East corner of the county to Ballyhack in the South-West. There are a number of objectives relating to walking and cycling in this part of the plan and they are listed as follows

2.6.1. Objective RS19

“To promote sustainable outdoor recreation in the form of walking and cycling and exploit the recreational and tourist potential of walking and cycling routes in the county whilst ensuring the protection of the environment.”

Relevance to Greenway

The Greenway project very much promotes this objective through the provision of the 10.7 km walking and cycling route linking two important tourist destinations Wexford Town and the beach area at Curracloe.

2.6.2. Objective RS23

To provide and maintain new/improved coastal access points, right-of-ways and the improvement and upgrading of the Coastal Pathway, subject to compliance with Articles 6 and Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.

Relevance to Greenway

The Greenway proposal fulfils this objective while taking into account the Habitats Directive

2.6.3. Objective RS27

“To support the development of a National Cycle Network and examine the feasibility of linking the main towns of County Wexford to this network”.

Relevance to Greenway

Wexford Town is on the proposed National Cycle Network and this proposed Greenway will link with the national network. Further aspects of the importance of the Greenway from a cycling perspective are outlined in Sections 6 and 7 of this report.

3. Wexford Town Development Plan 2009-2015 (As extended until 2019)

The Development plan for Wexford Town and Environs seeks to balance the needs for development, expansion and growth with strong policies for the conservation and protection of the natural and built environment while ensuring a quality of life for its inhabitants.

Wexford Town is built on the South/West side of the River Slaney. Since Wexford Bridge was built in its current location (1959) the North/East side of the Town has been characterised by one off ribbon type development in the Ferrybank and Crosstown area.

With the extension of the Town's Main Drainage System over Wexford Bridge to the East side of the River in 2009, this area to the North of the Town is now in a position from the infrastructure perspective to be developed. Accordingly in the preparation of the Town Development Plan there are three development zones, Zone 1 Ardcavan, Zone 2 Crosstown and Zone 3 Ferrybank are included within the Town Plan area.

3.1. Wexford Town Development Plan-Zoning

Leg 1 of the proposed Greenway passes through these three development zones.

3.1.1. Zone 3 Ferrybank

The Greenway commences in this zone. The first part of the Greenway runs through the small strip of open space and amenity land of the existing Caravan Park, to the North East of the caravan park, it runs through a landscape zone which is adjacent to medium density zoned land.

On the zoning map for this area an indicative coastal path is shown and it approximately follows the route of the proposed Greenway the subject of this planning application.

3.1.2. Zone 2 Crosstown

The Greenway runs through this zone adjacent to the coast. The zoning in this section, apart from the mid-section SAC, is zoned open space and amenity.

The indicative coastal path route on the zoning map is within this overall geographical zone but skirts around most of the SAC and crosses it inland. The proposed Greenway runs through the front of the SAC adjacent to the coast.

The NIS submitted with the application addresses the issues concerning any impact on the SAC.

The zoning in this area is compatible with the Greenway proposal. The NIS submitted with the planning submission addresses the impact on the SAC.

3.1.3. Zone 3 Ardcavan

The route also runs through this zoned area adjacent to the sea, apart from where the route diverts to avoid a small SAC area near Ardcavan. The overall zoning in this area is long term residential

As per the zoning matrix in the Town Development Plan the Greenway proposal is compatible with this zoning

3.2. Policy Objectives

3.2.1. Wexford Town Development Plan - Chapter 7 Recreation and Tourism

In this section of the Town Plan the importance of the Tourism industry is highlighted as are the abundance of Natural Heritage Areas close to the Town. There are a number of policy statements in this part of the plan which are of relevance to the Greenway proposal.

TR11 Create new rights-of-way in the interest of amenity as opportunity or as need arise.

TR12 Promote the development of river-side walking routes and fosters the enjoyment of the natural amenities of the area including the River Slaney.

TR13 Encourage the provision of access routes to amenity areas in co-operation with landowners and protect amenity areas from infringement by inappropriate development.

The following specific objectives in 7.5 of the plan are as follows

T02 To ensure the full recreational potential of the River Slaney and its estuary is realised.

T03 Provide a pedestrian walkway along the banks of the River Slaney estuary.

The Greenway proposal running adjacent to the estuary provides a safe environment for walkers and cyclists to travel close to the estuary and offers along a significant part of this leg of the overall route panoramic views of the entire Wexford Harbour and estuary area.

3.2.2. Wexford Town Development Plan-Chapter 8 Conservation & Heritage

Section 8.6 of this part of the plan is in relation to the Natural Heritage. It is stated in this part of the plan

“The overall aim of the Council will be to promote a reasonable balance between conservation measures and development measures in the interests of promoting the orderly and sustainable development of Wexford Town”.

The Greenway proposal providing a pedestrian and cycle way link between zoned residential lands and the town but by taking into account the conservation measures for the Natura 2000 sites strikes the right balance in our opinion.

In the policies in this section it is stated under policy NH8

“To require an appropriate ecological assessment of any project that has the potential to significantly impact on the Slaney River Valley and Wexford Harbour”

In terms of the Greenway proposal a full NIS is submitted.

3.2.3. Wexford Town Development Plan-Chapter 9 Infrastructure

In the section on infrastructure walking and cycling, it is stated that *“Wexford’s cycle network must be improved and expanded”* and an objective under traffic management is *“to maximise pedestrian and cycle movements between Residential areas, the Town Centre etc.”*

The proposed greenway links the Town Centre to areas that are zoned residential and long term residential with a dedicated walkway/cycle path. This objective is further developed in the section on Cycling and Walking with the following objective.

- *CW 3 To continue to provide for and extend the system of safe pedestrian and cycle routes linking residential areas and the town centre with schools, shops, the train station and open spaces.*

4. Architectural Heritage

A number of protected structures and architectural heritage sites have been recorded by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) in the general study area during the route selection process for the proposed Greenway

The sites themselves are some distance from the proposed greenway and as such the proposed greenway will have little or no impact on the sites. The proposed Greenway using the existing road, passes by the North Slob Pump House (Site No 15703805) near the Wildfowl Reserve

The history and location of such attractions will be included on tourist information boards along the greenway. An appreciation of the local heritage is important to the overall success of the project as a strong industrial / agriculture theme and crucially a wildlife theme should be apparent to the users of the proposed Greenway.

The protected structures and the heritage sites are listed on the following page in Table 4.1 and can be located on the drawing, Protected Structures, Heritage & Monument Sites Map.

Table 4.1: List of Architectural Sites recorded by NIAH in the vicinity of the Greenway

WCC Ref:	Name	NIAH Ref:	Date	Location	Category of Special Interest	Use; Original & Present
	Wexford Bridge	15501001	1995 – 2000	Ferrybank South	Architectural Technical	Bridge
WCC1259	St. Margaret's Church	15703342	1855 - 1860	Kilmacoe, Curracloe	Architectural Artistic Historical Social	Farm House
	Thatched House	15703344	1700 - 1840	Ballinamorrhagh	Architectural Social	Farm House
WCC1258	Thatched House	15703345	1700 - 1840	Barnahask	Architectural Social	Farm House
	Thatched House	15703346	1700 - 1840	Barnahask	Architectural Social	Farm House
	Thatched House	15703347	1700 - 1840	Barnahask	Architectural Social	House
WCC0913	Thatched House	15703349	1700 - 1840	Coolrainey	Architectural Social	House
WCC0912	Thatched House	15703350	1842 – 1903	Coolrainey	Architectural Social	House
WCC0560	Sweet Briar Cottage	15703352	1700 - 1840	Curracloe	Architectural Social	Farm House
	Slate Roofed House	15703801	1842 - 1901	Ballyla	Architectural Artistic Historical Social	Farm House
	Ardcavan Grave Yard	15703802	1760 – 1926	Ardcavan	Artistic Historical Social	Graveyard / Cemetery
	Ardcavan Cottage	15703803	1842 – 1875	Ardcavan	Architectural Artistic Historical Social	Farm House
WCC1246	Beggerin House	15703804	1845 - 1850	Beggerin Island	Architectural Artistic Historical Social	Farm House
	North Slob Pump House	15703805	1845 – 1852	North Slob	Architectural Technical	Engine House
WCC0529	Curracloe House	15703806	1830 - 1835	Curracloe	Architectural Artistic Historical Social	Farm House
	Curracloe House	15703807	1842 – 1903	Curracloe	Architectural Artistic	Gates / Railing / Walls

(NIAH) National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

Source: <http://www.buildingsofireland.ie> (NIAH Website)

(WCC) Record of Protected Structures

Source: <http://www.wexfordcoco.ie> (Co. Development Plan)

5. National Monuments

A number of archaeological monuments have been identified by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) which recorded such monuments for a national database of national monuments.

As the County of Wexford is rich in historical sites there are a number of monuments located in the study area for the proposed Greenway. The monuments listed below can be located on the drawing, Protected Structures, Heritage & Monument Sites Map.

None of the proposed sites are within close proximity of the proposed Greenway and therefore the Greenway will not impact on any of the sites listed below in Table 5.1

Table 5.1: List of National Monuments

(Recorded in the ASI & located in the study area for the proposed Greenway)

Name	Ref:	Date	Location	Category of Special Interest	Use; Original & Present
St. Cavan's Church	WX01834	7th Century	Ardcavan	Church	Ruins of church
St. Cavan's Graveyard	WX03431		Ardcavan	Graveyard	Raised oval graveyard
St. Cavan's Well	WX01833	1839 - 1903	Ardcavan	Ritual site - holy well	Well
St. Columb's Church	WX01825		Ardcolm	Church	Ruins of church
St. Columb's Well	WX01826	1840	Ardcavan	Ritual site - holy well	Well
	WX01825	5th Century	Beggerin Island	Church	Ruins of church
	WX03858	10th Century	Beggerin Island	Cross slab	Graveyard
	WX01827	11th Century	Ballinamorrhagh	Castle - Mott	Mott
	WX04227		Ballinacoola More	Font	granite stone
St. Margaret's Well	WX01463	1839 - 1924	Coolrainey	Ritual site - holy well	Well

(ASI) Archaeological Survey of Ireland

Source: <http://www.archaeology.gov.ie>

6. Tourism

6.1. Introduction

Wexford is a major tourism destination and it is estimated that the tourism industry is worth approximately €225m to the local economy annually. Growing tourism is key to job creation with every 55 international tourists supporting one tourism job and every €1m of tourist expenditure helps to support 34 tourism jobs

The most recent tourist numbers are listed in Table 6.1 below

Table 6.1 Tourist Numbers County Wexford (Failte Ireland)

Year	No of overseas tourist	Value of overseas tourist €m	No of Irish/domestic tourists	Value of domestic tourist €m
2010	179,000	45		
2011	n/a		547,000	123
2012	n/a		481,000	93
2013	n/a		455,000	101
2014	240,000	54	na	na
2015	221,000	65	679,000	na
2016	238,000	60	640,000	132

Note approximately 66% of overseas tourists visit in period April to September which is the open period for the entire Greenway route

Many of the tourist initiatives and policies as referred to in Section 2.2 of this report and national policies are focussed on diversification in the industry.

