



DESIGNING AND DELIVERING
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ATHY TRAILHEAD

Part VIII Report

Prepared for:
Kildare County Council



Kildare County Council
Comhairle Condae Chill Dara

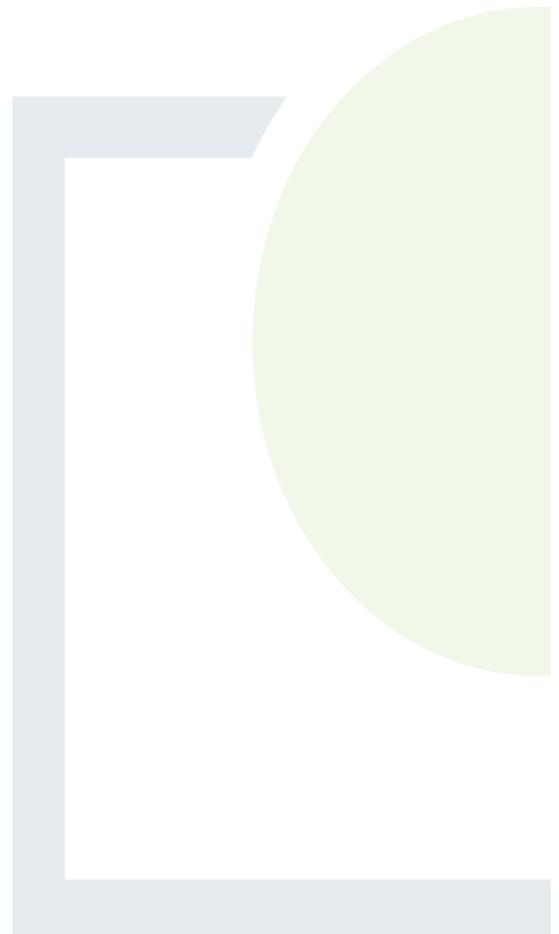
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BARROW BLUEWAY - ATHY TRAILHEAD PART VIII REPORT

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Abstract: This Part VIII Planning Report is in relation to the proposed development, the Athy Trailhead, which is to be constructed in Athy, Co. Kildare as part of Kildare County Council's continuous programme of improvement works to the Barrow Blueway.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Context

As part of the continuous programme of improvement works to the Barrow Blueway, Kildare County Council (KCC) are seeking Part VIII planning approval for construction of a new trailhead in Athy, Co. Kildare.

The proposed development is designed to significantly improve access to the popular 46km long walking and cycling route which is located along the existing Grand Canal Barrow Line towpath. By providing inclusive parking facilities and essential amenities for all Blueway users, the proposed trailhead aims to boost local tourism, support eco-friendly transportation, and enhance the overall Blueway visitor experience, while also promoting environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation through the materials and construction methods proposed.

1.2 Project Overview

This Part VIII proposal is for the construction of the Athy Trailhead, which is to be located on undeveloped lands on the northern bank of the Grand Canal Barrow Line in Athy, Co. Kildare. The proposed site is located approx. 130m from the River Barrow itself. The proposed trailhead location and the existing Barrow Blueway route are highlighted in Figure 1-1. Blueway users will utilise existing infrastructure between the proposed trailhead and the Barrow Blueway, over a distance of approx. 300m (note yellow dashed access routes below).

