



DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

BARNESMORE GAP GREENWAY

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING DETERMINATION

Donegal County Council ("DCC") intends to apply to An Coimisiún Pleanála for approval under Section 51 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended) for the Barnesmore Gap Greenway Project (the "**Proposed Scheme**").

The Proposed Scheme will provide an active travel route between the towns of Donegal Town and Ballybofey/Stranorlar in County Donegal, together with all associated amenities and all ancillary and consequential works associated with and known as the Barnesmore Gap Greenway Project.

The Proposed Scheme will provide enhanced access to the wider region, enticing users to explore its surrounding towns and villages and further develop the untapped tourism potential within the region. The project also provides the opportunity to highlight the historical and educational significance of such places, whilst promoting the scenic nature of the surrounding area. At Donegal Town the proposed greenway will connect with the international EuroVelo Route 1 which follows the northern, western and southern coastlines around Ireland, and the route also forms part of the proposed National Cycle Network across Ireland.

The proposed route of the greenway mainline is approximately 30km in length and will be a bi-directional shared walking, wheeling, and cycling route. There is a further 7.5km of connections which provide additional integration to surrounding amenities and active travel routes, which gives a total length of 37.5km for the proposed facility.

Ancillary Infrastructure along the route has been designed in line with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports Greenways and Cycle Routes Ancillary Infrastructure Guidelines. This includes the provision of trailheads, rest areas, cycle parking, connections, lighting and wind breaks.

Trailheads are formal points of entry to the Greenway and are an integral part of the route experience. Four trailheads have been identified along the proposed development route. At these facilities it is proposed to provide car parking, as well as rest areas and bicycle parking. Additional facilities and amenities, including toilet facilities, will be provided at some of the trailheads depending on the Level of Service. All the facilities at the trailheads will be accessible to disabled users, with dropped kerb access, tactile paving crossing, accessible parking and wider doors to access toilet blocks. The trailheads also include rest areas for users of the greenway in the form of picnic benches and seating as well as information boards displaying the greenway route and key information.

This screening determination has considered the relevant legislative context, including but not limited to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (as amended), Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (as amended), and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) (as amended).

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

DCC appointed AECOM/ROD to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for the Proposed Scheme, to consider, analyse and assess whether in view of best scientific knowledge and objective information and the conservation objectives of the European site(s) (which are discussed further below), if the Proposed Scheme individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site(s).

The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concluded that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, has the potential to give rise to impacts which would constitute likely significant effects on the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, the Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC, the Croaghonagh Bog SAC, the River Finn SAC, the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, the River Foyle and Tributaries SAC, and the Donegal Bay SPA in view of their Conservation Objectives.

DCC has received and read the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and has considered its content and its conclusions and recommendation set out therein. Having done this, DCC agrees with the conclusions and recommendation set out in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Having regard to the foregoing, DCC has determined that an Appropriate Assessment of the Proposed Scheme is required as it cannot exclude, in view of best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective scientific information, following the screening that DCC has carried out, that the Proposed Scheme, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, the Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC, the Croaghonagh Bog SAC, the River Finn SAC, the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, the River Foyle and Tributaries SAC, and the Donegal Bay SPA in view of the Conservation Objectives of those sites.

DCC has made this determination on the basis of the following reasons:

European Sites located within the Zone of Influence

European Site [site code]	Are there potential pathways for effects from the proposed development to this site?
Special Areas of Conservation	
Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC [000133]	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 1.5km upstream of this European Site via the River Eske and 369m northwest as the crow flies. Due to the hydrological connection between the proposed development and this European Site, there is a potential pathway for effects to this European Site.
Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC [000163]	Yes. The proposed development is located within the boundary of this European Site and two new watercourse crossings are proposed within this European Site. Due to the overlapping boundaries of the proposed development and this European Site, there is a potential pathway for effects to this European Site.
Croaghonagh Bog	Yes. The proposed development is located immediately adjacent to this European Site. Due to the proximity between the proposed development and this European Site, there is a potential pathway for effects to this European Site.