6.2 Accessible tourism

Many of the tourist initiatives and policies as articulated in the current County Development Plan in Section 2.2 and through national policies are focussed on diversification in the industry, one such area being Accessible Tourism.

“Accessible Tourism is about making it easy for everyone to enjoy tourism experiences. Making tourism more accessible is not only a social responsibility – there is also a compelling business case for improving accessibility as it can boost the competitiveness of tourism...” European Commission website.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports recent publication, **People Place And Policy- Growing Tourism To 2025**, informs of the need for sustainability, accessibility, and diversity in tourism to ensure and enhance economic growth *“...there is likely to be an ageing of the population, and the tourism industry should plan for increased accessibility of its services for all people, regardless of their age, size, ability*

or disability. There must also be the highest level of understanding and respect for the needs of visitors who have a physical or intellectual impairment”.

The proposed Greenway from Wexford Town which travels to Curracloe Beach taking in numerous areas of interest will be designed, developed and marketed in accordance with the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021, Action 107 and 114, for outdoor recreation facilities, footpaths and trails. In addition the proposed Greenway will provide a link to Curracloe beach where Wexford County Council has successfully piloted a beach wheel chair initiative which it has subsequently rolled out to other destination beaches in the County

The Greenway will be fully accessible, it's very modest gradients making it extremely accessible and it will be designed in accordance with the principles of universal access to ensure access for all potential users, in accordance not only with the above policies but also in line with current and future County Development Plans.

6.3 The Ancient East

Ireland's Ancient East which extends from Cavan to Cork (except Dublin) was launched in April 2015 and amongst its many objectives aims to change the region from a transit zone to a tourist zone. The region receives 23% of international visitors but only 11% of the overseas tourist revenue.

Under Ireland's Ancient East other strategies focus on signature stories, with Wexford strong in the area of Big Houses, Hard Times and Maritime stories. The proposed Greenway will offer superb views for the public of the entire Wexford Harbour area and the harbour's story and also the historical significance of the reclamation in the mid-19th century to create the North Slob area will form part of the historical context of the Greenway

Table 6.2 below are the statistics from Rosslare Port based on passenger vehicles and passenger buses.

Table 6.2 Rosslare Port Statistics

Rosslare	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Passenger Cars , Motorcycles and Accompanying Trailers/Caravans Handled (Number)	290,814	274,012	267,925	270,595	258,226	261,153	267,002	268,186
Passenger Buses Handled (number)	2,893	3,275	3,416	3,528	3,553	3,602	3,511	3,538

In 2016 it is estimated that 421,000 passengers entered Rosslare but only 238,000 overseas visitors are recorded as visiting the County in that year. This figure of 238,000 includes tourists that arrive through other access points therefore it is quite obvious that a high percentage of the people that arrive through Rosslare don't stay in the county.

In terms of dedicated walking and cycle paths County Wexford lags behind many other counties. The proposed Greenway would tap into this major market for walking and cycling enthusiasts and open up a tourism infrastructure a dedicated coastal Greenway, that is currently not available in the county...

The Greenway will be branded very much as part of the Ireland's Ancient East experience

6.4. Case Study – The Great Western Greenway

The Great Western Greenway (Westport-Newport-Mulranny-Achill) is a traffic free walking and cycling route that follows the line of the old railway line. The first section from Newport to Mulranny 18km opened in 2010. Failte Ireland commissioned a study to assess the economic benefits of the Greenway; it was carried out when only the first 18km section was open.

Some of the main findings from the study are as follows:

- Annually the route would attract 23,000 visitors from outside the area.
- 14,800 domestic visitors would use the Greenway 29,600 times during the year
- 8,000 overseas visitors would use the Greenway 16,000 during the year
- Estimate that the Greenway would be used 34,400 by local (Mayo) people
- Total annual visits to Greenway of 80,000.

The report goes on to outline that the direct expenditure associated with the Greenway would be €7.2m, in addition the Greenway would also contribute to a projected local economic impact of €6.3m and a national economic impact of €2.8m. Crucially the Greenway has helped to create 38 new full time jobs, with a further 58 existing FTE (full time equivalent) jobs being sustained.

The proposed Wexford to Curracloe would be expected to attract similar domestic and tourist visitors. The length 10.7 km with a round trip of 21.4 Km is reasonably close to the leg 1 of the Mayo Greenway on which the above economic and visitor numbers are based. In addition there is a very strong tourist product at either end of the Greenway. Wexford Town is renowned as a strong tourist destination and at the end of the route are the famous sandy beaches of Culleton's Gap (Green Coast Beach) and the Blue Flag Beaches at Curracloe and Ballinesker.

The winter/spring closure of Leg 2 of the proposed Greenway will limit to a certain extent the overall visitor number potential. However with legs 1 and 3 open all year, they will still attract visitor numbers and irrespective of the winter closure the prime period for using the entire route would be the open period April 15th to September 15th when weather conditions are more suitable for beach visits and when there is an average of 3 hours more daylight in the period April 15th to September 15th than there is between September 16th and April 14th. Fáilte Éireann figures estimate that 66% of overseas tourists visit the country between April and September, a similar time period to the opening period for the full proposed Greenway.

6.5. Case Study – Waterford Greenway

The Waterford to Dungarvan Greenway running on the old railway is a 46 Km long Greenway and it opened in March 2017. Between March and December of 2017 approximately 247,000 people used the Greenway, comprising 105,000 walkers and 142,000 cyclists.

In a survey carried out amongst users of the route, most visitors were from Waterford county but a significant portion around one third were from other counties in Ireland with 2% from outside the state. These figures from the early days of the operation of the Greenway highlight not just the tourism benefit of the Greenway but also and crucially the fact that local people of County Waterford view the Greenway as an important recreational facility.

Excluding accommodation the average spends per visitor was €28.50 giving a gross spend in the local economy of €7m. Additional data from the survey in terms of people opinions of the Greenway included the following summaries:

- 70% liked the scenery
- 51% liked the off road experience
- 36% liked the peaceful nature of the route
- 21% were interested in the features

In terms of planning for the proposed Wexford to Curracloe Greenway these were aspects that came into consideration in the route selection process.

Leg 1 of the proposed route offers stunning scenery of the Wexford Harbour area, all bar a 1.2km portion of Leg 1 is completely on a dedicated walking and cycling only path. It is a peaceful route in terms not having to deal with traffic noise and there are a number of features on the route, including the North Slob Pumping Station, the Wexford Wildfowl Centre, the Raven Forest and the beaches at Curracloe.

Waterford Chief Executive Michael Walsh in summarising the impact of the Greenway stated last December

“The Waterford Greenway has not just drawn visitors into our county but it has helped us all to take stock and appreciate the fantastic natural amenities we have on our doorstep.”

The proposed Wexford to Curracloe Greenway similarly will hope to attract tourists from outside the county but it also opens up areas of great natural amenity along the coastline that are currently not accessible to locals and tourists.

The Natura 2000 network is not well known among European Union citizens; only 11% of citizens knew what it was in 2013, a survey carried out by the European Commission discovered. With the development of the Greenway there will be a strong public information campaign in respect of the Natura 2000 sites of relevance in the Greenway area.

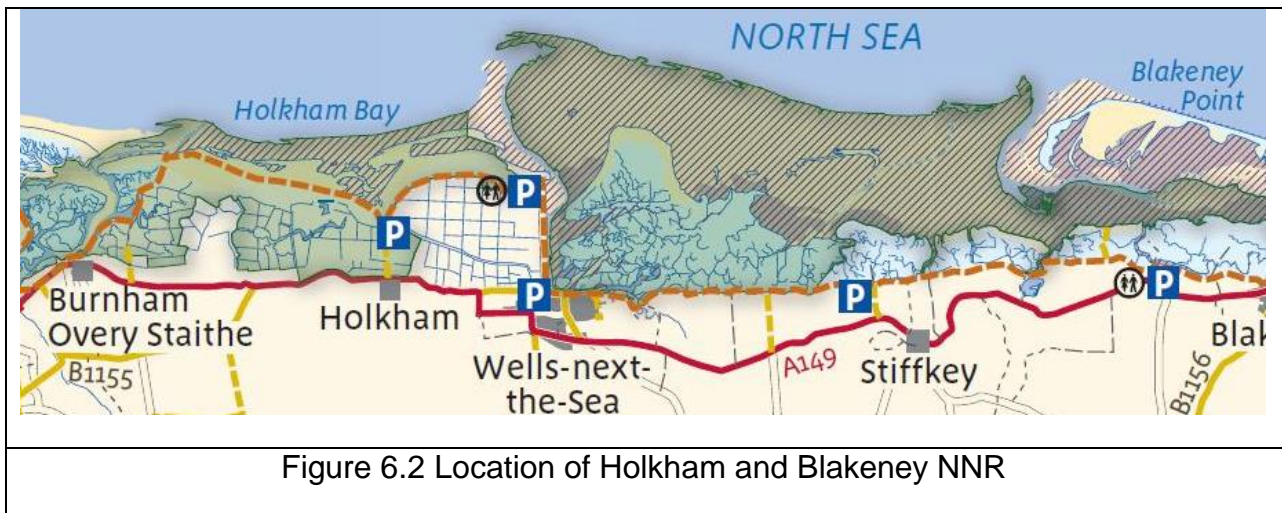


FIGURE 6.1 WATERFORD GREENWAY

6.6. Trip to Norfolk

Background

In November 2016 three members of the Greenway design team visited Norfolk to look at the interaction between coastal paths and Natura 2000 sites. The team visited Holkham and Blakeney National Nature Reserves both having important Natura 2000 sites.



In Appendix A the details of the visit are outlined including information learned from the visit. The visit to Norfolk was very informative in terms of the proposals for developing the Wexford to Curracloe Greenway and the following are some of the key messages learned from the visit.