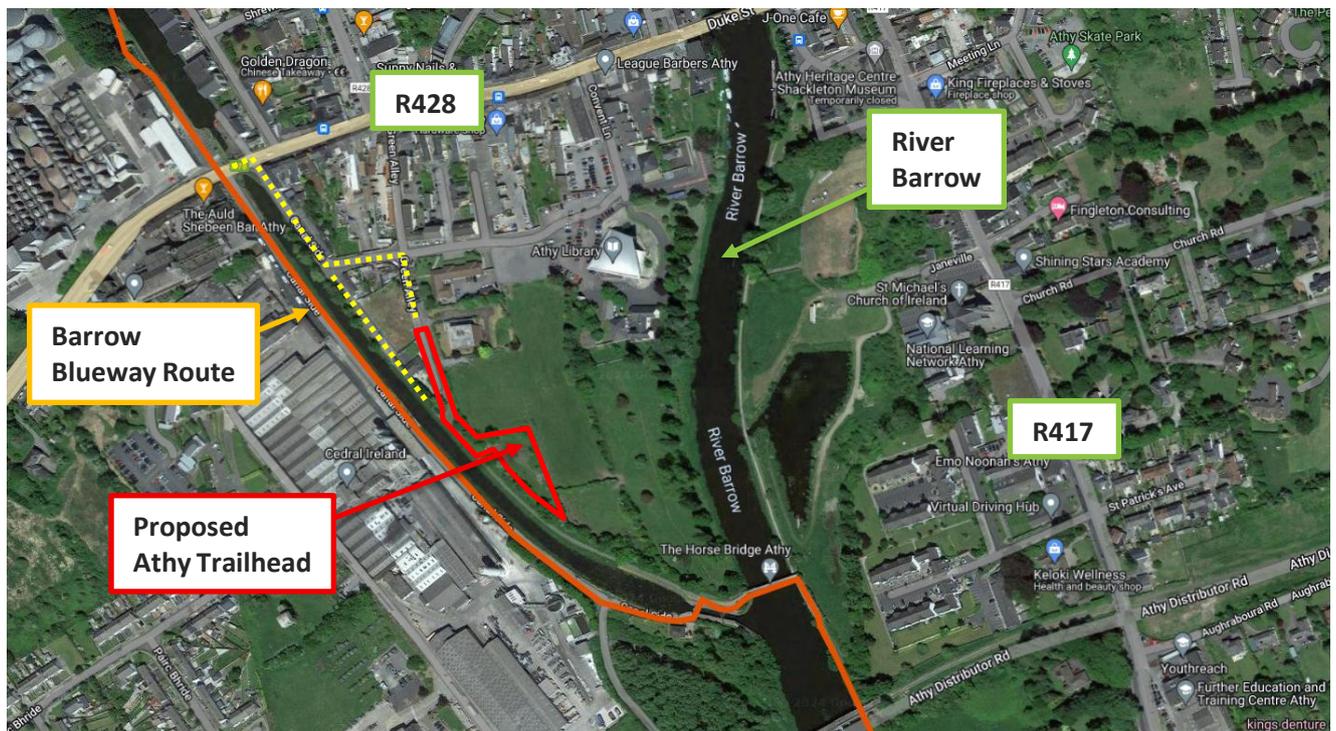


Figure 1-1: Proposed Location of Athy Trailhead

This location will provide Blueway users with access to the 46km long walking and cycling route along the Grand Canal Barrow Line towpath. The proposed trailhead facility will make a significant contribution to Athy by enhancing accessibility to the Blueway and town itself, improving Blueway visitor experience, promoting outdoor activities and eco-friendly transportation, and supporting local biodiversity.



The proposed trailhead development will provide the following:

- 15nr. standard car parking spaces;
- 2nr. accessibility car spaces;
- 14nr. standard bicycle parking spaces;
- 2nr. accessibility bicycle parking spaces;
- 3nr. bike storage lockers;
- 1nr. access point to the existing canal towpath via unbound path;
- Ancillary public amenities such as play area, benches, picnic tables, bins and route maps/signage;
- SUDs elements such as a sunken rain garden, permeable pavement/porous asphalt under car and bike parking spaces, and a drainage/storage basin;
- Retention of existing boundary hedgerows to maintain the site's biodiversity and natural habitat;
- Traffic bollards and buff tactile paving near accessibility spaces to prevent vehicle encroachment onto footways;
- Permeable footways, precast kerbs, tactile paving, and road markings to aid pedestrian navigation;
- Impermeable road surfacing to car park entrance/exit and along the proposed access road for maintenance purposes;
- A 5m wide shared space access road for car, cyclist and pedestrian traffic, with over the edge drainage to min. 0.5m wide grass verges, and a 2.1m wide drainage swale along the east side of entrance road;
- Speed control measures to access road including localised narrowing and landscaped buildouts, as well as colour contrast surfacing and road markings on approaches to shared space to highlight to all trailhead users;
- Timber post and rail fences to trailhead boundary and access control barrier at entrance; and
- Planting to all grass and landscaped areas, with any replacement planting to match existing. Full planting plan to be developed at Detailed Design stage. To enhance biodiversity, all replacement planting will be pollinator friendly.



