

Donegal County Council



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS 2001

(as amended)

Nature and Extent of a proposed development in accordance with
Part VIII of the above regulations by Donegal County Council.

(Available for Public Inspection and Download)

N15 Lifford Active Travel Project

Part VIII Report

Donegal County Council
Central Technical Services
Lifford

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0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report relates to the proposed construction of new shared walking and cycling active travel facility for approximately 1.2km alongside the N15 National Road between Lifford and Castlefin.

Works will take place in the townlands of Townparks, Coneyburrow and Curraghlane in the Lifford-Stranorlar Municipal District of Co. Donegal.

This report provides a background to the proposed development, the nature and extent of the works being proposed and key features of the project.

The report is prepared in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background and Need for the Project

Donegal County Council is seeking to establish a new shared use pedestrian and cyclist facility adjacent to the existing N15 National Primary Road at Lifford, to promote active travel journeys from residential areas to key education, employment, commercial, recreational, retail and tourist destinations. The aim of the project is also to infill a deficit in active travel cycle infrastructure between the completed Lifford to Strabane Greenway and the Lifford to Castlefin Greenway which is currently under construction. This will be achieved by the reallocation of road space to the active travel users and the upgrade of existing facilities. This will provide a continuous linkage between the population centres of Lifford and Castlefin and surrounding environs to the wider Northwest Greenway Network (NWGN), thereby supporting and enhancing the achievement of the NWGN objectives and other National and Local strategic policies.

The purpose of developing a cross border network of greenways is to:

- Bring social, economic, and environmental well-being to all
- Construct significant stretches of greenway and cycling/walking routes
- Encourage more people to walk and cycle as part of their daily routine (non-commute)
- Invest in the wider economic and social infrastructure in the North West Region
- Adoption and compliance with policies such as Active Travel etc
- Improve safety for vulnerable road users and reduce their interaction with vehicular traffic

The location of the proposed project (refer to Fig 1.1 below) is from the urban environs of the N15 in Lifford starting at the Lifford Roundabout travelling west to the 60kmph speed limit on the outskirts of Lifford. It will join with the Lifford to Castlefin Greenway at a controlled crossing. The route is approximately 1.2 kilometres in length and comprises of a mainly urban setting with predominately residential and business land use with some dispersed agricultural areas.



Figure 1.1 – Aerial view of location

1.2 Project Specific Aims and Objectives

The existing road network (N15) in the urban environs of Lifford has limited or no continuous facilities for vulnerable road users to travel (and cross) safely with adequate and appropriate separation from vehicular traffic. Facilities that do exist are of inconsistent width, construction make up, condition and are not available as a shared use area for pedestrians and cyclists.

The lack of consistent facilities for vulnerable road users reduces social inclusion and limits the means of safer access to amenities within the urban areas of Lifford (and between Lifford and Castlefin and their surrounding rural communities). Investment in suitable facilities would play a strong role in improving living conditions in this area for vulnerable road users including people who suffer from mobility and sensory deprivation, connecting non-motorised users (NEMU's) to services, businesses, education, and work opportunities.

Transportation Policy T-P-11 of the County Development Plan outlines that the appropriate development of affordable, multi-modal transport solutions that offer communities and future generations real transport choices such as park and ride; pedestrian and cycling; bus and taxi services; and ancillary infrastructure should be provided.

As a National Primary route, the N15 between Lifford and Castlefin experiences significant volumes of traffic with a high number of HGV journeys. There have been several recorded instances of accidents involving pedestrians in collision with vehicles. A review of RSA’s Collision Statistics identifies three minor injury accidents in 2006, 2010 and 2011 involving pedestrians being in collision with a vehicle. There is one serious injury collision involving a pedestrian in 2012. These are depicted in Figure 1.2.1. Overall collision statistics are depicted in Figure 1.2.2 and table 1.2.1.

There is however anecdotal evidence to suggest that there have been further collisions on this stretch of road in addition to numerous near misses. In addition, many collisions (minor / no injury) involving pedestrians and cyclists remain unreported to Gardai. There are also unverified collisions between 2016 & 2023 including fatalities. More up to date figures are unavailable from the RSA statistics due to GDPR issues.