- If properly managed by all the stakeholders, leisure including recreational walking and cycling for domestic and overseas tourism is not incompatible with the qualifying objectives of Natura 2000 sites.
- As crucial as the promotion of the walkways themselves is the education and information element of the importance of the wild life, flora and fauna of the area.
- The North Norfolk SACs and SPAs in geographical extent are considerably larger than the North Slob area. The Greenland White-fronted goose numbers are not excessive in Norfolk. In the Wexford Slob area the geese fly from their roost on the sand flats of Wexford Harbour to their feeding area of the North Slob. Due to the particular sensitive nature of the Greenland White-fronted Goose and the relatively small area (in comparison with Norfolk) in which the geese feed on land and the fact that the proposed Greenway is on the flight path it is considered that a winter/spring closure to protect their interests is absolutely essential.
- Control of dogs along the walkway by the provision of dog proof fencing is essential.
- As indicated in section 6.4.4 tourism is very important in the local economy and underlining the importance of the walkway to the Holkham area alone, 60% of the 171,000 visitors in a survey in 2015 indicated that walking was their primary reason for visiting.

- The inspection to both Holkham & Blakeney National Nature Reserves demonstrated to us the successful management of the visiting public to wetlands, sloblands and marshes without impacting negatively on bird habitat, either in feeding or roosting habits. The development of a trail may even be an opportunity for Wexford County Council to implement conservation measures along the trail in line with best practice currently carried out at Holkham NNR.

In applying the above protection measures with others measures it is possible to develop active travel routes around the perimeter of the nature reserves in the North Sloblands which would be compatible with the existing bird habitats.

In the case of the North Slob Reserve, the team consider it compulsory to restrict the trail to summer seasonal use along the coastal sections by the reserve along Leg 2 of the proposed route.

6.7. Cycling Tourism

Faillte Ireland carried out a research study in 2013 to examine the tourism potential of cycling. The study was very expansive and involved interviews with 15,000 cyclists in 5 countries, Ireland, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and France.

In 2011 the overseas visitors who engaged in cycling was 178,000 visitors with an estimated spend of €200m and 9% of the domestic holiday makers engaged in cycling. The purpose of the research was amongst other things to help develop a business case for cycle ways and to inform route engineering and selection

In the 5 countries examined the market potential of population aged between 18 and 65 and who would consider some type of cycling holiday is approximately 128 million people.

Table 6.2 Market Potential Selected European Countries

Population Aged 18-75		Ireland	UK	Germany	Netherlands	France	Total
		4,505,234	43,680,064	61,626,142	12,162,945	45,525,337	167,499,722
Outer* potential	% population	48	49	64	53	31	
	No of people	2,162,512	21,403,231	39,440,731	6,446,361	14,112,854	83,565,689
Inner** potential	% population	23	12	22	15	7	
	No of people	1,036,204	5,241,608	13,557,751	1,824,442	3,186,774	24,146,739
Core*** potential	% population	22	10	18	11	6	
	No of people	991,151	4,386,006	11,092,706	1,337,924	2,731,520	20,521,307

* Outer Potential – Consider cycling on holiday abroad

** Inner potential – Cycled on holiday abroad last 2 years, would consider Ireland

***Core Potential.- Cycled on holiday abroad in last 2 years, would consider Ireland in next 3 years

Some of the findings from the study helped to inform the route selection and will also form part of the business case for funding of the Greenway should planning permission be granted.

A significant percentage of those surveyed 82% domestic and 65% overseas tourists indicated that they would like to cycle for less than 4 hours per day. The proposed Greenway from Wexford to Curracloe with a round trip of 21.4km is the ideal distance in this context with depending on the rate of travel giving a typical journey length of around 2 hours.

Another key finding is the ranking of destination attributes. Top ranking for both domestic and overseas tourists are “beautiful scenery” and “suitable weather” (Average 76% and 67% respectively). The Wexford to Curracloe Greenway offers stunning scenery of Wexford Harbour near the Wexford Town end of the route and at the other end there is the spectacular scenery of the Curracloe sand dune system and golden beaches. On the following pages Photographs 6.7.1 and 6.7.2 give an indication of the types of views available from the proposed Greenway at either end of the proposed Greenway. In addition Wexford is at the heart of the “Sunny South East” and in terms of weather is best placed to build on this desired attribute

Third ranking is routes through attractive towns, and if the tourist is based in the Curracloe area then they would be cycling to the historic Viking town of Wexford.

The survey also looked at the route attributes itself and the top three is this category area Landscape/scenery (83%), Traffic free cycling (60%) and safety of cycle routes (57%). The proposed Greenway scores very highly in this category with stunning scenery along the route of Wexford Harbour and being a dedicated walking/cycling route for all bar 1.2 Km of the route from Ardavan to the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve it is traffic free and safe.



PHOTOGRAPH 6.5.1- DESTINATION ATTRIBUTE- WEXFORD HARBOUR AT FERRYBANK TERMINUS



PHOTOGRAPH 6.5.2 – DESTINATION ATTRIBUTE – BEACH AT CURRACLOE TERMINUS



PHOTOGRAPH 6.5.3- ROUTE ATTRIBUTE- VIEW SOUTH FROM ROUTE



PHOTOGRAPH 6.5.4- ROUTE ATTRIBUTE – VIEW NORTH FROM GREENWAY

7. Walking and Cycling Policies and Initiatives

7.1. Get Ireland Active (The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland)

Health Ireland, A Framework for improved Health & Wellbeing 2013-2025 (Department of Health 2012) is the national framework for the Government and the whole of society to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. The Framework identifies a number of key actions one of which is

“Develop a plan to promote increased physical activity levels across the population as an exemplar of how health Ireland will work”

The “Get Ireland Active” plan is the plan produced in line with this action within the framework. The remainder of this part of the report includes objectives and actions from the Get Ireland Active Plan.

In the plan physical activity is defined as “any bodily movement produced by the skeletal muscles which cause energy greater than at rest which is health enhancing”. The definition is broad and means that virtually all types of physical activity are of interest, including active play, walking or cycling etc.

The National Guidelines for physical activity are outlined in Table 7.1

Table 7.1 National guidelines for physical activity

	Age 2-18	Age 18-64	Age 65+5	Adults with disabilities
No of minutes per day (minimum)	60	30	30	30

The report outlines that “a large number of Irish people are not meeting the levels of physical activity recommended “and a report in 2013 indicates that only 31.3% of the population are highly active. In terms of children the figures are starker, “only 19% of primary and 12% of post primary school children met the physical activity recommendations”

Another clear statement within the plan states

“There is significant evidence that physical activity of moderate intensity promotes wellbeing, physical and mental health, prevents disease, improves quality of life and has economic, social and cultural benefits” The Mission Statement of the plan is “to increase physical activity of the entire population” The target of the plan is “increase the proportion of the population across each life stage undertaking regular physical activity by 1% per annum across the lifetime of Healthy Ireland

To achieve this target the plan sets out actions under a number of different headings with the actions under Action Area four the Environment of particular relevance to the Local Authority and the Wexford to Curracloe Greenway project.

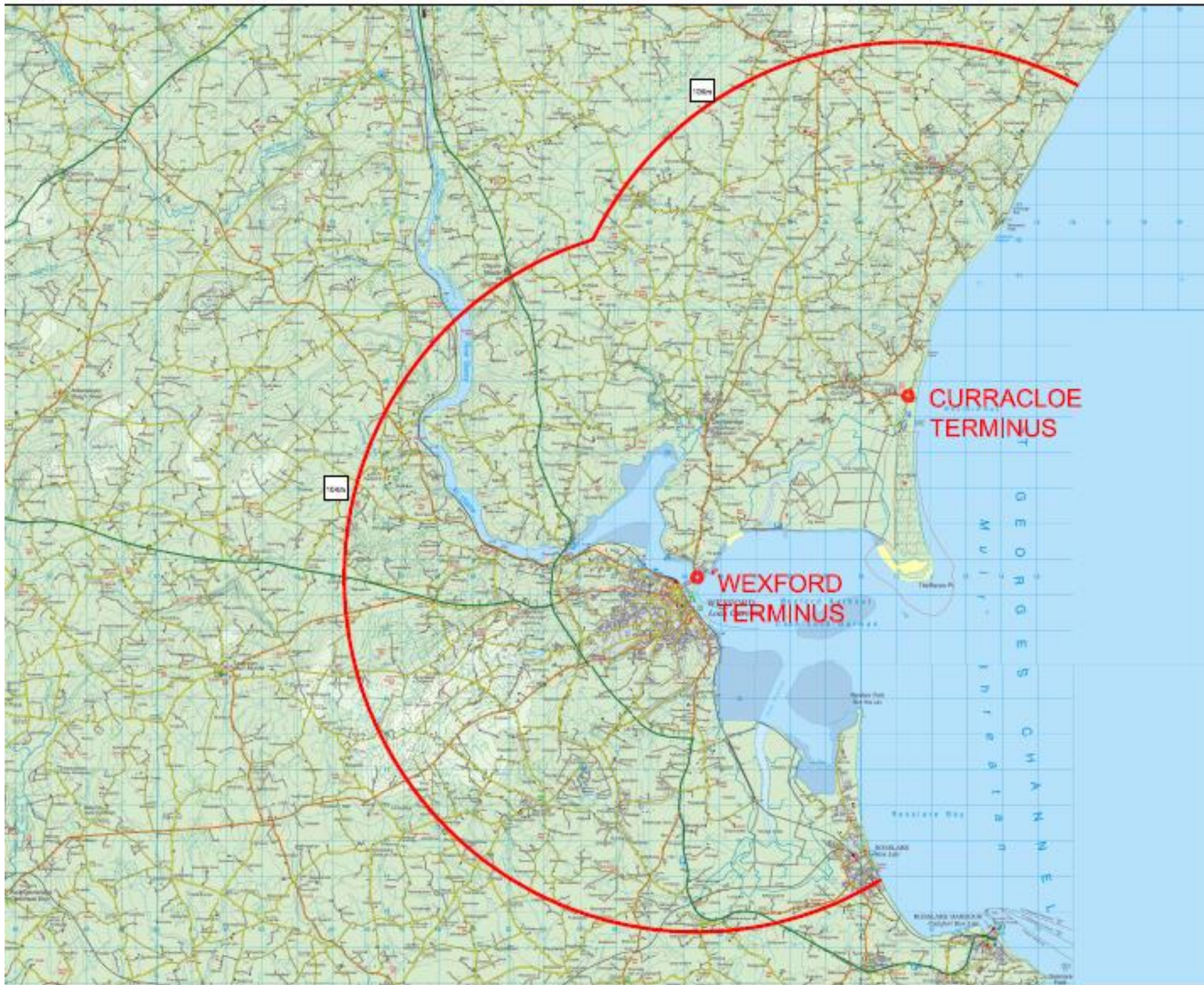
In this part of the plan it states

“Walking or cycling for transport or leisure is a form of physical activity that can easily be incorporated in the daily activities for many people. Supportive environments for walking, cycling and recreational outdoor activities have many benefits belong the immediate physical activity gains.