2. PLANNING CONTEXT

The following strategies, policies, guidelines, and plans support the creation of cycling and walking infrastructure and are relevant therefore to the Part VIII proposal:

- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework;
- National Development Plan 2021-2030;
- Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future
- The National Cycle Policy Framework;
- People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025;
- The Action Plan for Rural Development Realising our Rural Potential;
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways;
- Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach - Planning and Policy;
- Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029, and;
- Athy Local Area Plan 2021 - 2027.

2.1 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework:

The National Planning Framework (NPF) recognises that creating the environment to support job creation in rural areas will be a key enabler to rejuvenating rural towns and villages, sustaining vibrant rural communities, and reversing rural decline. The following overarching objectives in relation to tourism, transport and greenways are noted;

Table 2-1: National Policy Objectives

National Policy Objective Number	Objective
NPO 22	Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.
NPO 27	Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.
NPO 62	Identify and strengthen the value of greenbelts and green spaces at a regional and city scale, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks, prevent coalescence of settlements and to allow for the long-term strategic expansion of urban areas.
NPO 64	Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.



The following National Planning Framework - Strategic Outcomes should also be noted;

Table 2-2: National Strategic Outcomes

National Strategic Outcome Number	Outcome
NSO 3	Invest in greenways, blueways and peatways as part of a nationally coordinated strategy.
NSO 7	Implementation of planning and transport strategies for the five cities and other urban areas will be progressed with a major focus on improving walking and cycling routes, including continuous greenway networks and targeted measures to enhance permeability and connectivity.

2.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030

Launched in conjunction with Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework, the National Development Plan is a ten-year strategy for public capital investment totalling almost €165 billion. This document makes provision for the following investment actions.

Table 2-3: National Development Plan - Investment Priorities NSO 2

National Strategic Objective 2	Enhanced Regional Accessibility
National Active Travel Programme	The Government is firmly committed to encouraging the use of walking, cycling and other active travel methods, and this has been signaled by the recent increase in the active travel budget. Whole-of-Government funding equivalent to 20% of the 2020 transport capital budget, or €360 million, has been committed annually for the period 2021-2025. The aim of this funding is to provide a safe and connected network to those who wish to commute to work or school or make other journeys through healthy and sustainable means. This investment will help support the delivery of significant levels of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure by 2025, as well as additional investment in Greenways.

Table 2-4: National Development Plan - Investment Priorities NSO 3

National Strategic Objective 3	Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
Rural and Community Development	In March 2021, the Government launched its new five-year policy for rural development, Our Rural Future 2021-2025. The main objectives of the policy are to help more people to live in rural Ireland, settling in our towns, villages and on the islands and help reverse population decline, to facilitate more people to work in rural Ireland, for rural areas to contribute to, and benefit from, the transition to a low-carbon and more sustainable society and for rural towns to be vibrant hubs for commercial and social activity.



National Strategic Objective 3	Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Project	In light of the huge potential to develop the economic value of Activity and Recreational Tourism by Local Authorities, State Agencies and communities, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Project supports the development and necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of outdoor recreational infrastructure. Initiatives funded cover a broad spectrum and range from walking trails to blueways to facilities for outdoor pursuits and adventure activities such as canoeing/kayaking, surfing, and sailing.
Active Travel in Towns and Villages	Whole-of-Government funding of €360 million has been committed to the development of walking and cycling infrastructure all over Ireland, including in towns and villages in more rural areas of the country as well as rural Greenways. In 2021, over €70 million was allocated by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to local authorities outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and the regional cities. This constitutes the first ever major Active Travel investment programme for rural Ireland. The investment in these counties is a sign of the Government’s commitment to the development of a sustainable mobility system which will provide a viable alternative to private car use, where feasible, not only in our major urban centers but across the country.

Table 2-5: National Development Plan - Investment Priorities NSO 4

National Strategic Objective 4	Sustainable Mobility
Active Travel	This NDP represents a step-change in the approach towards funding active travel in Ireland. Over the next 10 years approximately €360 million per annum will be invested in walking and cycling infrastructure in cities, towns, and villages across the country, including Greenways. This investment has a transformative potential to substantially increase the numbers choosing to make active travel part of their daily life, improving personal health and mental well-being, making our city, town, and village centers more vibrant and people focused spaces, and significantly addressing our climate action challenge.