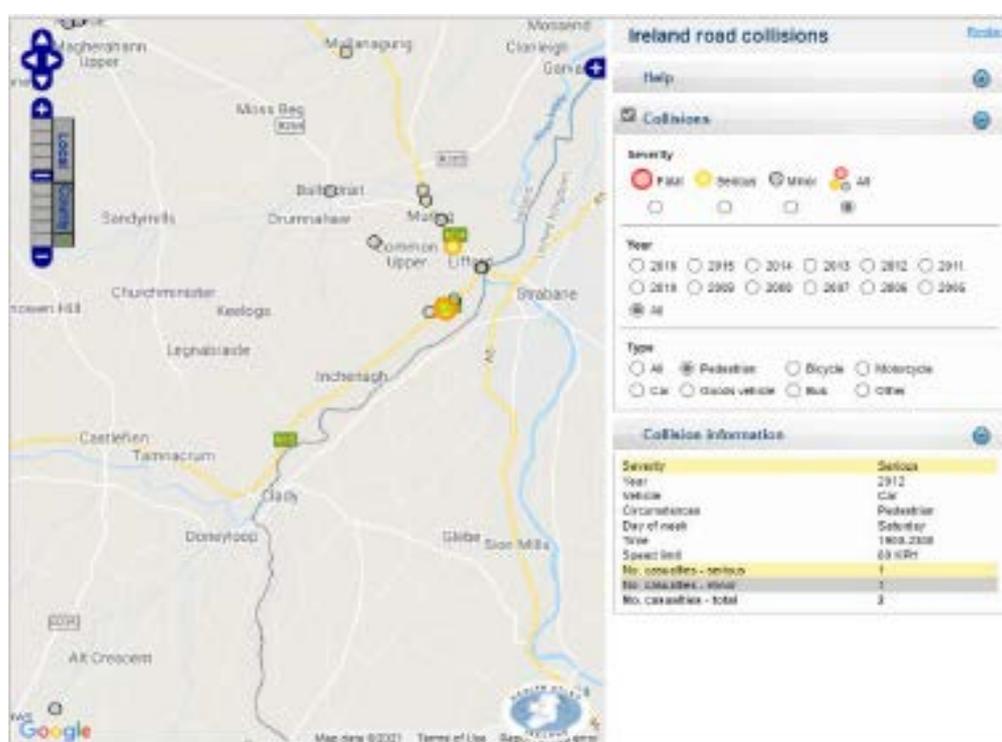


Figure 1.2.1 – Verified RSA Collision Statistics for Pedestrians between 2005 & 2016

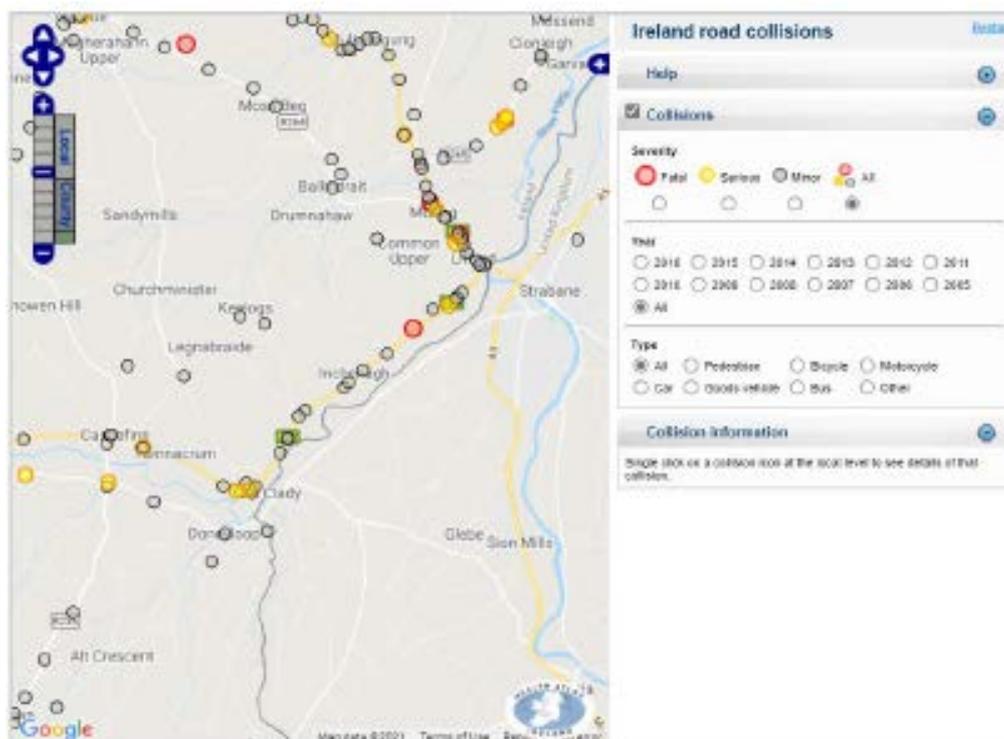


Figure 1.2.2 – Verified RSA Collision Statistics for all road users between 2005 & 2016

