

West Clare Railway Greenway

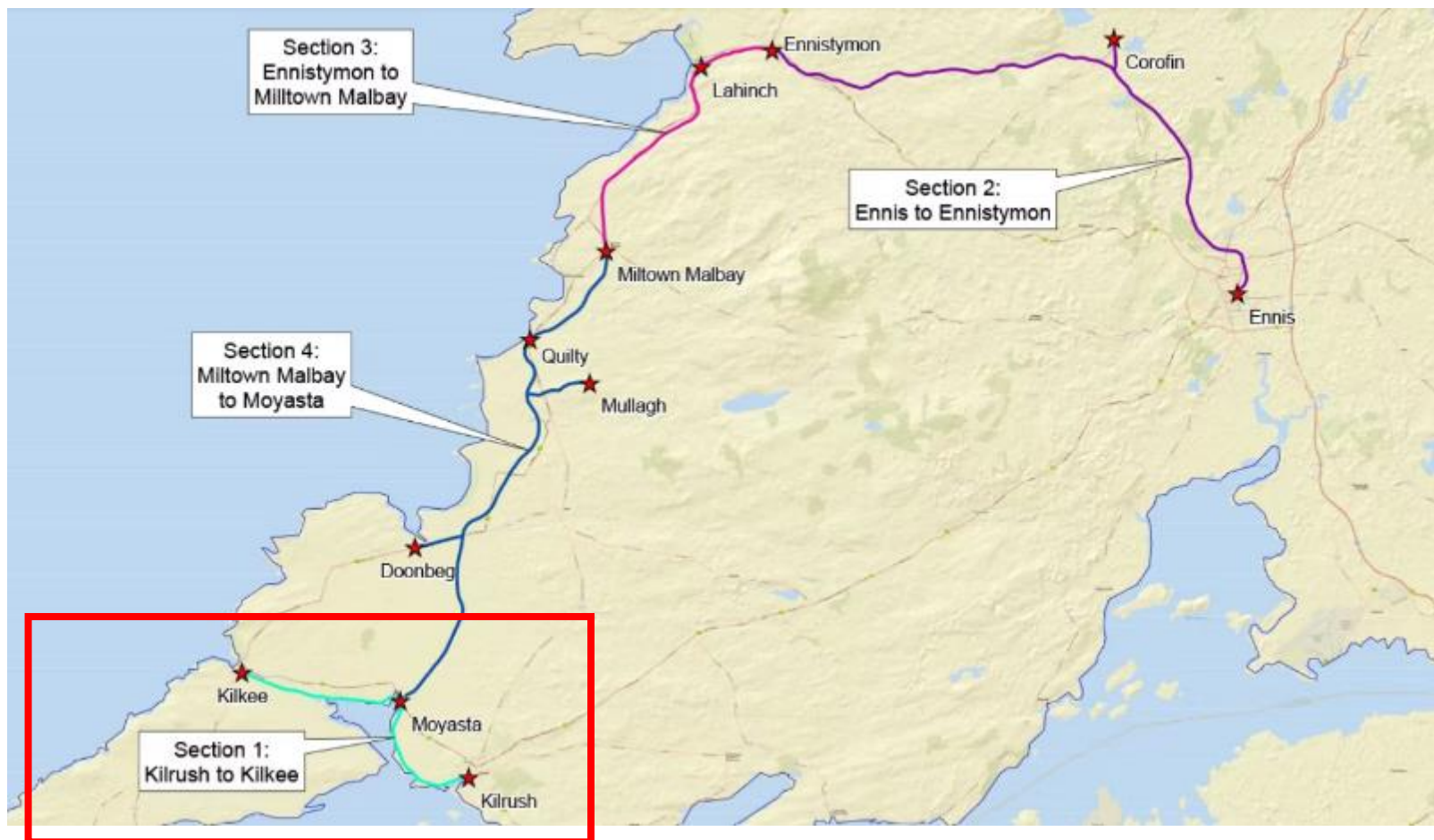
Introductory Presentation 17th February 2026

Overview

- Project Introduction and Background
- Project Status
- Overview of Design
- Planning Policy
- Environmental Consideration
 - Bird disturbance and mitigation
- Land Acquisition
 - Compulsory Purchase Order
- Alternatives
- Scheme Benefits



West Clare Railway Greenway



- c. 100km scheme over 4 Sections
- Section 1 is first scheme to progress to planning
- Status of other sections:
 - Section 2: Option Selection
 - Section 3: Feasibility
 - Section 4: Feasibility

WCRG Section 1: Kilrush to Kilkee



WCRG Section 1: Kilrush to Kilkee Status

- 15.2km of greenway – about 60% on old railway line
- Trailheads at Kilrush and Moyasta
- Preliminary Design Complete
- EIA and NIS Screened in
- 3 rounds of Public Consultation
- Extensive Landowner Engagement
- EIA Scoping engagement ongoing
- EIAR, NIS and CPO application
- Draft EIAR complete and undergoing review
- Submitting Pre -Planning Application to ACP in Q1 2026
- Application to ACP anticipated in Q2 2026



The Need for the Scheme

Improve connectivity between Kilkee Tourist Town and Kilrush Service Town

Provide safe facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and improving active travel rates in the region

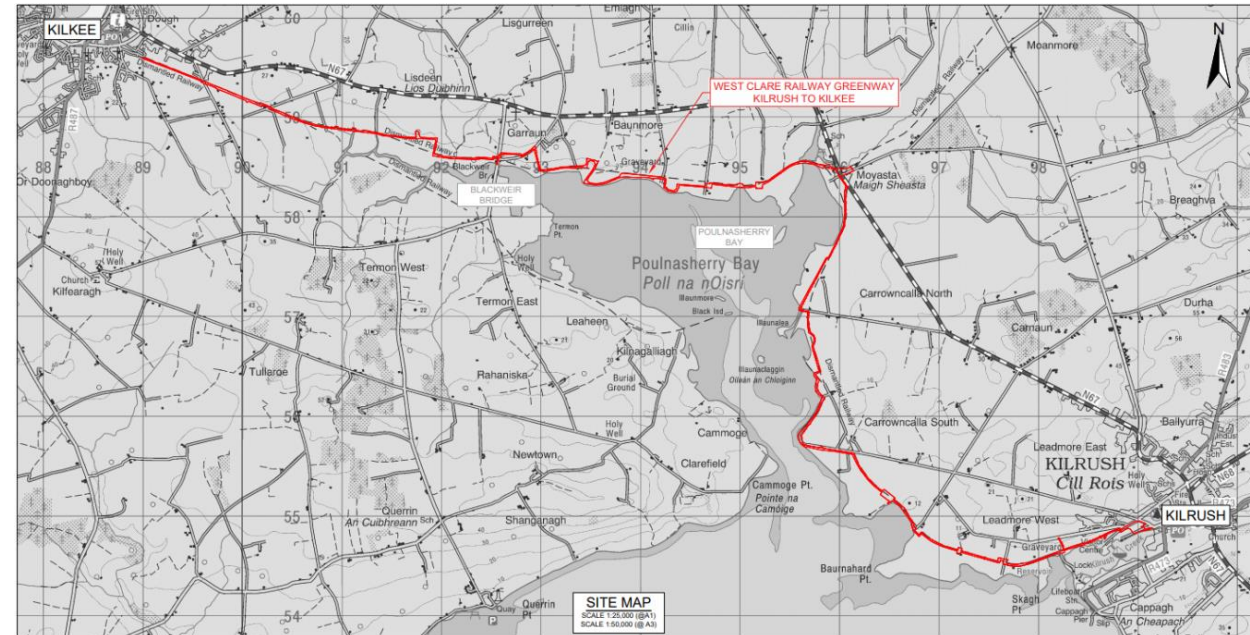
Reduce reliance on private car transport

Promote and enhance the local economy

Promote and spread tourism activity in the region

Fulfil international, national, regional and local policy objectives

Provide a scenic and safe section of EuroVelo Route 1



Project Objectives

1. To develop and promote a new sustainable tourism visitor attraction using the original West Clare Railway corridor where practicable.
2. To contribute towards the decarbonisation of transport in County Clare.
3. To encourage the use of and increase the mode share of sustainable transport modes.
4. To provide a safe and substantially segregated sustainable transport corridor for vulnerable road users, using quiet routes where segregation is not possible.
5. To improve the accessibility and connectivity between rural communities, employment areas, and other key services using sustainable modes of transport.
6. To protect the natural environment of the County Clare region.



Public Engagement

1. Public Consultation 1: Constraints and Indicative Routes – 13th September 2021 – 4th October 2021
2. Public Consultation 2: Route Corridor Options – 9th September 2022 – 30th September 2022
3. Public Consultation 3: Emerging Preferred Route Corridor – 15th March 2024 – 12th April 2024



Public Consultation No. 1



Public Consultation No. 2



Public Consultation No. 3

In person and online consultations held with submissions invited from the public

All public consultations indicated broad public support for the project, subject to addressing various landowner concerns

Planning Policy – National / Regional

Project Ireland 2040

1. National Planning Framework (NPF) to 2040
2. National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030

National Planning Objective (NPO 34):

“Continue to facilitate tourism development and in particular the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways...”

Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

- Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) identified to promote development of greenways include:
RPO 53 Tourism, RPO 125 Green infrastructure corridors, RPO 201: National Trails, Walking Routes, Greenway and Blueway Corridors, RPO 174 Walking and Cycling

Policy Level	Document	
International Policy	United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	
European Policy	EU Cycling Strategy (2017-2030)	
	European Green Deal	
	EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020	
	EuroVelo: The European Cycle Route Network	
	EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030	
National Policy	National Planning Framework First Revision, April 2025	
	National Development Plan 2021-2030	
	Vision Zero – The Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030	
	National Sustainable Mobility Policy	
	Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways 2018	
	Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030	
	National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland	
	Climate Action Plan 2025	
	National Cycle Network Plan 2023	
	Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025	
	National Physical Activity Framework 2024-2040 and the National Physical Activity Action Plan 2024-2029	
	CycleConnects: Ireland’s Cycle Network (Draft Version)	
	Regional Policy	Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (S-RSES)
	Local Policy	Clare County Development Plan (2023-2029) (Interim Version)
		Clare Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030		

Planning Policy – Local



Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029

The project complies with many of the objectives of the Plan, most notably CDP9.8:

“(d). To sustainably develop greenways, blueways and peatways and walking and cycling trails including the West Clare Railway Greenway to achieve greater accessibility to the countryside and the marine environment by sustainable modes and to achieve maximum benefit and connectivity at local, regional and national levels.”