2.3 Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020

Launched in 2009 and updated most recently in 2022 by the Department of Transport, the Smarter Travel Initiative acts as the national transport policy document for Ireland. One of the main aims of the policy is to develop walking and cycling as viable commuter modes in the short to medium term, with a long-term aim of fostering a lasting walking and cycling culture in Ireland.

2.4 The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009-2020

The NCPF recognises the positive benefits of cycling as a mechanism to improve quality of life for the country's citizens, by way of improved health but also on a broader communal sense, in terms of a reduction in CO2 emissions and increased social integration as people walk and cycle together.



2.5 People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's policy statement People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025 outlines the Government's objectives for tourism with a view to increase overseas visitors and revenue and employment. The Policy highlights the importance of sustainable development of tourism and recognises the contribution of facilities for activity-based holidays to Ireland's positive image and attraction as a tourist destination. It supports the development and improvement of physical visitor attractions, visitor infrastructure and facilities for visitor activities, including Greenways.

2.6 Action Plan for Rural Development - Realising our Rural Potential

The Action Plan for Rural Development - Realising our Rural Potential highlights the potential of activity to contribute to economic growth in rural areas, recognising "Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas in particular by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking".

2.7 Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways

The publication of the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways aims to support activity tourism in rural areas, which is also identified as an action point in the Action Plan for Rural Development - Realising our Rural Potential. The Strategy seeks to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard to deliver a quality experience for greenway users. The Strategy also seeks to increase the number and geographical spread of greenways to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland and a recreational amenity for domestic visitors and locals, thereby promoting physical activity and contributing to a healthier society. The Strategy aims to provide substantially segregated off-road experience linking places of interest, recreation, and leisure in areas with beautiful scenery and attractions.

2.8 Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach - Planning and Policy

This document provides comprehensive best practice guidance on how to design, build and manage spaces so that they can be readily accessed and used by everyone, regardless of age, size, ability, or disability. A policy statement within the document states that inadequacies in transport provision may create barriers that limit individuals and groups from fully participating in a range of activities, such as employment, education, health care and shopping. The loss or lack of mobility can cause isolation and reduce an individual's independence.

2.9 Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

The Kildare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029 has policy in place to promote sustainable development through facilitating movement to, from, through and within the County that is accessible to all and prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.



Chapter 5 - Sustainable Mobility and Transport

5.4 - Sustainable Movement

- *Objective - TM O12:*
- "It is an objective of the Council to investigate the feasibility of developing high-quality, suitable, safe and sustainable cycling pathways".
- *Target - TM T1:*
- "It is a target of the Council to, as a minimum, reduce the current car-based trips to work from 74% to 50% and the car-based trips to education from 50% to 40% by the end of this plan period".
- *Policy - TM P2:*
- "It is the policy of the Council to prioritise and promote the development of high-quality, suitable, safe, and sustainable walking and cycling pathways and facilities, both inter-county and intra-county and within the towns and settlements of Co. Kildare".
- *Objective - TM O24:*
- "It is an objective of the Council to implement the greenway and blueway projects that promote walking and cycling".
- *Objective - TM O27:*
- "It is an objective of the Council to support the development of the Grand Canal Greenway and all associated infrastructure".

2.10 Athy Local Area Plan 2021 - 2027

The Athy Local Area Plan 2021-2027 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Athy in the context of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 and the National Planning Framework (2018).

Chapter 6 - Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism

6.5 - Tourism

- *Objective - EDTO3.1:*
"It is an objective of the Council to support the development of the Barrow Blueway route along the Barrow Line of the Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation system as a multi-use tourism and amenity resource, subject to the required environmental assessments."
- *Objective - EDTO3.4:*
"It is an objective of the Council to Support and facilitate the development of angling activities and supporting infrastructure, including the provision of wheelchair friendly stands in Athy, subject to appropriate environmental assessments."
- *Objective - EDTO3.5:*
"It is an objective of the Council to support and facilitate the development of an integrated network of greenways, Heritage/Tourist Trails and looped walks where appropriate, within the town centre and along the River Barrow and the Barrow Blueway route."



