



ENVIRONMENTAL BALANCE IN DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE SOUTH KERRY GREENWAY, CO. KERRY

VOLUME 2 – MAIN EIAR/EIS

CHAPTER 6 - POLICY

AUGUST 2018

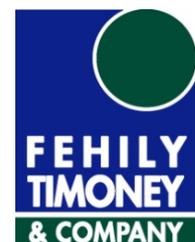


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6 POLICY

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter of the EIAR/EIS demonstrates how European, Regional, National and Local planning and development policies and legislation underpin, support and guide the design and development of the proposed South Kerry Greenway.

The Irish Planning Policy system is set within a hierarchical planning and development structure, as outlined in Figure 6.1. Local planning policies are informed by EU Directives, Planning Legislation, Ministerial Guidelines, Government Policy and Capital programmes.

The National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 (NPF) acts as a coherent national framework and is supported by a robust tiering of regional and local level development plans within an overall hierarchy–outlined in Figure 6-2. As detail is developed down through the hierarchy, there is further opportunity for focussed assessment as required to inform decision making at a local level which is not appropriate or feasible to be undertaken at the national scale.

This Chapter of the EIAR/EIS is set out in the context of this planning and development policy hierarchy within which the proposed South Kerry Greenway development is set.

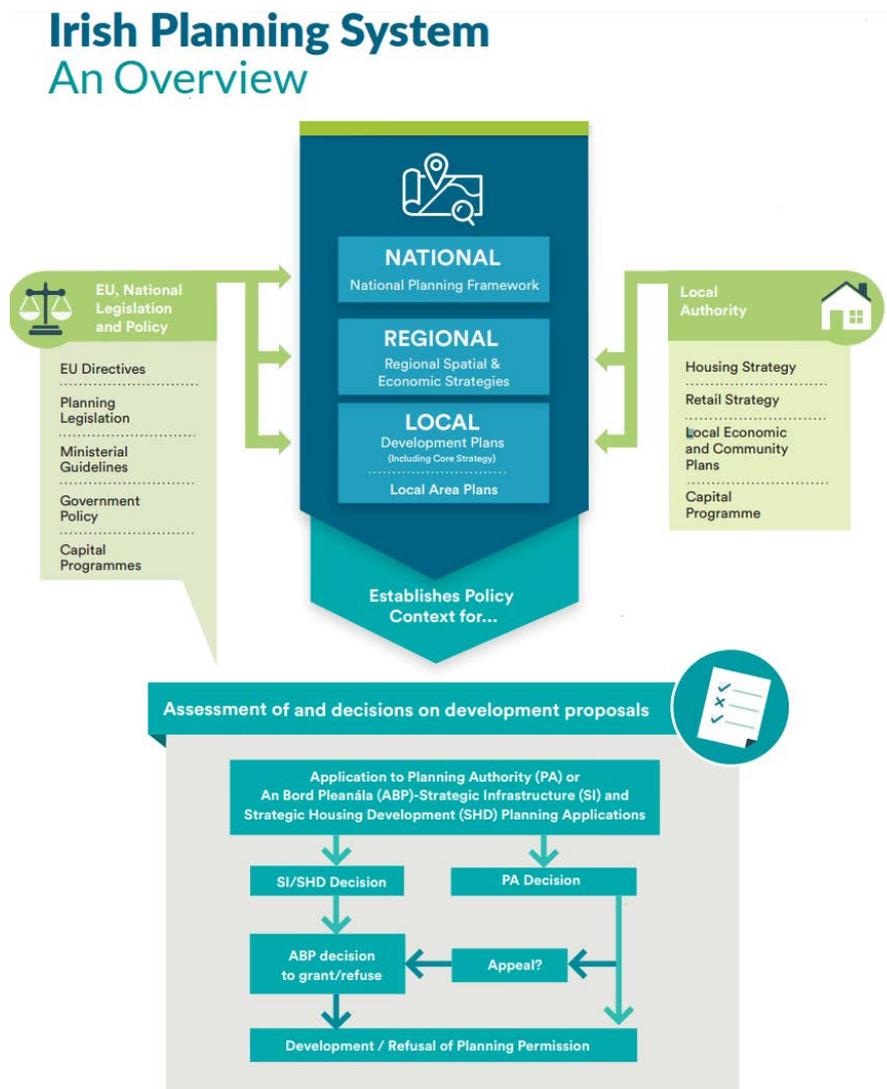


Figure 6-1: Irish Planning System – An Overview Extract from the National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040

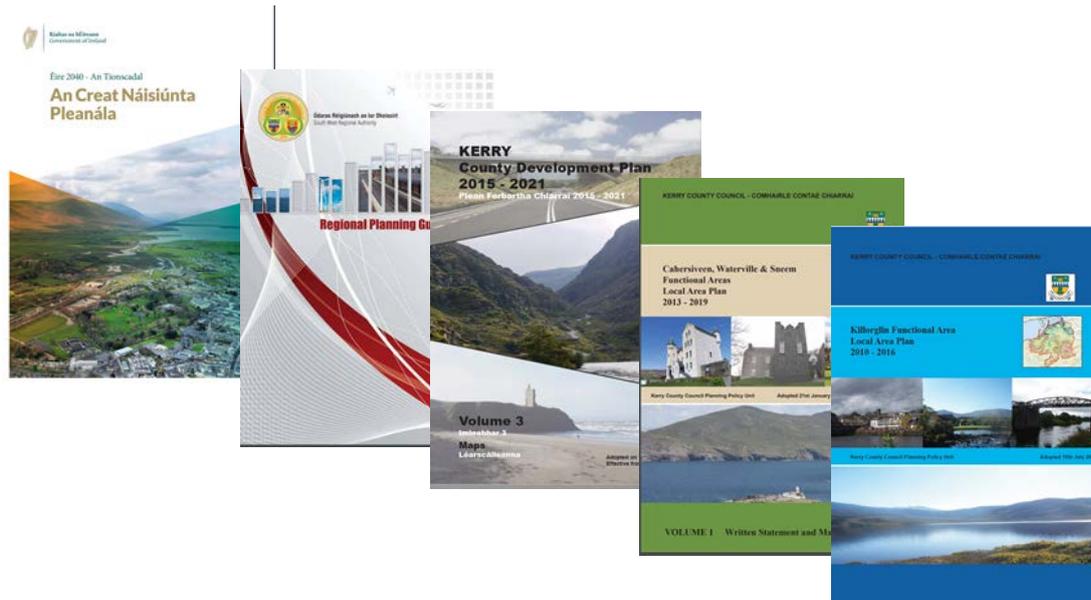


Figure 6-2: The hierarchy of National, Regional and Local planning policy documents supporting the proposed development

The proposed greenway is predominantly aimed at tourists and local users. The greenway will provide direct economic benefits to the local community not only during the construction period but also during the operational phase, through payments to the local landowners for greenway maintenance, by attracting increased numbers of tourists who will avail of local accommodation and refreshment facilities and by creating opportunities for additional smaller niche businesses ancillary to the proposed greenway for example in the agri-tourism and agri-food areas and thus stimulate the local economy.

