

# **Wexford to Curracloe Greenway**



## **EIS Screening Report**

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Wexford County Council

# Wexford to Curracloe Greenway

## EIS Screening Report

This project is developed by Wexford County Council

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# Wexford to Curracloe Greenway

## EIA Screening Report

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

To implement Wexford County Council's policy in promoting greenway in the form of a combined walking / cycling trail, we have identified routes around Wexford Harbour. A northern coastal route from Wexford Town to Curracloe was examined in more detail.

### **1.1 Introduction:**

Wexford County Council have undertaken this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report to inform a planning application to An Bord Pleanála for the proposed Wexford to Curracloe Greenway. The purpose of this Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment is to determine whether an EIS is required for the proposed Wexford to Curracloe Greenway, hereafter referred to as "the proposed Greenway".

### **1.2 Proposed Development:**

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. A National Cycle Policy (NCP) was implemented in conjunction with the 'Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future' policy. The NCP mission aims to 'create a strong cycling culture in Ireland' while also 'encouraging recreational cycling'. The NCP also outlines the importance of the National Cycle Network in attracting overseas tourists if the project is implemented.

The proposed Greenway will provide a safe recreational facility for tourists and local users to walkers and cyclists from Wexford Town to Curracloe along by the coast. The proposed Greenway aims to feed into the local and national tourism strategy and complement the existing natural, cultural and built heritage along the route. The proposed Greenway does not form part of the National Cycling Plan Wexford to Tralee – Corridor No.3, outlined in the Scoping Study of the same name in 2010; however, the proposed Greenway has the potential to link to this corridor. The proposed Greenway will for the majority of its length be segregated from vehicular traffic and will provide a safe alternative for cyclists compared to the R742 regional road, which is not suitable for cyclists.





**Fig. 1.1: Proposed Coastal Greenway from Wexford Town to Curracloe:**

### 1.3 Methodology:

Preliminary site visits were carried out between June and September 2016 by Eleanor Mayes ecologists to complete a baseline survey in order to examine any possible connectivity between the proposed Greenway and any designated Natura 2000 sites in the surrounding area. The site walkover survey identified the need for additional bird survey data including bird count surveys.

In May and June 2017 breeding bird visits were made along the proposed Greenway by Scott Cawley Ltd's ecologist and ornithologist. The walkover survey recorded all birds in the surveyor's field of vision and hearing and note was made of nesting activity such as carrying twigs and food and displaying activity. During a breeding bird survey on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2017 an otter was observed in a watercourse that flows through reedbeds at Burgess onto the shoreline. A second observation was made during the habitat survey on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017, where an otter was seen on the bank of a pond east of the Wildfowl

Reserve Visitor Centre. Additionally six further surveys of Hen Harrier activity at the reedbeds at Burgess were made between November 2017 and February 2018.

Three habitat surveys were made between July and November 2017 along the proposed route and all habitats were classified, recording dominant species, indicator species and species of conservation interest. During these surveys not evidence of invasive species was recorded.

This assessment has had regard to the following documents:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidelines for Consent Authorities Regarding Sub-Threshold Development (DEHLG, 2003);
- Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide (NRA, 2008); and
- The European Commission Guidelines on EIA Screening (European Commission, 2001).

#### **1.4 Screening Conclusions:**

The Project does not meet the thresholds for which the preparation of an EIS is a mandatory requirement (Refer to Table 4.1) on page 16.

The criteria under which the project must be considered are outlined within Article 27 of the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1989, as amended. The screening criteria categories include:

- (i) Characteristics of the Proposed Development;
- (ii) Location of the Proposed Development; and
- (iii) Characteristics of Potential Impacts.

The proposed Greenway intersects with four European site, namely the Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC) [Site Code 00781], The Raven SAC [Site Code 00710], Wexford Harbour & Slob Special Protection (SPA) [Site Code 004076] and The Raven SPA [Site Code 004019].

The Greenway follows the edge of both SAC along the shoreline over the whole of the route from Ferrybank to Culleton's Gap. The proposed route traverses the Slaney River Valley SAC in the townland of Burgess where it extends inland and is predominantly

covered in reeds. The route crosses over into The Raven SAC at the sea wall at ch:6+200 along a farm path then turns north through the Raven Wood to the trailhead at Culleton's Gap. The route is also located within 50 metres of the architectural historical interest, namely the Pump House at the North Slob.

Similarly the Greenway follows the edge of the Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA along the shoreline over the whole of the route from Ferrybank to Ardcavan Lane. The proposed route traverses the SPA in the townland of Burgess where it extends inland and is predominantly covered in reeds. The route crosses over into The SPA at the edge of the slobland at ch:2+550 along access road and farm lanes then until the edge of the Raven Wood. The route heads north through the Raven Wood and is outside the Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA and The Raven PSA but parallel to both.

The proposed development shall be designed in accordance with the National Transport Authority (NTA) National Cycle Manual, the TII 'Rural Cycleway Design (offline) 2017, TII/NRA Environmental Assessment and Construction Guidelines (EACG), Inland Fisheries Ireland 'Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters' 2016 and other best practice guidelines. Adherence to these guidelines will ensure that the probability of significant environmental effects will be minimised.

In accordance with the Roads Act 1993, as amended and the Planning & Development Acts 2000, as amended, it is considered that the proposed Greenway is not likely to have significant adverse effects on the environment and therefore an EIS is not required.

## **2.0 PROJECT BRIEF**

### **Tourism**

The proposed Greenway is predominantly targeted at tourists and local users, while also playing a role in supporting the national sustainable transport network, connecting up with other local schemes such as the proposed Wexford to Rosslare and the proposed Rosslare to Waterford Greenway in County Wexford.

### **Health**

Locals and tourists using the proposed Greenway for recreational use are the key target of the project, together with commuters to and from Wexford Town. Due to traffic delays at the Ferrybank Bridge leading into Wexford Town at peak hours, the proposed Greenway will also encourage commuters to cycle to work on the cycleway. The proposed Greenway will provide a safe route for tourists to travel between town and beaches, and for locals to exercise in a safe and clean environment.

### **Economy**

The proposed Greenway will provide economic benefits not only during the construction period but will also stimulate the local economy by providing another link between Ardavan business area and Wexford Town centre. Recent figures on cycle tourism in Ireland concluded that 280,000 holidaymakers/visitors engaged in cycling while in Ireland in 2011, spending €200 million. With only a small portion of these tourists visiting the south-east region, the proposed Greenway in conjunction with other local cycling and walking routes has the potential to attract a lot more tourists to the area, generating income for the area.

### **Safety**

The project will aspire to provide a "premium" cycle route that will offer the highest level of comfort and security for users in line with the best international practice. Cyclists and walkers will have a 3m wide surfaced path along the entire length from Wexford to Curracloe. The route itself is for the majority segregated from live traffic which greatly improves the safety for pedestrians and cyclists, while a number of at grade road crossings will be fitted with traffic calming works to provide safe crossing points for all users of the proposed Greenway.



### 3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:



**Fig. 3.1: Project Site Area – Ferrybank, Ardcahan, North Slob and Raven Wood:**

#### 3.1 Overview:

The proposed project considers the northern coastal route, a distance of approximately 10.7km. The route would be a walking / cycling trails and constructed to 'greenway' standard.

The project also includes a shorter looped trail, the Ferrybank Looped Trail, which leads out along the R741 Regional Road to Ardcahan, through the Ardcahan Business Park, connects with the Ardcahan Lane leading back to the main coastal trail at the edge of the Wildfowl Reserve.

The overall goal of the Wexford to Curracloe Greenway is to link Wexford Town to the beaches of Curracloe while also providing a scenic route which can be enjoyed by locals and tourists.