Chapter7 - Movement and Transport

7.4 - Active Transport Modes - Walking and Cycling

- *Objective - MTO1.2:*
"It is an objective of the Council to support the implementation of the actions contained in the Walkability Audit Report for Athy (2020) and ensure that all footpaths in Athy are accessible to all members of the community, including people with disabilities, the elderly and people with young children."
- *Objective - MTO1.6:*
"It is an objective of the Council to ensure that all development within Athy allows for connectivity (pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular) to adjacent lands in accordance with the National Transport Authority's Permeability Best Practice Guide (2015), or any updated version of same."

2.11 Assessment

The provision of the Athy Trailhead in Athy, Co. Kildare is considered to be in accordance with the frameworks, initiatives, development plans, and local area plans outlined above.



3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Project Location

This Part VIII proposal is for the construction of the Athy Trailhead in Athy, Co. Kildare. The trailhead will be located adjacent to the 46km long Barrow Blueway.

The Barrow Blueway consists of an existing walking and pedestrian towpath along the Grand Canal Barrow Line which begins near Robertstown, Co. Kildare and meanders south to Athy. The Blueway continues on through Athy, joining with the River Barrow towpath, as far as St. Mullins in southern Co. Carlow. The Blueway passes through the picturesque towns of Rathangan, Monasterevin, Athy, Carlow, Leighlinbridge, Muine Bheag, Goresbridge, Borris and Graiguenamanagh. The Blueway will also tie-in with the proposed Grand Canal Greenway Phase 2 project near Robertstown, Co. Kildare which is currently at the detailed design stage.

Once these projects are completed, a comprehensive greenway and blueway network will be created across Kildare and Carlow as highlighted in Figure 3-1. The Athy Trailhead aims to provide access to this network.