In addition to this, there is the potential of the proposed development to act as a catalyst for the development of a marketable local identity (akin to the Dingle Peninsula), by establishing and promoting a unique sense of place for the local community and the local area. It could become the fulcrum of a place making brand identity which could boost both the local community and the local economy. The South Kerry Greenway facility will also support the promotion of cycling and healthy exercise among the local community and tourist users.

In this context particular consideration is given to tourism, economic and infrastructural policies and objectives within this chapter of the EIAR / EIS.

Chapter Summary

As can be seen from the detail presented below, this chapter concludes that the proposed development will meet the objectives of and is supported by European, National, Regional and Local policies which reflect the predominant need for this development including:

- Promote tourism through natural based activities – walking / cycling.
- Enhance amenities and heritage
- Deliver balanced growth throughout all regions, & support rural job creation
- Encourage rural diversification. (new sustainable tourism initiatives).
- RD-31 “support the establishment of a network of cycleways and walkways within the county including Glenbeigh to Renard” (Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021)
- Provide a sustainable tourism product with potential to create critical mass necessary to economically regenerate South Kerry.
- Capitalising on local landscape assets provides opportunities for rural diversification:

- ES-28: “support the provision of on-farm tourism enterprises such as the renovation of farm buildings for tourism purposes, walking, cycling, angling, pony trekking and bird watching” (Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021)
- T-60 “promote and facilitate the sustainable development of rural tourism such as open farms, on farm craft villages and visitor centres where these are not detrimental to the character, biodiversity, scenic value and rural amenity of the surrounding area....” (Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021)
- Ensure environment & recreation amenities are developed in a sustainable manner.

The proposed development meets the needs and objectives of these policies as presented below.

6.2 EU Directives and Policy

6.2.1 [Blueprint for an EU Cycling Strategy Draft Version \(March 2017\)](#)

The *Blueprint for an EU Cycling Strategy Draft Version (March 2017)* sets out a key campaign mission:

“Encouraging more people to cycle more often’ across the EU has the potential to unlock socio-economic benefits worth billions of Euros. Stakeholders from diverse backgrounds have therefore joined forces to develop a blueprint for an EU Cycling Strategy which will recommend objectives and define actions falling within EU competence. Published at Velo-city 2017 conference in June it will then be submitted to the European Commission as a new inspiration for action.”

The Draft Blueprint sets out suggestions for investment levels in infrastructure and promotional measures at EU, Regional, Regional and Local Level.

At EU level the Draft Blueprint sets out that EU Funds provide a unique opportunity to boost cycling by providing additional resources for direct and indirect cycling-related measures. To use this opportunity, cycling needs to be treated on an equal footing with other modes of transport:

- Cycling should be streamlined into all relevant EU funding streams. This requires a close and regular coordination between all the responsible DGS within the commission and the executive agencies. 10% of the EU’s transport budget should be invested in cycling measures.
- The financial means available for cycling measures through the cohesion policy should be further increased during the next multiannual financial framework, and regions and cities should be encouraged by the commission to use them. The use of these means could be made more efficient by developing European guidelines for cycling measures that include best practices, and that regions and cities can use when implementing cycling measures co-funded by the EU.
- The connecting Europe facility (CEF) should fully integrate the Eurovelo network into the trans-European transport network (TEN-T).
- The transport part of the horizon 2020 programme should move from researching funding that is focused on developing new forms of cars to an approach that looks at the mobility system as a whole, and includes (electric) cycling as an innovative form of transport and an integral part of the smart cities of the future. Cycling measures should be incorporated in all relevant land-based transport projects co-funded by the EU.

At National level the Draft Blueprint advocates that:

- When drafting operational programmes for the EU cohesion and rural development funds, national and regional administrations should ensure that cycling projects are eligible to receive an adequate share of funding from the **transport and tourism-related parts of the programmes**.
- Cycling strategies should be adopted at the national and regional level and include concrete provisions on adequate funding levels for infrastructure and promotion measures

Lastly at Regional and National level the Draft Blueprint advocates that:

- Administrations should make sure that they have the capacity to use available funding for cycling from the national and the EU level, meaning that there should be enough staff working on this topic and that staff should have adequate knowledge about all funding opportunities.
- Regional and local authorities should use adequate levels of own resources to co-finance investments and maintenance of cycling projects to reach the target investment levels stated above.

6.2.2 [Give Cycling a Push - PRESTO Cycling Policy Guide Infrastructure](#)

PRESTO (Promoting Cycling for Everyone as a Daily Transport Mode)ⁱ is a project of the EU's intelligent Energy – Europe Programme granted by the Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI). In February 2010 PRESTO published policy guidance on cycling infrastructure entitled *Give Cycling a Push – PRESTO Cycling Policy Guide Infrastructure*ⁱⁱ.

The European Parliament delegates the creation of cycling policies to individual member States.

Guidance associated with PRESTO notes that utility routes and recreational routes have a different set of priorities. These are set out in table 6.1 hereunder, it should be noted in the context of the proposed development recreational cycle network priorities are the most pertinent.

Table 6-6-1: Priorities for Utility and Recreation Cycle Routes

Order	Utility Cycle Network	Recreational Cycle Network
1	Safety	Safety
2	Directness	Attractiveness
3	Cohesion	Cohesion
4	Comfort	Comfort
5	Attractiveness	Directness

6.3 National Policy and Guidance

6.3.1 [Project Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework](#)

As a strategic development framework, Project Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework, demonstrates an approach that joins up ambition for improvement across the different areas of our lives, bringing the various government departments, agencies, State owned enterprises and local authorities together behind a shared set of strategic objectives for rural, regional and urban development.

“The National Planning Framework, is a planning framework to guide development and investment over the coming years. It does not provide every detail for every part of the country; rather it empowers each region to lead in the planning and development of their communities, containing a set of national objectives and key principles from which more detailed and refined plans will follow.”

