

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ACP-323831-25



Development	West Clare Railway Greenway Project - Section 1 (Kilrush to Kilkee)
Location	Kilrush to Kilkee via Moyasta, Co. Clare
Planning Authority	Clare County Council
Type of Application	Pre-application consultation under Section 51A of the Roads Act 1993, as amended
Prospective Applicant	Clare County Council
Date of Site Inspection	1 st December 2025
Inspector	Joe Bonner

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Clare County Council (the prospective applicant) requested Pre-Application Consultations with the Commission under Section 51A of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), for the development of the proposed West Clare Railway Greenway – Section 1: Kilrush to Kilkee.
- 1.2. One pre-application consultation meeting took place between the Commission and the prospective applicant on the 5th of March 2026.
- 1.3. The initial meeting request was received by the Commission on the 31st of October 2025. It was followed on the 14th of January 2026 by a draft copy of chapter 4 of the EIAR ‘Description of the proposed development’ and draft maps indicating the extent of the CPO, which would form part of the project, that was stated to be in preparation and under review at that time. On the 16th of February 2026, a presentation was submitted to the Commission and this was what was presented at the meeting on the 5th of March 2026.
- 1.4. This report is prepared following a written email request, dated the 30th of March 2026, from the prospective applicant, to close the pre-application consultation. The prospective applicant intends to submit an application for approval to the Commission, pursuant to Section 51(2) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended). An Environmental Impact Assessment and a Natural Impact Statement are to be submitted with the application.
- 1.5. This report provides an overview of the site location and the proposed development, a summary of the meeting and the advice provided by the Commission representatives, details of relevant legislative provisions, and a list of recommended Prescribed Bodies that copies of the application for approval should be forwarded to.

2.0 Site Location and Description of Development

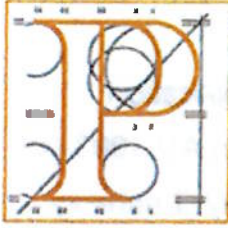
- 2.1. The proposed development is described as the first phase of a 4 phase ‘West Clare Railway Greenway’ that would eventually extend to c100km. The original West Clare Railway Line ran in a northwestern, then western direction from Ennis through Corofin and Ennistymon, before reaching the coast at Lahinch from where it continued southwards, close to the coast, through Miltown Malbay and Quilty, then

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- 2.6. The greenway would cross a private road at CH5000, from where it would be diverted for c800m north of the old rail line along field boundaries to avoid agricultural and residential properties, before once again rejoining the old rail line and continuing east. The greenway would cross a farm track at CH6300 and a local road (L6082) at CH6870, where it would bisect a small field before again continuing along field boundaries. Approaching Moyasta, it is proposed to lower the levels of the greenway between CH7350 and CH7500, in order to reduce impacts on adjacent properties, by including an agricultural overpass and footbridge.
- 2.7. The greenway would travel along the existing railway causeway across Poulnasherry Bay to arrive in Moyasta via the old railway yard passing through all three protected sites (SAC, SPA and pNHA, which referred to in Section 4 below). It is proposed to erect screening along the causeway in the form of fencing and landscaping to a height of 1.4m. A trailhead and parking area is also proposed to be installed on the eastern side of the N67, at Moyasta, which would include the installation of a zebra crossing on the national road. The greenway would also travel along a new footpath on the southwestern side of the N67 for c215m, before connecting into the Moyasta to Kilrush spur of the former rail line and heading in a south western direction along the edge of the three protected sites. After following the rail line corridor for 780m, it is proposed to install a new bridge at CH9250 to allow the route to cross a canal to the west to avoid a saltmarsh. From there, the greenway would run parallel to the existing canal and through the SAC and pNHA to where it would meet the L6090 at another bridge and would then run east along that road for c60m before rejoining the former railway alignment as it continues south.
- 2.8. The greenway would be diverted again between CH10150 and CH10320 to avoid soft ground that forms part of the SPA, before diverting west along and close to the coastline to avoid an active agricultural holding. It would rejoin the original rail corridor again at CH12000 shortly after an overbridge would be installed at CH11670, to avoid severance of an active farm.
- 2.9. As the greenway continues south-eastwards, a further farm overpass would be installed at CH12500 where the rail line is in cutting. The alignment would then divert westwards off the rail embankment close to Brews Bridge, using the existing boardwalk to go around the existing carpark and residences before rejoining the old railway alignment at CH13100. A number of accommodation works would be

passing close to Doonbeg, before arriving at Moyasta, where the line branched in two directions, one going west to Kilkee and one south towards Kilrush.