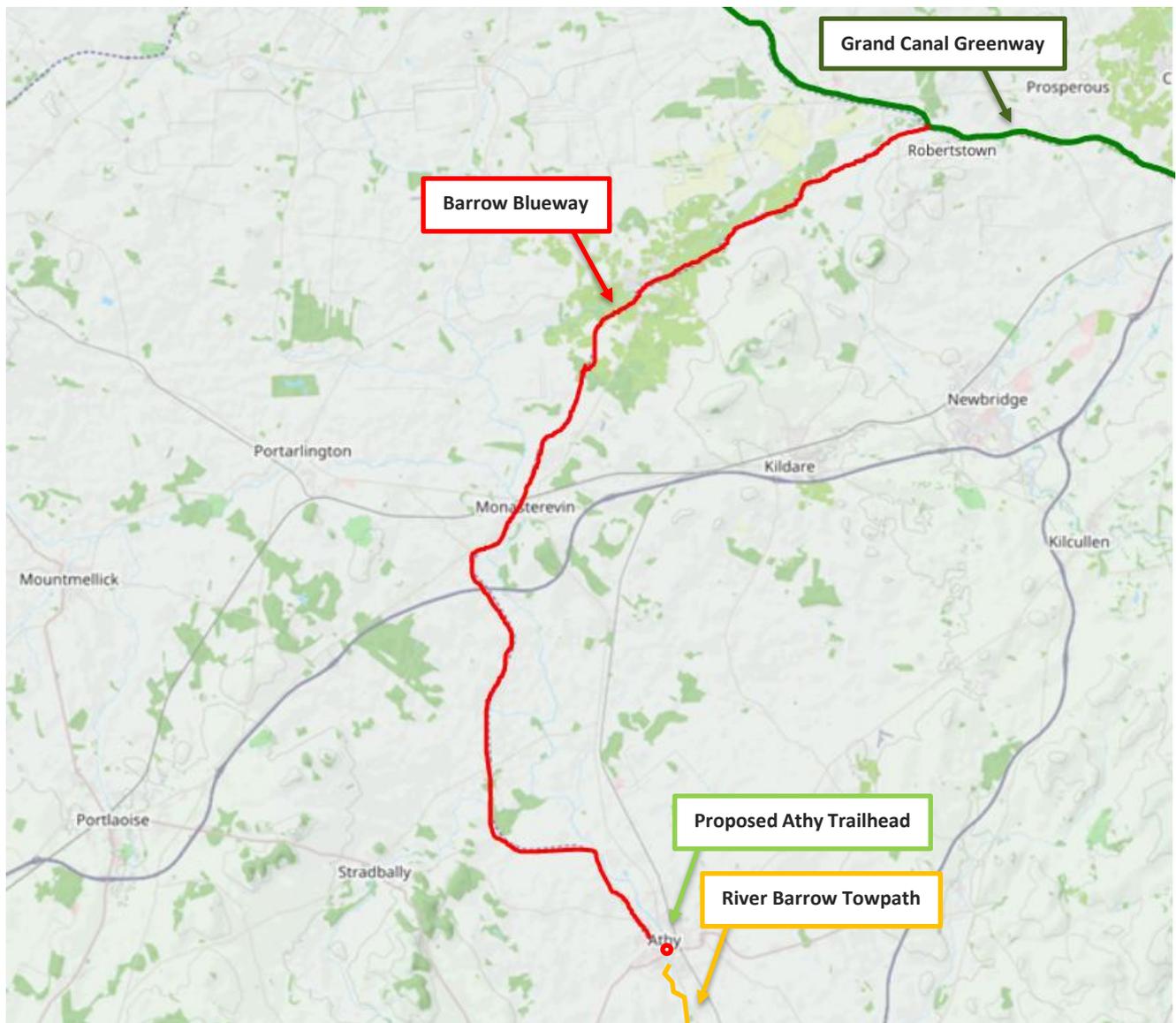


Figure 3-1: Site Context & Barrow Blueway Route



Table 3-1: Site Location Coordinates

Location	Lat Long	ITM	Irish Grid
Athy Trailhead	52.9889, -6.9874	667981, 693615	268036, 193587

3.2 Project Description

The proposed project aims to improve public access to the existing Barrow Blueway pedestrian and cycle route in Athy, Co. Kildare, as well as provide greenway trailhead amenities as per TII's Rural Cycleway Design standard (DN-GEO-03047). The proposed development includes the construction of a trailhead facility, a new shared space entrance/exit road, car parking facilities, and greenway amenities that will serve both locals and visitors.

3.2.1 Proposed Entrance Road to Trailhead

A new shared space access road will be constructed, providing a dedicated route to the trailhead facilities. This shared space will permit vehicle, pedestrian, and cyclist access to the trailhead. The shared space has been intentionally narrowed through localised buildouts to encourage lower vehicle speeds. This entrance road will tie into the proposed Cluid Housing Development junction along Green Alley (Planning Ref. 22985), ensuring seamless integration with the surrounding road network and providing easy access from the Athy town centre.

Designed with safety and efficiency in mind, the road will feature appropriate speed control measures such as buildouts, as well as road markings and colour contrast surfacing on approaches to the shared space access road to aid navigation to the trailhead for all users. The road surface will be constructed using impermeable and durable materials, ensuring longevity and minimising maintenance requirements. The alignment of the entrance road has been carefully designed to minimise disruption to the existing landscape, with grass verges, drainage swales, landscaping elements, and planting provided alongside the access road to preserve the natural feel of the area. Where the entrance road meets the trailhead site, a turning island with line-marked overrun area has been provided to improve vehicle access and navigation.

3.2.2 Proposed Car Park Area

The car park layout provides dedicated parking bays, including spaces for accessible parking. The parking area will be surfaced, where possible, with permeable pavement/porous asphalt for drainage purposes. Access control barriers, signage, pedestrian bollards, tactile paving, colour contrast surfacing, road markings, and precast kerbs will delineate footways and roadways. These measures are intended to manage vehicular access and ensure safe pedestrian circulation within the car park area.

3.2.3 Proposed Trailhead Facilities

To encourage recreational use of the Barrow Blueway, the project will feature trailhead facilities as per DN-GEO-03047. These facilities include picnic benches, seating areas, informational signage, bike parking, bike storage lockers, and bins. The proposed trailhead will serve as a gateway for canal-side activities such as walking and cycling. A children's play area has also been provided for within the trailhead footprint as illustrated below in Figure 3-1

The space will not only provide benefits to users of the Blueway but to the local public in Athy who can avail of these same amenities. The trailhead is located just 300m from the R428 (Duke Street) in Athy, providing locals with useful recreational amenities just a short walk from the town centre.