### 3.2 Construction Methodology:

The construction method adopted for this project will need to address the fact that three quarters of the proposed site is within special designated areas. These designated areas have restrictive requirements which will restrict the working seasons, site clearance, noise generation and the limited access points along the site. The nature of the site and the restrictive requirements imposed on it are outlined in more detailed in a separate document, 'Outline Construction Method Statement & Environmental Management Plan'.



**Fig. 3.2: Beige Coloured Macadam Contained by Precast Concrete Edging:**

The project site does not include any large obstructions which would necessitate the need of any large civil works etc. Most of the proposed works involved could easily be carried out by medium sized contractors. It is important however that the finished product is up to the required standard and that the appropriate equipment required such as a paver is used to ensure a smooth surface is provided. The only relatively large works involve are laying macadam and erecting fencing along the route.

**Pavement:** The proposed trail pavement shall to be a bituminous surface laid on 150mm of crushed stone sub-base. Machine paving is standard practice on the European continent and has also been used in a number of greenway and cycleway scheme in Ireland.



**Culverts:** A number of culverts will be required to cross wide open shallow ditches. The proposed culverts shall be precast concrete boxes laid on stone capping and wrapped in terram geo-textile.



**Fig. 3.3: Light-weight Reinforced Plastic Boardwalk:**

**Boardwalks:** The project requires boardwalks at a number of locations over the site. The boardwalks shall be constructed of light-weight reinforced plastic boards on similar beams and cross beams frames.

**Crossings:** There are number of at-grade road crossings points along the proposed route which shall require traffic calming works to provide a safe crossing for all users. The crossings are located at Ferrybank, Orchard Lane, Ardavan Lane, Reserve Access Road and Culleton's Gap. The level of traffic calming will depend on the level of vehicular traffic on these local roads which are to be crossed, as well as visibility at the crossing. Signage and access controls will also be required on the cycleway itself to warn cyclists of the upcoming road crossing.

Screening: The provision of screening at affected houses shall be provided in order to protect the privacy of local residents, reduce noise transmission and provide additional security. The extent of screening will be determined following landowner consultation and during detailed design stage of the project.



**Fig.3.4: Example of Solid Timber Screen Adjacent Residential Housing:**

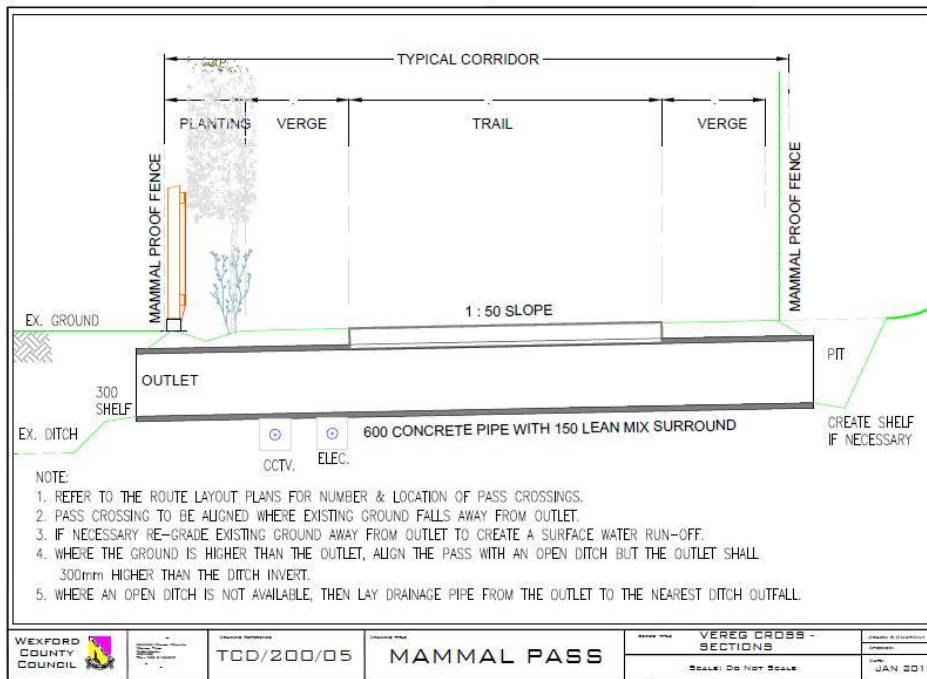
Secure Fencing: Additional to the boundary screening there will be extensive secure fencing along the route. The proposed fencing shall be a 1.8m high paladin mesh fence which will follow the trail boundary adjacent the sea wall of the North Slob to prevent access to the Wildfowl Reserve.



**Fig. 3.5: 1.8m High Paladin Secure Fencing:**



Mammal Passes: It is proposed to provide mammal passes at a number of locations along the proposed route. .



**Fig. 3.6: Example of Mammal Pass:**

**3.3 Drainage:**

The existing drainage ditches located along the route and particularly through the sloblands are to be retained. It is not proposed to pipe any of the existing drainage ditch along the proposed trail route. Where the proposed trail is to be placed over any existing ditch, a new ditch shall be created adjacent the new trail. Drainage ditches adjoining the route shall be cleared of any blockages / debris during the construction phase and maintained their after.



**Fig. 3.7: Trail Runoff to Drainage Grip / Ditch:**

## **4.0 EIA SCREENING PROCESS**

### **4.1 Introduction:**

This EIA Screening Report has been prepared by Wexford County Council with the aim of documenting the significant environmental effects which the proposed Greenway is likely to have on the receiving environment. Furthermore, this report has been prepared having regard to the following documents:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidelines for Consent Authorities Regarding Sub-Threshold Development (DEHLG, 2003);
- Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide (NRA, 2008); and
- The European Commission Guidelines on EIA Screening (European Commission, 2001).

The Guidelines on EIA Screening (European Commission, 2001) provide a flow diagram of the screening process and this is the process generally followed in this Screening Report (See Figure 4.1).

#### **4.1.1 Legislation**

EIA requirements derive from Council Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC) and as codified and replaced by Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (and as amended in turn by Directive 2014/52/EU).

### **4.2 Methodology:**

The EIA Screening is the process of deciding whether a development requires an EIA. The mandatory and discretionary provisions within the Roads Act 1993, as amended, allow the requirement for an EIA to be determined.

All roads projects can be placed into one of the following two categories:

- Those that exceed the thresholds laid down and therefore have a mandatory requirement to prepare an EIS; and



- Those that are sub-threshold and must be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

In the case of this proposed road development it has been determined as sub-threshold and will be determined on a case-by-case basis, outlined below in Table 4.2.

### **4.3 Mandatory EIA:**

The proposed development does not meet the thresholds required for a mandatory EIA.

The legislative requirements which deem whether an EIA is mandatory for a project are outlined in Section 50 of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, and in Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. An overview of these legislative requirements and their applicability to this amenity project in a comparison to a similar scaled road project are provided in Table 4.1 on page 16.

**Table 4.1 Screening Matrix for Mandatory EIA**

<b>Mandatory Threshold</b>	<b>Regulatory Reference</b>	<b>Response</b>
<i>Construction of a Motorway</i>	S. 50(1)(a) of the Roads Act, 1993, as substituted by S. 9(1)(d)(i) of the Roads Act, 2007	The Wexford to Curracloe Greenway is not a Motorway.  <b>Mandatory Threshold Trigger not reached.</b>
<i>Construction of a Busway</i>	S. 50(1)(a) of the Roads Act, 1993, as substituted by S. 9(1)(d)(i) of the Roads Act, 2007	The Wexford to Curracloe Greenway is not a Busway.  <b>Mandatory Threshold Trigger not reached.</b>
<i>Construction of a Service Area</i>	S. 50(1)(a) of the Roads Act, 1993, as substituted by S. 9(1)(d)(i) of the Roads Act, 2007	The Wexford to Curracloe Greenway is not a Service Area.  <b>Mandatory Threshold Trigger not reached.</b>
<p><i>Prescribed type of proposed road development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or the realignment or widening of an existing road so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new, realigned or widened road would be eight kilometres or more in length in a rural area, or 500 metres or more in length in an urban area</li> <li>• The construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length.</li> </ul>	Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994 (Road development prescribed for the purposes of S. 50(1)(a) of the Roads Act, 1993	<p>The Wexford to Curracloe Greenway does not involve the provision of four or more lanes anywhere throughout its length.</p> <p><b>Mandatory Threshold Trigger not reached.</b></p> <p>The Wexford to Curracloe Greenway does not involve the construction of a bridge or tunnel.</p> <p><b>Mandatory Threshold Trigger not reached.</b></p>

Irish legislation has set mandatory thresholds for Annex II projects as defined by EIA Directives (Directive 85/337/EEC and Directive 97/11/EC).