- 2.2. The proposed phase 1 section of the greenway, that is the subject matter of this pre application consultation, is a stand-alone section that would extend over a distance of c15.2km from Kilkee to Kilrush and would run on or close to the two former tail lines from Kilkee to Moyasta and from Moyasta to Kilrush. Approximately 58% of the route would follow the exact alignment of the former railway line, with diversions off the route to avoid residential properties or to avoid fragmentation of active agricultural lands.
- 2.3. The proposed greenway would start at the south eastern end of the built up part of Kilkee, c180m east of the former railway station and would run eastwards along the former rail line through agricultural land, where it would meet and cross the first of several public roads at chainage (CH) 650, where it would also pass close to a former railway cottage and other private houses. The greenway would continue eastwards and cross a second local road and pass another former railway cottage at CH1400 before crossing a third local road, at CH1980, just north of Lisdeen Recycling Centre. This section of the route would all be on the former rail alignment.
- 2.4. From CH1980, the greenway would deviate slightly northwards of, but parallel to the former rail line and two sets of parallel bridges would be installed at CH2100 and CH2500. Two of the bridges would allow for independent farm access and two would form part of the greenway. This section of the route is low lying and has been identified as having a medium potential for coastal flooding. The route would also divert away from the rail line at CH2600 and would follow field boundaries for 600m in an eastern direction before turning south for 160m, where it would rejoin the former rail line corridor. This diversion avoids areas in active agricultural use.
- 2.5. The greenway would continue eastwards again along the former corridor for c550m from where it would divert northwards c50m before Blackweir Bridge. The new route would move the greenway away from a number of houses and help to create straight crossing point for greenway users across the L2016 at CH4015, as the existing local road arrangement involves a staggered road crossing close to the bridge. This offline section would extend to c520m and would cross another local road, the L20161 at CH 4225 before travelling directly south to rejoin the rail line at CH4650.

ridge height with first floor accommodation plus elevational changes, (2) upgrade and relocate foul sewer treatment system, (3) construct new vehicular entrance to former railway line level crossing gate, (4) part adjust existing ground levels plus all ancillary site works on the existing railway cottage at CH1400. The proposed greenway would divert off the route to avoid this property.

- **RL3506** – (House immediately south of CH5000). On the 15th of May 2017 the Commission determined that ‘the re-construction and extension of the existing railway cottage’ is development and is not exempted development.

3.3 **Moyasta**

- **PL03.236417** (P.A. Reg. Ref. 09/1098) – Permission refused by the Commission on 5th of November 2010 to construct a museum and associated site works following a decision by Clare County Council to grant permission. The site incorporates part of the greenway and trailhead at Moyasta. The refusal reason stated:

The site of the proposed museum is located adjacent to and with access to/from the N67 main Kilrush-Kilkee Road, a national secondary route, at a point where the maximum speed limit of 100 km/h applies. It is considered that, notwithstanding proposed “park and ride” transport arrangements to service the museum, planned for the future, the proposed development would endanger public safety by reason of a traffic hazard or obstruction of road users or otherwise as a result of additional traffic turning movements. Furthermore, the proposal would represent a piecemeal form of development since it has not been shown how it would integrate with the established railway museum/installation at Moyasta junction, which it is indicated may involve an access/rail crossing on the N67.

- **PL.03.244161** (P.A. Reg. Ref. 14/292) – Appeal against ‘Construction of a railway museum building and associated work’ dismissed by the Commission on the 5th of February 2015, due to the nature of appeal/any previous permission S.138(1)(b), which related solely to the title to land. The site corresponds with part of the greenway at Moyasta, where it meets the N67 road.
- **PA. Reg. Ref. 19808** - Extension of the Appropriate Period of Planning Permission granted for P14-292, described as ‘construction of a 1506m² Railway Museum building incorporating a cafe and toilets, a Reed-Bed waste disposal

required between CH13100 and CH13900, including a diversion around a former railway station cottage at CH13900 where the greenway would cross a local road and return immediately onto the old alignment just north of the Kilrush Wastewater Treatment Plant. From there, a 625m section of the route is currently used as the access route to the Kilrush Marina lock gates. However, as part of the proposed development it is proposed to construct a new direct access route to the marina lock, with gates fitted where it would intersect with the greenway. The access point would be taken from the local (Shandyke) road to the north.