Clare Climate Action Plan 2024–2029

- The Plan acknowledges the tourism sector is one of the key drivers of the local economy for County Clare
- The Plan aims to *“Advance the delivery of the West Clare Railway Greenway”*

County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030

- Establishes a 10–year vision for the development of tourism in County Clare
- West Clare Rail Greenway identified as the *“top priority initiative”* for the county and to *“move forward with the initial Kilrush to Kilkee pilot project”*.

Planning Policy – Local

CDP9.26 West Clare Railway

It is an objective of Clare County Council in addition to the development of it as a greenway, potential to facilitate the reopening of appropriate sections of the West Clare Railway as an operational tourist attraction by permitting where appropriate new sections of railway to be built as alternatives to parts of the line which have been built on or are inaccessible since its closure.



CDP10.11 Recreational Routes

(a) To support the maintenance of existing off-road walking and cycling trails and support investment in the sustainable development of walking and cycling facilities, greenway and blueway corridors within the County and region extending into and between our County's settlements;

(b) To support and facilitate the development of a network of interlinked greenways and necessary supporting infrastructure along the former route of the West Clare Railway subject to project level environmental assessments (Refer to Volume 2 for the indicative route of the West Clare Railway Greenway);

(i) To have regard to the Code of Best Practice for National & Regional Greenways in the development of greenway corridors within the county.

National Greenways Policy

Strategy for Future Development of National and Regional Greenways 2018

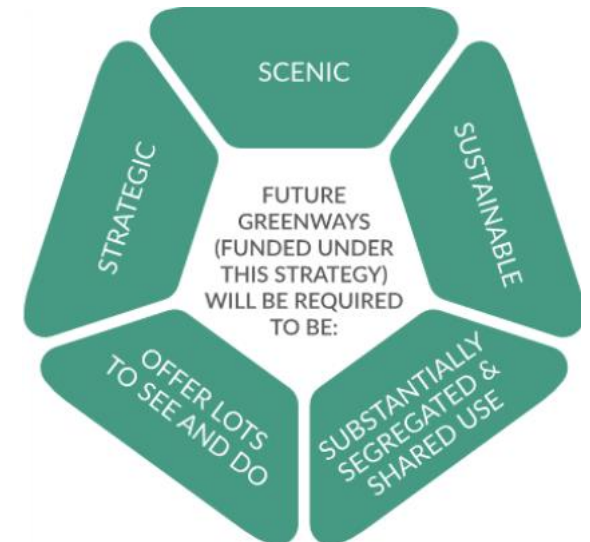
A Strategic Greenway network of national and regional routes, with a number of **high-capacity flagship routes** that can be extended and/or link with local Greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure

Greenways of scale and appropriate standard that have **significant potential to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland** and are regularly used by overseas visitors, domestic visitors and locals thereby contributing to **a healthier society through increased physical activity**

Greenways that provide a **substantially segregated off-road experience** linking places of interest, recreation, and leisure in **areas with beautiful scenery of different types** with plenty to see and do

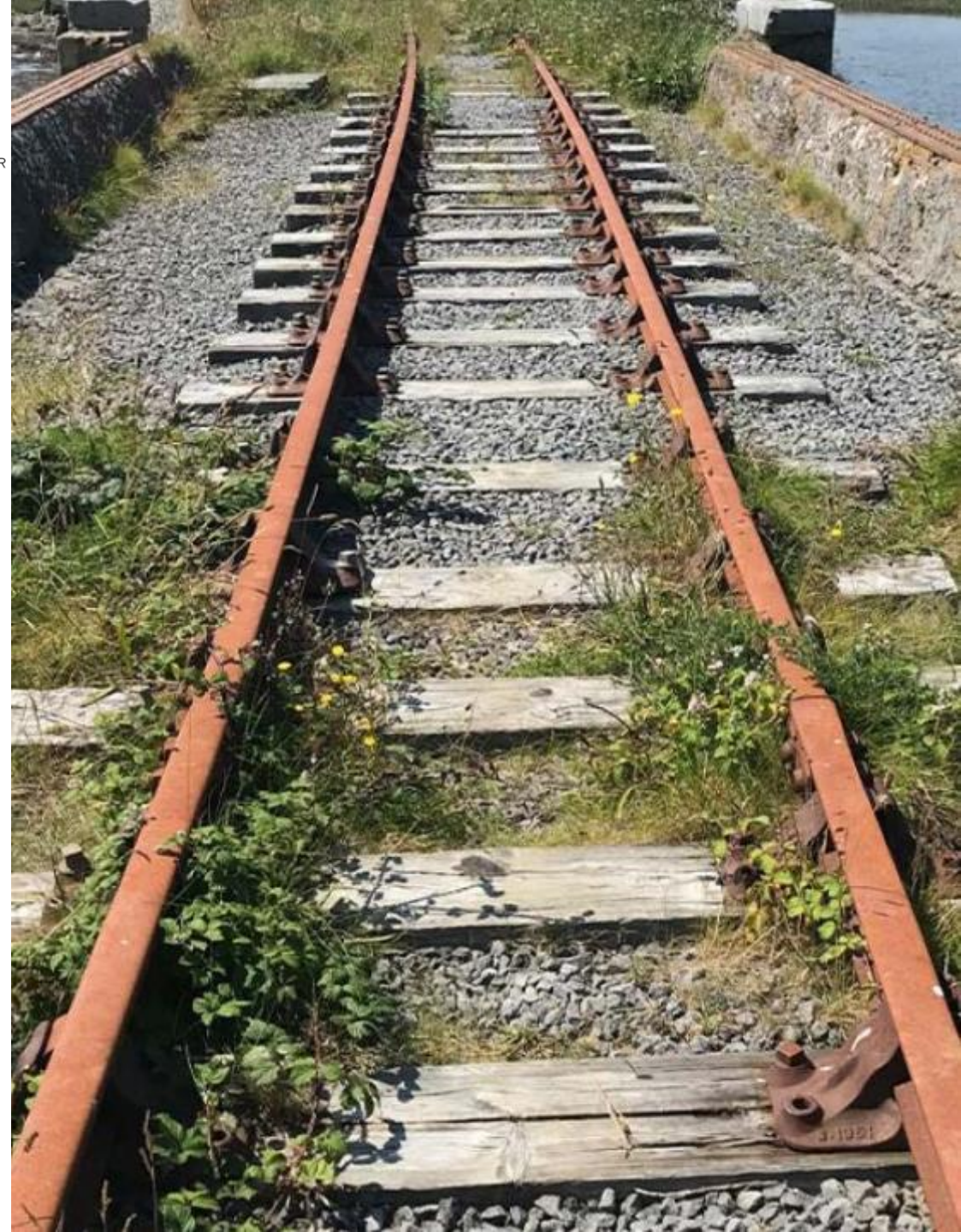
Greenways that provide opportunities for the **development of local businesses and economies**

Greenways that are developed with all relevant stakeholders in line with an **agreed code of practice**