The Framework sets out the key goals and objectives for the State, and central to this framework is the theme of *Planning and Investment to Support Rural Job Creation* (Section 5.4). In particular, this Section notes that:

“The development of greenways, blueways and peatways offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland. The development of a strategic national network of these trails is a priority and will support the development of rural communities and job creation in the rural economy, as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity.”

The NPF is supported by a series of National Strategic Outcomes which the Framework seeks to deliver. The most pertinent Outcomes in the context of the proposed development are as follows:

National Strategic Outcome 3: Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities

“A strong start has also been made in the development of a national long-distance Greenway/ Blueway Network. Such a network, including rural walking, cycling and water-based recreation routes, as well as ‘peatways’, has demonstrated major potential to bring new life to regional and rural locations through the “win-win” scenario of increased tourism activity and healthier travel.

Developing this network further will diversify our rural economy by embracing the potential for a major expansion in the demand for activity based tourism.”

National Strategic Outcome 7: Enhanced Amenities and Heritage

“Attractive places include a combination of factors, including vitality and diversity of uses, ease of access to amenities and services supported by integrated transport systems and green modes of movement such as pedestrian and cycling facilities. Appealing places are also defined by their character, heritage and sense of community. This includes attractive buildings and street layouts, civic spaces and parks and regeneration of older areas and making places feel safe through active use and design.”

A series of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) were developed to set the context for regional and local planning policy in Ireland. In the context of the proposed development, the following NPOs are considered the most pertinent:

Policy Objective	Description
National Policy Objective 17	Enhance, integrate and protect the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive use now and for future generations.
National Policy Objective 18a	To support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.
National Policy Objective 21	Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.
National Policy Objective 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.

Other relevant NPOs are as follows:

Policy Objective	Description
National Policy Objective 26	Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, though integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.
National Policy Objective 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.
National Policy Objective 28	Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.
National Policy Objective 46	In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, enhanced transport connectivity between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to include cross-border road and rail, cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways, greenways and peatways.
National Policy Objective 49	Support the coordination and promotion of all-island tourism initiatives through continued co-operation between the relevant tourism agencies and Tourism Ireland.
National Policy Objective 64	Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollutions in our urban and rural areas through the integrated land use

Therefore, as can be ascertained from the above referenced material, the proposed greenway development is consistent with and will deliver on key National policies set out in the current Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework.

6.3.2 Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2018-2027

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP) came into effect in February 2018. In tandem with the National Planning Framework (NPF), this document seeks to drive Ireland's long term economic, environmental and social progress over the next decade.

The key role of the NDP is to set out the updated configuration for public capital investment over the next 10 years in order to achieve the National Strategic Outcomes as set out within the NPF.

National Strategic Outcome 3, Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities, sets out for the full participation of rural communities in the strategic development of the State, as envisaged in the NPF. The NDP outlines a number of key rural initiatives that set out to revitalise rural areas and to enhance economic growth. In particular, the Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme is regarded as the most applicable scheme to the proposed greenway project:

“The Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme supports the development and necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of recreational infrastructure throughout Ireland in light of the huge potential to develop the economic value of Activity and Recreational Tourism by Local Authorities, State Agencies and communities. Initiatives funded covered a broad spectrum, and range from walking trails to greenways and blueways.”

Investment in activity based tourism, including greenways, is recognised as a priority over the duration of the NDP lifespan, which will comprise of measures to support further regional investment in existing experience brands, including the Wild Atlantic Way.

Chapter 5: National Strategic Outcomes and Public Investment Priorities, summarises the status of greenway strategies within the State, anticipating the ongoing development of greenways over the duration of the NDP.

The National Development Plan reiterates the core national strategic objectives and outcomes of the National Planning Framework. The NDP earmarks future investment in greenways and recreational based tourism across the State over the duration of its lifespan.

6.3.3 Smarter Travel: A New Transport policy for Ireland 2009-2020

The Department of Transport produced a transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009 – 2020. This policy document entitled *Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future*ⁱⁱⁱ, sets out a broad vision for the future of transportation in Ireland and establishes associated objectives and targets. The main objectives are to reduce dependency on car travel and long-distance commuting, increase public transport modal share and encourage walking and cycling in line with national policies such as the National Cycle Policy Framework. This policy document sets out key goals, targets and actions, by 2020 and include the following:

- *“Our vision is to create a **strong cycling culture in Ireland** and ensure that all cities, towns, villages and **rural areas will be cycling friendly**. Cycling will be a normal way to get about, especially for short trips. Next to walking, cycling will be the most popular means of getting to school, both for primary and secondary school.”*

It is considered that the proposed greenway development will deliver on the vision and goals of this national policy document by creating a cycle friendly rural environment for both tourists and locals alike.

6.3.4 The National Cycle Policy Framework, 2009 - 2020

The National Cycle Policy Framework^{iv} 2009 – 2020 aims to provide a common, integrated basis for the long-term development and implementation of cycling policies among various sectors and levels of government.

The National Cycle Policy Framework outlines key objective which are relevant to the creation of cycle friendly environments including greenways. These key objectives are outlined hereunder:

Objective	Description
Objective 1	<i>“Support the planning, development and design of towns and cities in a cycling and pedestrian friendly way.”</i>
Objective 3	<i>“Provide designated rural signed cycle networks providing especially for visitors and recreational cycling.”</i>
Objective 4	<i>“While the main target of the cycle tourism strategy is visitors-both overseas and domestic- the secondary target market is recreational cyclists. From the perspective of the National Cycle Policy Framework encouraging recreational cycling is a key element of creating a cycling culture in Ireland and recreational routes in and around urban areas, which, in turn link to rural areas are very important”.</i>
Objective 6	<i>‘Ensure that all cycling networks – both urban and rural – are signposted to an agreed standard’</i>

As can be ascertained from the above referenced material, the proposed greenway development will deliver on key objectives of The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009 – 2020.

6.3.5 Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways

The objective of the recently published Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenway Strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations, constructed to an appropriate standard, in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenway users.

With the support of the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport, Local Communities, Local Landowners Local Authorities and other state bodies the Strategy seeks to deliver:

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. 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;
4. Greenways that provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies, and
5. Greenways that are developed with all relevant stakeholders in line with an agreed code of practice.

The proposed South Kerry Greenway is a “*Regional Greenway*” as defined by the recently published **Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways** since it complies with each of the above five key objectives of the strategy as set out below:

Objective 1: The South Kerry Greenway may become regarded as part of a **Flagship route** because of its spectacular scenery, local facilities and its connection to other cycleways on the Iveragh Peninsula and County Kerry as part of the Strategic Greenway Network.