**Table 4.2 Screening Matrix for Sub-Threshold Developments**

Sub-Threshold Requirements	Regulatory Reference	Response
<p>Where a local authority proposes to carry out a sub-threshold development and the likelihood of significant effects on the environment cannot be excluded by the authority, the authority shall make a determination as to whether the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and where it determines that the development would be likely to have such significant effects it shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an EIS in respect thereof.</p>	<p>Article 120(1) of the P&amp;D Regs, 2001.</p>	<p>Wexford County Council determined he proposed Greenway would not be likely to have significant effect on the environment, therefore does not require an EIS.</p>
<p>Where a proposed development referred to in sub-article (1) would be located on, or in, or have the potential to impact on,</p> <p>(a) a European Site, meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a candidate site of Community importance,</li> <li>(2) a site of Community importance,</li> <li>(3) a candidate special area of conservation,</li> <li>(4) a special area of conservation,</li> <li>(5) a candidate special protection area, or</li> <li>(6) a special protection area</li> </ul> <p>(b) an area the subject of a notice under section 16 (2)(b) of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (No. 38 of 2000),</p> <p>(c) an area designated as a natural heritage area under section 18 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000,</p> <p>(d) land established or recognised as a nature reserve within the meaning of section 15 or 16 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (No. 39 of 1976),</p> <p>(e) land designated as a refuge for fauna under section 17 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 as amended by section 28 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000,</p>	<p>Article 120(2) of the P&amp;D Regs, 2001.</p>	<p>Wexford County Council determined that the proposed Greenway would not be likely to have significant effect on the environment, therefore does not require an EIS.</p> <p>However the AA Screening determined the scheme would be likely to have significant effects on the designated European Sites and a NIS is required (see the following paragraphs and the Screening Checklist included in Appendix 1).</p>

<p>(f) a place, site or feature of ecological interest, the preservation, conservation or protection of which is an objective of a development plan or local area plan, draft development plan or draft local area plan, or proposed variation of a development plan, for the area in which the development is proposed,</p> <p>(g) a place or site which has been included by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in a list of proposed Natural Heritage Areas published on the National Parks and Wildlife Service website,</p> <p>The local authority concerned shall in determining whether the development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, have regard to the likely significant effects of the development on such site, area, land, place or feature as appropriate.</p>		
<p>The Board shall, where it considers that sub-threshold development proposed to be carried out by a local authority would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, require the local authority to prepare, or cause to be prepared, an EIS in respect thereof.</p>	<p>Article 120(3) of the P&amp;D Regs, 2001.</p>	<p>Wexford County Council determined he proposed Greenway would not be likely to have significant effect on the environment, therefore does not require an EIS.</p>

The Planning and Development Regulations 2001 specifically mention the above sites when screening for EIS requirements.

Figure 2 The Steps in Screening

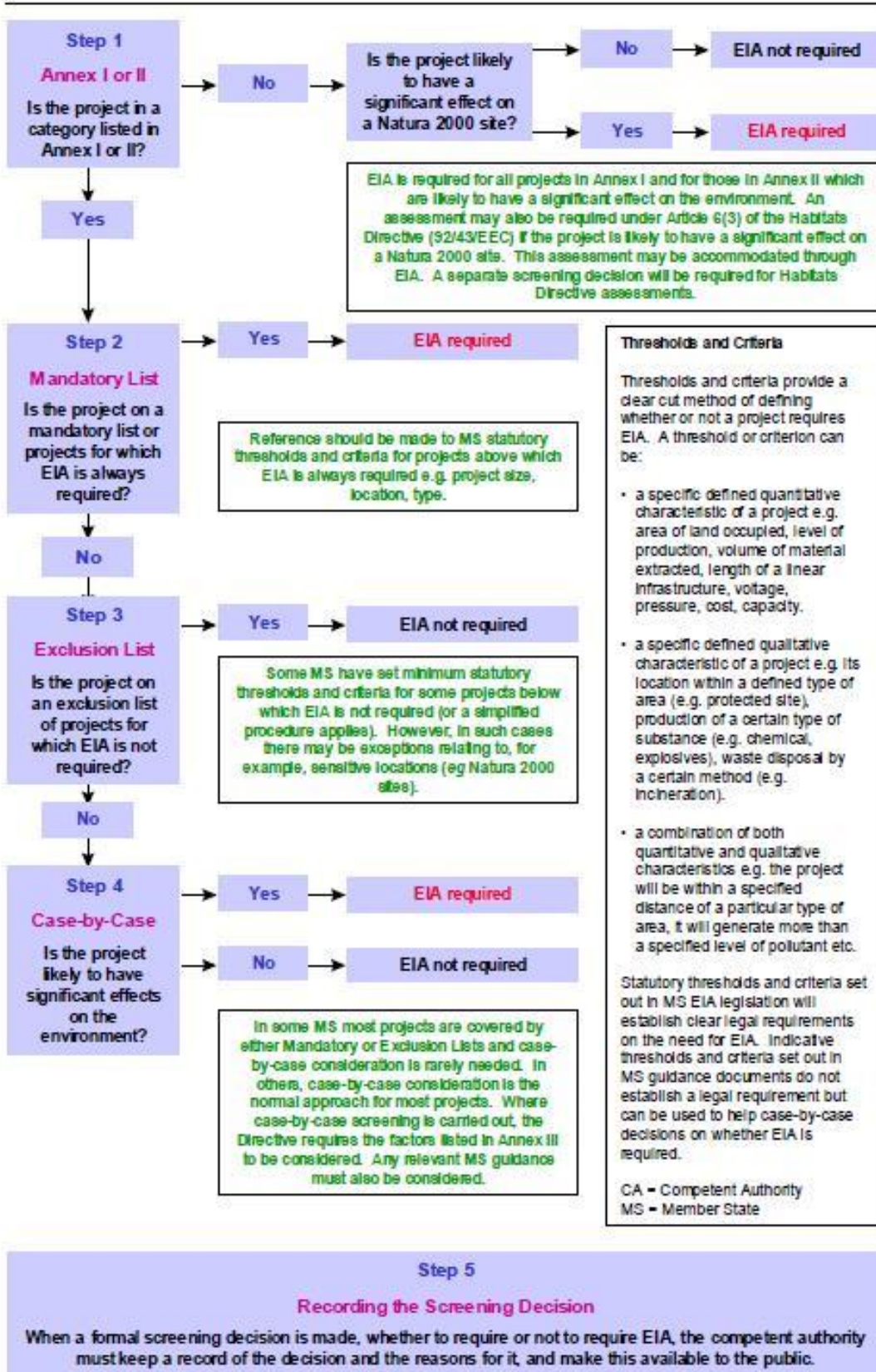


Fig. 4.1: Flow Diagram of the Screening Process (Source: European Commission Guidelines on EIA Screening, June 2001)

#### 4.4 Sub-Threshold Development:

Where a decision is being made on whether a proposed development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, regard must be given to the criteria specified for the purposes of Article 27 of the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1989, as amended, (which reflects the criteria in Annex III of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU).