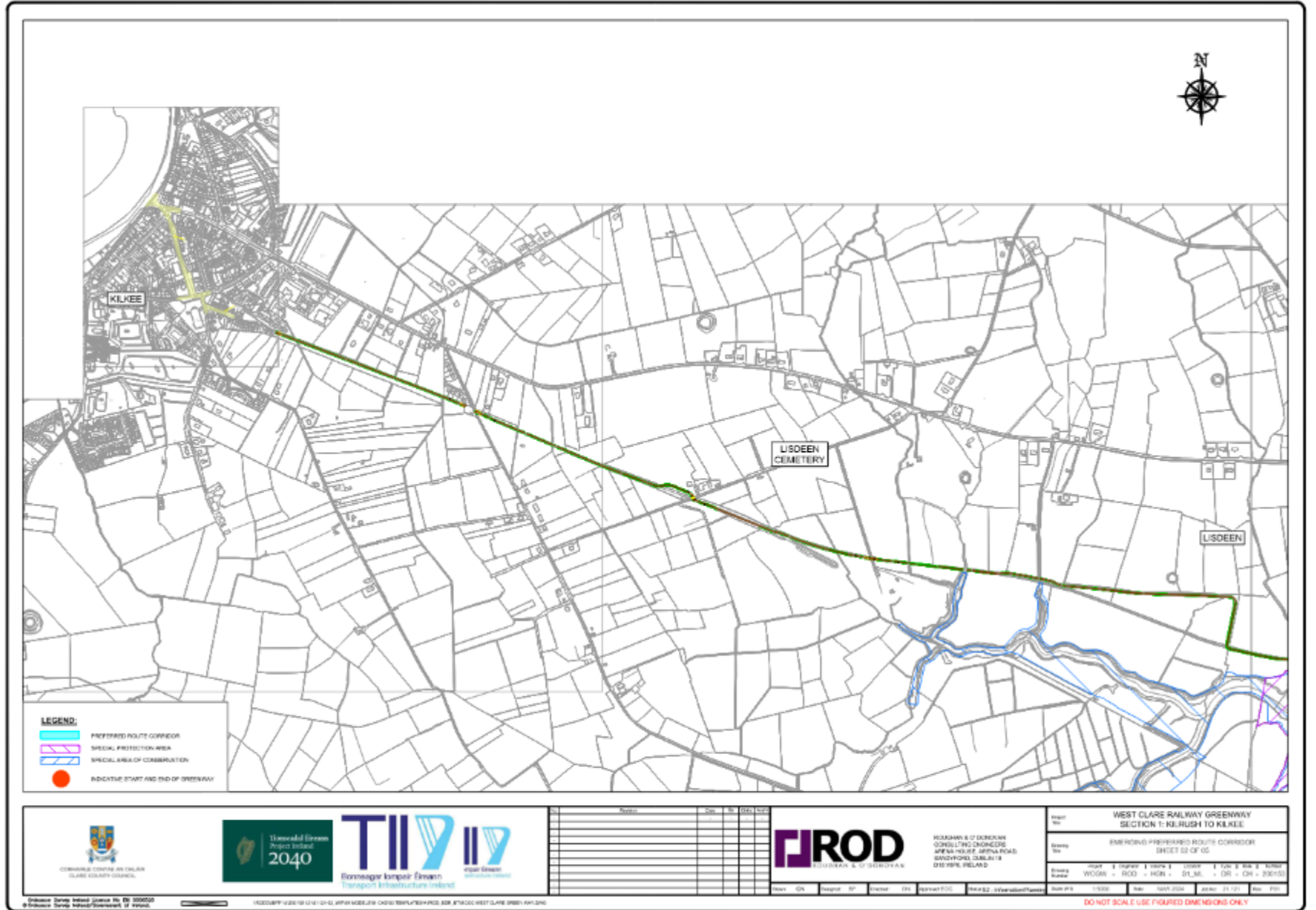


Overview of Design

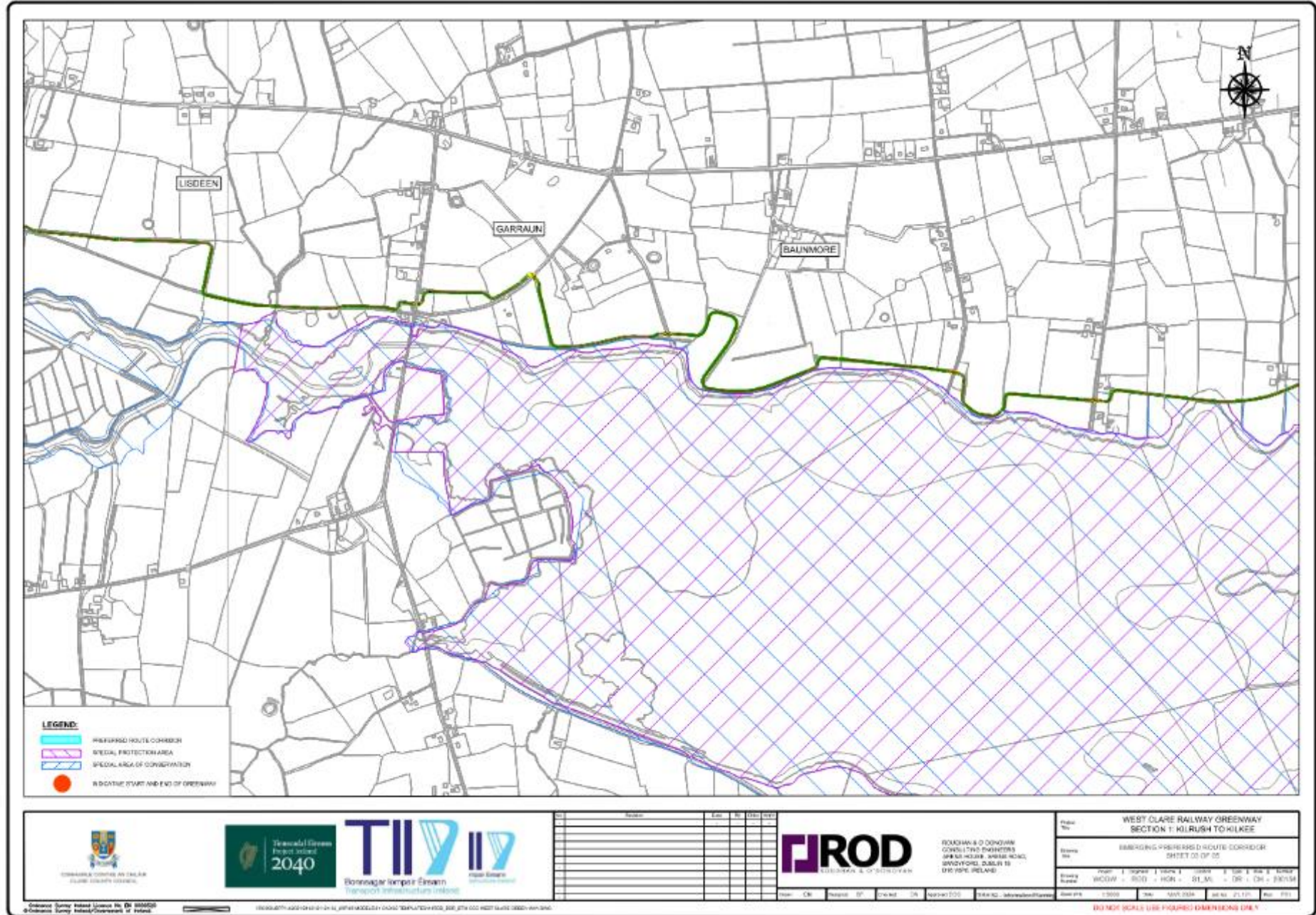
- Typically 3m wide greenway with 1m verges
- Corridor typically 7m-10m wide allowing for earthworks and drainage
- Stockproof fencing each side with 100mm gap for otters beneath where required
- Dense hedging beyond to 1.4m height for screening of children, dogs and most of adult's body height to minimise disturbance to birds
- Narrower sections at existing structures, and local drainage and embankment constraints



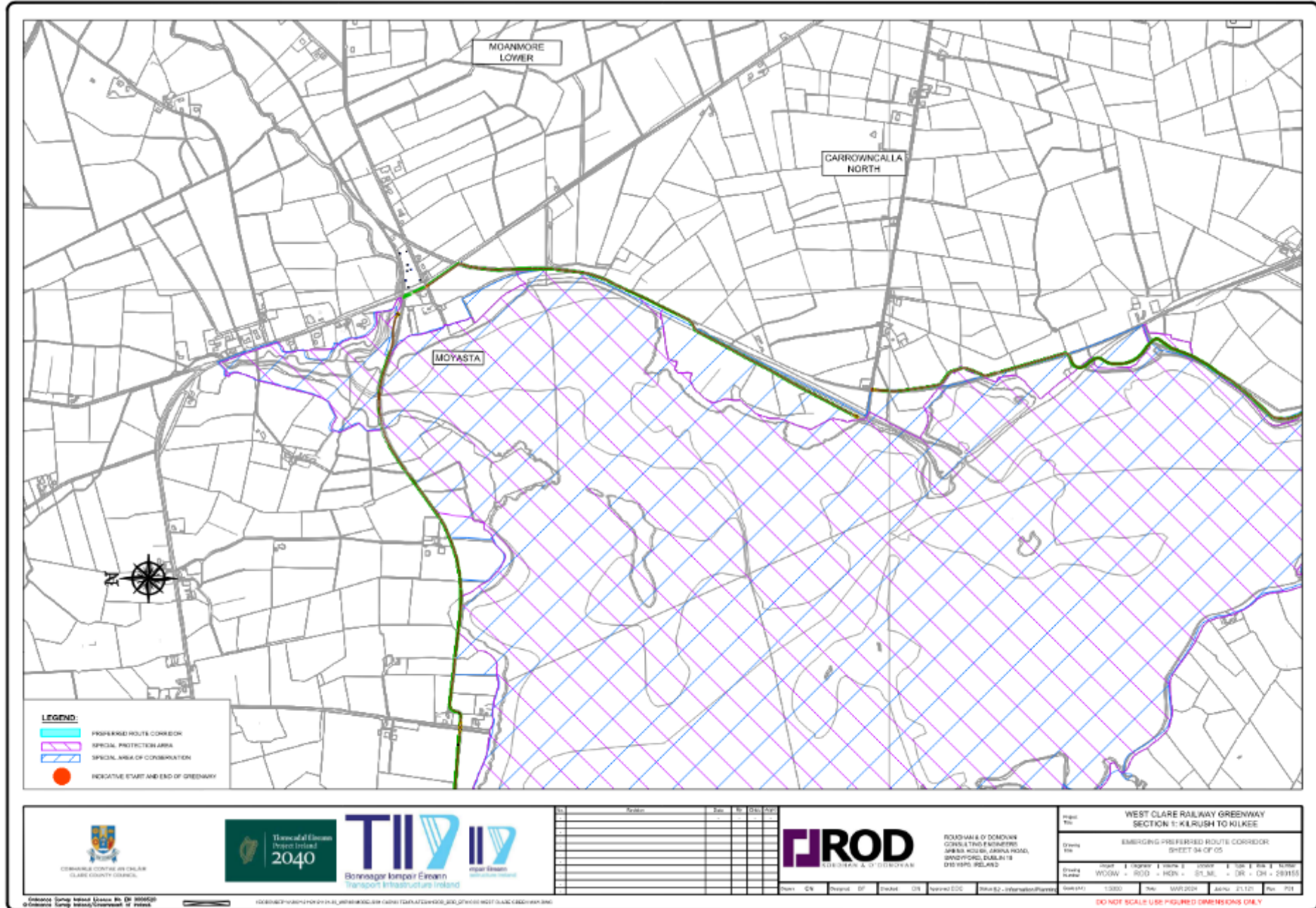
Overview of Design (1/4)



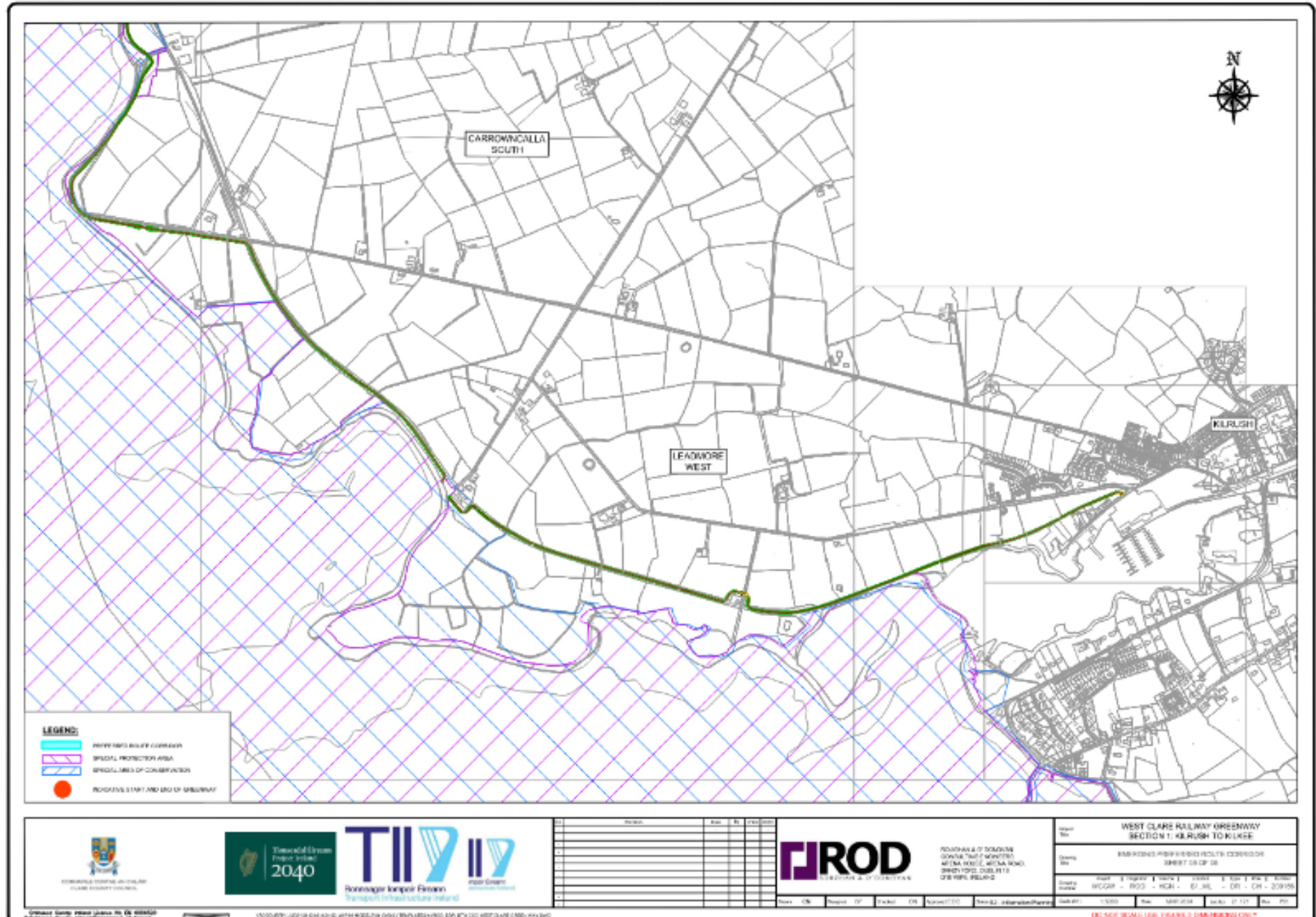
Overview of Design (2/4)