Objectives 2: As outlined in the EIAR, the scale of the proposed development and its unique location has significant potential to deliver an increase in **activity tourism** to the otherwise established and successful tourism county of Kerry, for the health benefit of overseas tourists, local tourists and the local community alike.

Objective 3: The proposed South Kerry Greenway will be a Regional Greenway which will be a “**Substantially Segregated**” Greenway for the “**Shared Use**” of pedestrians and people cycling and for a range of other users including vulnerable users and emergency responders.

Objective 4: The project has been developed following detailed consultation with the local community including the local development partnerships. As set out in this EIAR **a detailed economic study has been undertaken which highlights the potential to leverage the Greenway for the development of new businesses and the enhancement of existing business** initiatives, which will contribute to reversing the current trend of rural decline and local depopulation and it is hoped greatly improve the local economy.

Objective 5: The proposed South Kerry Greenway has been developed in **full-compliance with the design standards** referred to in the Strategy and following full and detailed consultation with local community and landowners.

6.4 Regional Policy

6.4.1 Regional Planning Policy

6.4.1.1 *South West Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022*

The current South West Regional Planning Guidelines came into effect on 15 June 2010^v. These Guidelines formulate public policy for the functional administrative areas of Kerry County Council, Cork County Council and Cork City Council. The RPGs set out a series of recommendations to local authorities, designed to strengthen integrated approaches to policy making and planning at local level, in line with regional and national planning frameworks.

Sustainable growth is a key theme of the Guidelines, relating to the development and strengthening of the regional economy; the quantum and location of future housing; environmental improvement and sustainable living with a high level of service integration, all within the context of heightened protection of the region's biodiversity.

As outlined in Section 1.3.40 of the South West Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022:

*"The unique quality and diversity of the South West region has the potential to further contribute to the overall quality of life and attractiveness of the south west as a location in which to settle or visit. Among such is the potential in the region to sustainably develop **significantly more walking and cycling routes**, yachting marines and other sporting, recreational, cultural and heritage facilities."*

Section 3.2.24 Rural Economy and Diversification of the Regional Planning Guidelines states that:

*"The traditional mainstays of rural employment have been in decline for some time. Mechanisation and technological advances have contributed significantly to this decline. There is a need for new **initiatives which will support rural diversification, innovation and enterprise development**:*

- *Facilitate innovative approaches to identify new products and markets to increase rural employment (in the existing sectors).*
- ***New sustainable tourism initiatives in appropriate locations.***

The relevant regional planning objectives in support of the proposed greenway development are set out hereunder.

Table 6-2: Extracts from the South West Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022

Strategic Recommendations	Description
Regional Planning Guidelines - RES-03 <i>Tourism</i>	It is an objective to protect existing tourism assets in the region and develop additional sustainable facilities for activity holidays, urban and rural tourism.
Regional Planning Guidelines RES-05 <i>Rural Diversification</i>	It is an objective to promote rural diversification through building local rural capacity by upskilling and making appropriate provision in development and local plans to foster local entrepreneurial activity and encouraging innovative and sustainable economic activity.
Regional Planning Guidelines - RSS-07 <i>Settlements in the Western Area</i>	It is an objective to strengthen the economic and tourism roles of the towns and villages and forge greater links to their surrounding hinterlands and to peripheral areas and improve accessibility to peripheral areas in a sustainable manner.
Regional Transport and Infrastructure Strategy - RTS-03 <i>Cycling and Walking</i>	It is an objective to encourage the development of strategies for walking and cycling that promote the goals and aspirations of Smarter Travel and the National Cycle Policy Framework.
REAS-07 Social and Community Infrastructure	It is an objective to encourage local authorities to protect and enhance public open space and recreational facilities in a sustainable manner and recognise the importance of protection of urban wildlife corridors and sites of nature conservation importance.

Therefore, as can be ascertained from the above referenced material, the proposed greenway development is considered consistent with and will deliver on key strategic objectives of the current South West Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines.

6.4.1.2 Southern Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

Arising from the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the Southern Regional Assembly has assumed a number of new functions. Chief among these responsibilities is the preparation of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region. The RSES, once adopted, will replace the function of the Regional Planning Guidelines at this tier in the hierarchy of planning policy.

The initial Issues Paper for the Southern Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy was issued for public consultation in November 2017. The consultation process completed on the 16th of February 2018.

The Southern Region consists of the administrative areas of Carlow, Cork, Clare, Kerry, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Wexford County Councils, Limerick City and County Council, Waterford City and County Council and Cork City Council. The region covers approximately 42% of the total land area of the country and had a total population of almost 1.6 million people at the time of the 2016 census.

The Southern Regional Assembly's vision for the development of the region is:

"To promote the Southern Region as an attractive, competitive and sustainable place to live, work and visit, a region of considerable opportunity for growth based on the quality of its cities, towns and rural areas, well developed physical and social infrastructure, a diverse modern economy and a pristine natural environment."

The Issues Paper has noted the significant contribution tourism makes to the region stating that:

“Tourism is a significant economic sector throughout our rural region. In 2014, over 4.6m overseas visitors came to counties in the Southern Region, 39% of the State total visitors. Overseas visitors generated €1.3bn in revenue in the Southern Region, 36% of total overseas visitor revenue generated in the State. Domestic tourism, growth and diversity in the sector across the region, which is within both the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East and Ireland’s Lakelands, provides significant potential for economic growth in diverse locations across the region.”

The Issues Paper outlines the objective to support rural communities and the Action Plan for Rural Development. The Paper also presents some *Key Questions for our Rural Region* in Section 4.3, pertinent to this scheme are:

- *How can the RSES support growth and diversity in rural economic sectors which are successfully embedded in our region, particularly agriculture, marine, forestry, tourism, energy and the green economy? What are the examples of other emerging sectors that will further drive the rural economy and what are infrastructure requirements that will assist their success?*
- *How can the RSES strengthen protection of the rural environment and rural resources in tandem with objectives for sustainable growth in the rural population and employment?*

Both of the above key questions will be addressed through the development of the proposed Greenway, with aspects of rural population, tourism and the economy explored in Chapter 7 Population, Human Health and Material Assets of this EIAR/EIS.

6.5 County and Local Policy

6.5.1 The Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan (KLECP) 2016-2021

The Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 -2021 (LECP) sits within Ireland’s Planning Policy Hierarchy, and is informed by a series of plans and strategies that are developed at European, National, Regional and a Local level. The LECP along with the Kerry County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 provides a strong and clear role for local government in economic and community development.