The Article 27 screening criteria are grouped into three categories:

- (i) Characteristics of the Proposed Development;
- (ii) Location of the Proposed Development; and
- (iii) Characteristics of Potential Impacts.

Additionally, the EIA screening process can be aided using the checklists contained within the European Commission publication Guidance on EIA Screening (June 2001), in particular the “Screening Checklist” and the “Checklist of Criteria for Evaluating the Significance of Environmental Effects”. The Screening Checklist was completed to inform the Article 27 screening process and is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

The criteria associated with each category (i.e. the criteria that must be taken into account when making screening decisions on a case by case basis) are presented in Table 4.3. These criteria have been considered in the context of the proposed amenity development and a description of the aspects of the environment with potential to be significantly affected by the project are outlined in Section 5.

#### Table 4.3 Article 27 Screening Criteria for Determining Likely Significant Effects

##### 1. Characteristics of proposed development

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular:

- The size of the proposed development;
- The cumulation with other proposed development;
- The use of natural resources;
- The production of waste;
- Pollution and nuisances; and
- The risk of accidents, having regard to substances or technologies used.



## **2. Location of proposed development**

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, having regard in particular to:

- The existing land use;
- The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area; and
- The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:
  - (a) wetlands,
  - (b) coastal zones,
  - (c) mountain and forest areas,
  - (d) nature reserves and parks
  - (e) areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,
  - (f) areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded,
  - (g) densely populated areas,
  - (h) landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

## **3. Characteristics of potential impacts**

The potential significant effects of the proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in particular to:

- The extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population);
- The transfrontier nature of the impact;
- The magnitude and complexity of the impact;
- The probability of the impact; and
- The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact

## **5.0 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT**

### **5.1 Nature Conservation Designations:**

The proposed Greenway intersects with four European designated sites (Natura 2000 sites), these sites are the Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC) [Site Code 00781], The Raven SAC [Site Code 00710], Wexford Harbour & Slob Special Protection (SPA) [Site Code 004076] and The Raven SPA [Site Code 004019].

The proposed site corridor hugs the edge of the Slaney River Valley SAC along the harbour shoreline and traverses it in the townland of Burgess where it extends inland over the reed. The site corridor then enters The Raven SAC at ch:6+100 along the shoreline before turning north inland through the Raven Wood.

The proposed site corridor traverses the Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA from Ferrybank to the Raven Point along the sea wall to ch:7+100 where it crosses over into The Raven Wood. The route corridor does not enter The Raven SPA but is situated within 100 metres for the remainder of the route north to Culleton's Gap.

### Slaney River Valley SAC

The Slaney River Valley SAC [Site Code 000781] (4,870ha) covers the general area of Wexford Harbour and estuary, the map below shows the extent of this SAC related to the project site area.

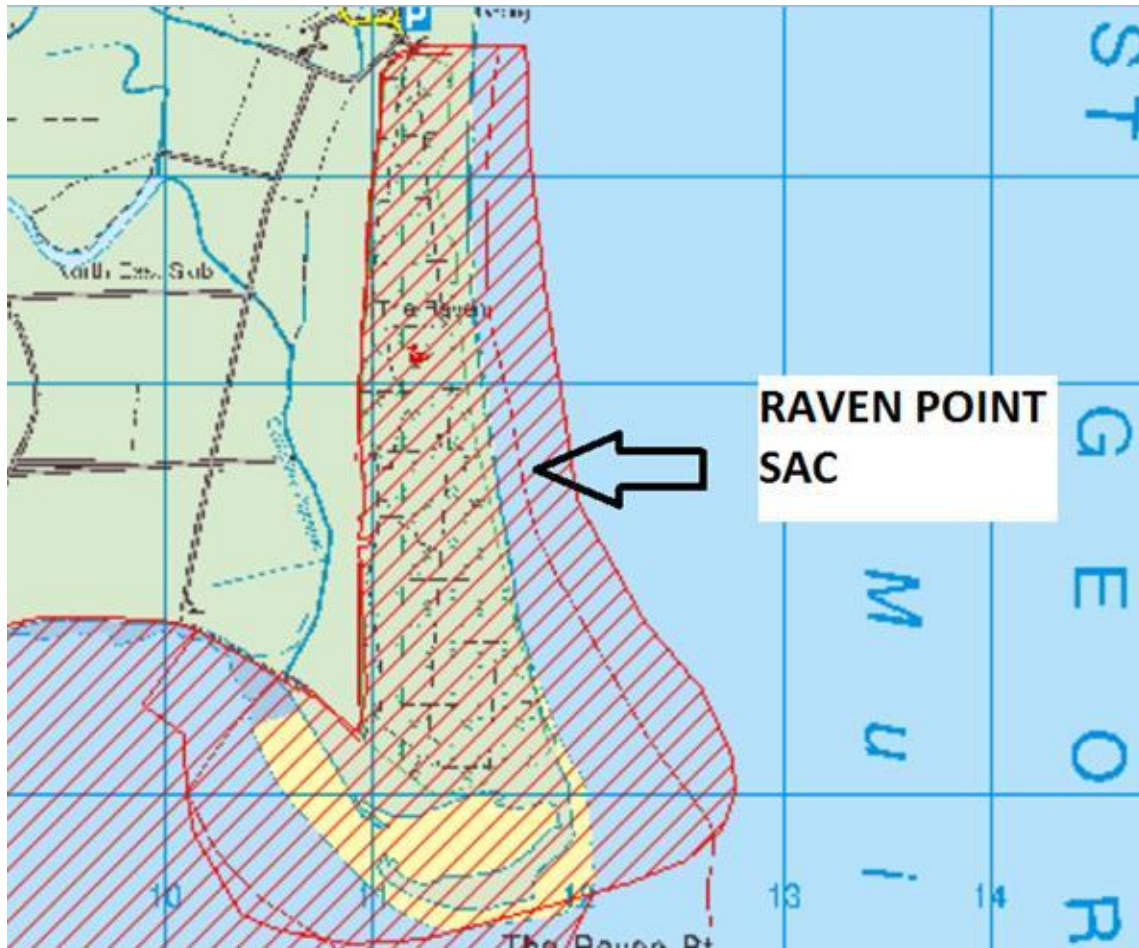


**Fig. 5.1: Slaney River Valley SAC 000781:**

The 1<sup>ST</sup> Leg of the Greenway from Ferrybank to the Wildfowl Reserve Visitor Centre is adjacent to the SAC except for a short section where the SAC extends inland over a salt meadow habitat. All of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Leg of the Greenway runs adjacent and in close proximity to the SAC but does not pass through it.

### The Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC

The Raven Point Nature Reserve [Site Code 000710] (589 hectares), 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 full extent of Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC is indicated on the map below.