Figure 3-2: Proposed Trailhead Play Area

3.2.4 Proposed Landscaping, Planting and Boundary Treatment

The trailhead, access road, and parking area will be surrounded by extensive landscaping, including wildflower meadows and grassed zones. The design will prioritise the retention of existing boundary hedgerows, enhancing the natural beauty of the area while supporting biodiversity. These green spaces will not only improve the visual appeal but also provide important habitats for local wildlife, fostering a more sustainable and eco-friendly environment. The existing eastern boundary consists of dense vegetation and a historic stone wall. A structural inspection of this wall will be completed in advance of any construction works, and the wall will be repaired if necessary. The wall will be protected during the construction phase, and a 1m buffer provided in the form of a grass margin.

3.3 Local Residents and Adjacent Properties

Access to properties adjacent to the site shall be maintained through the construction process. Swept path analysis has been carried out to ensure cars can access the proposed site, as well as navigate the proposed trailhead layout.

During construction, the Contractor shall comply with the recommendations of BS 5228: Code of Practice for Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites to ensure construction related noise which may affect local residents is minimised.



3.4 Public Lighting

A detailed public lighting design shall be prepared for the project as part of the detailed design phase. Public lighting shall be provided in accordance with the recommendations of BS5489 Part 1, Lighting of Roads and Public Amenity Areas and BS EN 13201:2003. In particular, public lighting will be considered at crossing points within the car park area.

All lighting designs shall be in accordance with the Kildare County Council Public Lighting Specification. Detailed plans and lighting report shall be submitted for approval in advance of construction.

3.5 Services

Existing utilities infrastructure have been identified near and within the site boundary. In consultation with the service owners these services shall be protected in place or diverted to facilitate the proposed works.

3.6 Architectural Heritage

Based on a desktop review, no recorded architectural sites have been recorded within the site boundary or within a 200m radius of the proposed location. Although not recorded on the NIAH or RMP, a historic stone wall runs along the eastern site boundary. A 1m buffer will be provided to this wall in the form of a grass margin. This wall will be protected during the construction phase.

3.7 Environment

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening was carried out which determined that no significant effects are envisaged by the proposed works. The works are minor and are to be carried out on pre-existing scrub land, thus minimising the potential impacts on the environment. Any European Sites in proximity of the proposed works were further assessed and it was found that the sites were not at risk of impact. The results of this Appropriate Assessment Screening will be made available as part of this Part VIII submission.

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) was also carried out for the proposed development. The results of this EclA will be made available as part of this Part VIII submission.

3.8 Drainage and Flooding

It is intended that during the detailed design process, a full drainage strategy will be developed that integrates nature-based sustainable drainage solutions, such as a swale along the access road verge, a sunken rain garden to the north of the site, permeable pavement/porous asphalt to the car parking area, and a drainage basin to the south of the site. An example of the proposed sunken rain garden is illustrated below in Figure 3-3.

Infiltration is the intended drainage strategy for the scheme, and the proposed SuDS features, as well as the area of permeable pavement/porous asphalt indicated on the Part VIII drawings, is sufficient for a 1:100-year rainfall event. It is proposed that surface water run-off from the proposed impermeable access road will collect in a drainage swale provided in the grass verge. The drainage system shall be designed to manage surface water run-off from the site in a way that mimics the existing hydrology of the site in so far as is practical.



No outfalls to nearby watercourses such as the Grand Canal Barrow Line or River Barrow are proposed. All proposed SuDS measures will be agreed with the KCC Roads Department at the detailed design stage. Using information obtained from <https://www.floodinfo.ie/map/floodmaps/>, it appears that the site is not subject to the risk of flooding. Therefore, it is not necessary to apply for a hydraulic risk assessment.



Figure 3-3: Proposed Sunken Rain Garden



4. METHODOLOGY FOR CONSTRUCTION

An Outline Construction and Environmental Management Plan (OCEMP) will be prepared for the proposed works. The OCEMP will provide particular focus and detail on how the proposed works will negate any impact on the local environment. The OCEMP shall also take into consideration and align with the findings of both the EIA and AA Screenings, as well as the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). Furthermore, the OCEMP shall set out the design rationale for the proposed works, access details, environmental management (i.e. provision of an Ecological Clerk of Works and the development and implementation of an Environmental Management Plan) and construction methodology.

The preparation and implementation of a detailed Construction Management Plan and Environmental Management Plan shall be the responsibility of the contractor and will be reviewed by the project ecologist at the preconstruction stage. This will include method statements for all construction works, environmental management, and supervision.