The formulation of the LECP was guided by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), a 19-member committee comprising of representatives from a broad range of sectors, including; social, community, environmental, agricultural and the local development sector in co-operation with the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee of Kerry County Council. The LECP is consistent with the Kerry County Development Plan Core Strategy and the South West Regional Planning Guidelines.

The purpose of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the sustainable economic and local community development of County Kerry from 2016 to 2021. The plan promotes a coordinated interagency approach comprising of Local Government, State Agencies, Community Sector, Local Development Groups and other bodies to tackling key economic and social concerns focusing on three key aspects:

1. Economic Development and Job Creation.
2. Quality of Life.
3. Community and Social Inclusion.

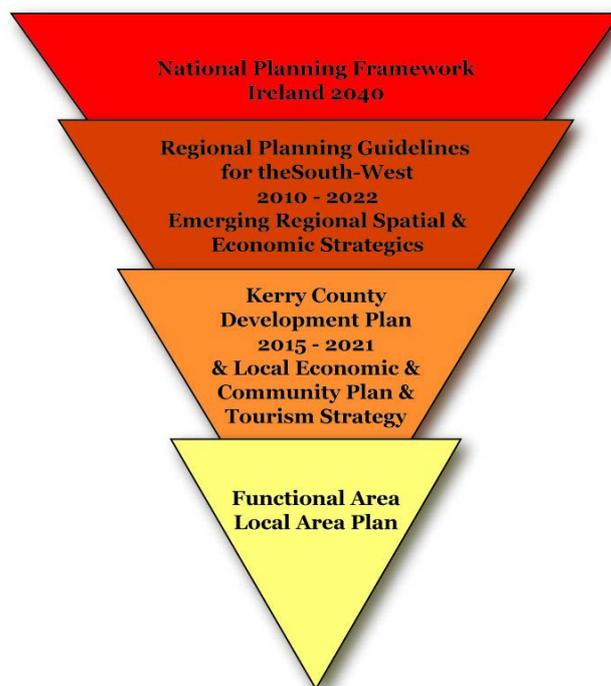


Figure 6-3: The relationship between Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021, Kerry Local Economic & Community Plan and, Kerry Tourism Strategy in the context of National, Regional and Local plans.

The KLECP sets out the key actions aimed to promotion and strengthening the economy and communities of Kerry into the future.

The plan promotes a coordinated interagency approach comprising of Local Government, State Agencies, Community Sector, Local Development Groups and other bodies to tackling key economic and social concerns focusing on three key socio-economic aspects:

1. *Economic Development and Job Creation - To promote a robust and diverse economy, supported by a well-developed education and training model, enabling a sustainable population and vibrant communities throughout the county.*
2. *Quality of Life - To promote a high quality of life, based around a clean natural environment, good quality local services, a strong sense of place and culture and meaningful participation in decision making.*
3. *Community and Social Inclusion - To promote social and economic inclusion and reduction of social inequalities, particularly targeting areas and communities in Kerry experiencing social disadvantage, marginalised groups or those at risk of exclusion.*

These socio-economic statements have assisted in the formation of a number of goals, objectives and actions. The goals, objectives and actions in supports of the proposed greenway are set out hereunder.

Goal	Objective	Action
1.3 Sustainably Maximise Growth Opportunities for Kerry	1.3.8 Actively promote the sustainable development of tourism in the county through the development and implementation of appropriate plans and strategies.	1.3.8.3 Undertake further work on route options and feasibility studies for potential development of Greenways in the county, in line with national Greenways guidelines.
		1.3.8.4 Further to proper planning and sustainable development support completion of existing Greenway development (South Kerry, North Kerry and Fenit Greenways) and investigate the feasibility of linking up the North and South Kerry Greenways.
2.5 Promote population health & well-being drawing on the social determinants of health (covering social aspects including education, environment, sport & physical activity, housing, economic status)	2.5.2 Promote an increase in physical activity levels across the county for all.	2.5.2.1 Promote and develop free recreation facilities as part of a drive to increase physical activity levels and opportunities in the county for all. This work programme to be carried out in cooperation with the Kerry County Tourism Strategy.
3.8 To ensure that appropriate needs based social and community infrastructure is prioritised in	3.8.8 Improve the liveability of communities through improved local facilities	3.8.8.1 Support the development of safe walking routes and other recreation opportunities in communities involving vulnerable road users in the design, included in which should be better signage and mapping facilities

Goal	Objective	Action
<p>creating sustainable communities and a sense of belonging for both new and more established areas throughout the county</p>		

Therefore, as can be ascertained from the above referenced material, the proposed greenway development is considered consistent with and will deliver on the goals and objectives of the current Local Economic and Community Strategy for the County.

6.5.2 [County Kerry Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2022](#)

The County Kerry Tourism and Action Plan was adopted by the elected Member of Kerry County Council in July 2016 following significant public consultation. This strategy sets out the priorities and investment plans for the County over a six year period.

The County is hugely dependant on tourism with one in five employed in this Sector at the present time. The visitor numbers are growing – 1.7 million visitors to the County, and this Plan demonstrates how vital it is that the County has a shared vision and a shared ambition to support this expanding industry and enterprise.

The Tourism Strategy works to the principles of the National Tourism Policy as outlined in ‘*People, Place & Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025*’ and forms an integral part of the County Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan and the Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021.

This plan recognises that physical infrastructure forms an essential part of Kerry’s tourism package. Infrastructure contributes to the future growth potential of the region, its competitiveness and has a direct bearing on the visitor’s holiday experience and whether or not the visitor will return and recommend the destination to others. It covers many areas including transportation links, product development, quality of the environment, and visitor facilities among others.

Developing and enhancing Kerry’s tourism infrastructure is a key objective of this strategy. A priority in achieving this objective includes upgrading visitor facilities at trail heads and linking up Greenways, walking and cycling trails. One of the key actions identified in this plan is the development of greenways throughout the County and in particular from Reenard to Glenbeigh, as set out in action 1.7 Greenway of this plan:

1.7.1 Develop a greenway, in a sustainable manner, from Renard to Glenbeigh. This action is to be investigated further at Municipal District Local Area Plan preparation level.

It is considered that the proposed greenway will deliver on the action of the current tourism strategy for the County.

6.5.3 [Kerry County Development Plan 2015 – 2021](#)

The Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021 was adopted by the elected member of Kerry County Council in February 2015 following significant public consultation. It sets out the strategic framework and land use planning policies and objectives for the County in the interest of the common good.