Year	Fatal	Serious	Minor
2005			2
2006		1	2
2007			1
2008			6
2009	1		
2010		1	4
2011			5
2012		1	2
2013			1
2014			1
2015		1	1
2016			

Table 1.2.1 - Verified RSA Collision Statistics for all road users between 2005 & 2016

As the Lifford to Strabane Greenway is recently completed as part of the Northwest Greenway Network, this project forms a natural extension of same to provide an infill link to the under-construction Lifford to Castelfin Greenway thus providing a broader scope for recreational and

commuter use in this region. The project specific objectives include those listed in paragraph 1.1 and below:

- To further develop a cross border network of greenways that link people with places locally,
- A reduction in CO2 emissions through reduced number of vehicle journeys
- Widespread behavioural and attitudinal change in all targeted beneficiaries.
- Provide increased active travel opportunities

2 PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS, GUIDELINES AND LEGISLATION

The following sections describe a non-exhaustive list of European, National, Regional and Local Policy Documents and Guidelines which contain clear policy objectives to promote and develop sustainable transport, active travel and cycling initiatives which directly support the development of cycling / walking infrastructure projects such as the development described in this report.

2.1 European Policy and Guidelines

‘Europe 2020 – A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth’ puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Sustainable transport strategy is set out under the “sustainable growth” priority, through flagship Initiative: “Resource efficient Europe”, which supports a shift towards a resource efficient and low carbon economy.

European Cyclists’ Federation’s EU Cycling Strategy: Recommendations for Delivering Green Growth and an Effective Mobility in 2030” is the result of a systematic review of all EU policies related to cycling. The central objectives of the plan are as follows:

- Cycling should be an equal partner in the mobility system
- Grow cycle use in the EU by 50% at an average in 2019/2020-2030
- Cut rates of cyclists killed and seriously injured by half (in km cycled) in 2019/2020-2030
- Raise EU investment in cycling to €3bn in 2021-27; and €6bn from 2028-34.

2.2 National Policy and Guidelines

2.2.1 National and Regional Policy Documents

Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework and National Development Plan 2018-2027

Project Ireland 2040 is the Irish Governments overarching policy initiative for the long-term planning of the State. It is informed by the Programme for a Partnership Government 2016, which recognises that economic and social progress go hand in hand and is made up of the “National Planning Framework to 2040” and the “National Development Plan 2018-2027”.

National Planning Framework to 2040

This is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country out to the year 2040. It seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes including the following which are relevant to the Lifford:

- *National Strategic Outcome 4: Sustainable Mobility* including an objective to “Develop a comprehensive network of safe cycling routes in metropolitan areas to address travel needs and to provide similar facilities in towns and villages where appropriate.”
- National Strategic Outcome 8: Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society including developing metropolitan cycling and walking networks and Greenways.
- National Policy Objective #46 includes the enhancement of “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 Development Plan 2018 – 2027

The National Development Plan 2018–2027 is the most recent in the series of Government Capital plans adopted since 1988 and identifies the strategic priorities for public capital investment for all sectors to meet the strategic outcomes of the National Planning Framework.

It includes as a “Priority Investment Action” the facilitation of Cross Border Sustainable Transport with the North West Greenway Network listed as a specific action. Investment in sustainable travel measures, including comprehensive Cycling and Walking Networks for metropolitan areas, and expanded Greenways is also identified as a priority in delivering a transition to a Low-Carbon society.

Dept. for Transport, Tourism and Sport’s: “Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways”

Developed following an extensive national consultation process, this Strategy outlines the Irish Government’s objective to assist in the strategic development of Greenways to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for Greenway users.

The Strategy lists a number of National and Regional Greenway projects, including the North West Greenway Network, identified as the initial priorities for development.