It is expected that the construction sequence will take place as follows:

1. Utility Services: location, diversion and protection of existing services on site;
2. Site and Vegetation Clearance: protect existing boundary hedgerows which are being retained;
3. Structural Inspection of Boundary Walls: to be repaired and repointed if required;
4. Earthworks: re-grade trailhead site with longitudinal fall towards proposed drainage basin/storage to south of the site. Import and compaction of acceptable fill material likely to be required;
5. Drainage: installation of SuDS measures;
6. Fencing & Kerbs: install precast concrete kerbs, precast dropped kerbs, tactile paving, and boundary fencing;
7. Pavement: installation of 804 subbase with asphalt paving to access road, and installation of permeable pavement/porous asphalt to parking area, permeable footways to be constructed;
8. Landscaping: top soiling and planting; and
9. Ancillary Works: install public lighting columns at road crossings if required, road signage, access control, road markings, colour contrast surfacing, trailhead amenities (benches, bins, etc.), bollards, bike stands and bike storage lockers.



5. HEALTH AND SAFETY

5.1 Safety During Construction - Traffic Management

The construction of the proposed facility is to be executed using appropriate traffic management procedures. The PSCS appointed to the project will be required to develop a traffic management plan to ensure access and egress for construction activities are managed in line with best practise. An independent Road Safety Audit shall be carried out on the Contractors traffic management plans. Swept path analysis has been carried out to ensure that larger vehicles will be able to navigate the site.

5.2 Safety During Construction - Earthworks

The risk of burial in earthfalls has been identified in relation to the works. The PSCS will be required to put in place safe systems for the management and control of these risks in compliance with the current Construction Regulations and best practice guidance.

5.3 Safety During Construction - Underground Services

Underground services haven't been identified at the trailhead location. However, the PSCS shall verify the location of all services on site and liaise with the relevant service owner to ensure the service is adequately protected from damage during the works.

5.4 Safety In Use - Inspection and Maintenance

The as built records and Maintenance Manual shall highlight the requirements for inspection and maintenance.

5.5 Safety In Use - Traffic Management

The proposed trailhead will integrate multiple safety measure to ensure effective traffic management. The car parking area will feature colour contrast surfacing, signage, tactile paving and road markings to highlight pedestrian and cycle areas, as well as any pedestrian crossing points. One access point to the existing towpath will be established to allow pedestrians and cyclists to enter the trailhead without conflicting with vehicular traffic. In addition, the trailhead will include a dedicated bike parking area to improve cyclist comfort and safety. This area will provide standard and accessible bike parking spaces, as well as secure bike storage lockers, ensuring that bicycles are safely accommodated without interfering with vehicle or pedestrian movements.

The trailhead will include a wide central vehicle aisle and parking spaces to facilitate easier vehicle manoeuvrability and to enhance overall safety. Reverse parking will be enforced to improve visibility for pedestrians. The proposed entrance road has been artificially narrowed and will feature speed control measures, such as buildouts, to reduce vehicle speeds and to guide all users safely from the tie-in location to the trailhead. Road markings and colour contrast surfacing on approaches to the shared space access road will also be provided to highlight this area to all trailhead users. A vehicle turning island with line-marked overrun area has been provided to aid vehicle navigation of the trailhead entrance/exit. The access road and turning area have both undergone swept path analysis for a large van which is the largest vehicle envisaged at the trailhead.



In-line with the recommendations of TII standard GE-STY-01024, a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been carried out for the scheme at the preliminary design stage by an independent Road Safety Audit team. All recommendations have been incorporated into the design where possible. A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit shall be carried out at the detailed design stage in advance of construction.



6. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report and its accompanying documents is to demonstrate the proposals suitability and conformity to the planning policy that is in place, while also highlighting the steps to be taken to ensure that the works are carried out with the highest concern for both safety and environmental considerations.

The proposed trailhead forms an important aspect of the programme of continuous improvement works on the Barrow Blueway project. A comprehensive greenway and blueway network is being developed in Kildare and Carlow at present, and the Athy Trailhead will become an important access point for users of all ability to this network. The trailhead is also expected to bring significant benefits to the local area given the recreational amenities proposed and its location in the centre of Athy.

Overall, the proposals set out are considered to be in agreement with the development plans and objectives set out by Kildare County Council and the relevant townlands.



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