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 amended section 10 of the Principal Act by introducing the requirement of a Core Strategy that shall “ensure that the development objectives in the Development Plan are consistent, as far as possible, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy/National Planning Framework and Regional Planning Guidelines”.

Among the strategic aims of core strategy are:

- Set out a vision and blueprint for the **future sustainable development** of the County and maximise the counties potential in the context of the South West region.
- Support **sustainable tourism development** in Kerry and strengthen the contribution that tourism makes to the local communities, culture and economy of the County.
- Promote and support the integration of land use and transport and encourage modal shift to greater use of **sustainable modes of transport**, including public transport, **walking and cycling**.

As a mechanism to achieving these strategic aims, the County Development Plan encourages the sustainable development of walking and cycling routes, through the re-use of the existing former railway lines as 'greenways' for the purposes of promoting cycling and walking. The relevant policies and objectives in the core strategy in support of the proposed development are set out in hereunder. Of these, Objective T-27 is particularly pertinent.

Table 6-3: Extracts from the Kerry County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, Chapter 2 Core Strategy

Objective	Description
Objective CS-6 <i>Core Strategy</i>	Promote the integration of land use and transportation policy and to prioritise provision for sustainable cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport.

6.5.3.1 Tourism and Recreation Policy

The Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021 outlines that the tourism sector is one of the major growth areas of the national and local economy with tourism expenditure standing at €5.3 billion in 2009, representing 3.8% of Gross National Product. It is the sector of the economy which has significant potential for growth in the short and medium term. Kerry received 846,000 tourists in 2011. Ten percent of Kerry's labour force is employed in hotels and restaurants compared to a national average of 6%.

The County Development Plan provides a policy and objective framework for the development of a more diversified and sustainable tourism sector. It is also recognised that tourism policies are not 'stand-alone' but are supported through related policies such as transport, natural resources and settlement policies.

Pertinent to the proposed development are the following objectives set out in table 6.4.

Table 6-4: Extracts from the Kerry County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, Chapter 5 Tourism and Recreation

Objective	Description
Objective T-2	Maximise the potential of tourism as a 'pillar of economic growth' which will contribute to the balanced economic development of the County and the tourism industry in the South West Region.
Objective T-10 <i>Activity Tourism</i>	Support and facilitate, in conjunction with other bodies and agencies, the sustainable development of Kerry as a world class destination for sports and recreation related tourism.
Objective T-11 <i>Activity Tourism</i>	Promote and facilitate the sustainable development of outdoor activities, in appropriate locations, such as walking, rambling, cycling and adventure with specialised wellness centres and facilities in association with Tralee IT, Fáilte Ireland, National Trails Office, Irish Sports Council, Kerry Education and Training Board and other relevant national and County based departments and agencies.

Objective	Description
Objective T-17 <i>Activity Tourism</i>	Support the strategic objectives of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy (2006) Dept. of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs.
Objective T-20 <i>Amenity Tourism</i>	Facilitate the sustainable provision, at appropriate locations, of a network of quality pathways and associated car parks for walkers and cyclists and horse riders that are attractive and free from vehicle traffic.
Objective T-21 <i>Amenity Tourism</i>	Co-operate with National Trails Office (Management Standards), Fáilte Ireland, National Way Marked Way Advisory Committee, Coillte, the Heritage Council and other relevant bodies, in order to support the sustainable development, maintenance and enhancement of walking routes at appropriate locations throughout the County subject to compliance with the policies and objectives of this Plan particularly as they relate to the protection of the natural environment.
Objective T-23 <i>Cycleways</i>	Actively encourage and seek to facilitate appropriate and sustainable development of integrated cycle routes throughout the County in association with other agencies.
Objective T-26 <i>Cycleways</i>	Co-operate with the National Trails Office, Fáilte Ireland, National Way Marked Way Advisory Committee, Coillte, the Heritage Council and other relevant bodies, in order to support the sustainable development, maintenance and enhancement of trail development, throughout the County, both urban and rural in an environmentally sustainable way
Objective T-27 <i>Cycleways</i>	Promote and facilitate the sustainable re-use of existing former railways lines for amenity purposes, such as cycleways, walkways and other recreational activities in order to develop a network of 'green routes' throughout the County.
Objective T-28 <i>Cycleways</i>	Support the sustainable development of a National Cycle Network and the development of the EuroVelo project, in particular the Atlantic Coast Route where it passes through the County.

Section 5.5 *Cycling* of the Plan sets out the preferred location of cycling routes as follows:

“Routes should follow in order of preference: off-road tracks, quiet country roads and regional or national roads. In the case of regional and national routes, cycle ways should, where possible be segregated from carriageways and footpaths.”

The Plan further states in Section 5.5 that:

“There are significant stretches of lands that were formally in use as railway lines. To the extent that these are engineering works negotiating (at times) difficult topographical obstacle, they also constitute significant resources”.

The former railway lines have potential for use as corridors for amenity access, free from motorised traffic and even have potential for a revived railway use.

Cycling is growing in popularity both as a sport and as a means of transport. The National Cycle Policy Framework has a specific objective relating to the development of the National Cycle Framework to include rural recreational routes around urban areas and connecting with major urban areas. There are also initiatives at a European level that can be used to promote cycling tourism within the County.”

6.5.3.2 *Economic Development and Employment Policy*

The rural economy is an important component of Kerry's overall economy and the Council recognises the contribution of rural employment to the continued and sustainable growth of the County's economy. The County Development Plan in Section 4.8 states that:

“The provision of employment opportunities in rural areas close to rural communities not only supports economic growth but is critical in maintaining sustainable vibrant rural communities.

*In particular, there is considerable potential for the expansion of employment from traditional crafts, artisan food and drink products and **outdoor activities**.*"

6.5.3.3 Transport and Infrastructure Policy

The Government's sustainability development strategy, *Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland*, identifies the increased provision of cycle lanes and safer facilities for pedestrians as a key priority.

The Kerry County Development Plan under Section 7.2.3 *Pedestrians and Cyclists* contains key policies and objectives for the provision of routes which promote physical health and enhances tourism thus benefiting the local economy.

The Development Plan identifies the former railway lines in County Kerry as potential future 'greenways', where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000. These former railway lines are listed in Table 7.4 of the County Development Plan and identified in Table 6.5 hereunder.

Table 6-5: Extract from Table 7.4 of the Kerry County Development Plan, Former Railway Lines in County Kerry

From	To
Listowel	Ballybunion
Tralee	Abbeyfeale (Co. Limerick)
Tralee	Fenit
Tralee	Dingle
Camp	Castlegregory
Gortatlea	Castleisland
Farranfore	Cahersiveen to Renard Point
Headford	Kenmare

Pertinent Transport and Infrastructure Objectives set out in Chapter 7 of the Kerry County Development Plan are further set out in Table 6.6 hereunder.