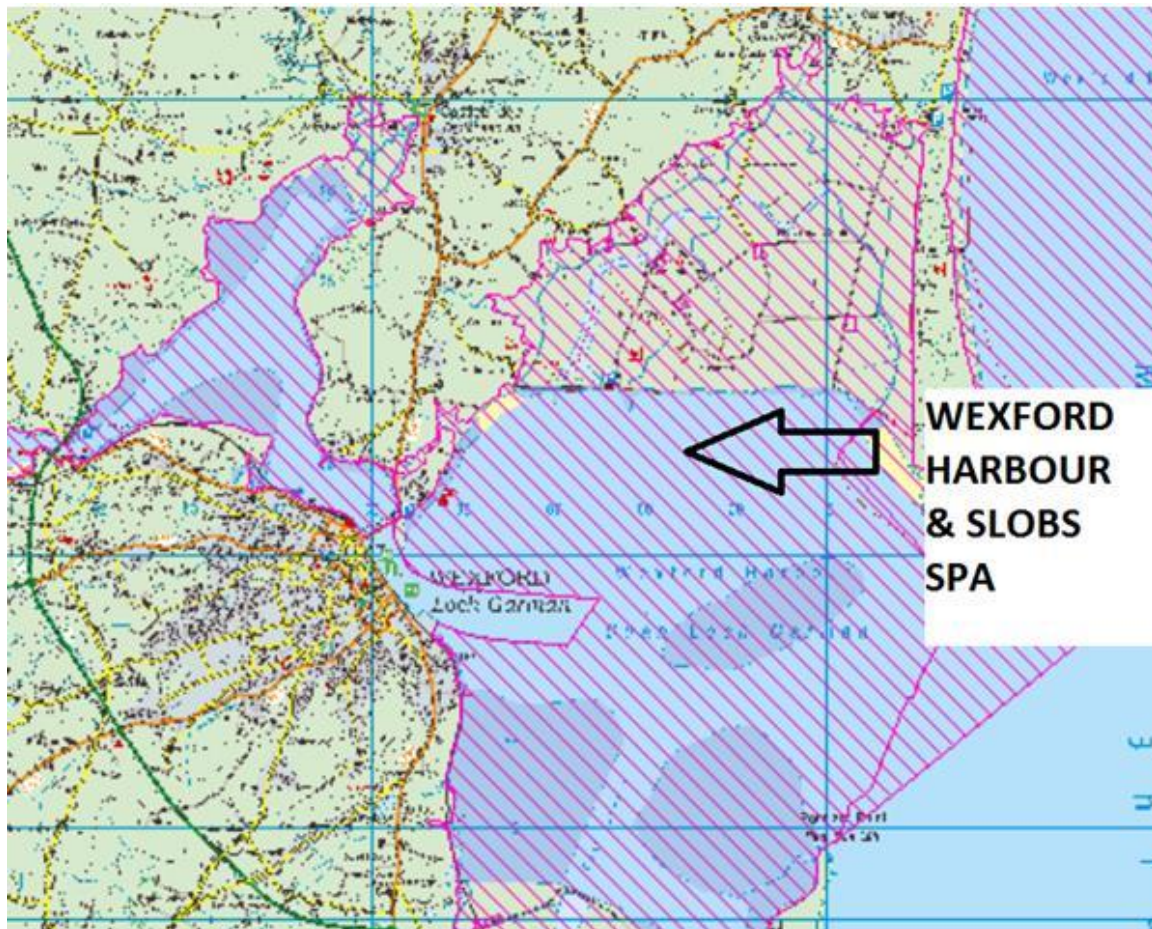
**Fig. 5.2: Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC (000710):**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Leg of the proposed Greenway runs through this SAC. The route follows the existing established walking/access trail through the wooded part of the SAC.



### Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA

The Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA [Site Code 004076] (5,979Ha) covers the Wexford Harbour and slobland area in general, the map below indicates the full extent of the SPA over the North Sloblands. The Wildfowl Reserve (194 hectares) is located within this SPA on the North Slob. It is owned jointly by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Birdwatch Ireland and it forms 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 on 3 June 1981 and was extended by 84 hectares in 1989.



**Fig. 5.3: Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA 004076:**

The 1<sup>ST</sup> Leg of the Greenway from Ferrybank to Reserve Visitor Centre is adjacent to the SAC except for a short section where the SAC extends inland over a salt meadow habitat. All of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Leg of the Greenway runs through the SPA along by the sea wall. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Leg of the Greenway routed through the Raven Wood is out side the SPA but in close proximity to it.

### The Raven SPA

The Raven SPA [Site Code 0004019] (4,204Ha) 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.



**Fig. 5.4: The Raven SPA 004019:**

No part of the proposed Greenway runs through the SPA. However the 3<sup>rd</sup> Leg of the greenway route through the Raven Wood is in close proximity to the SPA.



**Wexford Slobs & Harbour proposed Natural Heritage Area 000712**

The Wexford Slobs & Harbour pNHA [Site Code 000712] (6,915Ha) covers the Wexford Harbour and beyond the north slobland area, the map below indicates the full extent of the area over the North Sloblands.



**Fig. 5.6: Wexford Slobs & Harbour pNHA 000712:**

The 1<sup>ST</sup> Leg of the Greenway from Ferrybank to Reserve Visitor Centre is adjacent to the proposed NHA except for a short section where the NHA extends inland over a salt meadow habitat. All of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Leg and 3<sup>rd</sup> Leg of the Greenway runs through the pNHA along by the sea wall.

## 5.2 Cultural Heritage:

The proposed Greenway is routed along the north coast of Wexford Harbour and aligned inside the North Slob sea wall before traversing through the Raven Wood. The North Slob was reclaimed from the sea in the mid nineteenth century in phases. The original pump house (NIAH 15703805) is located within 10m of the proposed Greenway and is listed on National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) site of architectural interest.



**Fig. 5.7: North Slob Pump House (1845-1852) [NIAH 15703805]:**

The propose Greenway route passes close to a number of farm houses in Ardavan and Curracloe which are listed on the NIAH records of heritage interest. The coastal zone of County Wexford is noted for a significant number of thatch cottages and the Curracloe area is well represented with this form of vernacular construction. There are also a number of national monuments within 200m of the proposed route in the Ardavan area. These sites are church ruins dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, graveyards and holy wells. These monuments and architectural heritage sites are indicated on drawing 'Heritage & Monuments Map', ATR/103 and listed in Book No.1, Planning & Policy Report for this greenway project.

### 5.3 Landscape:

The existing environment along the project corridor can be considered as three broad legs. The first Leg is predominantly agriculture land at the fringe of Wexford Town extending to the edge of the sloblands. The land is slightly elevated, overlooking the harbour on soft clay coastline where aggressive erosion is occurring. The fields are bound by low hedging and the land is currently both farmed and unfarmed.

The second leg is over-reclaimed land from the sea which is known as the North Slob. This land is flat open country with few hedges on heavy poor-draining soil. The land is a mix of grass meadows and cereal / fodder crops. The western section of the slobland is within the Wildfowl Reserve and the eastern part is private farmland. Most of the sloblands are below sea level, protected by a 4m high earth wall with stone-faced incline on the sea-ward side. The land is drained by wide open ditches accumulating into large open channels where the water is pumped out to sea.

The third leg is the Raven Point Nature Reserve which extends from Culleton's Gap to the point. The reserve is a sand dune system covered with a stand of mature planted pine trees. The outer dunes at the top of the point are open and covered in marine grasses.

## **5.4 : Characteristic of the Proposed Development:**

### **5.4.1 Size of the Project**

The proposed route travels through a rural area. The mandatory threshold for prescribed types of road development in a rural area is 8km of four or more lanes (dual carriageway). The proposed Greenway development is approximately 11km in length and 3m in width. Although this area is greater than the mandatory threshold which triggers an EIS, the proposed development will be a Greenway amenity and not a road of more than 4 lanes and therefore does not meet the mandatory threshold.

### **5.4.2 Cumulation with other Projects**

An initial review of plans and projects that may have the potential to result in cumulative impacts has been undertaken. This section considers plans and projects in Co. Wexford that were considered. Data sources included the following:

- Wexford County Council website (planning and roads sections);
- An Bord Pleanála website (planning searches);
- Web search for major infrastructure projects in Co. Wexford;
- Wexford County Development Plan 2013 – 2019;

A review was also undertaken of plans and projects around Wexford Harbour. The following projects have been identified:

- National Route No.3
- Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019
- Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 (Extended to 2019)
- Proposed Wexford to Rosslare Greenway
- Proposed Rosslare to Waterford Greenway

### **National Route No.3**

As stated previously the proposed Greenway does not form any part of the National Cycle Network's Wexford to Tralee (Corridor no. 3). National Route No. 3 -Wexford to Tralee is to be approximately 286km in length. At present there are no Appropriate Assessments carried out for any section of Route No. 3, however, future development of sections of this route will be able to utilise the results of this Screening report when considering in-combination impacts.