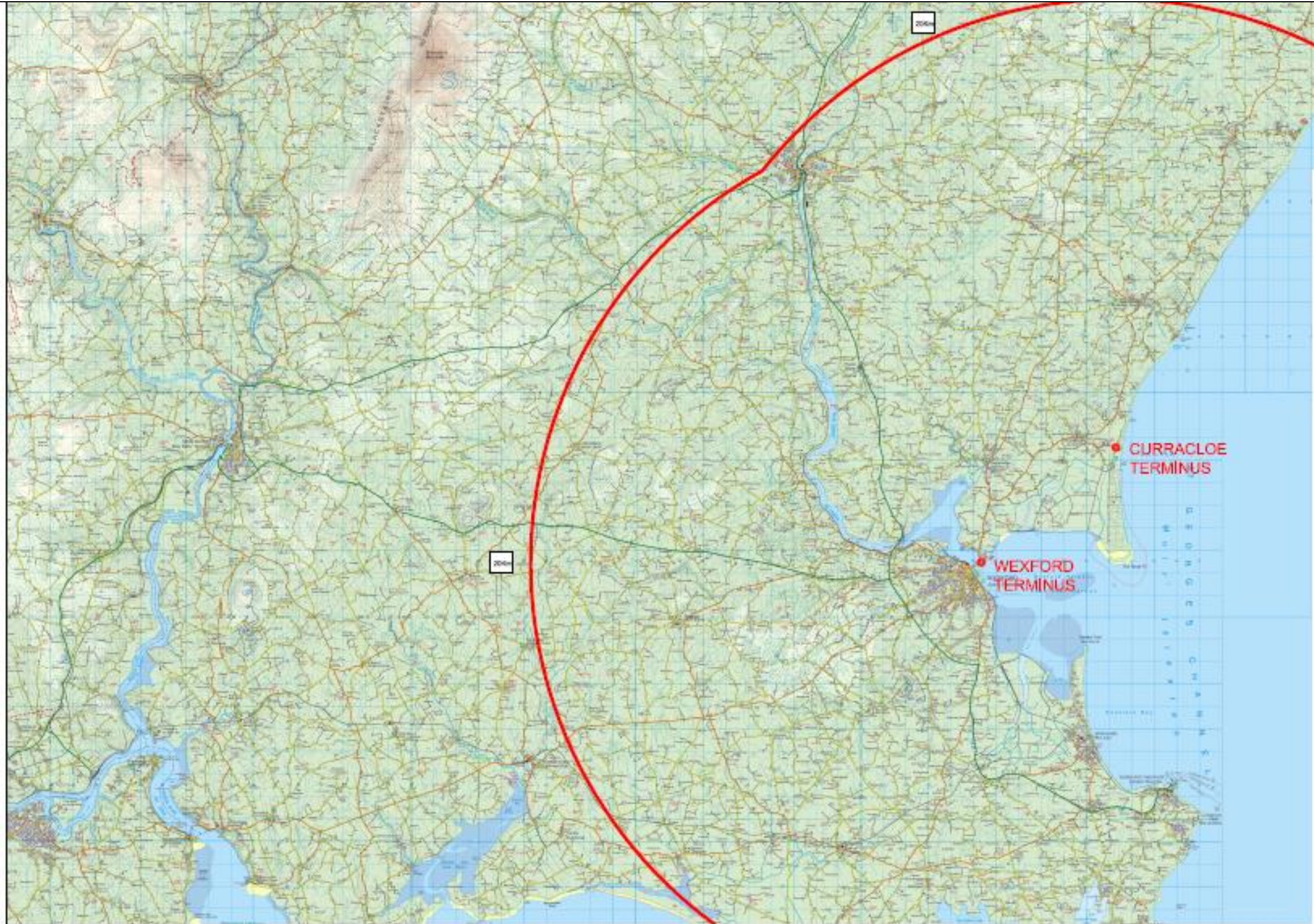
In the section on tourism the benefits of the Greenway have been detailed. However the Greenway proposal is not only of benefit to the tourist industry but as detailed in this part of the report will contribute to the physical well-being of the local population.

The Greenway is located at the largest town in the County and also serves a relatively densely populated hinterland. On the following pages Map No 7.1 and 7.2 indicate the geographical area that is located within 10 Km and 20 Km respectively of either terminus of the route. In summary 41,000 people live within 10 Km and 79,000 within 20 Km of the route. Many people already walk the established route within the Raven Forest, (same route as Leg 3 of the Greenway), but most have to drive to the area to start their walk. The new Greenway will enable people to walk and cycle to this destination in Curracloe without having to drive.

In the following table are specific actions within the plan that are of relevance to the Local Authority and the Greenway proposal.



Map 7.1 Area within 10Km of Greenway



Map 7.2 Area within 20Km of Greenway

Table 7.2 Get Ireland Active – National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Action Area 4
(selected actions only)

Action No	Action	Comment
32	Develop and promote walking and cycling strategies in each Local Authority Area	
33	Ensure that the planning, development and design of towns and cities promotes cycling and walking with the aim of developing a network of cycle routes and footpaths	The network of cycle routes in the Wexford Town area as indicated on Map 2.1 in section 2 of this report are limited. The provision of the Greenway including the Ardcahan Loop would considerably promote walking and cycling
36	Prioritise the planning and development of walking and cycling and general recreational/physical activity infrastructure	The proposed greenway is a key part of infrastructure in terms of walking and cycling
37	Explore opportunities to maximise physical activity and recreational amenities in the natural environment	The link of the Greenway from Wexford Town to the renowned natural beach area of Curraclloe will build on the established physical activities on the beach, including walking, running and swimming

Under Action Area 6 Sport and physical activity in the community the action detailed in Table 7.3 is of particular relevance to the Local Authority.

Table 7.3 Get Ireland Active –National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland –
Action Area 6 (selected actions only)

Action No	Action	Comment
43	Rollout a new Active Communities Walking Programme in all LSP areas and support over 500 new active community walking groups around the country under the Get Ireland Walking Initiative	The Local Sports Partnership in Wexford supports over 37 Walking Groups within the County and in addition has trained 11 Walking Leaders.

7.2. Get Ireland Walking.

The Get Ireland Walking (GIW) initiative established in 2013 aims inter alia to encourage widespread participation in walking... It is informed by a number of international studies including the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland “Get Active”. The GIW produced by Sport Ireland vision is to “empower and support people

to choose to walk more often for recreation, transport and health as part of their daily life”.

The GIW initiative through a number of strategies under various action plans aims to get more people walking throughout the country. Theme 4 “Environment” is of particular relevance to the Local Authority and the Greenway project.

The overall aim in this section is to

“To connect walkers with suitable walking environments and advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure and recreational walking routes”.

In terms of specific actions the following are of relevance.

Table 7.2 Get Ireland Walking – Recreational Walking in Ireland – Theme 4
Environment Actions (some only selected)

Action No	Action	Comment
4.5	Create opportunities for improved access to lands for recreational walking	The Greenway proposal provides a new pathway and improves the existing unsurfaced pathway in the Raven Wood in Leg 3 of the proposed Greenway
4.6	Develop and market recreational walking infrastructure	The proposed Wexford to Curracloe will be a key piece of walking infrastructure and the LA is proposed to develop the route subject to planning permission and then to market and promote the route

There are many other actions within the plan concerning the promotion and organisation of walking groups, an activity the Wexford County Council Sports Department is already active in.

7.3. National Cycle Policy Framework

The Irish Government policy entitled ‘Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future’ which runs from 2009 to 2020, identifies certain key goals and objectives to be met in order to introduce a national sustainable transport network.

The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) was adopted to run alongside the main transport policy ‘Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future’ document. The NCPF mission states an objective to create a strong cycling culture in Ireland while also encouraging recreational cycling. The mission of the framework is to create a strong cycling culture in Ireland. The framework identifies the three main benefits of increased

participation in cycling, an improved quality of life, a stronger economy and an enhanced environment.

The health benefits of cycling are well documented and cycling will help various population cohorts to achieve the required levels of physical activity as detailed in Section 6.4 of this report.

The NCPF also outlines the importance of the National Cycle Network (NCN) in attracting overseas tourists. Some of the key overall objectives of the framework which are relevant to the Wexford to Curracloe Greenway project include:

- *Provide designated rural cycle networks especially for visitors and recreational cycling. (A specific objective under Policy 2.2 of the framework is to “expand the national cycling network around urban areas”) Figure 7.1 is of the National Cycle Network.*
- *Ensure that all of the surfaces used by cyclists are maintained to a high standard and are well lit.*
- *Ensure that all cycling networks both urban and rural are signposted to an agreed standard.*
- *Ensure proper integration between cycling and public transport.*