National Cycle Policy Framework 2009

Ireland’s first National Cycle Policy Framework was launched in April 2009. It outlines 19 specific objectives, and details the 109 individual but integrated actions, aimed at ensuring that a cycling culture is developed in Ireland to the extent that, by 2020, 10% of all journeys will be by bike. The NWGN supports the overall aims and objectives of the plan.

Regional Planning Guidelines (2010-2022)

The Guidelines acknowledge that current cycling infrastructure in border regions is currently limited but outlines an aim to encourage greater shift to cycling/ walking by the promotions of the strategies outlined in the Smarter Travel Policy and the National Cycling Policy Framework as referenced above.

The NWGN will support specific cycling and walking Policy INFP13 of the Guidelines which seeks to ‘Promote and support cycling and walking within the Region, particularly within urban centres.’

Tourism focused publications.

There are a number of tourism focused publications related to greenways, but it is considered that Lifford to Castlefin Greenway will focus primarily on the provision of local amenity and Modal shift rather than an overall tourism offering. However, the provision of a high-quality walking and cycling link between Lifford to Castlefin will provide potential connectivity to wider future rural Greenways with potential to provide enhanced tourism and recreational amenity.

Some of the tourism related publications are:

- People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025 (March 2015)
- Fáilte Ireland Strategy for Development of Irish Cycle Tourism 2007
- Fáilte Ireland Cycling and Activities Research, 2013
- Realising our Rural Potential – Action Plan for Rural Development (2017)

2.3 Local Policy Documents

Donegal County Council Development Plan 2018 – 2024:

Chapter 5 – Infrastructure, Section 5.1, Transportation:

- Transportation Objective T-O-13: To support the development of new walkways, walking routes, trains, greenways, and cycleways that maximise the potential for local, regional and all-island walking and cycling networks.
- Transportation Policy T-P-3: It is a policy of the Council to work in partnership with the Northern Ireland authorities to strengthen and improve existing cross border transportation links (including walking and cycling routes) to enable the targeted spatial and economic development of the North West City Region.
- Transportation Policy T-P-11: It is a policy of the Council to facilitate the appropriate development of affordable, multi-modal transport solutions that offer communities and future generations real transport choices such as park and ride; pedestrian and cycling; bus and taxi services; and ancillary infrastructure.

- Transportation Policy T-P-24: It is a policy of the Council to protect established/historic railway corridors throughout the County primarily for strategic infrastructure provision (such as rail/road projects) and secondly for recreational development. Along these corridors other uses shall not be considered. Where these corridors have already been compromised by development, adjacent lands which could provide opportunities to bypass such an impediment and reconnect these routes for amenity purposes (walking/cycling) shall be protected for this purpose. However, in all instances, the over-riding objective shall be the provision of strategic infrastructure.
- Transportation Policy T-P-35: It is a policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate joined up long distance walking and cycling routes and greenways for recreation and as alternatives to the car, particularly in rural areas, between settlements. Adequate car parking facilities shall be provided, where required, in association with any such developments.
- Transportation Policy T-P-36: It is a policy of the Council to support and facilitate the maintenance, enhancement and expansion of the National Cycle Network.

Chapter 9 – Tourism:

Section 9.1.2, Objectives:

- TOU-O-9: To support the development of new, and protect the functionality of existing, Greenways, walking and cycling routes as key components of an overall green tourism infrastructure and as standalone tourism products in their own right.

The Donegal Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 – 2022:

Volume 1, identifies ‘To develop Donegal as a Connected Place’ as a priority goal.

Volume 2, sets out the Action Areas of the Plan and notes the following actions:

- Section 1.9.1: To develop an integrated North West Greenway
- Section 1.9.3: To identify a programme of walkways, cycleways and Greenways within towns and their hinterland, to enhance town centre connectivity, support regeneration of town centres and improve health and recreation opportunities.
- Section 2.4.5: To develop an integrated North West Greenway (Walking, Trails, Cycling) as a key tourism project on a cross-border basis.
- Section 4.4.16: To maximise health and wellbeing outcomes for communities in the proposed development of the North West Greenway and other initiatives involving outdoor spaces.