SAC [000129]	Site.
River Finn SAC [002301]	Yes. The proposed development is located within the boundary of this European Site and a new watercourse crossing over the River Finn is proposed. Due to the overlapping boundaries of the proposed development and this European Site, there is a potential pathway for effects to this European Site.
Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC [002047]	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 21.2km southeast and 30.1km downstream of this European Site. This European Site is designated for terrestrial habitats and species as well as mobile aquatic species that have the potential to use watercourses crossed by the proposed development, including the River Finn. While this nature of the proposed development will not directly affect upstream or terrestrial habitats, mobile species which are Qualifying Interests of this European Site may be present in the vicinity or downstream of the proposed development works. Therefore, there is a potential pathway for effects from the proposed development to this European Site.
Meentygrannagh Bog SAC [000173]	No. The proposed development is located at least 16.6km southeast of this European Site. This European Site is designated for terrestrial peatland habitats. The proposed development is located in a different subcatchment to this European Site. Therefore, given the nature of the Qualifying Interests for which this site is designated, there are no pathways for effects from the proposed development to this European Site.
River Foyle and Tributaries SAC [UK0030320]	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 18.3 km upstream of this European Site via the River Finn and 14.4km west as the crow flies. Due to the hydrological connection between the proposed development and this European Site, there is a potential pathway for effects to this European Site.
Special Protection Areas	
Donegal Bay SPA [004151]	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 367m northeast and 1.5km upstream of this European Site. Due to the hydrological connection via the River Eske between the proposed development and this European Site, there is a potential pathway for effects to this European Site.
Lough Swilly SPA [004075]	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 18.1km south of this European Site. This is within the maximum core foraging range for some of the Qualifying Interests for which this site is designated. Therefore, given the distance, there is an ex-situ pathway for effects to this European Site.
Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA [4039]	No. The proposed development is located at least 18.2km southeast of this European Site. This is outside the maximum core foraging range for all of the Qualifying Interests for which this site is designated. Therefore, given the distance, there are no pathways for effects to this European Site.
Lough Nillan Bog SPA [004110]	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 10.5km southeast of this European Site. This is within the maximum core foraging range for some of the Qualifying Interests for which this site is designated. Therefore, given the distance, there is an ex-situ pathway for effects to this European Site.
Durnesh Lough SPA [004145]	No. The proposed development is located at least 9.5km northeast of this European Site. This is outside the maximum core foraging range for all of the Qualifying Interests for which this site is designated. Therefore, given the distance, there are no pathways for effects to this European Site.
Pettigo Plateau Nature Reserve SPA [004099]	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 7.5km northwest of this European Site. This is within the maximum core foraging range for the Qualifying Interests for which this site is designated. Therefore, given the distance, there is an ex-situ pathway for effects to this European Site.
Lough Derg	Yes. The proposed development is located at least 9.2km northwest of this

(Donegal) SPA [004057]	European Site. This is within the foraging ranges for all the Qualifying Interests for which this site is designated. Therefore, given the distance, there is an exsitu pathway for effects to this European Site.
Pettigo Plateau SPA [UK9020051]	No. The proposed development is located at least 14.1km northwest of this European Site. This is outside the maximum core foraging range for the Qualifying Interest for which this site is designated. Therefore, given the distance, there are no pathways for effects to this European Site.

15 European Sites, namely the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, the Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC, the Croaghonagh Bog SAC, the River Finn SAC, the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, the Meentygrannagh Bog SAC, the River Foyle and Tributaries SAC, the Donegal Bay SPA, the Lough Swilly SPA, the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA, the Lough Nillan Bog SPA, the Durnesh Lough SPA, the Pettigo Plateau Nature Reserve SPA, the Lough Derg (Donegal) SPA and the Pettigo Plateau SPA occur within the Zone of Influence of the proposed development, and it has been established that there are pathways for impacts between the proposed development and eleven of these European Sites. There are no pathways for impacts between the proposed development and any other European Sites.

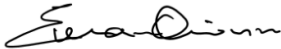
Section 3.3 of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report established, in light of the best scientific knowledge, that the proposed development will give rise to ecological impacts which would constitute likely significant effects on seven of these European Sites, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that AA be carried out in respect of any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European Sites, "either individually or in combination with other plans or projects". Therefore, regardless of whether or not the likely effects of a plan or project are significant when considered in isolation, the potential for the plan or project to significantly affect European Sites in combination with other past, present or foreseeable future plans or projects must also be assessed.

In the case of the proposed development, this AA Screening Report has found that the proposed development, individually, is likely to have significant effects on seven European Sites. Therefore, the assessment of the proposed development must proceed to Stage 2 (AA).

DCC has therefore requested that AECOM/ROD finalise a Natura Impact Statement which will be submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála with the application for approval under Section 51 of the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended) for the Proposed Scheme.

This AA Screening Determination has been made by Eunan Quinn, Senior Planner, and in doing so DCC has implemented an appropriate functional separation in the carrying out of Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

Signed: _

Dated:- 02/07/2026