The proposed Greenway very much resonates with these objectives

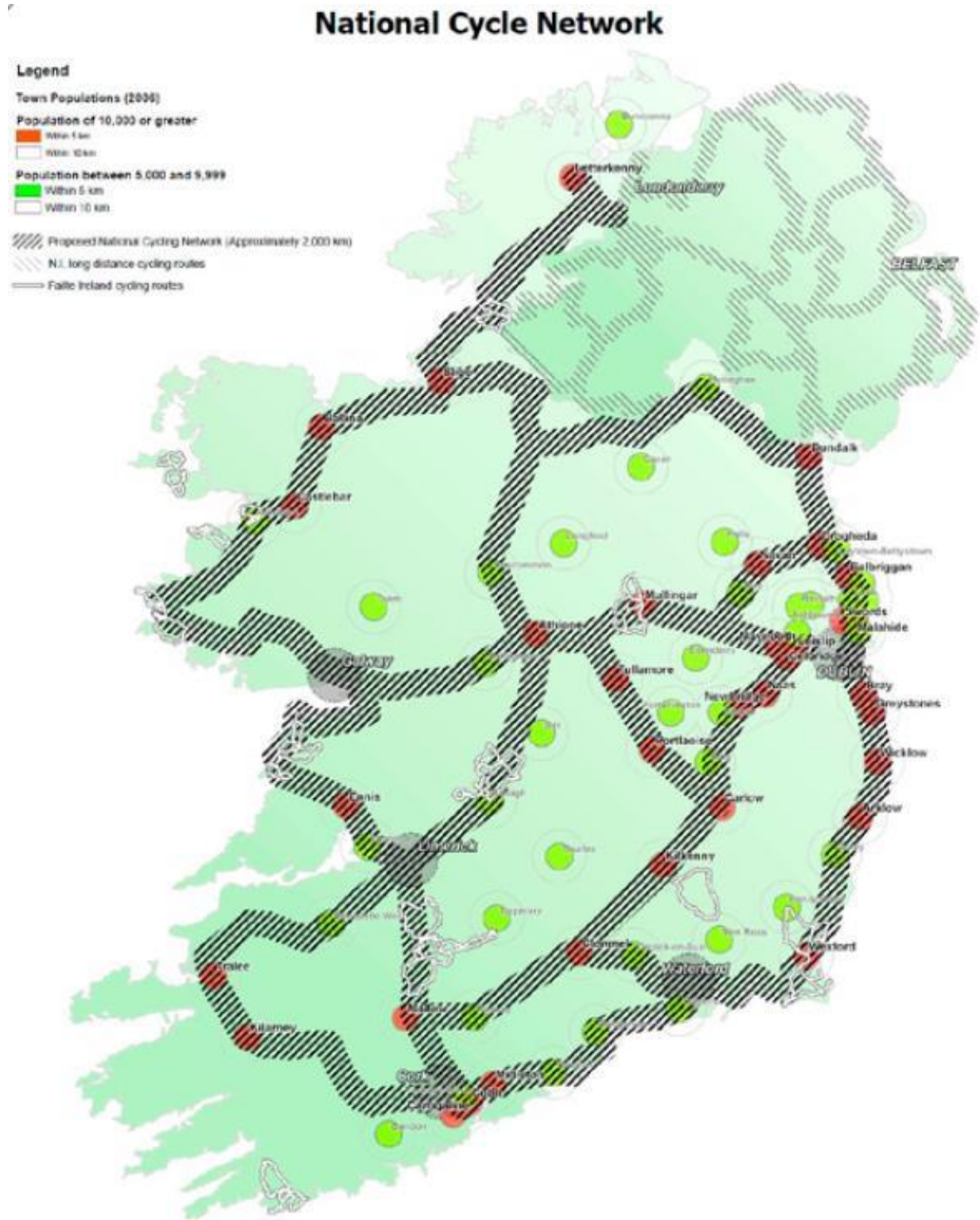


Fig.7.1: 2010 National Cycle Network

8. Engagement with stakeholders

8.1. Landowners

All of the landowners along the selected route have been met on an individual basis and in some cases minor amendments to the route have been made following those discussions.

No formal agreements have been reached with any of the landowners and it is proposed to enter detailed discussions on accommodation works/compensation if and when a planning decision is forthcoming.

Detailed discussions have been had with the main landowners on Leg 2 and 3, the NPWS and representatives of the Slob Commissioners.

8.2 Elected Members

The elected members of Wexford County Council have been fully informed of the Wexford to Curracloe Greenway proposal. At the most recent meeting of the Wexford Municipal District of the Council, February 19th 2018 a motion supporting the development of the Greenway was unanimously approved by the members. An extract from the minutes is below.



Comhairle Chontae Loch Garman
Wexford County Council

/BD.

23rd February, 2018.

Memo to Mr. G. Forde, Senior Engineer.

I set out hereunder extract from minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Wexford Borough District held on 19th February, 2018, for your information and attention:-

Wexford – Curracloe Greenway.

The attached report and recommendations circulated to the meeting by Mr. G. Forde, Senior Engineer, in relation to the proposed Greenway from Wexford to Curracloe were welcomed by Members and, following discussion, unanimously adopted on the proposal of Cllr. G. Lawlor and seconded by Cllr. F. Staples.


Angela R. Laffan,
District Manager.

9. Conclusions

In terms of planning policy both the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 and the Wexford Town Development Plan (2009-2015, as extended until 2019) in general terms support the provision of walking and cycling paths as a key objective both in the built environment, in the rural area and the coast.

Both plans aim to protect the key qualifying interests of the network of the Natura 2000 sites. The County Council is strongly aware of the Natura 2000 sites adjacent to or impinging on the route and in particular the Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA. The NIS submitted with this planning application deals with this issue in detail and a key part of the plan and an element that is incorporated in the design and monitoring plan is the winter/spring closure of Leg 2 of the proposed route to avoid any impact on the wintering birds.

It is proposed to include signage and information boards along the route to highlight the heritage features encountered, including the development of the North Slob, the Wildfowl Reserve and the Raven Wood. The Wexford to Curracloe Greenway project will fit seamlessly into the surrounding environment by using native screening; landscaping and appropriate construction materials. The impacts on archaeological and national monuments are negligible due to very few of these sites being close to the proposed route and also due to the minimum earth works involved in the project.

The tourism potential of the proposed Greenway is covered in detail in Section 6 with a conservative estimate that it could attract upwards of 275,000 visits per annum and worth up to €40m to the local economy, regional and national economy in terms of direct spend and added value on an annual basis. The health benefits and the societal benefits are covered in detail in Section 7 and in terms of increasing the physical activity of all population cohorts the proposed Greenway located in close proximity to a large population catchment has the potential to significantly impact on physical activity levels amongst the population.

The Greenway, as well as providing a recreational facility for walkers and cyclists, will also provide a safe traffic free commuter route for local people into Wexford Town. The fact that the proposed scheme is located entirely off road except for the access section to the Wildfowl Reserve will provide a greater advantage to the cyclist and pedestrians.

Signed

Gerry Forde

Senior Engineer.B.E, C Eng, Diploma in Physical Planning for Engineers.

Appendix A – Visit to Norfolk Natura 2000 sites

A.1 Introduction

In order to examine the potential for a Greenway that potentially would pass partially through the north slob lands of Wexford Harbour a three member design team visited Norfolk in England in November 2016. In Norfolk there are similar slob lands of international importance in the UK where trails co-exist with wintering geese habitat and with Natura 2000 sites.

The slob lands of Holkham National Nature Reserve (NNR) and the marsh of Blakeney National Nature Reserve were chosen for the site visit due to their similarity with the SPA's around Wexford Harbour. Both reserves are located along the north coast line of County Norfolk.

Holkham National Nature Reserve (NNR) is located between Scolt Head Island NNR to the west and Blakeney NNR to the east. It is estimated that around 27,000 geese winter in these reserves over the winter season. The reserve adjoins a block of slob land on its eastern side. Salt marshes exist over the sea wall east of this block, which is very much akin to the salt marsh in the Ardcavan area close to the Greenway route.

Blakeney NNR is located to the north of Blakeney village and is mostly open fresh water marsh with a block of slob land enclosed by a sea wall to the east of the River Glaven. Extensive salt marshes are to the west of the sea wall skirting the estuary. The estuary has sand flats in keeping with the profile of Wexford Harbour.

Fig A.1.1 shows the location of these National Nature Reserves

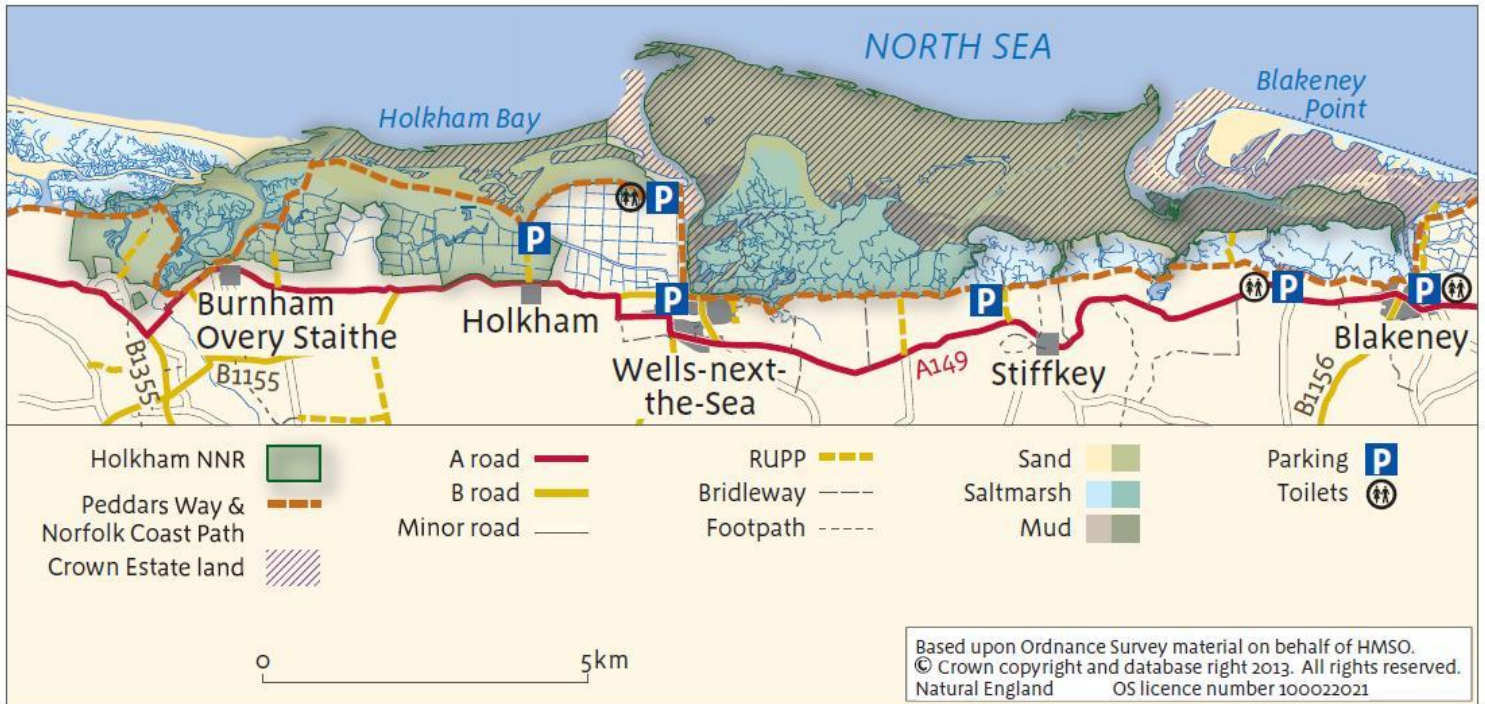


Fig. A.1.1 Map showing the location of Holkham NNR to Blakeney NNR:

These reserves are part of a series of Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) along the Norfolk coast and contain many features of interest, including sub-tidal sandbanks, salt marsh, intertidal mudflats and sandbanks, shallow inlets and bays and seal colonies. All again are very similar to Wexford Harbour and the Raven Point Reserve.