2.4 Relevant Legislation

Statutory approval for the scheme will be in accordance with the procedures identified in Part 8 of:

- The Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- The Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

3 PROPOSED SCHEME

3.1 Description of Existing Infrastructure

These existing roads are active public highways. A brief overview of existing infrastructure and provision is as follows:

Carriageways:

All carriageways are fully paved with regulatory and warning signage throughout with existing road markings to the N15 and all side roads. The surface type of the roads vary between HRA, SMA and surface dressing. Residential / business accesses and agricultural entrances are predominantly asphaltic concrete and unbound stone respectively. The main N15 also has occasional grass verges or landscaped areas.

Footpaths:

The N15 is provided with footpaths to both sides within the urban area of Lifford terminating at the 60/100kph speed limit. These vary in width, condition, and make-up. There are no other existing pedestrian / cyclist facilities along the route with the exception of the two tie-ins to the Greenway Projects at both ends.

Crossing points:

There are 4 No. uncontrolled crossing facilities along the route at present.

Public Transport:

There are no formal bus stops on the N15 within the area under consideration. One informal bus stop is located at the layby at the entrance to the Conneyburrow Estate and the other informal bus stop is on the southern side beside Dalys shop opposite Lifford National School. No bus stop signage or bus shelters are currently provided at the locations.

Lighting:

There is existing public lighting within the urban area. Lighting is provided in the main by dedicated public lighting columns and by lighting standards co-located with electrical network poles.

Drainage:

Existing road drainage is provided along the extents of the N15 within the area of the proposed works via road gullies feeding into a public carrier drainage system with discharge into existing watercourses.

Landscaping:

Existing landscaping along the N15 and local connector access roads consists of grass verges of varying widths with some planting of trees and flower beds. The boundaries consist of timber fence, stock-proof fence, stone walls, mature hedging, open non-bounded areas and residential and commercial building lines.

3.2 Nature and Extent of the Proposed development

The works proposed within the site extents will generally consist of utilising the existing footpath area and the reallocation of road space to accommodate a separation area, active travel facility and comfort verge to provide a minimum 3m wide shared-use path, with a bituminous surface to provide a high-quality finish for cyclists and pedestrians.

The designs have been prepared with reference to relevant design standards and guidance documents, including the following:

Title	Published By
National Cycle Manual	National Transport Authority
Rural Road Link Design TII, DN-GEO-03031	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Cross Sections and Headroom TII, DN-GEO-03036	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Subways for Pedestrians and Pedal Cyclists TII, DN-GEO-03040	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Rural Cycleway Design (Offline) TII, DN-GEO-03047	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Geometric Design of Junctions TII, DN-GEO-03060	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets	Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport
TII Pedestrian Crossing Specification and Guidance	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
Local Transport Note 2/95 The Design of Pedestrian Crossings	Department for Transport (UK)
Traffic Signs Manual	Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport, latest editions of relevant chapters
Bus Stop Design Guide	Roads Service UK
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways	Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport

3.3 Principal Features of the project

The principle features of the proposed scheme are as follows:

Carriageways:

The existing southern kerb line of the existing N15 carriageway will remain unchanged however, the overall carriageway width will be narrowed to 6.3m with the crown line and northern kerb line being relocated to the south. The ghost island and vehicle stacking entering Conneyburrow estate will also be retained.

Footpaths:

The existing southern footway will be retained in its current form with the only exceptions being at proposed crossings where appropriate crossing treatments will be applied. On the northern side

of the N15, the space provided by the narrowing of the road will accommodate a minimum 3.0m wide shared use pedestrian and cyclist facility. Any existing footways will be tied into with appropriate vertical and horizontal transitions to ensure a smooth movement from one facility to the other with adequate signage and tactile paving alerting the users of the change in use.

Crossing points:

There are 4 No. new mainline crossing points of the N15 proposed as part of this project. One of these will be a controlled crossing with all appropriate Push Button Units, aspects, signage and associated road markings located between Lifford National School and Lifford Community Centre. All other crossings will be uncontrolled and will vary in position compared to the existing crossings to maximise both visibility and desire lines. These crossing points will serve as safe access to cross the existing N15 and for onward journeys and appropriate destination points along the scheme.

Crossings of side roads, private properties and commercial premises will be provided. Crossings of side roads (Local Roads), where possible, will be by way of a bend out facility for which the vehicular traffic will have the priority and will have sufficient stacking to access the N15. Consistent surface profile will be provided for pedestrians/cyclists and to highlight the crossing effectively to all users.