- 2.10. The final c600m of the greenway would travel along the old railway alignment to where it would terminate at a new trailhead and carpark, just north of Kilrush Marina.
- 2.11. Along its alignment it is intended that the initial working area would be 7 to 10m in width and the completed greenway would generally be 3m in width with 1m verges on either side, where stockproof fencing and landscaping would be installed. At points along the route such as the causeway over Pulnasherry Bay, the width of the pathway would be less than 3m.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1. The following history relates to sites on or immediately abutting the proposed greenway alignment and is divided into three sections from 1) Kilkee to Moynasta; 2) Moynasta and 3) Moynasta to Kilrush.

3.2. Kilkee to Moynasta

- **ABP-320967** – (site immediately north of chainage 65m to 205m in Kilkee and slightly north of CH390 to 550m). Approval issued by the Commission with conditions on the 20th of August 2025 for ‘a series of flood defences situated within the catchments of both the Victoria, Well & Atlantic Streams, the three sources of fluvial flooding in the town’ of Kilkee.
- **P.A. Reg. Ref. 062798** – Outline Permission refused to erect 16 no. dwelling houses and connect to public services on a site incorporating part of the rail track from C650 to CH900)
- **P.A. Reg. Ref. 25128** – Permission granted on the 21st of October 2025 for 1) part demolish, renovate and extend existing dwelling house to include raised roof

prevent the use of this original railway route as a greenway, would be contrary to the above objectives, and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

- **PL03.244297** (P.A. Reg. Ref. 14/351) – Permission granted by the Commission on the 11th of May 2015 for the 'provision of a new marina pavilion building and associated infrastructure and works. The overall site incorporates part of the greenway close to Kilrush Marina and part of the proposed Kilrush Trailhead/carpark area.

4.0 Natural Heritage Designations

4.1. Parts of the proposed greenway route run through and close to the following sites:

- Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code 002165)
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (Site Code 004077)
- Poulnisherry Bay pNHA (Site Code 000065)

5.0 Pre-Application Consultation Meeting

5.1. One pre-application meeting took place, which is summarised below. Please refer to the detailed record of the meeting included on the file for further details of the matters discussed.

5.2. The prospective applicant made a presentation of the proposed greenway, based on the Wet Clare Railway Greenway Introductory Presentation dated the 17th of February 2026. The greenway is to be a stand-alone 15.2km section of the West Clare Railway Greenway, which would eventually extend to 100km. The prospective applicant explained that the project has been subject to 3 rounds of public consultation and extensive landowner engagement, that the EIAR, NIS and CPO processes are at an advanced stage and that the application is anticipated to be submitted to the Commission in Q2 2026.

5.3. The prospective applicant set out the basis and need for the development and the policy context that supports it. They then discussed the overall design and noted that the route follows c58% of the route of the former railway line, with deviations from

system connected to a water tank, a railway crossing and pedestrian crossing of the N67, Bus pull-in, Car park and pathway, Footbridge, the laying of rail tracks and other associated site works. The extension expired on the 2nd of December 2020.

3.4 **Moyasta to Kilrush**

- **P.A. Reg. Ref. 041424** – (house at CH13900) Permission granted on the 15th of November 2004 to refurbish and develop the existing dwellinghouse including extending the roof to create a second storey, demolishing and replacing the existing utility room, construction of a conservatory and replacement of septic tank with a proprietary effluent treatment unit. The proposed greenway would run through this site and it is not known where the septic tank and percolation area for this house is located.
- **P.A. Reg. Ref. 25172** – Final Split decision issued by Clare County Council on the 2nd of April 2026 in respect of a retention application for a) light engineering workshop in the old seaweed factory building. b) new side cladding and access doors to old sea-weed factory building. c) existing palisade fencing and entrance gates. d) the existing storage area. e) existing carparking, all within the curtilage of an existing protected structure.