A.2 Information from Holkham NNR

A. 2.1 General

Holkham NNR comprises of slob land, sand dunes covered pine forest and open sandy beaches. The wetlands in Holkham were designated a reserve over 50 years ago. Holkham National Nature Reserve is a spectacular 11-mile stretch of fragile windswept coastline, including a maze of creeks and marshes, un-spoilt sand dunes and tranquil pine forests. Figure A.2.1 below indicates the extents of the SACs in the vicinity of Holkham and also the location of the coastal path through the SAC. Figure A.2.2 similarly indicates the extent of the North Norfolk SPA in the vicinity of Holkham also indicating the coastal path.

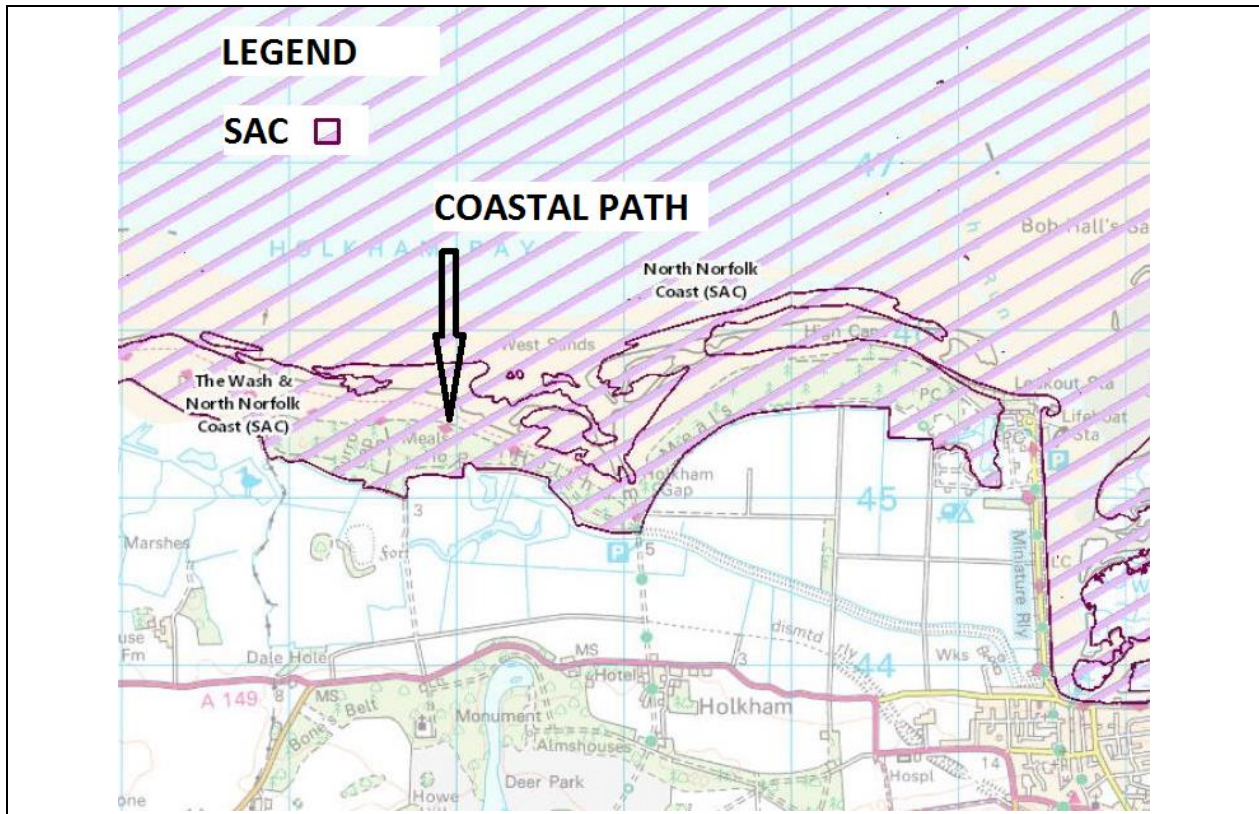


Fig. A.2.1: North Norfolk Coast SAC at Holkham – ref: UK0019838 (1996).

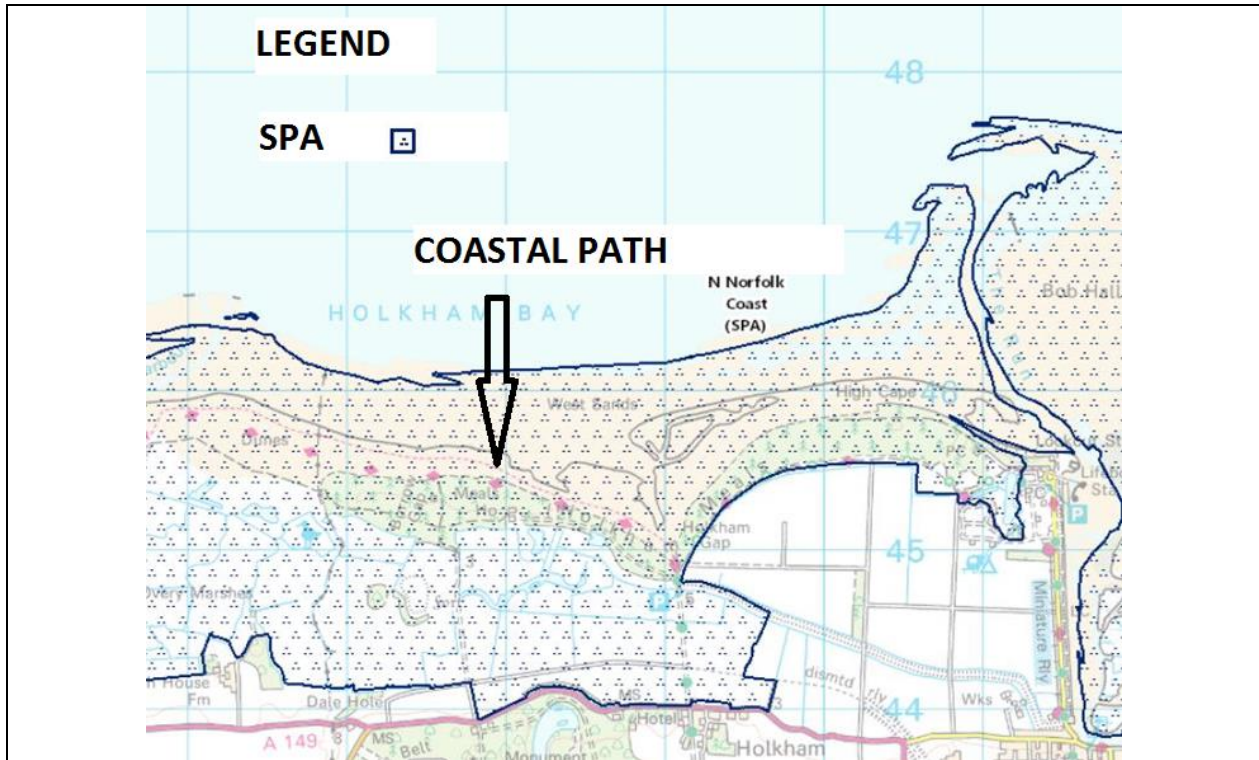
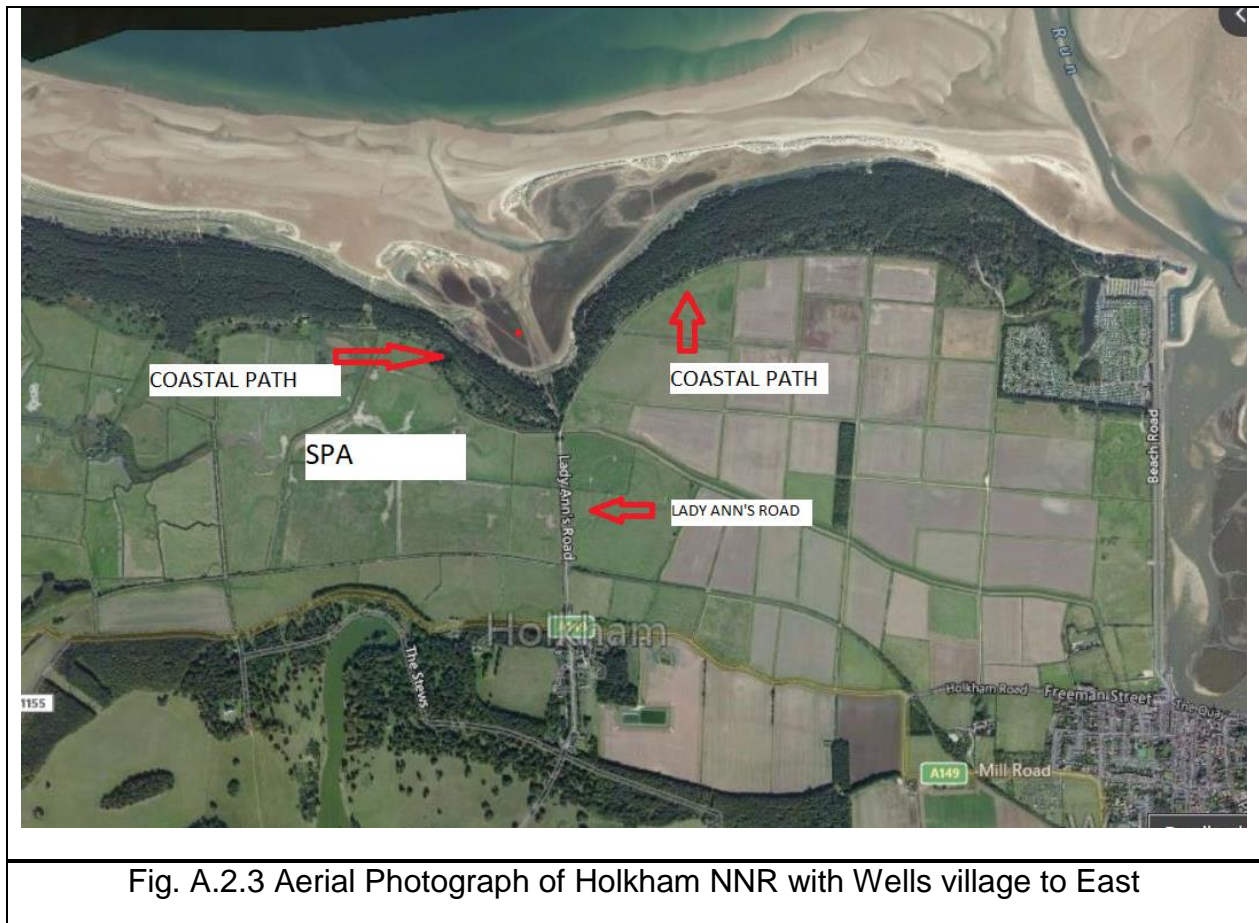


Fig. A.2.2 North Norfolk Coast SPA - ref: UK9009031 (1989)

Note the coastal path traverses both SPA & SAC above.

