

I welcome the National Transport Authority's planned Greenway (K17) which proposes to utilise the old railway line from Naas to Baltinglass. This will greatly benefit locals and tourists in terms of cycling & walking. It will provide greater connectivity between rural areas and the more urbanised towns where public transport is available. Moreover, it will make the many adjoining or close by archaeological/historic sites, areas of great natural beauty and rich biodiversity more accessible to all.

In my own area of Coughlanstown\Harristown there is a myriad of interesting and largely unknown sites of archaeological and historical interest which have the potential to reveal a fascinating story of the past. St James' Well and Abbey at Coughlanstown is reputed to have an association with the pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostella. A letter of 1786 by the parish priest of Ballymore Eustace, Fr Devoy, to the Archbishop of Dublin states that the local tradition was that the monastery at Coughlanstown was founded by monks from Santiago de Compostella and that they gave the name to the nearby townland of Yago. An article written for History Ireland by the Damien McLellan, lists St James' Well & Abbey as a possible stop for Irish pilgrims travelling from St James' Gate, Dublin to Waterford. While a recently discovered artefact bearing the scallop shell symbol of St James will no doubt shine further light on this connection. I am of the opinion that the development of a historic pilgrim route to link up with the Naas Baltinglass Greenway could offer another interesting facet. The Cistercian Abbey, Baltinglass (founded 1148) would provide further connection with this theme.

The natural beauty of the Coughlanstown\Harristown area will provide another worthy feature for the Greenway. Indeed an article detailing the opening of the Naas to Baltinglass railway line from the Kildare Observer of June 13 1885 succinctly describes the area as one of great beauty.

“The occasion was one of very considerable interest, not merely from a purely commercial point of view, but because the extension is one that opens up a most, beautiful and picturesque countryside”. (The Kildare Observer June 13, 1885)

Further reference is made to the beautiful and unique five arched railway bridge which crosses the Liffey at Harristown.

“The Liffey bridge is not only the most elaborate of all but it is the most remarkable from the fact that it happens to cross the river at a point of the most singularly picturesque beauty, and one that to travellers is certain to be the centre of a great amount of admiration”

This area has changed very little in the 137 years since these words were written and I would like to think that we will continue to protect this area in terms of aesthetics and biodiversity for generations to come.

I would greatly welcome the commitment of KCC to the development of the Naas to Baltinglass Old Railway Greenway. In order to facilitate this development, I would urge you to include a policy within the County Development Plan 2023-2029 to protect all adjoining & surrounding areas along this route. This project will bring so much to the entire county.

Your sincerely,

Tara Lawlor