## **Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019**

The policies and objectives of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 have been examined for any in-combination effects that may occur in conjunction with the proposed development. No adverse impacts on the site integrity of either SACs or SPA's listed above in section 5.1 were identified as part of the assessment. The Plan contains several policies that relate to the development and promotion of cycle trails within the county (listed below) though none are location specific:

### ***Chapter 7 Tourism:***

*Objection 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."

*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."

*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."

*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".

### ***Chapter 8 Transportation:***

The following are transportation 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;

### **Chapter 13: Coastal Zone Management:**

*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”.

*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”

*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”.

*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.”

### Chapter 15: Recreation, Sport & Public Rights of Way:

*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.”

*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.

*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”.

No residual impacts were identified as part of the assessment for the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 and the above policies. No in-combination impacts between the County Development Plan and the proposed Greenway were identified.



**Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan 2009-2015: (Extended to 2019)**

The policies and objectives of the Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan 2009 - 2015 examined for any in-combination effects that may occur in conjunction with the proposed development.

***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 need arises.

TR12 - Promote the development of river-side walking routes and foster 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.

***Chapter 9 Infrastructure:***

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.

No residual or in-combination impacts with this plan have been identified as a result of the proposed Greenway. There are no other planned developments in proximity to the Wexford Harbour identified within the Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan or any National Plans that may potentially result in an in-combination impact.

### **5.4.3 Use of Natural Resources**

Aggregates will be imported to the site for use during construction as the proposed Greenway is to be 3m wide, made up of 40mm bituminous surface laid on 150 – 200mm base of Clause 804 (graded crushed rock or standard graded stone) with some locations requiring an additional 200mm of sub-formation (capping material) in certain areas where levels dictate. The level of aggregates required is not considered to be significant.

### **5.4.4 Production of Waste**

As with all construction sites there will be a small volume of waste material such as packaging, pallets, etc, generated from the construction of the proposed Greenway. However, it is anticipated that all topsoil / sub-soil excavation would be reused on site adjacent to the proposed trail route, thus avoiding the hauling of bulky soil material.

### **5.4.5 Pollution and Nuisances**

Apart from the agriculture land over the 1<sup>st</sup> leg of the site the remainder of the site is considered to be sensitive environmental receptors. The proposed development traverses or is aligned close to SAC's and SPA's with the SPA more sensitive to noise disturbance. The restricting of the construction programme to five months over the summer season will eliminate the noise disturbance to wintering migratory geese.

During construction, polluting material has the potential to cause environmental effects, however the likelihood and severity of these effects will be minimised through compliance with the NRA/TII 'Environmental and Construction Guidelines', IFI Guidelines 2016 and the employment of construction management best practice.

It is anticipated that with the operation of the proposed Greenway there would be a reduce air pollutant emission levels in the Ardavan area as local commuters would have an option to switch from cars use to cycling or walking.

### **5.4.6 Risk of Accidents**

During the construction stage, the likelihood of an accidental spillage of construction materials into the aquatic environment will be managed through the adoption of strict best practice construction management.

## **5.5 Location of Proposed Development:**

### **5.5.1 Existing Land Use**

Land uses along the length of the proposed Greenway development comprise mainly agricultural, while also residential and industrial in the Ardavan area. The route traverses the European designated ecological sites, these sites are the Slaney River Valley SAC, mostly covering the harbour but includes salt meadow; The Raven SAC, sand dune system with pine tree plantation; Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA, covering the harbour and the sloblands and The Raven SPA, covering the sand dunes system and off shore sandbanks.

### **5.5.2 Abundance, Quality and Regenerative Capacity of Natural Resources**

All construction material including bitumen and stone will be imported to site for the construction of the proposed development.

### **5.5.3 The Absorption Capacity of the Natural Environment**

#### **5.5.3.1 Overview**

During the construction phase, due to potential pollution incidences, measures must be put in place to protect, maintain or improve the water quality status of the Slaney River Valley SAC, The Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC and all surrounding watercourses.

#### **5.5.3.2 Watercourses**

The Slaney River Valley SAC is adjacent with the route of the proposed Greenway. The proposed Greenway crosses two watercourses one emerging from the salt meadow wetland in the townland of Burgess and the North Slob perimeter stream in the townland of Ardavan.

Watercourses can be sensitive to pollution, particularly to the potential increased levels of suspended solids during the construction stage. Suspended solids (silt) affect aquatic life particularly larger animals such as fish, most critically when it settles in spawning areas. Other impacts include:

- Physical obstructions to upstream and downstream migration both during and after construction;
- Disturbance of spawning beds during construction -timing of works is critical; and
- Point source pollution incidents during construction

Avoidance and control measures will be implemented during and after construction in order to reduce the risk of these impacts.

### **5.5.3.3 Coastal Zones**

The proposed Greenway is adjacent to the coastal zone over its entire route length. The zone is sensitive to bird feeding activity along the shoreline particularly during low tide and over the grassed sand dunes at the Raven Point.

Avoidance and control measures will be implemented during construction in order to reduce the risk of these impacts. Avoidance could include restricting construction staff from mounting the sea wall, this could be achieved by early erection of permanent fencing at the base of the sea wall. Control measures could include timing of work relative to low tide particularly opposite Burgess wetland.

### **5.5.3.4 Mountain and Forest Areas**

There are no mountain ranges within the study area. The Raven Wood is a pine wood plantation and a designated habitat, see impact and measures in 5.5.3.7 below.

### **5.5.3.5 Nature Reserves and Parks**

There proposed greenway traverses the Raven Point Nature Reserve which is a proposed nature reserve, see impact and measures in 5.5.3.7 below.

### **5.5.3.6 Nationally Designated Sites**

There are no nationally designated sites within the study area, however the Raven Point Nature Reserve is proposed, see impact and measures in 5.5.3.7 below.

### **5.5.3.7 European Sites**

There are four European designated sites traverses by the proposed Greenway, these sites are the Slaney River Valley SAC, The Raven SAC, Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA and The Raven SPA. The Screening for Appropriate Assessment has identified that by applying the precautionary principle, the professional opinion of the ecologist that it is not possible to exclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a likely significant effect on the above four European sites.

### 5.5.3.8 Environmental Quality Standards

From the information available at this stage of the process there are no known areas in which the environmental quality standards have already been exceeded. All relevant environmental quality standards will be adhered to during construction.

### 5.5.3.9 Densely Populated Areas

As the proposed route exits Wexford Town, it passes through agriculture land and intersects with Orchard Lane which has housing ribbon development, then through agriculture land again before entering the sloblands and then Raven Wood which have no dwellings. These residential areas in Tincone and Ardcavan will benefit from a Greenway by providing a safe link to Wexford Town which can be used by cyclist commuters and recreational users.

### 5.5.3.10 Landscapes of Historical, Cultural or Archaeological Significance

The following Landscapes of Historical, Cultural or Archaeological significance were identified within a 100m boundary either side of the proposed route, through the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Historic Environment Viewer.

#### Architectural

- Wexford Bridge 15501001
- Ardcavan Cottage 15703803
- Ardcavan Grave Yard 15703802
- North Slob Pump House 15703805
- Curracloe House 15703806
- Curracloe House Gate 15703807

#### Archaeological

- St. Cavan's Church WX01834
- St. Cavan's Graveyard WX03431

These constraints have been identified within the study area and will be taken into consideration. During the design development, liaison will be undertaken with the National Monuments Service and other groups with interest in historical, cultural and archaeological resources in the area.

#### **5.5.3.11 Designated Focal Points/Views**

The Wexford County Development Plan 2013 -2019 has not identified any specific protected views for the county.