The sloblands (light brown in colour) to the east of Lady Anne's Drive (Figure A.2.3) are farmed in the summer and convert to wetlands in the winter by controlling the ditch water levels. This practice attracts wintering wildlife and waders. In November cattle are taken off the land for the winter months.



A.2.2 Information on wintering birds

Geese: The following geese winter in the reserve;

- White Fronted Geese are migratory from either Greenland or Europe. (numbers are relatively small)
- Pink Footed Geese, their numbers have risen from 27,000 to 50,000 in recent years, harsh weather conditions have driven these flocks southwards.
- Widgeon Duck, their numbers have also risen from 5,000 to more than 13,000.
- Greylag Geese, feral.

- Pale-bellied & Dark-bellied Brent Geese
- Canadian Geese, feral.

A.2.3. Visitors & Trails:

Visitors are encouraged to the reserve to view the birds and the natural habitat. Visitors can enter the reserve at Lady Anne's Drive or at the caravan park near Wells. The Reserve also provides guided walks throughout the year which is an ideal way to discover the diversity of wildlife on the Nature Reserve.



Fig. A.2.4 : Holkham Trail which is part of the Norfolk Coast Path is within the SAC & SPA.

A.3 Information from Blakeney NNR

A.3.1 General

At the heart of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Blakeney National Nature Reserve boasts wide open spaces and uninterrupted views of the beautiful North Norfolk coastline. (Figure A.3.1). The four mile long shingle spit of Blakeney Point offers protection for Blakeney Harbour and the surrounding salt marshes, providing a perfect habitat for the vast array of residential and migratory wildfowl.



Fig A.3.1 Aerial photograph of Blakeney NNR

The OS map (Figure A.3.2).shows Blakeney NNR and the adjoining Warham marshes. The red route indicated is a section of the Norfolk Coastal Path which skirts the edge of the marsh. The purple symbol and outline represents the area of reserve owned by the National Trust, however the reserve extends beyond that outline to the east.

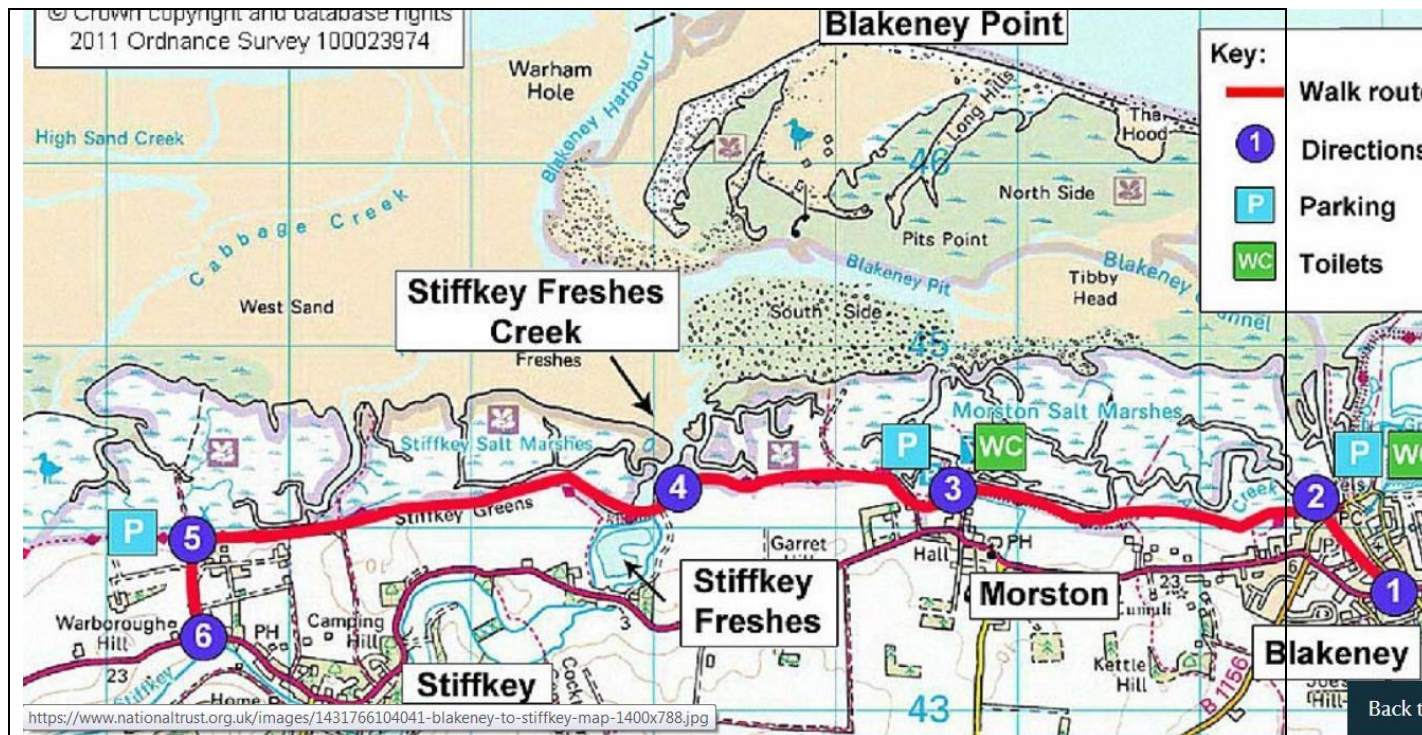


Fig. A.3.2 Map of Blakeney NNR general area

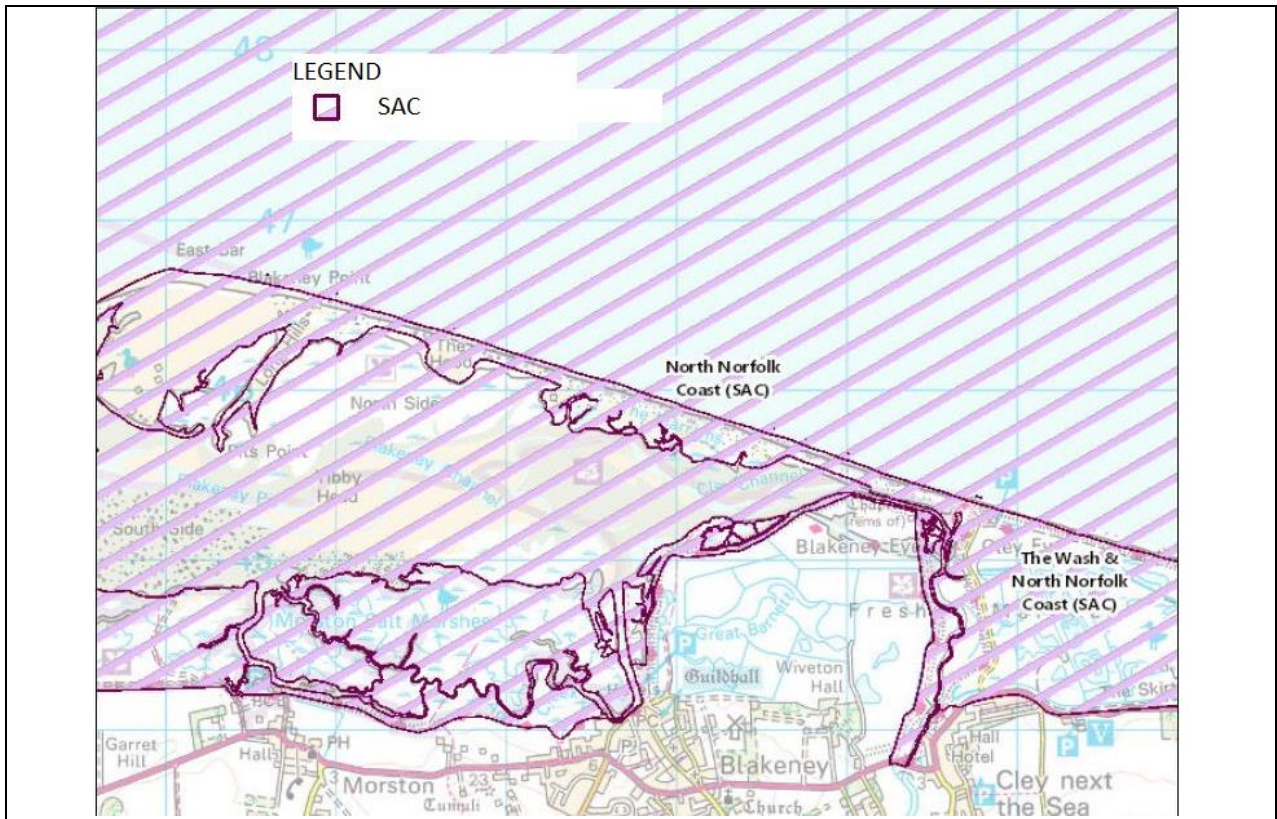


Fig. A.3.3 North Norfolk Coast SAC at Blakeney – ref: UK 0019838 (1996).



Figure A3.4 North Norfolk Coast SPA at Blakeney – ref: UK 9009031 (1989).