Crossing of accesses will be by way of raised table ramps such that the level at which the pedestrians and cyclists travel at does not change unduly or sharply.

Public Transport:

The existing dedicated bus stop will be retained on the northern side adjacent to the entrance to the Conneyburrow Estate.

Lighting:

Existing public lighting along the N15 will be assessed for current and proposed needs in terms of compliance with safety standards. New lighting will be provided with the appropriate approvals to all crossing locations that traverse the N15 for road safety reasons.

Drainage:

The existing carriageway drainage will be retained and utilised in full. The northern road side gullies will be relocated and tied into the existing drainage network. Any drainage requirements from the active travel facility itself will be also tied into the existing network.

It is not proposed to provide any culvert extensions or interfere with any streams etc as part of this project.

Road markings:

Appropriate road and cycleway markings in accordance with the Traffic Signs Manual will be used throughout the scheme where required to clearly identify carriageways, priorities and turning movements. Junction road markings will be upgraded to reflect the change in layout.

Signage:

Where required, existing mainline directional and route confirmatory signage will be relocated or altered to accommodate the required active travel width. New signage provided will consist of

directional, warning and regulatory signage to give a clear understanding of cycleway and road layouts, crossing points and prevailing speed limits and user expectations. The sizing of all signage will be appropriate to the target road users.

Landscaping:

Grass buffers will be provided to the segregated active travel facility and will be low maintenance. Some localised removal of hedgerows, small trees, vegetation and lower branches may be required along the route to provide adequate head room for the new facility.

As many existing mature trees as possible are to be retained.

Details of proposed planting/landscaping scheme will be developed and agreed with Donegal County Council Roads Department in conjunction with landowner agreements and accommodation works

Walls and Structures:

Where land take is required, the walls and boundaries will be set back and replaced on a like for like basis. It is not proposed to introduce any structures as part of this project.

Services:

Localised relocation of service poles or pillars may be required where these are located along the route of the proposed greenway. All works will be agreed and carried out in accordance with the requirements of the appropriate utility providers.

3.4 Drawings Provided

The following Part VIII drawings of the proposed development are included in **Appendix A (Available as a separate booklet)**

Ref	Title
Site Location	
23-105-002	Site Location
Site Location & Extents	
23-105-003	Site Location & Extents
Scheme Proposals – Existing Layout	
23-105-004-AB	Existing Layout – Sheet 1 of 3
23-105-004-CD	Existing Layout – Sheet 2 of 3
23-105-004-E	Existing Layout – Sheet 3 of 3
23-105-006	Existing Cross Sections
Scheme Proposals – General Layout Plans	
23-105-005-AB	Proposed Layout – Sheet 1 of 3
23-105-005-CD	Proposed Layout – Sheet 2 of 3
23-105-005-E	Proposed Layout – Sheet 3 of 3
23-105-007	Proposed Cross Sections

3.5 Road Safety Audit

As per TII publication TII-GE-STY-01024 (Road Safety Audit), a Stage 1 Safety Audit has been completed as part of the Preliminary Design Report which will be submitted to the TII for approval as part of the preliminary design process. The Road Safety Audit was carried out by a qualified team of auditors to look at all aspects of road safety. All appropriate recommendations made by the audit team will be accepted by the designer and will be incorporated into the design for construction. The audit team is completely independent of the design process. A Stage 2 Safety Audit will then be carried out prior to the project advancing to tender award / construction.

Furthermore, and in accordance with DMURS Standards, a Quality Audit was carried out on the project. This was carried out at the same time as the Stage 1 Safety Audit and the purpose of the Quality Audit aims to demonstrate that appropriate consideration has been given to all relevant aspects of the development in accordance with the guidance provided in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) produced by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in June 2019. All items identified in the Quality Audit will be incorporated in to the project at detailed design stage.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An EIA pre-screening exercise was undertaken to determine if EIA is required for the proposed development as set out in the mandatory and discretionary provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act) and as set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended (the Regulations). The proposed development consists of road construction works which do not exceed the threshold for Environmental Impact Assessment set out in Schedule 5 of the Regulations. In accordance with Article 120(1)(b)(i) of those regulations, based on environmental assessments carried out and considering the nature, size and location of the development it is concluded that an EIA for the proposed development is not required as there is no potential for significant effects, including cumulative effects, on the environment. The EIA pre-screening report is contained in **Appendix B**.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was undertaken (on behalf of the respective Authorities) in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). This was undertaken in the context of the entire route (including the N15 Lifford Active Travel Project scheme extents) between Lifford and Castlefin for the Lifford to Castlefin Greenway Project. The constraints study area along with a preliminary design was provided to an Environmental Consultant to inform the process. The Screening Report concluded the proposed development on its own, or in cumulation with other projects, will not have a significant effect on European sites. The AA Screening Report is contained in **Appendix C**.