Table 6-6: Extracts from the Kerry County Development Plan 2015 – 2021

Objective	Description
Objective RD-14 <i>Pedestrians & Cyclists</i>	Promote the sustainable development of walking, cycling, public transport and other sustainable forms of transport such as car-sharing and car-pooling, as an alternative to the private car, by facilitating and promoting the development of necessary infrastructure and by promoting initiatives contained within "Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020".
Objective RD-28 <i>Pedestrians & Cyclists</i>	Promote the sustainable development of walking, cycling, public transport and other sustainable forms of transport, as an alternative to the private car, by facilitating and promoting the sustainable development of necessary infrastructure at appropriate locations and by promoting initiatives contained within "Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020".
Objective RD-29 <i>Pedestrians & Cyclists</i>	Promote the sustainable development of the public footpath network, the walking and cycling routes and associated infrastructure in the County, including where possible the retrofitting of cycle and pedestrian routes into the existing urban road network and in the design of new roads.

Objective	Description
Objective RD-30 <i>Pedestrians & Cyclists</i>	Support the sustainable establishment of a network of 'Greenways' as outlined in Table 7.4 [of the Kerry County Development Plan 2015 – 2021] within the County and the adjoining counties where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
Objective RD-31 <i>Pedestrians & Cyclists</i>	Support the sustainable establishment of a network of interlinked cycle ways and walk ways within the County and the adjoining Counties, including; Tralee-Fenit, Lough Leane Loop, Glenbeigh - Reenard, Great Southern Trail, Ballyseedy - Blennerville - Spa and linking them where appropriate and possible; where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
Objective RD-33 <i>Pedestrians & Cyclists</i>	Protect all existing or historic rail lines and associated facilities from redevelopment for non-transport related purposes in order to protect their future use as an operational transportation network or for Green cycle/walking routes.

The proposed greenway aims to stimulate the local economy through increase tourist footfall and thus encouraging rural enterprise and farm diversification. The development plan facilitates and encourages rural enterprise and diversifications that may arise as a direct result of the proposed development.

Objective ES-28(13) supports the provision of farm-tourism enterprises such as the renovation of farm buildings for tourism purposes, walking, cycling, angling, pony trekking and bird watching, subject to compliance with normal planning criteria and development management standards.

As can be ascertained from the above referenced material, the proposed greenway development is consistent with and will deliver on the relevant policies and objectives of the current Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021.

6.5.4 Cahersiveen, Waterville & Sneem Functional Areas Local Area Plan 2013-2019

The Caherciveen, Waterville and Sneem FALAP 2013-2019, adopted by the elected members of Kerry County Council in January 2013, sets out a comprehensive local planning framework with clear policies and objectives in the interests of the common good.

This functional local area plan recognises the social and economic value of cycling and walking infrastructure, in particular the development of a green route along the former railway line between Glenbeigh and Caherciveen.

The Functional Area Local Area Plan further states that:

"It is proposed that a green route be developed along the old railway line between Killorglin and Caherciveen in accordance with the development objective INF8-38 of the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015. Kerry County Council and South Kerry Partnership are seeking to promote the utilisation of the old railway line as a Greenway/route.

Subject to strategic environmental assessment, at project level, this green route could facilitate recreational activities such as walking, cycling and nature observation. This would provide a valuable amenity resources for the area with some spectacular sea and mountain views and would constitute an additional tourist attraction in the Caherciveen area."

Kerry County Council seeks to utilise the old railway line as a "Greenway route" and this is supported by objective set out in Table 6-7 hereunder.

Table 6-7: Extracts from the Caherciveen, Waterville and Sneem Functional Areas Local Area Plan 2013-2019

Objective	Description
Ru-AT-1	Encourage the development of walking routes within the plan area and associated car parking facilities at appropriate locations so as to facilitate sustainable outdoor recreational activities in the plan area.
Ru-AT-4	Facilitate the development of a 'green route' in a sustainable manner along the route of the dismantled railway line. This green route could be used, where appropriate, for recreational activities such as walking, cycling and nature observation.
Ru-AT-5	Facilitate the sustainable extension and diversification of tourist facilities
Ru-AT-7	Protect from inappropriate development the protected views and prospects in the plan area as identified in figure 5.
Ru-EE-1	Facilitate sustainable diversification of the rural economy

It is considered that the proposed greenway will deliver on key objectives of the current local area plan in the functional area of Cahersiveen, Sneem and Waterville.

6.5.5 [Killorglin Functional Areas Local Area Plan 2010-2016](#)

The Killorglin FA LAP 2010-2016, adopted by the elected members of Kerry County Council in July 2010, sets out the land use planning policy for the settlements of Killorglin, Glenbeigh and their surrounding rural hinterlands. The latter section of the proposed greenway development is governed by this local area plan.

This local area plan supports the development of a green route along the dismantled railway line in accordance with development objective T-27 of the Kerry County Development Plan (2015-2021). It recognises that, subject to Habitats Directive Assessment at project level, the green route could facilitate recreational activities such as walking, cycling and nature observation.

This plan also acknowledges that green routes have potential in providing a valuable amenity resource for the area with some spectacular sea and mountain views and would constitute an additional tourist attraction in the Killorglin and Glenbeigh area.

Objective	Description
OO-1	Provide an improved quality of life for all the citizens of the area by promoting the area's economic potential, protecting its natural and built environment and safeguarding its cultural heritage.
OO-3	Provide for balanced growth throughout the area by promoting the strengthening of rural communities and provide the infrastructure to facilitate job creation in these areas in a sustainable manner.
OO-4	Strengthen the town and villages throughout the area, improve the infrastructure provided, sustainably develop the critical mass necessary to maintain and expand the service provision within them, and make them more attractive places in which to live.
OO-27	Ensure that proposed cycleways, footpaths, tourist trails and amenity walkways in the vicinity of Natura 2000 sites shall be designed in an ecologically sensitive manner and shall be subject to Habitats Directive Assessment as required by legislation

Objective	Description
Ru-12	Encourage the development of walking routes within the plan area and associated car parking facilities at appropriate locations sustainable outdoor recreational activities in the plan area.
Ru-13	Encourage eco-tourism in the rural area in an environmentally sustainable manner.
Ru-18	Facilitate the development of a 'green route', in a sustainable manner, along the dismantled railway line between Farranfore Junction and Caherciveen. This green route could be used, where appropriate, for recreational activities such as walking, cycling and nature observation.