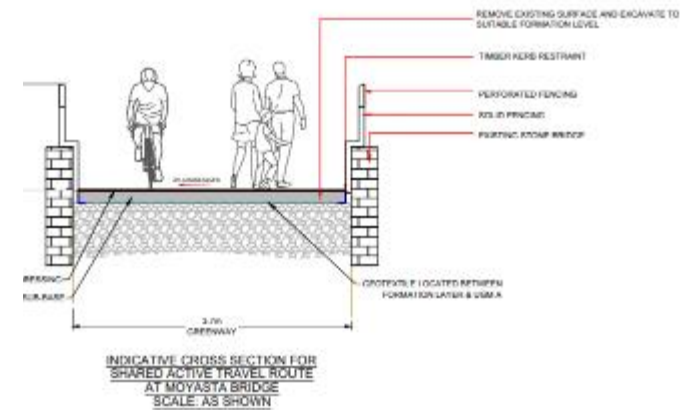
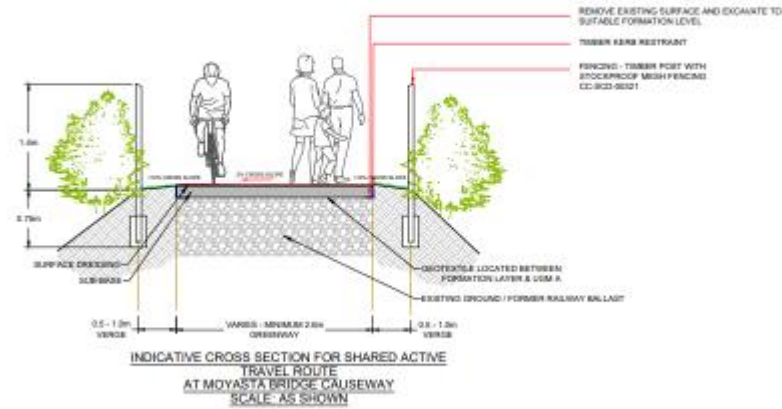
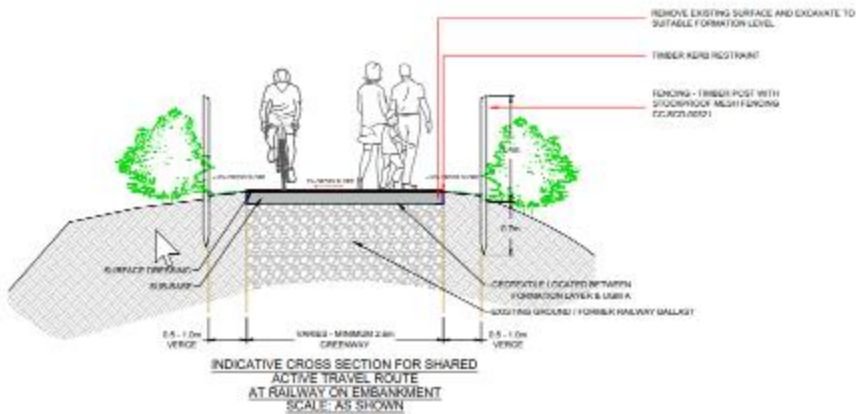
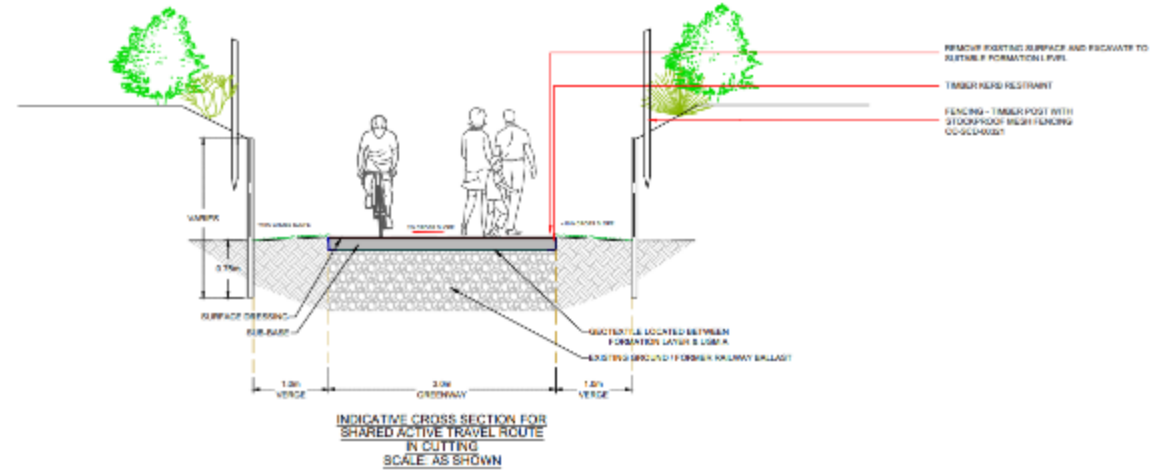
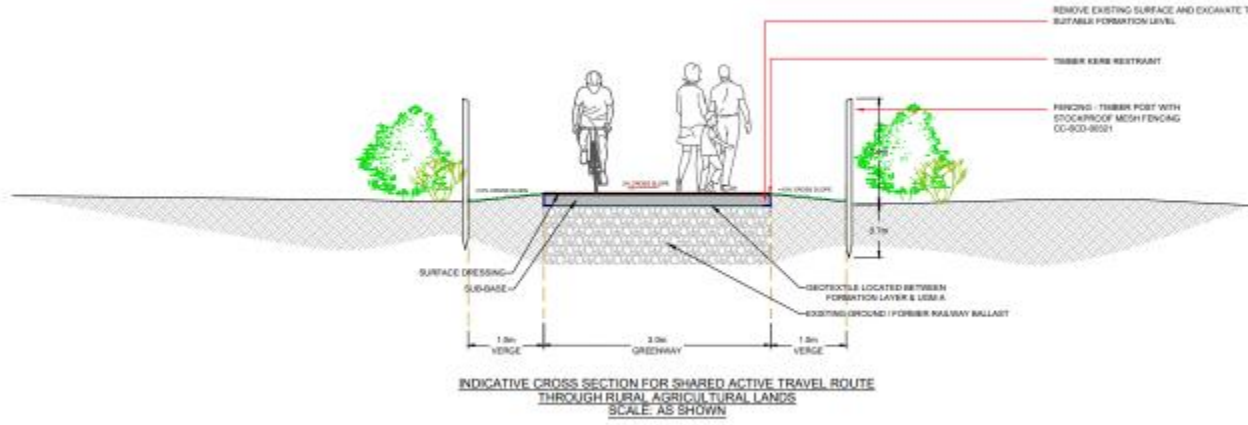
Overview of Design (3/4)



Overview of Design (4/4)



Typical Cross Sections



WCRG Section 1: Environmental Considerations

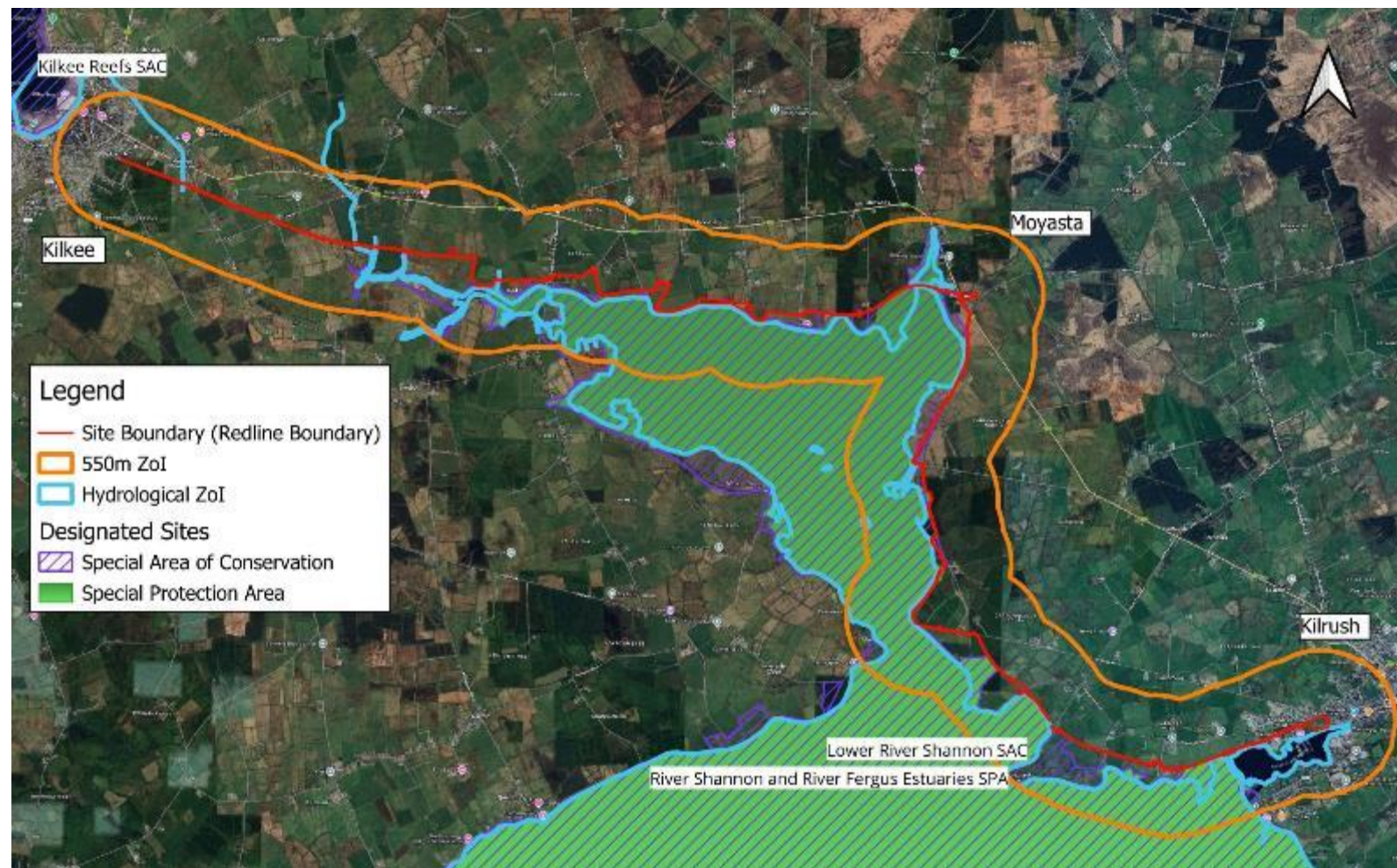
- Biodiversity
- Material Assets (Agri and Non Agri) – Land Acquisition
- Population – Land Acquisition and Disturbance
- Alternatives Considered
- Construction Stage Impacts
- Hydrology
- Climate