Due to the small scale of the proposed works, existing views are not expected to be impacted significantly and therefore, a detailed landscape and visual assessment is not required due to the construction and operation of the proposed development.



**Fig. 5.8: Greenland White-fronted Goose:**

## 5.6 Probability of the Impact:

### 5.6.1. Extent of the Impact

The proposed Greenway consists of a 3m wide, paved corridor of approximately 10.7km in length.

### 5.6.2. Transfrontier Nature of the Impact

There are no transfrontier impacts associated with the proposed Greenway development.

### 5.6.3. Magnitude and Complexity of the Impact

**Air Quality and Climate:** The proposed Greenway involves the design and construction of a high quality cycling and pedestrian facility along the length of the route corridor. The objective of the project is to provide a facility for cyclists and pedestrians thus having no significant operational impact on air quality and climate. The construction phase of development aims to provide a bound surface 3m in width for 10.7km. It is considered that the level of construction required for a project of this scale will not have a significant impact on the local air quality or climate; neither will a construction project of this scale result in any significant generation of dust.

**Noise and Vibration:** The proposed Greenway will largely be active in daytime hours only. At operation an increase in the number of cyclists or pedestrians will have negligible impact on noise in the local environment. It is also considered that the level of construction traffic and construction operations required for a project of this scale will be short term and will not result in the creation of any significant levels of noise or vibration. Furthermore works will be carried out in compliance with BS.5228: Part 1 and the European Communities (Noise Emission by Equipment for Use Outdoors) Regulations, 2001 which will ensure a controlled level of noise during construction phase.

**Human Beings:** The development of the route will pose minor noise and visual impacts to residents living along the route corridor during construction. During the operational stage, the proposed Greenway should have negligible adverse effects on human beings living along the route and will provide a high quality amenity for the local residents.

**Ecology:** The proposed Greenway intersects with four European designated sites (Natura 2000 sites), these sites are the Slaney River Valley Special Area of



Conservation (SAC) [Site Code 00781], The Raven SAC [Site Code 00710], Wexford Harbour & Slob Special Protection (SPA) [Site Code 004076] and The Raven SPA [Site Code 004019].

The proposed site corridor hugs the edge of the Slaney River Valley SAC along the harbour shoreline, following the slobland sea wall, then enters The Raven SAC at ch:6+100 before turning north inland through the Raven Wood. The proposed site corridor traverses the Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA from Ferrybank to the Raven Point along the sea wall to ch:7+100 where it crosses over into The Raven Wood. The route corridor does not enter The Raven SPA but is situated within 100 metres for the remainder of the route north to Culleton's Gap.

A Habitats Directive Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been carried out for the proposed development in order to address the potential impact on Natura 2000 Sites (SAC, SPA). This Assessment addresses the potential impact the project may have on the Qualifying Interests (Habitats and Species) of the designated sites and the conservation objectives for same. The AA Screening Report was carried out in May to November 2017.

Qualifying Interests of the Slaney River Valley SAC [Site Code 00781] Include Estuaries [1130], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Atlantic salt meadows [1330], Mediterranean salt meadows [1410], Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260], Old sessile oak woods [91A0] and Alluvial forests [91E0].

The SAC is also selected for eight protected species including Freshwater Pearl Mussel [1029], Sea Lamprey [1095], Brook Lamprey [1096], River Lamprey, [1099], Twaite Shad [1103], Salmon [1106], Otter [1355] and Harbour Seal [1365].

The Raven SAC [Site Code 00710] has qualifying interests including Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Atlantic salt meadows [1330], Embryonic shifting dunes [2110], Shifting dunes along the shoreline (white dunes) [2120], Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130], Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* [2170] and Humid dune slacks [2190].

Wexford Harbour & Slob Special Protection (SPA) [Site Code 004076] has qualifying interests including;

Little Grebe [A004], Great Crested Grebe [A005], Cormorant [A017], Grey Heron [A028], Bewick's Swan [A037], Whooper Swan [A038], Light-bellied Brent Goose [A046], Shelduck [A048], Wigeon [A050], Teal [A052], Mallard [A053], Pintail [A054], Scaup [A062], Goldeneye [A067], Red-breasted Merganser [A069], Hen Harrier [A082], Coot [A125], Oystercatcher [A130], Golden Plover [A140], Grey Plover [A141], Lapwing [A142], Knot [A143], Sanderling [A144], Dunlin [A149], Black-tailed Godwit [A156], Bar-

tailed Godwit [A157], Curlew [A160], Redshank [A162], Black-headed Gull [A179], Lesser Black-backed Gull [A183], Little Tern [A195], **Greenland White-fronted Goose** [A395], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999].

The Raven SPA [Site Code 004019] has qualifying interests including; Red-throated Diver [A001], Cormorant [A017], Common Scoter [A065], Grey Plover [A141], Sanderling [A144], Greenland White-fronted Goose [A395], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999].

The AA Screening concluded, that likely significant effects on these four European sites may require mitigation.

The authors of this report acknowledge it is for the competent authority to carry out a screening for appropriate assessment and to reach one of the following determinations:

- (a) Stage 2 AA of the proposed development is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site; and

Stage 2 AA of the proposed development is not required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

**Soils and Geology:** Due to the scale of the project and the minimal nature of excavation required it is not anticipated that there will be any significant impacts to soils and geology as a consequence of the construction or operation of the scheme.

**Hydrology:** The principal potential impacts to surface water are associated with discharges to the receiving watercourses – in this case the stream through salt meadow in the townland of Burgess, the North Slob Perimeter River, Westside Channel and the Curracloe Channel. It is anticipated that there will be no impact to hydrology or water quality during the operational phase. The proposed Greenway will not create traffic pollutants impacting on the water system. During construction there is the potential for pollution of the SAC from sediment loading and associated anthropogenic polluting substances as a result of surface water run-off or spills on site. It is considered that the enforcement of industry best practice pollution prevention measures will prevent the occurrence of a pollution event (for example CIRIA Guideline Document C532 Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites and C648 Control of water pollution from linear construction projects).

**Hydrogeology:** Hydro-geological assessment addresses the potential impact of the proposed project on groundwater features and groundwater flow regime. As the proposed Greenway will be largely on the existing farm paths / field margins and there will be no requirement for any significant cut or fill, it is considered that there will be no significant impact on the groundwater regime during either construction or operation.

**Landscape and Visual:** The nature of the proposed Greenway being principally an overlay on the existing farm paths & walking paths and new pavement over field margins is unlikely to have any significant impact on the landscape of the area. The existence hedgerows along farm paths, sea wall embankment adjacent the proposed route and tree canopy cover to existing walking path in the Raven Wood allows the incorporation of the proposed Greenway into the surrounding environment. Where solid screens panels are erected along the proposed route to prevent bird disturbance at ponds / channels, natural landscaping with grassed mounds to the reserve side of the screens is proposed. In addition at operational stage the proposed Greenway will not detract from existing views or views to or from any heritage features present. In fact the project has the potential to have a positive landscape and visual impact through the provision of additional views and interpretation of the area and its heritage.

During construction the presence of plant and machinery will detract from certain views. However this is considered to be a slight impact which is short term in nature and which is easily offset by the benefits accrued at the operational stage.

**Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage:** The area is not particularly rich in cultural heritage, possessing a small number of recorded monuments and protected structures. As a result of this it is considered that the proposed Greenway project will not have a likely significant effect on any monuments or structures.

**Socio-economic:** The objective of any socio-economic assessment is to examine the potential impact of the construction and operation of the proposed development on the local community and business activities in the local area. The opening of the proposed Greenway will have beneficial impacts as it will attract people to the area thereby having a knock on positive economic effect with respect to hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, recreational tourism, restaurants, bike hire, etc. Similarly during construction the influx of construction workers will have a short term benefit on the local economy.