Therefore, as can be ascertained from the above referenced material, the proposed greenway development is consistent with and will deliver on the key objectives of the current local area plan in the functional area of Killorglin.

6.6 Other Supporting Plans and Guidance

The proposed development is consistent with non-statutory programmes, plans and guidance documents as set out hereunder.

6.6.1 [Rural Development Programme 2014-2020](#)

In May 2015 the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine adopted the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. Since then three amendments have been made to this programme with the most recent being adopted in October 2017. The Rural Development Programme recognises that tourism has been a central element in many local development projects. The programme notes that:

“Tourism plays a very significant role in the rural economy and continued support for a varied and innovative rural tourism sector is critical to the future development of rural communities in Ireland. Areas such as rural recreation, adventure tourism, food tourism, cultural and heritage initiatives, festivals, other events and destination management have all been identified as areas of significant potential that require investment in order to contribute to the continued development of the rural economy.”

The proposed greenway is anticipated to contribute significantly to the rural recreation and adventure tourism offering in County Kerry and the Southern Region.

6.6.2 [A Strategy for the Development of Irish Cycle Tourism \(2007\)](#)

A Strategy for the Development of Irish Cycle Tourism^{vi} was drawn up by Fáilte Ireland as a subset of the Fáilte Ireland Tourism Product Development Strategy within the NDP and in response to the decline in Irish cycle tourism. The strategy focuses on areas with high potential for holiday cycling and sets out measures on how to make these areas more appealing to both domestic and overseas tourists. The strategy also suggests a framework for the development of longer cycle routes. The initiative aims to develop, enhance and promote Irish cycle tourism in a sustainable and balanced manner while bringing economic benefits to rural communities in Ireland.

6.6.3 [Irish Trails Strategy \(2007\)](#)

The Irish Trails Strategy^{vii} is an initiative of The National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee (NWWAC) a sub-committee of the Irish Sports Council. The initiative is a response to changes in the trend and demands of the today's Irish society which has resulted in opportunities for the development of trails for communities and for the development of tourism which can provide economic sustainability to communities in rural Ireland.

The three main objectives of the strategy are to:

1. *To position Ireland in the top tier of European countries for availability of quality recreational trails, spread throughout the country;*
2. *To promote and facilitate the highest sustainable level of usage of the recreational trails among Irish people; and*
3. *To establish Ireland as a premier international tourism destination for the broad range of outdoor recreational activities associated with a diverse trail network.*

This broad strategy comprises a range of non-motorised recreational trail developments such as footpaths, multi-use tracks, both on road and off-road cycle routes, walkways, forestry tracks, utility corridors / former railway lines, waterways and portage routes.

6.6.4 A Guide for Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland (2012)

This planning guide drawn up by the National Trails Office offers information on considerations applicable when developing trails. It also provides information on the trail planning process and provides practical planning advice with the goal of helping trail advisors to create sustainable trails *“that will attract trail users, are acceptable to all landowners, funder and other stakeholders, have long term appeal and are manageable in the long term”*. This document does not provide construction details.

6.6.5 Fáilte Ireland South West Tourism Development Plan 2008-2010

The Fáilte Ireland South West Tourism Development Plan 2008-2010 states that that *“Cork/Kerry, as Ireland’s top tourism region, successfully attracts a balanced mix of domestic and overseas visitors and has a well-established tourism industry and tradition of hospitality.”*

The Fáilte Ireland Development Plan set out a future vision for tourism within the south west region through a series of strategic goals which address performance trends and competitive advantages as developed from detailed analysis and stakeholders’ objectives.

6.6.6 Skellig Coast Visitor Experience Development Plan (2016)

The international exposure of Skellig Michael has led to growing visitor numbers to the Skellig Coast. This increase in visitors presents challenges and opportunities for the area. The Fáilte Ireland *Skellig Coast Visitor Experience Development Plan* recognises the need for better delivery and promotion of the Skellig coast’s unique features.

The Skellig Coast in County Kerry – stretching from Kells to Castlecove on the Wild Atlantic Way – is famous for its journeys taking travellers to and from the ‘edge of the world’.

The development plan aims to motivate visitors to stay longer and spend more, extend the season, align brands and target markets, provide sustainable employment, while protecting the special environmental character of the region. The delivery of Greenway from Reenard to Glenbeigh is a catalyst project and important to the success of the plan.

‘The way forward for the Skellig Coast is through partnerships, connectivity of the products to experiences and a focus on getting the story to the customer – inspiring them to travel off-season, stay longer and enjoy the essence of the Skellig Coast.’

6.6.7 A Strategy for the Development of Irish Cycle Tourism - Conclusions Report (March 2007)

In March 2007 Fáilte Ireland commissioned the publication of A Strategy for the Development of Irish Cycle Tourism. This Strategy noted that there is a strong need to develop *Traffic-Free Routes and Greenways* in Ireland.

The Strategy states that:

“Cyclists particularly less experienced and young cyclists, like to be away from traffic whenever possible as this enables them to enjoy the sounds and sights of the countryside without the noise and other distractions of cycling in traffic.”

The strategy further states (2007:26) that:

“Disused railway lines are plentiful in Ireland and these can provide excellent greenways. Also, riverside paths and canal towpaths can provide excellent recreational facility. Strategic greenways will become tourist attractions in their own right, as is the case throughout Europe.”

6.7 Conclusion

In summary, the proposed South Kerry Greenway development is aligned with European Policy, is consistent with and will deliver on relevant National, Regional and Local policies and objectives set out in the following plans:

- Project Ireland 2040 - The National Planning Framework 2020-2040,
- Project Ireland 2040 - The National Development Plan 2018-2027,
- Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020,
- The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009 – 2020,
- South West Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022,
- Southern Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic strategy (RSES) Issues Paper,
- The Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021,
- The County Kerry Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2022,
- The Kerry County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 and,
- The Local Area Plans for the Functional Areas of Caherciveen, Waterville and Sneem and Killorglin area.

The proposed development also took cognisance of and is consistent with non-statutory programmes, plans and guidance documents outlined in this chapter.

6.8 References

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- ⁱⁱ PRESTO (February 2010), Give Cycling a push PRESTO Cycling Policy Guide Infrastructure, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/sites/iee-projects/files/projects/documents/presto_policy_guide_cycling_infrastructure_en.pdf
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<http://www.smartertravel.ie/content/smartertravel-policy-document>
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