- Traffic & Transportation
- Air Quality
- Noise & Vibration
- Landscape & Visual
- Cultural Heritage
- Hydrogeology
- Land & Soils
- Human Health
- Major Accidents and Disasters



Biodiversity

- European sites and other adjacent designations
- Hydrological connections
- Comprehensive ecological surveys
- Annual wintering bird surveys since 2021 and scientific mapping of annual usage
- Extensive engagement with NPWS
- NIS Prepared
- Mitigation measures integrated into the design (Screening)



Biodiversity – Sensitive Bird areas



Biodiversity – Potential for Bird Disturbance

- Poulnasherry bay contains internationally important numbers of waders and water birds
- A disturbance event could cause large numbers of birds to leave the area – considered potential for significant level of disturbance
- Screening required to prevent disturbance (along approx. 22% of the route).



Biodiversity – Potential for Bird Disturbance

Moyasta Bridge

- No existing screening
- Birds present very close to bridge and embankments
- 1.4m parapet proposed on bridge



Moyasta Embankment and other Sensitive Areas

- Stockproof fence and 1.4m dense vegetation screen
- Fully screens children and dogs from birds
- Restricts view of adults to upper torso and head only
- Allows air flow through barrier
- Existing vegetation to be retained where possible and enhanced where it is sparse – 9 plants per sq m

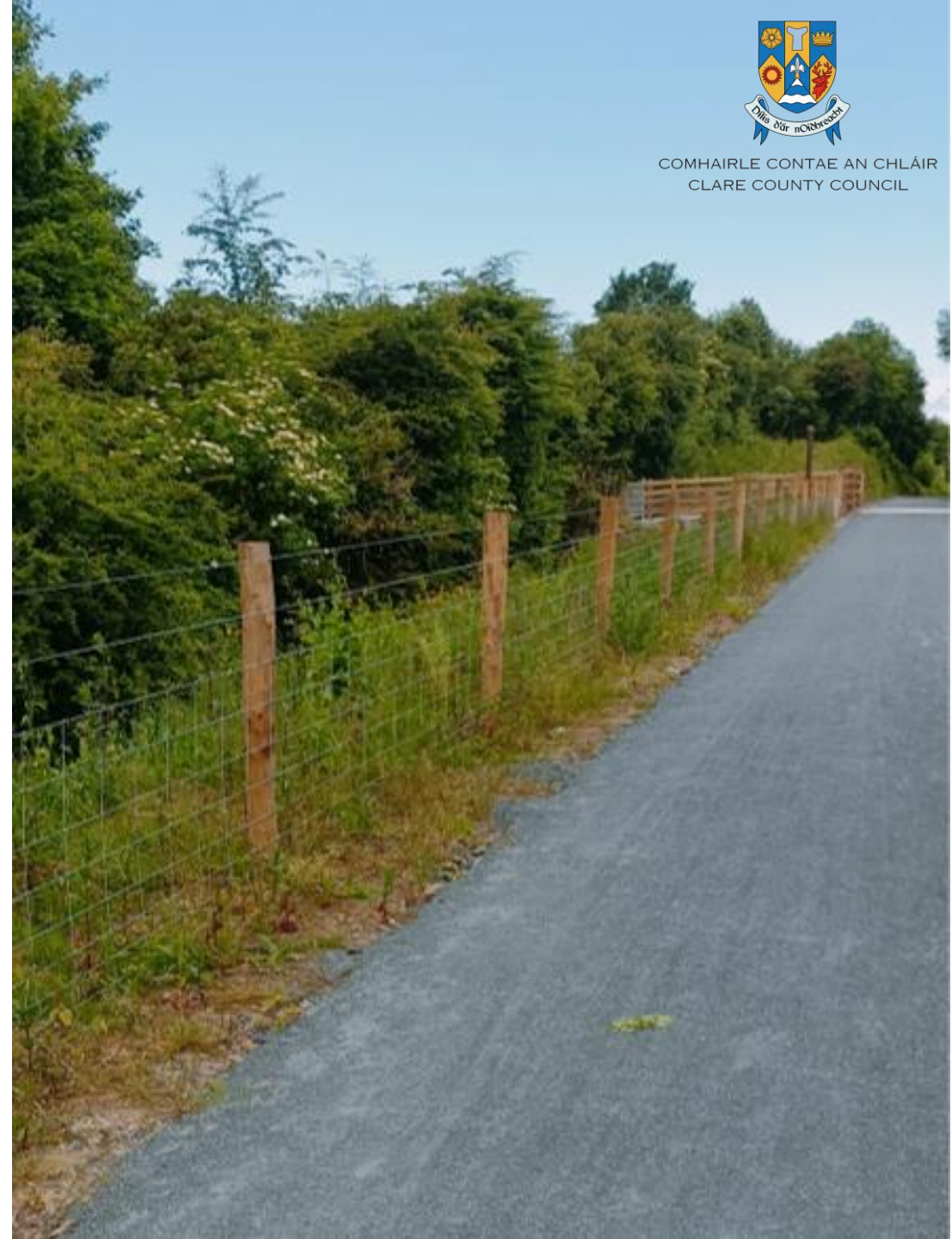


Examples of screening at Dublin Port Greenway

Biodiversity

Other Mitigation Measures

1. Construction works (other than vegetation clearance works) across Moyasta Bridge and other sensitive bird areas will only take place over the summer months (April – September inclusive) – to avoid impacting on wintering birds. The only works to take place during the winter months will be planting required to screen the greenway.
2. Planting will be some of the first works carried out to allow the maximum time for the planting to become established.
3. During construction, mesh screening (privacy netting) will be attached to the fencing in the sensitive bird areas. The purpose of the mesh netting is to increase the level of screening while the permanent screening planting becomes established (operation)
4. 100mm gap at bottom of fences to allow otters to pass across greenway where required
5. Mammal ledges to be added to culverts for otter passage



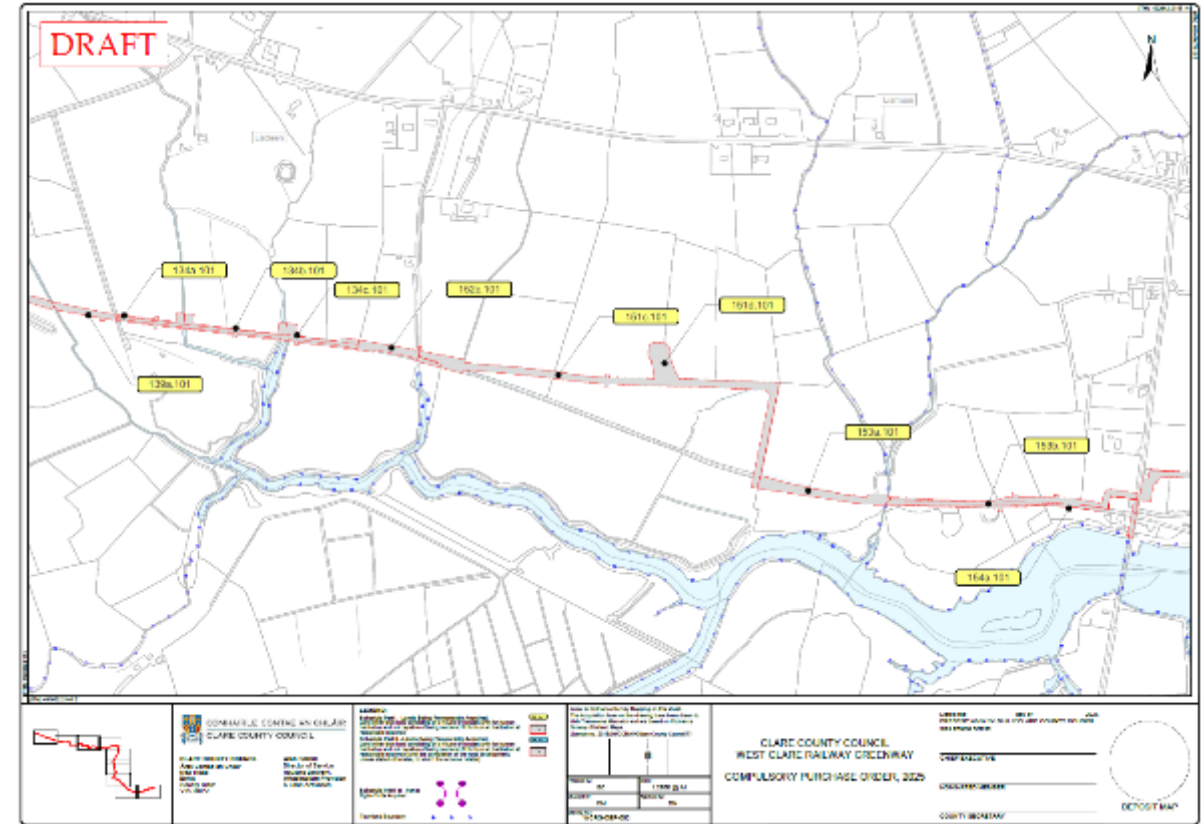
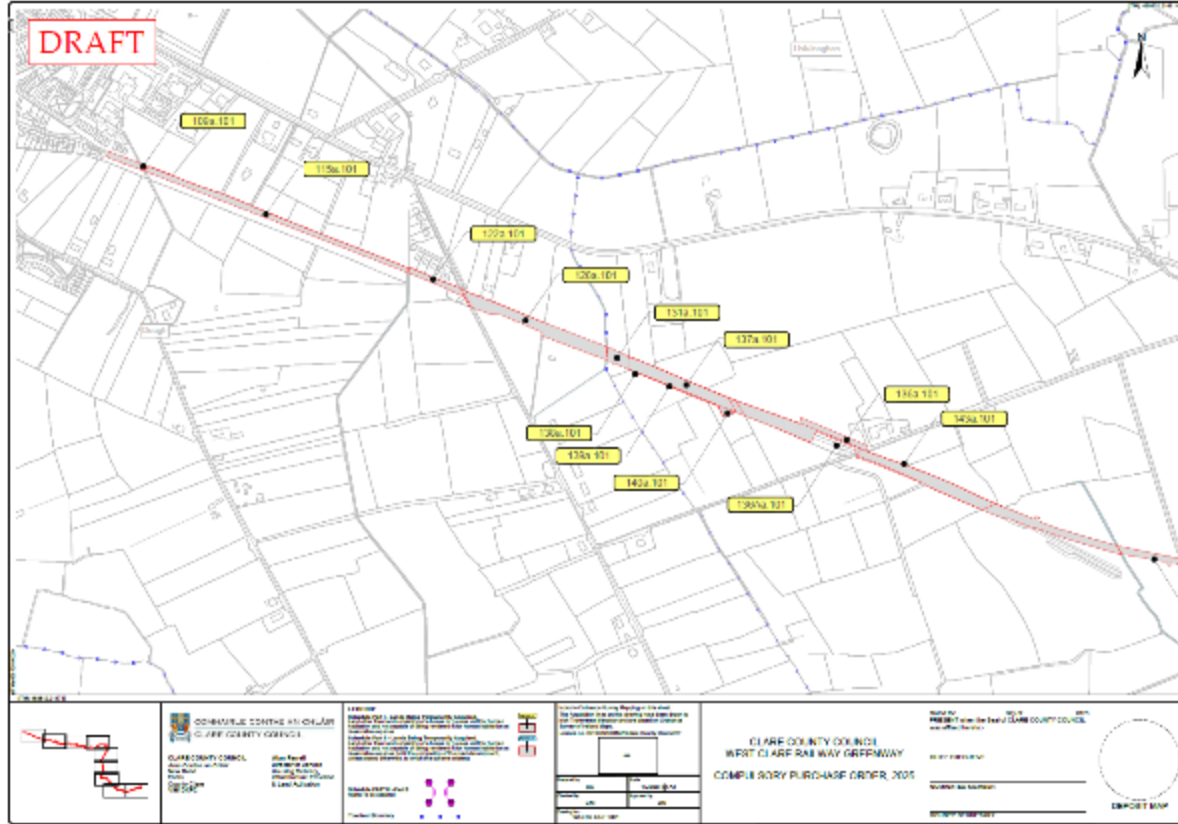
Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Ongoing monitoring of screening and maintenance as required – vegetation and mesh