A.3.2 Visitors and trails

Blakeney Freshes comprises of approximately 160 hectares of freshwater grazing marsh. It is an important area for breeding birds and over-wintering wildfowl and is popular with birdwatchers. The walkway along the sea-wall allows for excellent opportunity to view the wildfowl and waders as they feed nearby. The majority of the wetland is closed to public but the National Trail Norfolk Coast Path goes around the perimeter and gives spectacular views. The reserve promotes three walking routes;

1. The Stiffkey – Blakeney Route
2. The Blakeney Freshes Route
3. The Blakeney Point Route

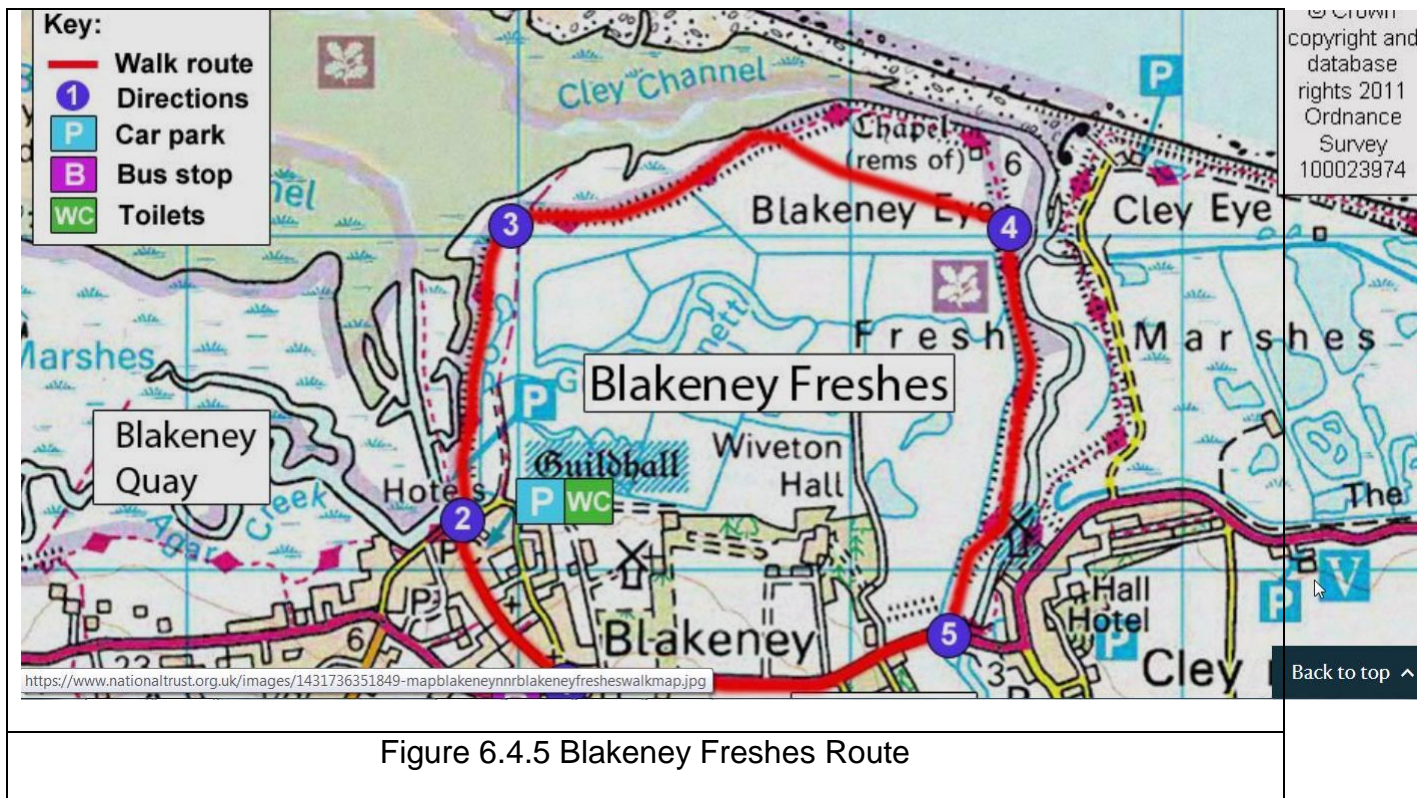


Figure 6.4.5 Blakeney Freshes Route

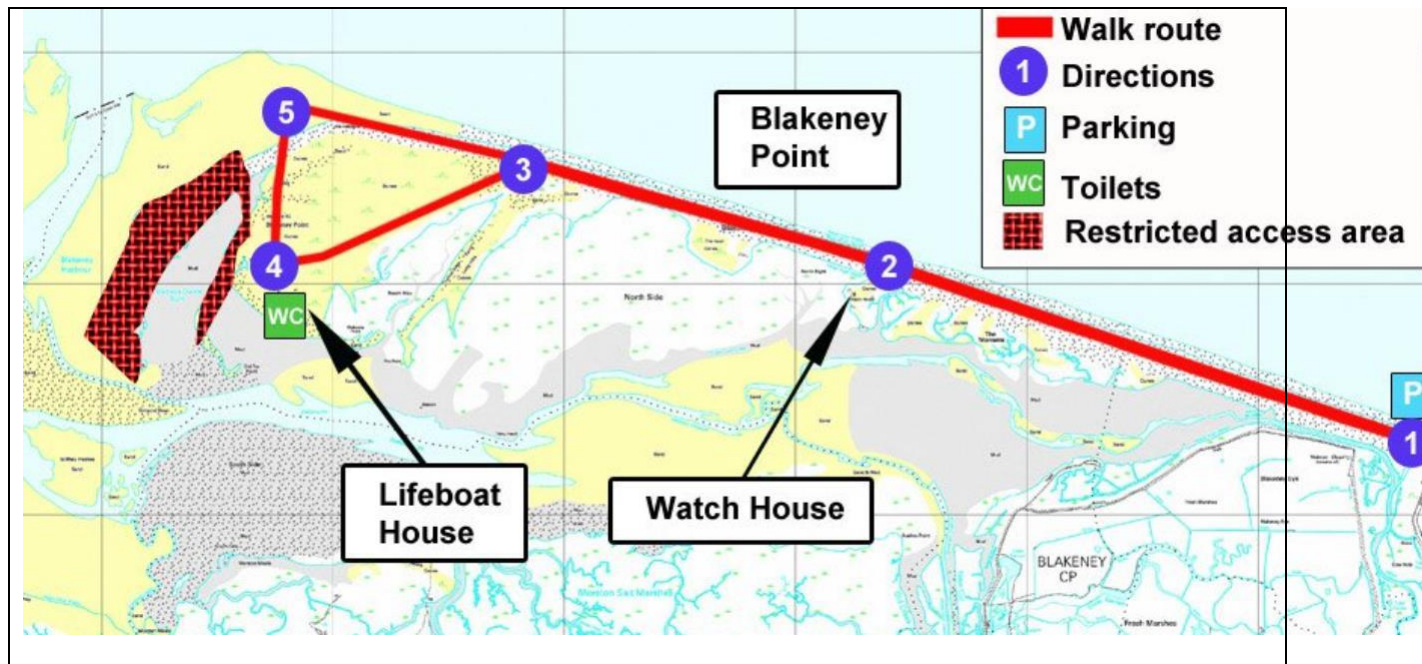


Figure 6.4.6 Blakeney Point Route

Each year there are dog restrictions in place on Blakeney Point to help protect and minimise disturbance to ground nesting birds. The use of drones are not permitted on or over National Trust land, byelaws require users to have the necessary qualifications before they are issued with a licence.



Fig. 33: Geese feeding at Blakeney.

In winter large swirling flocks of golden plover move between the harbour and the marshes, while duck and geese, such as widgeon and Brent geese graze in the fields inside the sea-walls.



Fig. 34: Brent Goose wintering at Blakeney.

A.4 Tourism

In 2015 The Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) commissioned a cost benefit report for the North Norfolk and Suffolk coast. It found that 17.3% of businesses along the coast were related to tourism. Just looking at the Holkham area, it received 171,000 visitors who spent £27.4m which supported 223 equivalent jobs. This gives a spend of £160 / visitor or €187/visitor. The 2011/12 tourist survey found all age groups were evenly represented as visitors; half were on holidays with another third as day trippers from outside the county. The average stay was 4.9 nights, most staying in self-catering, then hotels or B&B's. 60% of tourists named walking at their primary activity for their stay with 20% for beach and 7% for bird watching.

A.5 Measures applicable to potential Wexford to Curracloe Greenway

The following measures could be applied to the proposed active travel routes through the North and South Slob;

- a) Dog proof fencing to ATR through all sloblands.

The use of 2" mesh wire fencing along reserve side of any trail through the slobland will prevent dogs and users from wandering off the proposed trails. The fencing would be screen with a mix of reeds and hawthorn hedging.

Segregate pedestrian trails from farm access paths where possible. Where not possible provide lockable gates with clear 'no entry' signage.

- b) Hedge screening to farm access path.

Complement hedging along existing farm access paths. This can be as simple as planting narrow bands of reeds along path verges.

- c) Place boardwalks in soft ground or sandy locations.

Place non-slip boardwalks over route section where the ground is soft or sandy. This will contain users and prevent rutting and spreading of path with the deterioration of ground surface.

- d) Erect viewing hides along Greenway

Erecting a number of raised deck viewing platforms along the routes will provide users with good viewing points off birds and compensate against extra trail screening.

- e) Construct shallow wetland for winter geese grazing.

Propose renting or buying 2 to 3 acre paddocks on the sloblands so that Wexford County Council could construct shallow wetlands as per Holkham's conservation

management plan. Following discussions with the NPWS this may not have much relevance in terms of providing a suitable environment for the Greenland White-Fronted Geese. As an alternative Wexford County Council would rent acreage to sow tillage crops suitable for the wintering geese.

f) Erect direction, warning and information signage along ATR.

Trails should be well sign posted with trailhead signs, way marker posts, no entry warning signs and information signs of ecology, landscape or heritage where appropriate along the route.

These measures would complement existing measures used by Wexford County Council to develop trails around the county.

A.6 Conclusions:

The visit to Norfolk was very informative in terms of our proposals for developing the Wexford to Curracloe Greenway and the following are some of the key messages learned from the visit.

- If properly managed by all the stakeholders' leisure including recreational walking and cycling for domestic and overseas tourism is not incompatible with the qualifying objectives of Natura 2000 sites.
- As important as the promotion of the walkways themselves is the education and information element of the importance of the wild life and flora and fauna of the area.
- The North Norfolk SACs and SPAs in geographical extent are considerably larger than the North Slob area. The Greenland White-fronted goose numbers are not excessive in Norfolk. Due to the particular sensitive nature of the Greenland Goose and the relatively small area (in comparison with Norfolk) in which use it is considered that a winter closure to protect their interests is absolutely essential.
- Control of dogs along the walkway by the provision of dog proof fencing is essential.
- As indicated in section 6.4.4 tourism is very important in the local economy and underlining the importance of the walkway to the Holkham area alone, 60% of the 171,000 visitors in a survey in 2015 indicated that walking was their primary reason for visiting.

The inspection to both Holkham & Blakeney National Nature Reserves demonstrated to us the successful management of the visiting public to wetlands, sloblands and marshes without impacting negatively on bird habitat, either in feeding or roosting habits. The development of a trail may even be an opportunity for Wexford County Council to implement conservation measures along the trail in line with best practice currently carried out at Holkham NNR.

In applying the above protection measures with others measures it is possible to develop active travel routes around the perimeter of the nature reserves in the North Sloblands which would be compatible with the existing bird habitats.

In the case of the North Slob Reserve, the team consider it compulsory to restrict the trail to summer seasonal use along the coastal sections by the reserve along Leg 2 of the proposed route.