

An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Board Order ABP-312479-22

### Planning and Development Acts, 2000 to 2022

#### Planning Authority: Wicklow County Council

**Application** by Wicklow County Council for approval under section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in accordance with plans and particulars, including a Natura Impact Statement, lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of January 2022, as amended by the further information received by An Bord Pleanála on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of January 2024.

**Proposed Development:** The proposed development is proposed to provide a predominately off-road shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed development will cover approximately 33 kilometres and involve the provision and upgrading of a greenway mostly through forest and woodlands adjacent to the shoreline of the Blessington Lake/Poulaphouca Reservoir Special Protection Area.

Traffic lights are proposed at three existing bridge crossings (Knockiernan Bridge, Baltyboys Bridge and Vallemount Bridge) to manage a new shuttle system for vehicular traffic. This will create space within the existing bridge cross section for the provision of a shared use path to accommodate users of the Greenway.

The greenway surface construction is proposed to consist of a machine laid, bound pavement. A 20 millimetres surface course is proposed to be laid on 40 millimetres to 55 millimetres base course on 150 millimetres Clause 804 subbase on a geotextile layer as required. Construction works will require shallow excavation (maximum depth of 200 millimetres - 300 millimetres), tree removal and replacement, placement of culverts, single span bridges over larger streams, fencing and minor landscaping.

The proposed development is divided into six sections and is proposed to comprise of the following:

- Blessington – The Blessington section of the proposed development extends from the Wicklow County Council boundary at Russellstown to Blessington. The section comprises 9.2 kilometres in length. This section is proposed to consist of new greenway and the upgrade of existing sections along the route with a connection to Russborough House via an existing underpass of the N81. It is proposed to extend the capacity of the Russellstown car park with an additional 50 car spaces. Works to both the Russellstown car park and the Blessington Greenway Hub and car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations and closed-circuit television (CCTV). There is one new watercourse crossing included in this section while several existing crossings are to be retained.
- Baltyboys – The Baltyboys section of the proposed development extends from the Blessington section to the Valleymount section. This section comprises 5.3 kilometres in length. Works to the Valleymount West car park and Baltyboys car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bike parking, bins, seating, drinking water stations and closed-circuit television (CCTV). Precast box culverts and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section to construct the proposed development. There are approximately five small watercourses/ditches crossings along this section.
- Tulfarris – The Tulfarris section of the proposed development connects the Baltyboys section to Tulfarris via the R758. This section comprises 3.7 kilometres in length. This section is proposed to consist of new greenway and share the existing road to connect with the Tulfarris Hotel and Golf Resort. There are approximately two new small watercourse/ditch crossings along its length.
- Valleymount – The Valleymount section of the proposed development extends from Baltyboys to Ballyknockan. This section comprises 5.2 kilometres in length commencing at the Valleymount carpark, which is located adjacent to Valleymount GAA Club. Works to the two carparks in Valleymount East and West will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating

areas, drinking water stations, and closed-circuit television (CCTV). Precast box culverts and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. There are approximately three small watercourses/ditches crossed by the proposed development in this section as well as a crossing of the Annacarney Stream.

- Ballyknockan – The Ballyknockan section of the proposed development extends from Ballyknockan to Lacken. This section comprises 4.3 kilometres in length. Gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. Due to the high ground to the east, there are a few small tributaries on this section with approximately thirteen small watercourses/ditches requiring to be accommodated by the proposed development.
- Lacken – The Lacken section of the proposed development extends from Lacken to Knockiernan Bridge. This section comprises 5.6 kilometres in length. The section involves new greenway construction. Precast box culverts, concrete underpasses, and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. It is proposed to extend the capacity of the Knockiernan car park with an additional 50 car spaces. Works to both Knockiernan and Lacken car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations, and closed-circuit television (CCTV). The eastern side of the lake has many small tributaries which will require the proposed development to accommodate approximately seven small watercourses/ditches

Signage will be provided to incorporate visitor information, way-finding information, heritage information and advisory/regulatory information in proximity to road crossings. All signage will be subject to full specification at detailed design stage of the project in accordance with national technical standards and guidance.

All located at the following townlands in the Counties of Wicklow and Kildare:

Blessington, Haylands, Knockieran Lower, Knockieran Upper, Carrig, Sroughan, Lacken, Ballynastockan, Ballyknockan, Carrigacurra, Annacarney, Vallemount, Monamuck, Humphrystown, Baltyboys Upper, Baltyboys Lower, Burgage Moyle, Russellstown, Russborough, Rathballylong, Tulfarris, Glebe East, and Burgage More

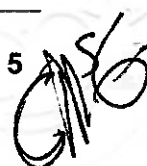
and passing adjacent to the villages of Valleymount, Ballyknockan and Lacken before returning to Blessington at Knockiernan Bridge.

## **Decision**

**REFUSE the above proposed development based on the reasons and considerations under and subject to the conditions set out below.**



## **Reasons and Considerations**

1. The Board is not satisfied on the basis of the information on file, that the applicant has demonstrated beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of the Wicklow Mountains Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002122) and the Poulaphouca Reservoir Special Protective Area (Site Code: 004063), in view of the conservation objectives of these Sites. Specifically, in the absence of detailed information on the impact of the proposed development on water quality within watercourses leading to the reservoir and the reservoir itself, the Board cannot rule out the possibility of adverse effects on the integrity of the above-mentioned European Sites, having regard to the reliance of Special Conservation Interest species on the water environment. Furthermore, the Board is not satisfied on the basis of the information on file, that adverse disturbance and displacement impacts on foraging and roosting Special Conservation Interest bird species will be adequately mitigated having regard to the increased presence of pedestrians and cyclists associated with the proposed greenway, and the uncertainty as to the usage of the site and surrounding area by Special Conservation Interest bird species. In this regard it is noted that the Board can place no reliance on post consent monitoring to identify any further adverse effect or apply additional mitigation measures. In overall conclusion, the Board is not satisfied on the basis of the information on



file, that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites in view of the Sites' conservation objectives. The Board is therefore precluded from granting permission.

2. The site of the proposed development is located around the shoreline of Poulaphouca Reservoir, which is one of two major sources of water supply for the Greater Dublin Area. The protection of the reservoir as a drinking water source is of national importance. Having regard to the sensitivity of the reservoir, and the proximity of the proposed greenway, the Board is not satisfied, on the basis of the information on file, that the proposed development will not adversely affect the treatability of the drinking water source and has also failed to adequately demonstrate that the proposed development would not give rise to a potential deterioration of the Water Framework Directive status of the adjoining waterbody. The proposed development would, therefore, give rise to a potential source of water pollution, would be prejudicial to public health and be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.



**Chris McGarry**  
**Member of An Bord Pleanála**  
**duly authorised to authenticate**  
**the seal of the Board.**

Dated this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of December 2024