Parts a, b, d and e above were granted and part c) was refused retention.

The site extends across the part of the proposed greenway close to its end in Kilrush. The request of further information note that the existing palisade fencing and open air storage area obstruct the rail line and the proposed route of the West Clare Greenway. Following a response from the applicant, the planning authority refused retention permission for part C for the following reason:

The existing boundary fencing in the north, north east, and north west of the site, which was installed in recent years, encroaches onto the route of the Old West Clare Railway and comprises of a physical barrier to movement along this section of the rail line. As per objectives CDP11.5. "Walking and Cycling", CDP9.8 "Activity and Adventure Tourism" and CDP10.11 "Recreational Routes" of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, the Council will, where feasible, safeguard the route of the Old West Clare Railway, and will seek to develop the West Clare Railway Greenway as an off-road walking and cycling facility. Therefore, the existing fencing in this area of the site, would

- **CPO** – In response to a question, the prospective applicant confirmed that some refinement of boundaries is ongoing through the voluntary land acquisition agreement process and minor adjustments to landowner areas may occur. However, for all practical purposes, the same landowners would be affected as are identified in the consultation document submitted to the Commission. The Commission's representative queried the corridor widths and whether the CPO mapping differentiates between temporary and permanent land acquisition or any land to be returned to the landowners. The prospective applicant confirmed that it does. The Commission's representative also advised that details of the CPO be included in the greenway application.
- **Policy** – The Commission's representative advised that the application should refer to the most up to date policy context at the time the application is lodged such as the Climate Action Plan 2026 (if published).
- **Preliminary Design** – The Commission's representative referred to parts of draft Chapter 4 of the EIAR that refers to Preliminary Design 'and noted that some elements are stated to be subject further detail at a later stage'. They also stated that it is important that the application has sufficient detail to support definitive conclusions in the EIAR and NIS as parts of the site run through a SAC and SPA.
- **Site Surveys** – The Commission's representative also queried whether the entire route had been surveyed as some sections appear overgrown. The prospective applicant stated that each discipline contributing to the EIAR is responsible for its own surveys and that no concerns have been identified.
- **Farm Access v Cyclist Priority** – The Commission's representative queried the number of at grade agricultural crossings and whether greenway users or farmers would have priority. The prospective applicant stated that approximately 50 crossings would exist, but they would not be frequently used and that those landholdings where severance would be an issue have been provided with overpasses or underpasses. The prospective applicant also stated that some at grade crossings would permit agricultural vehicles to cross the path, while others would be used the movement of farm animals only.
- **Residential privacy** – The Commission's representative queried how the privacy of houses at the start of the greenway at Kilkee would be protected and the

the route occurring where lands are in active agricultural use or have buildings built thereon. The deviations generally follow along field boundaries to reduce potential severance impacts. They outlined the environmental considerations that would form part of the EIAR and identified the areas which are sensitive areas for birds, before discussing how they intend to mitigate potential bird disturbance impacts, as well measures to allow otter to move freely, while at the same time providing visual barriers to restrict intervisibility between birds, people and animals on the greenway, while also providing for monitoring and adaptive management of the greenway, while in use.

5.4. Finally, the prospective applicant outlined the extent of the land acquisition that would be carried out through a parallel CPO process.

5.5. Following the presentation, the following issues were discussed, and are based on the contents of draft EIAR chapter 4, which was submitted by the prospective applicant as part of their pre-consultation submission.

- **Other reports** – in addition to the EIAR, AA and CPO, a number of management plans are being prepared to support the application including a Construction Environmental Management Plan, an Invasive Species Management Plan and a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment.
- **Bats** – In response to a question, the prospective applicant stated that bats have been considered and are not identified as a significant issue.
- **Traffic** – In response to a question, the prospective applicant stated that traffic management arrangements would be set out in the application.
- **Climate Act** – The prospective applicant confirmed that Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 is addressed in the Climate Chapter of the EIAR.
- **Consultations** – The Commissions representatives asked what statutory consultees had been engaged with in preparation of the application in addition to the NWPS and Birdwatch Irland. The prospective applicant advised that TII as a sponsor of the project is closely involved in the process and that an EIA scoping report has been sent to statutory consultees and they are listed in the EIAR.