5 CONSTRUCTION

The construction stage of the scheme is likely to take approximately 4 months. The construction will be carried out on a phased basis and landowner access will be maintained at all times. No road closures will be permitted during the construction phase. It is proposed that the road will remain open to traffic at all times during construction. The majority of the work will be undertaken within the northern footpath and carriageway thus maintaining two-way traffic or short one-way shuttle systems if needed where the required working area encroaches onto the carriageway. Appropriate traffic management will be employed to ensure traffic disruption is kept to a minimum during construction.

Kerb and gully works will require handling and lifting of large, prefabricated elements. The use of prefabricated units minimises the time required for works. The N15 provides suitable access for transportation of pre-cast elements to site.

6 CONCLUSION

The information contained in this report together with the drawings provided describe the nature, extents and principal features of the proposed works as required under Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

The background of the proposed project and its associated aims and objectives have been identified in section 1.0 of this report. It has been outlined in Section 2.0 that the proposed scheme is consistent with European, National, Regional and Local Policy objectives. The potential environmental impacts arising from the works have been considered and it is concluded that construction works associated with the scheme will have no significant impact on the receiving environment if constructed in accordance with the proposed design and good practice.

It is therefore concluded that the proposed development of a segregated shared-use active travel facility in the urban environs of Lifford is in line with proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the project is proposed.

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development would be situated, may be made in writing to The County Secretariat, Donegal County Council, Lifford, County Donegal, before **4.00pm on 29th November 2023** as outlined in the public notices.

APPENDIX A – PART VIII DRAWINGS

PART VIII DRAWINGS ARE CONTAINED IN SEPARATE BOOKLET

APPENDIX B – EIA PRE SCREENING REPORT



Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall

Donegal County Council

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS 2001
(as amended)

Environmental Impact Assessment Preliminary Examination

in accordance Article 120 of the above Regulations.
(available for inspection)

N15 Lifford Active Travel Project

Donegal County Council,
Central Technical Services Division
County House,
Lifford,
Co.Donegal.

February 2023

Stage 1.b – EIA Screening - Preliminary Examination

Case Ref:	N15 Lifford Active Travel Project		
Development Summary:	Donegal County Council proposes to provide a new shared use pedestrian and cyclist facility adjacent to the existing N15 National Primary Road in accordance with the Part 8 application. The project will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a shared use cycle / pedestrian facility on the northern side of the existing N15. • Reduction in mainline road width and reallocation of space to the shared facility within the scheme extents. • Provision of appropriate road crossings both controlled and uncontrolled within the scheme extents. • Provision of upgraded public street lighting within the scheme extents. • Provision of all appropriate drainage, earthworks, road marking and road signage for the project. • Minor localised realignment of the existing roads, accesses, and junctions to accommodate the new facility. • All other ancillary and tie in works to TII, DMURS and National Cycle Manual standards. 		
EXAMINATION			
	Yes /No/ Uncertain	Comment:	
Is the size of the development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?	No	Development is minimal in its sizes and impact.	
Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on a sensitive site or location?	No	Works will be confined to the footpath and northern carriageway realignment improvement in the extents proposed.	
Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, or result in emissions or pollutants?	No	Demolition waste generated will be disposed of to an authorised waste disposal facility. There will be no loss of materials or pollutants to waters or sensitive receptors during works as a result of separation.	
CONCLUSION			
Based on a preliminary examination of the nature, size or location of the development is there a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment?			
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment	EIAR not required		X
There is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment	Stage 2 Screening Determination Required		
	Schedule 7A information required from Applicant?	Yes	No X
There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment	EIAR Required		No

Case Officer: 

Date: 02/02/2023

APPENDIX C – APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment for a Greenway between Lifford and Castlefinn, Co. Donegal

To support the Appropriate Assessment process in line with the
requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive

Prepared by:

Earthy Matters
Environmental
Consultants
Glenvar,
Letterkenny,
Co. Donegal

Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment for a Greenway between Lifford and Castlefinn, Co. Donegal

In line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU
Habitats Directive



Prepared for:

Donegal County Council

Prepared by:

Earthy Matters Environmental Consultants

Glenvar, Kerrykeel,

Letterkenny

Co. Donegal

www.earthymatters.ie



March 2022

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Appendices including all maps.