**Resource and Waste Management:** The key phase with regard to resource and waste management is the construction phase. As the proposed Greenway is largely an overlay there will be no requirement for any significant cut or fill. It is therefore considered that there will not be a significant amount of waste generated from the construction of the scheme. Efforts will be made to reuse material on site where possible such as the topsoil and sub-soils as mentioned in Section 5.4.4, thus minimising waste.

**Interactions:** Interaction will occur between the water environment and ecological receptors. However, the likely impacts on these environmental aspects are minimal and will not result in significant environmental effects.

**Overall:** Any environmental impacts associated with the proposed Greenway development will be minimal and therefore, significant environmental effects can be ruled out without further surveys, investigations and assessments.

#### **5.7 Duration, Frequency and Reversibility of the Impact:**

The potential impacts during the development will be associated with the construction stage. These impacts will be temporary, reversible and one-off.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction:**

This screening report has been carried out in accordance with a methodology that is based on

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (DEHLG, 2003),
- Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide (NRA, 2008) and
- The European Commission Guidelines on EIA Screening (June 2001).

### **6.2 Mandatory EIA:**

The proposed Wexford to Curracloe Greenway does not exceed any of the thresholds outlined in the Roads Act 1993, as amended, that would trigger a mandatory requirement to prepare an EIS.

### **6.3 Sub-Threshold EIA:**

The proposed development is sub-threshold and therefore is assessed in accordance with Article 27 of the European Communities (EIA) Regulations, 1989.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

Under Article 120 (2) of the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 Wexford County Council considers that the proposed Greenway development does not have potential to have significant effects on the environment for those reasons listed in the previous sections and, as such, it is not recommended that an EIS is required. However the proposed development could have a likely significant effect on the designated European Sites along the proposed route and the Appropriate Assessment Screening recommends a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) be prepared for the scheme.



## **Appendix A:**

### EIA Screening Checklist



Questions to be Considered	Yes / No / ? Briefly Describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/No/? - Why?
1. Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the Project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies, etc)?	Yes Construction of approximately 11km of Greenway in a rural environments along the coast line.	No The construction of a new path 3m wide at grade plus fencing and some screening.
2. Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy especially any resources which are non- renewable or in short supply?	Yes Land and natural resources will be required.	No The volume of materials required will not be large enough to result in a significant effect
3. Will the Project involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health or the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	Yes Bitumen, oils, etc will be used will be excavated during construction.	No Construction best practice and guidance will be followed in the construction of the proposed Greenway. Any refuelling will be carried out in controlled areas with bunds to prevent any spillage entering the drainage channels.
4. Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes Small quantities of unsuitable material during construction.	No A Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan will be prepared by the Contractor in order to deal with all materials in accordance with current waste management legislation.
5. Will the Project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Yes The construction phase will produce air pollutants.	No Air pollution levels are not anticipated to exceed permitted thresholds.
6. Will the Project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes The construction phase will create low levels of noise and vibration over a short period.	No The extent of construction works will not be of a large enough scale to result in significant effects.

Questions to be Considered	Yes / No / ? Briefly Describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/No/? - Why?
7. Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	<b>Yes</b> Both the construction and operation phases will have risk of pollutants entering surface water and groundwater.	<b>No</b> The proposed development will be designed and constructed in accordance with the TII/NRA Environmental Assessment and Construction Guidelines (EACG) and other best practice guidelines
8. Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?	<b>Yes</b> Both the construction and operation phases will have risk of accidents which could affect human health or the environment.	<b>No</b> The proposed development will be designed and constructed in accordance with the NRA/TII EACG and other best practice guidelines.
9. Will the Project result in social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	<b>Yes</b> The provision of pedestrian/cycle facilities will assist in people moving to more sustainable forms of transport. Additional benefits of the proposed development include the increase in employment which will result from the construction stage and economic benefits during operation.	<b>No</b>
10. Are there any other factors which should be considered such as consequential development which could lead to environmental effects or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality.	<b>Yes</b> The proposed Wexford to Rosslare Greenway is considered with regards to its cumulative impacts due to their proximity and connection with the proposed development.	<b>No</b> Having considered the anticipated overall potential impact with respect to related developments, it is considered that the effect of the project will not result in cumulative impacts. There is potential for some tourist development. All will be subject to separate planning applications.

Questions to be Considered	Yes / No / ? Briefly Describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/No/? - Why?
11. Are there any areas on or around the location which are protected under international or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape cultural or other value which could be affected by the project?	<b>Yes</b> The Slaney River Valley SAC plus Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC and the Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA plus The Raven SPA which supports qualifying interests such as estuaries Atlantic salt meadows, Mediterranean salt meadows, and Freshwater Pearl Mussel.	<b>No</b> The proposed Greenway will be designed and constructed in accordance with best practice guidelines and the extent of works will not be of sufficient scale to result in significant impacts.
12. Are there any other areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other waterbodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or Woodlands, which could be affected by the project?	<b>Yes</b> The Slaney River Valley SAC plus Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC supports wetland habitats including mudflats and sandflats.	<b>No</b> The proposed Greenway will be designed and constructed in accordance with best practice guidelines and the extent of works will not be large enough to result in significant impacts.
13. Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over wintering, migration, which could be affected by the project?	<b>Yes</b> The Slaney River Valley SAC plus Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC and the Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA plus The Raven SPA have species included in their qualifying interests.	<b>No</b> The proposed Greenway will be designed and constructed in accordance with best practice guidelines and the extent of works will not be large enough to result in significant impacts. Surveys for protected species showed no significant impacts.
14. Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	<b>Yes</b> Two streams intersect with the proposed Greenway and the Westside and Curracloe Channels are within close proximity.	<b>No</b> The extent of works associated with the proposed Greenway is not large enough to result in impacts to the streams or channels.

Questions to be Considered	Yes / No / ? Briefly Describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/No/? - Why?
15. Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	<b>No</b> There are no protected view identified in the County Development Plan.	<b>No</b> The extent of works associated with the proposed Greenway is not of a sufficient scale to result in impacts to the surrounding landscape. The proposed Greenway will be designed to fit with the receiving environment.
16. Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	<b>Yes</b> The beach at the end of Ardavan Lane is used for recreational activities including light boating and fishing.	<b>No</b> The extent of works associated with the proposed Greenway is not of a sufficient scale to result in impacts to recreational activities.
17. Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
18. Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	<b>No</b> The proposed Greenway traverses rural landscape, there are only a few dwellings located along the route.	<b>No</b> The extent of works associated with the proposed Greenway is not of a sufficient scale to result in impacts to surrounding populations.
19. Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	<b>Yes</b> 6 architectural sites and 2 archaeological sites were identified within 100m of the site.	<b>No</b> These sites will be considered in the design. The extent of the works is not considered to be of sufficient scale to create any likely significant effects.
20. Is the project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield land?	<b>No</b> The proposed Greenway is along an existing farm paths, footways and wide field margins.	<b>No</b>

Questions to be Considered	Yes / No / ? Briefly Describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/No/? - Why?
21. Are there existing land uses on or around the location e.g. homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which could be affected by the project?	<b>No</b> The project will involve the acquisition of land but not building property.	<b>No</b>
22. Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
23. Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, which could be affected by the project?	<b>No</b> The proposed Greenway traverses rural areas.	<b>No</b> The extent of works associated with the proposed Greenway is not of sufficient scale to result in impacts to surrounding populations.
24. Are there any areas on or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities, which could be affected by the project?	<b>Yes</b> The Ferrybank Swimming Pool is adjacent the proposed route.	<b>No</b> The trailhead is located at Ferrybank carpark and trail fencing will prevent access via swimming pool carpark.
25. Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
26. Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>



Questions to be Considered	Yes / No / ? Briefly Describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/No/? - Why?
<p>27. Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>	<p><b>No</b></p>



## **Appendix B:**

### PHOTO-MONTAGES