- **Construction Compounds** – The Commission’s representative advised that the exact locations of and number of construction compounds be identified.
- **Typographical Errors** – The Commission’s representative advised that a number of typographical errors require amendments.
- **Construction Period** – In response to a query, the prospective applicant stated that an 18 month construction period is anticipated.
- **Demolition** – The prospective applicant confirmed that no buildings are anticipated to be demolished as part of the development.
- **Contaminated Ground** – The Commission’s representative queried whether there are any areas of contaminated ground along the route. The prospective applicant confirmed that ground investigations are ongoing and noted that grounds at Kilrush was previously used as landfill.

6.0 Legislation and Conclusion

- 6.1. Section 51A of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, provides that a Road Authority or an Authority can enter into consultations with the Commission prior to submitting an application under Section 51(2) in relation to a proposed road development.
- 6.2. The Act also provides that the Commission may give advice to the Authority in relation to the procedures involved in making the application, and what may have a bearing on its decision in relation to the application in respect of the effects of the proposed road development on the environment, or an area, site or land, and proper planning and sustainable development. During the meetings held, advice was provided, as noted above and the record of the meeting is found in the attached file.
- 6.3. The prospective applicant now wishes to close the consultation stage and, following this stage, the applicant may apply to the Commission for approval of the West Clare Railway Greenway Project – Section 1 (Kilrush to Kilkee)
- 6.4. A recommended list of Prescribed Bodies, who should be forwarded copies of the application documentation, is as follows:
- 6.5. Section 51(3)(b) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, lists the following bodies:
 - (i) The Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland.

prospective applicant indicated that specific measures are under review for the Percy French Estate, while discussions have also been held with the owners of houses to the immediate north, that back onto the proposed greenway.

- **Bridges** – The Commission’s representative queried the level of detail that would be provided in respect of the proposed new bridge structures. The prospective applicant confirmed that drawings exist for new bridges, including foundations and flood compatible infrastructure details for bridges located in areas prone to flooding.
- **Photomontages** – Responding to a query, the prospective applicant stated that photomontages are being finalised and will include those showing the visual impact of the fencing and vegetation planned along the causeway over Poulnasherry Bay as well as for the proposed overbridges and under bridges.
- **Lighting** – The Commission’s representative queried whether permanent lighting would be installed and if temporary construction lighting has been factored into the impact assessments. The prospective applicant responded that no permanent lighting is proposed on the greenway and they would address temporary construction lighting in the EIAR, if necessary, though it is not intended to carry out works during hours of darkness.
- **Drainage** – The Commission’s representative queried the drainage and pollution prevention measures at the proposed trailhead/car park at Moyasta. The prospective applicant confirmed that an interceptor ditch will be provided around the perimeter of the car park.
- **Access** – The prospective applicant stated that local road crossings would not provide parking areas and these access points would be for local pedestrian and cyclist access, while areas of restricted access would be identified.
- **Existing Structures** – The Commission’s representative queried the extent of inspections carried out on existing structures, embankments and footings and the extent of surveys that would be required prior to construction, in particular in respect of structures located within the SPA and SAC. The prospective applicant confirmed that inspections have focused on structures with potential impact on the SAC. They acknowledged that not every structure has been assessed and would clearly indicate this in the EIAR.

Joe Bonner

Joe Bonner

Senior Planning Inspector

8th April 2026

- (iii) Bord Fáilte Éireann (now Failte Éireann).
- (iii) An Taisce – the National Trust for Ireland.
- (iv) The Environmental Protection Agency.
- (v) Any other prescribed body or person.

It is also considered that the following prescribed bodies or persons, as per section 51(3)(b)(v) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), should also be notified:

- (vi) Department of Planning and Local Government and Heritage
- (vii) National Parks and Wildlife Service
- (viii) Minister of Environment and Climate & Communications
- (ix) Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- (x) National Transport Authority
- (xi) An Chomhairle Ealaíon (Arts Council)
- (xii) The Heritage Council
- (xiii) Southern Regional Assembly
- (xiv) Irish Water
- (xv) Inland Fisheries Ireland
- (xvi) Waterways Ireland
- (xvii) Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)
- (xviii) Department of Transport
- (xix) Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
- (xx) HSE
- (xxi) Office of Public Works
- (xxii) ESB
- (xxiii) Eirgrid