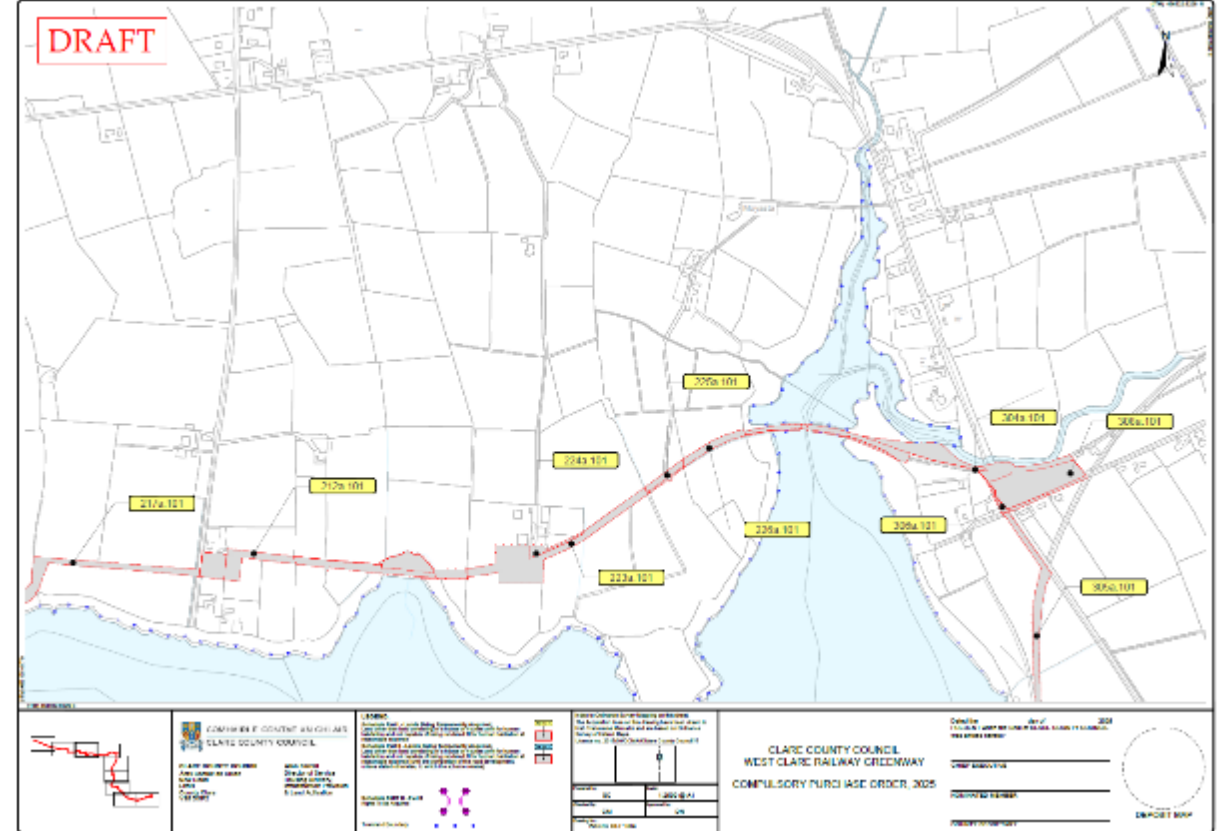
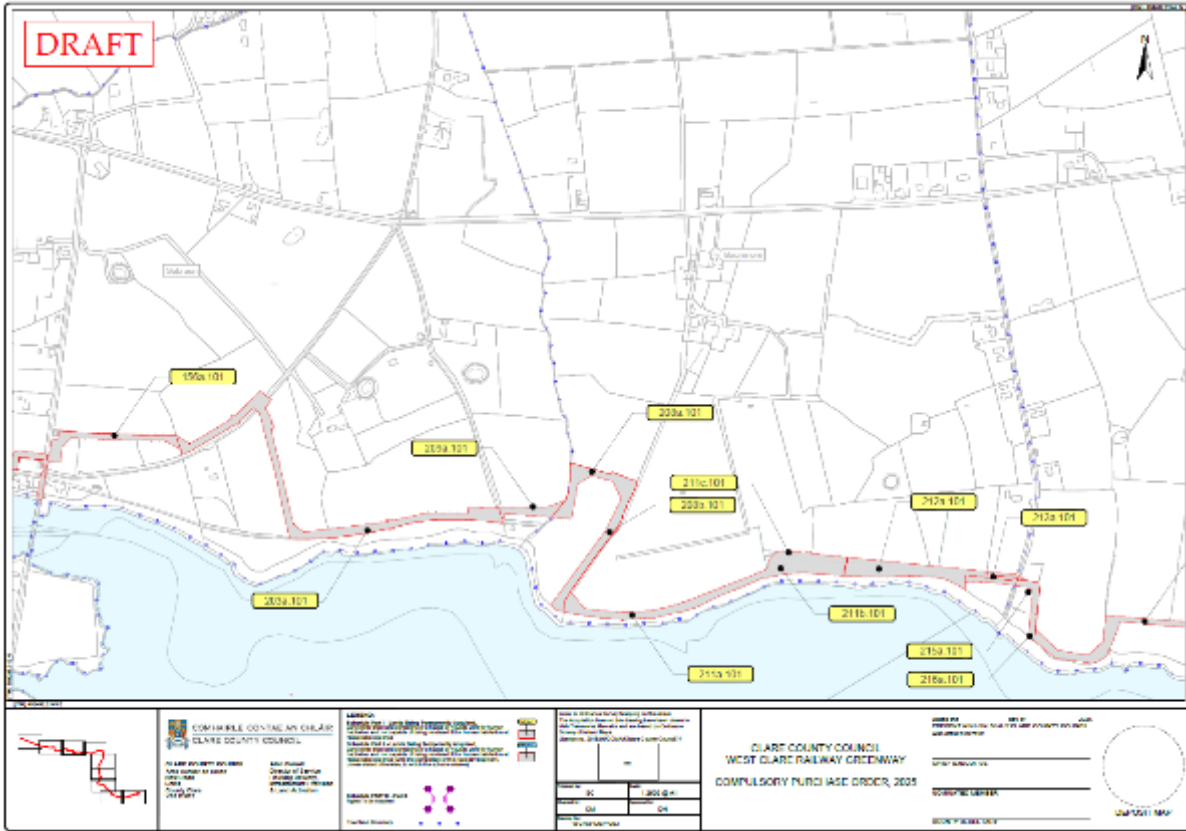
Disturbance monitoring – during construction and for first few years after opening

- Annual repeat surveys will continue to be undertaken by an ecologist at sensitive bird areas
 - Bird numbers and species will be recorded
 - Instances of disturbance of wintering birds will be recorded
- Surveys will determine whether there is any change in the pattern of habitat use relative to the baseline conditions and map the responses of birds to construction and greenway operation
- Screening vegetation can be locally enhanced in the unlikely event of new instances of disturbance being recorded

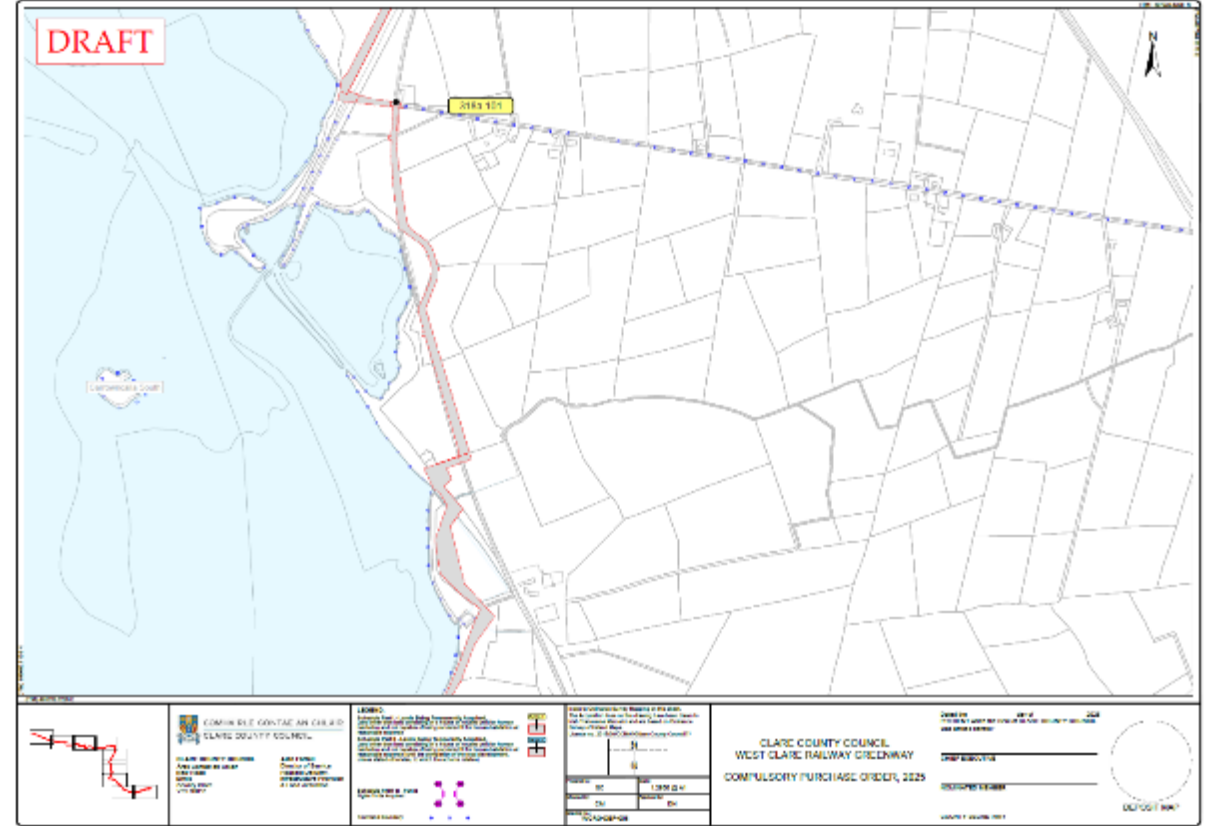
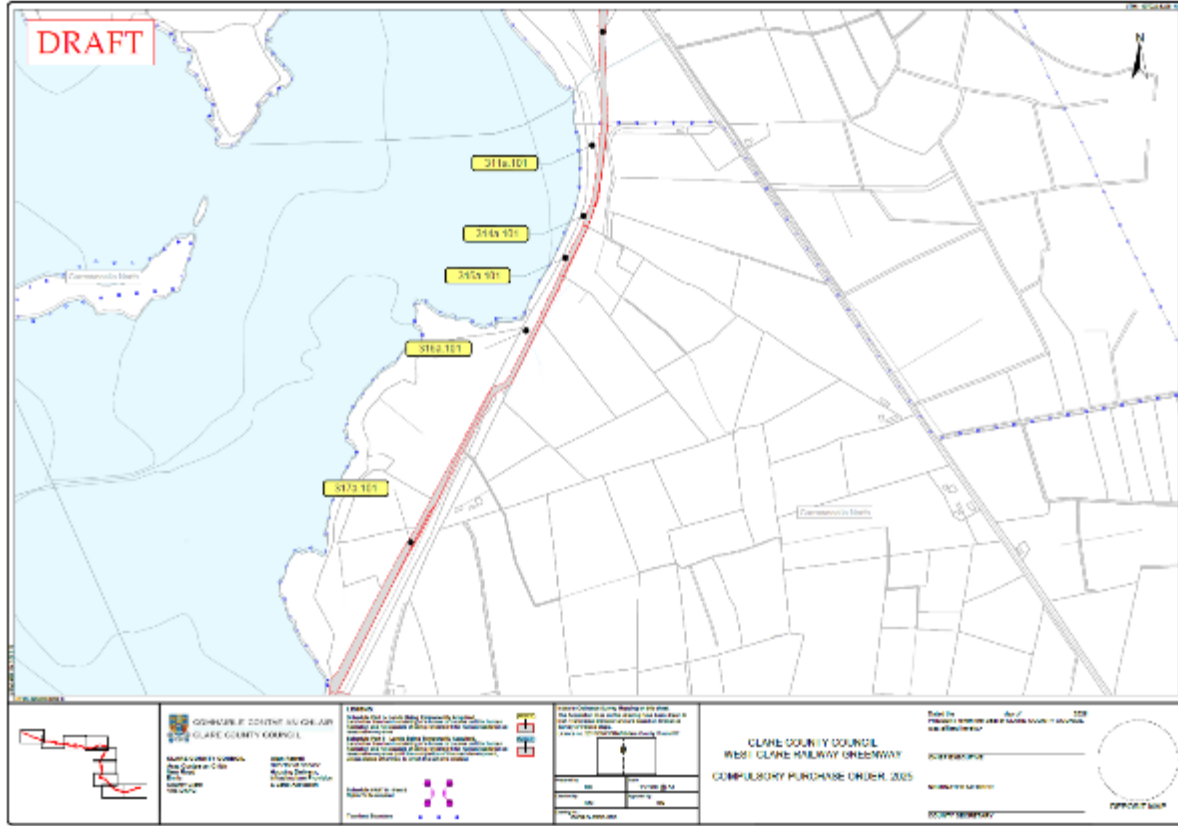
Land Acquisition (1/5)



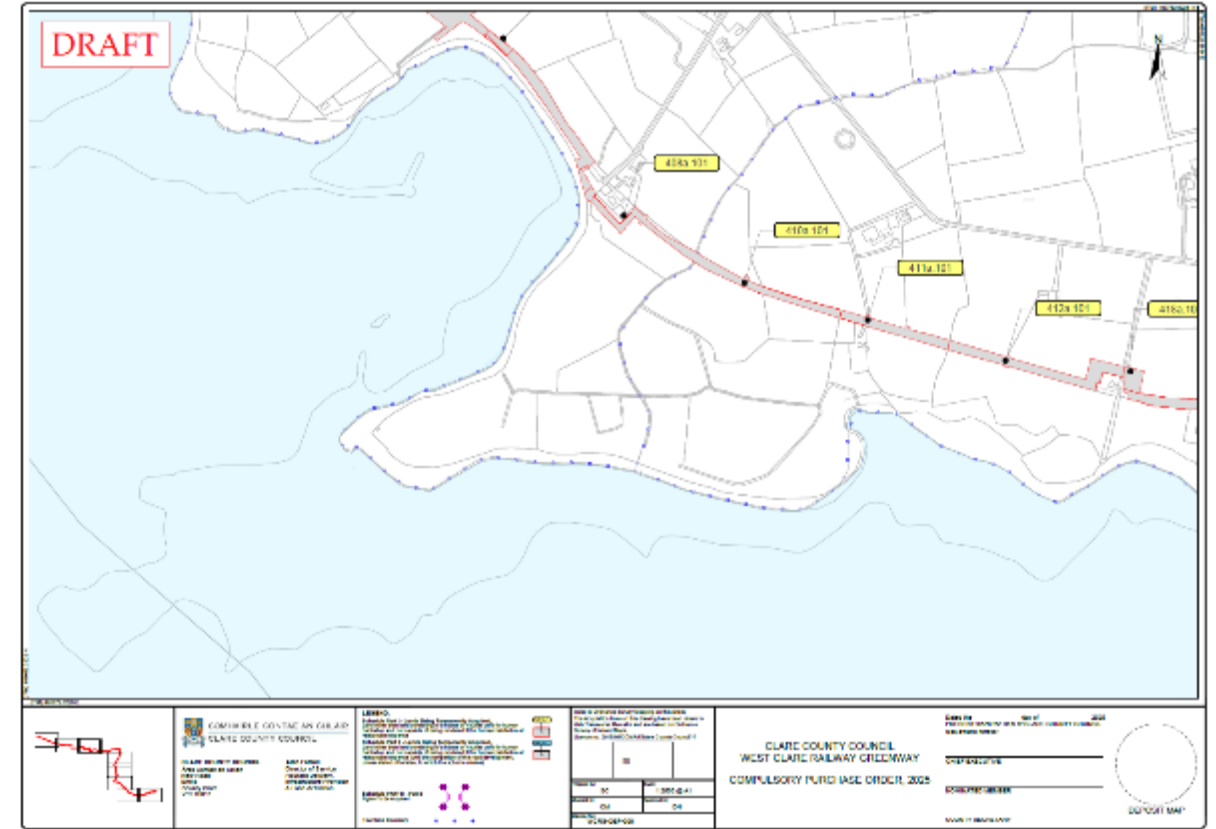
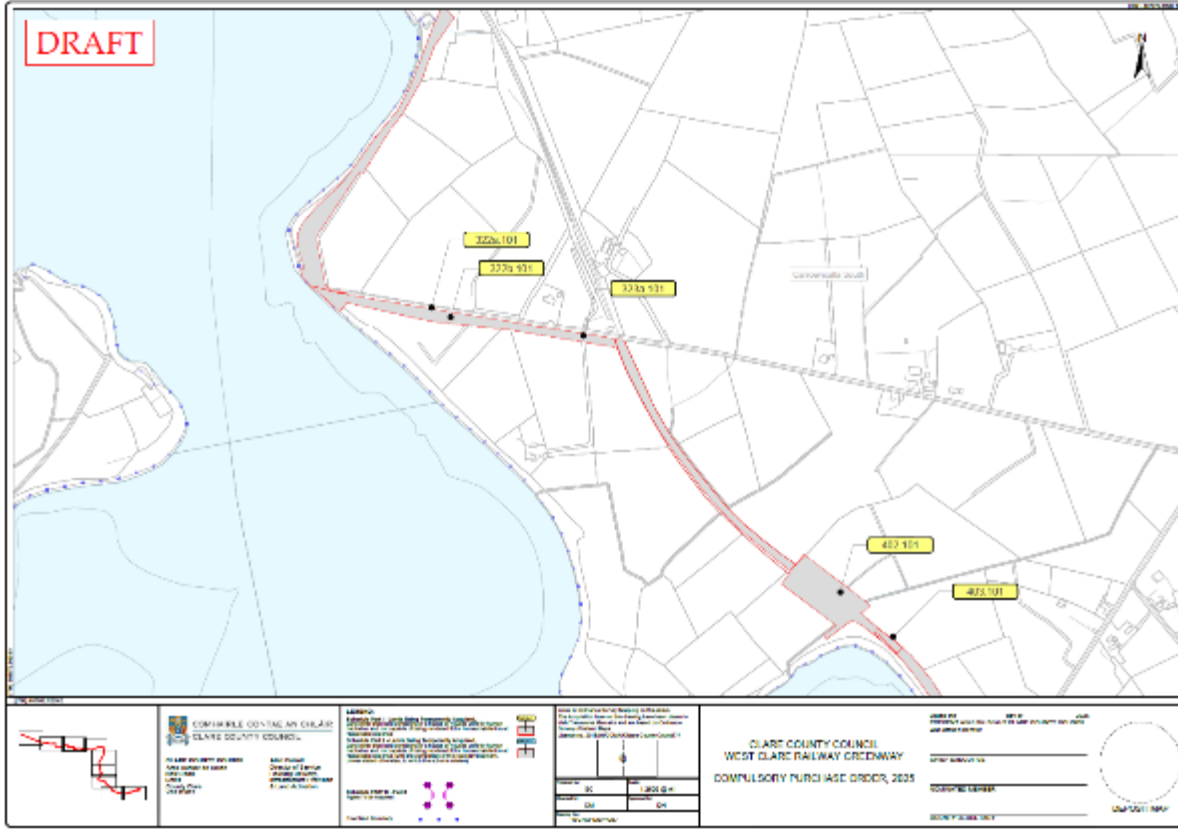
Land Acquisition (2/5)



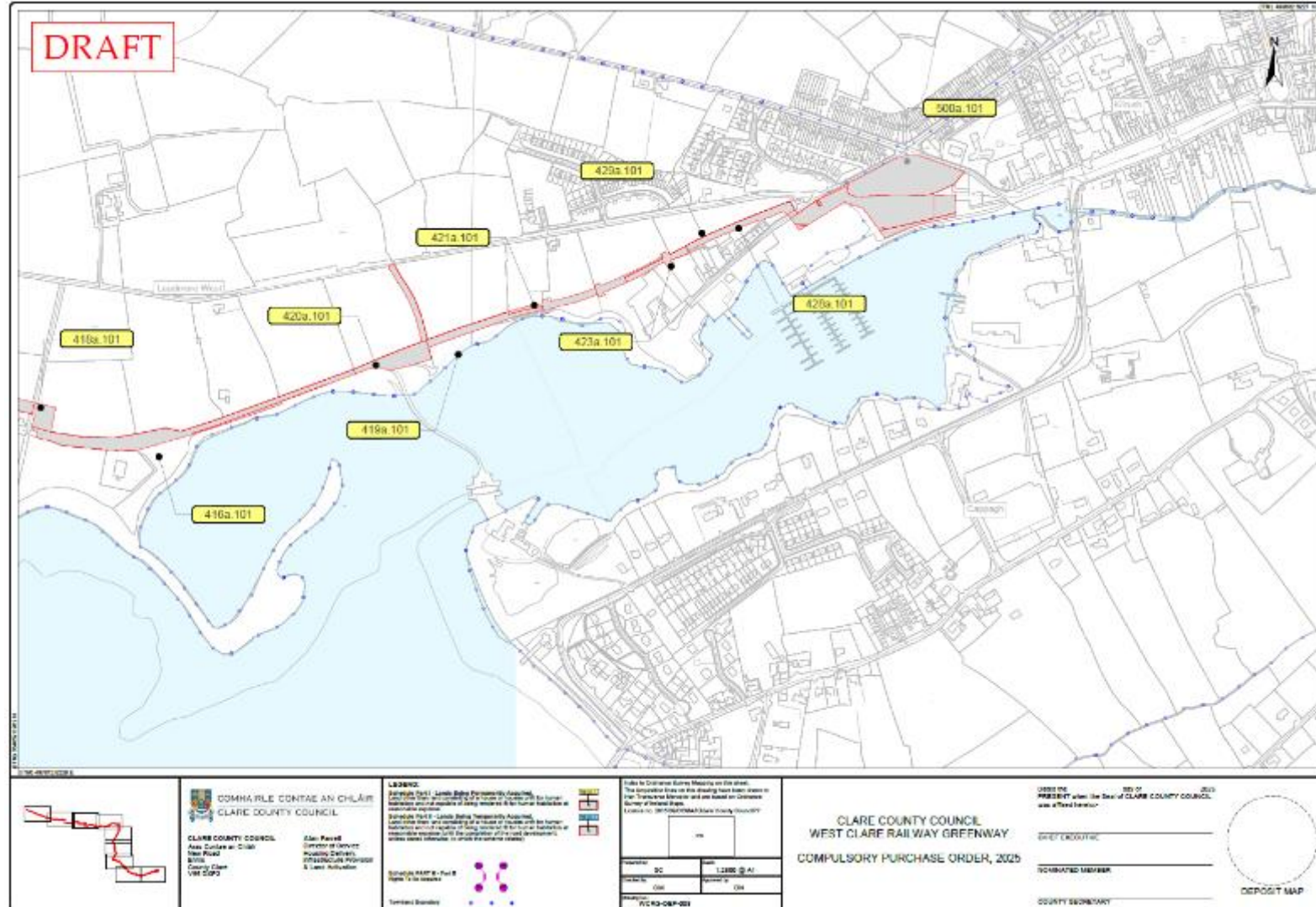
Land Acquisition (3/5)



Land Acquisition (4/5)



Land Acquisition (5/5)



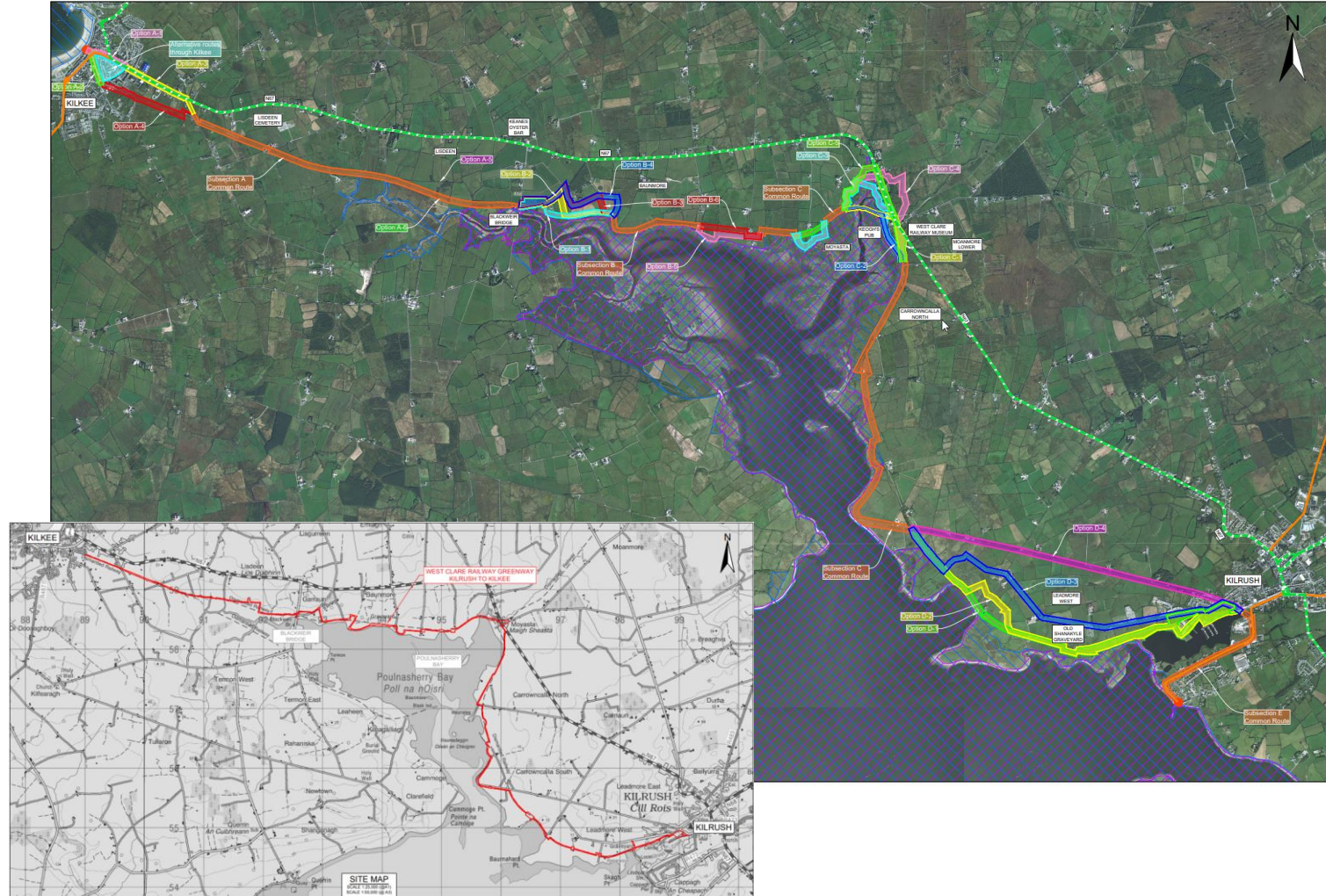
Land Acquisition – Summary



- Code of Best Practice for Greenways – followed at all stages
- Extensive Landowner Consultation and Voluntary Land Acquisition Agreements being drafted
- Compulsory Purchase Order required to underpin land acquisition
- 55 Agricultural Landholdings and 16 non-Agricultural Landholdings affected
- Accommodation bridges provided in cases of exceptional severance

Alternatives Considered

- N67 and Poulasherry Bay constrain route options – as evidenced by the routing of the historic railway line
- Government Policy to provide dedicated route rather than following existing roadways – also addresses landowner concerns about interfaces with large agricultural machinery on narrow roads
- Scheme stays largely on old railway past / through most ecologically sensitive areas with enhanced (largely natural) screening being provided as part of the scheme
- Local variations considered and adopted in most cases to address landowner concerns
- Planning and infrastructure policy supports the development of the scheme, notwithstanding the sensitivity of its receiving environment



Scheme Benefits



- Generate and sustain local employment
- Provide Safe walking and safe cycling
- Provide sustainable transport options linking towns.
- Draw tourism to the area year-round.
- Promote healthy living and quality of life benefits.
- Engender positive travel habits at a young age.
- Highlight the history of the West Clare Railway.
- Bring the community together/promote a sense of community.
- Positive Economic Benefits to Costs Ratio.



Thank You