Appendix 1a: Site location and aerial view.

Appendix 1b: Site layout plan and constraints study drawings.

Appendix 2a: Sections of the corridor route considered to have potential 'risk' to European sites.

Appendix 2b: Invasive species locations along the proposed route.

Appendix 2c: Site location vis-à-vis European Sites.

Appendix 2d: Site location vis-à-vis European Sites (SAC and SPA) in close proximity to the proposed Greenway.

Appendix 3: Site Synopsis and Conservation Objectives.

Appendix 4: Proposed project (Greenway) vis-à-vis location of conservation objectives.

Appendix 5: Photos of the site.

Appendix 6: Description of works

SUMMARY

Project title:	Construction of a Greenway between Lifford and Castlefinn.
Project proponent:	Donegal County Council
Project location:	Lifford to Castlefinn N15
Conclusion	<p>It has been scientifically and objectively concluded during the screening process that significant impacts on the following European Sites located within a 15 km radius and those beyond this radius but hydrologically connected are considered unlikely as a result of proposed development:</p> <p>River Finn SAC (IE002301)</p> <p>River Foyle and Tributaries SAC (UK0030320)</p> <p>Moneygall Bog SAC (UK0030211)</p> <p>Owenkillew River SAC (UK0030233)</p> <p>Fairy Water Bog SAC (UK0016611)</p> <p>Therefore, these European Sites can be screened out and it is deemed that it is not necessary to proceed to Appropriate Assessment.</p>

INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by Earthy Matters Environmental Consultants on behalf of Donegal County Council to determine the potential impacts, if any, of a Greenway between Lifford and Castlefinn, Co. Donegal, on European sites (European conservation designation).

This document is a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment and is in line with the requirement of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). As such, this report provides information required in order to establish whether or not the proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on any European site known in the vicinity as in the context of their conservation objectives and specifically on the habitats and species for which the European conservation site has been designated.

Context and stages of an Appropriate Assessment process

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives”.

The Habitats Directive, via the Appropriate Assessment process promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. First, the project should aim to avoid any negative impacts on European sites by identifying possible impacts early in the planning stage and designing the project to avoid such impacts. Second, mitigation measures should be applied, if necessary, during the process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If the project is still likely to result in adverse effects and no further practicable mitigation is possible, then it is rejected. If no alternative solutions are identified and the project is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effects.

Following the obligations under Article 6(3), the European Commission’s guidance promotes a four-stage process to complete the Appropriate Assessment and outlines the tests required at each stage. By taking the ecological impact assessment (in relation to the conservation objectives) in a step-by-step manner this report seeks to inform the screening process required as the first stage of the Appropriate Assessment procedure and also to provide full and detailed information as required for the second stage, namely Appropriate Assessment, should the competent authority decide that such an assessment is required.

Screening stage:

- Determination whether the project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the European site.
- Description of the project.
- Identification of European sites potentially affected.
- Identification and description of individual and cumulative impacts likely to result from the project.
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above on site integrity.
- Statement of Appropriate Assessment screening (as per Irish guidance): Exclusion of sites where no significant impacts are foreseen.

Methodology

This report includes the ecological impact assessment and testing required under the provisions of Article 6(3) by means of the first stage of Appropriate Assessment. In this context, a review of the potential, residual (indirect and direct) and cumulative impacts have been undertaken. It is based on an analysis of existing ecological information including documented information about the designated and non-designated areas involved, as well as a walk-over survey carried out by the author on the land on 1st September 2021. A habitat/vegetation assessment was undertaken by the author to assess the ecological interest of the area.

Guidance documents on the Appropriate Assessment process have been referred to during the preparation of this report. These include:

- NPWS (2012) Marine Natura Impact Statements in Irish Special Areas of Conservation. A Working Document. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- NPWS (2009) Revised February 2010. Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- The European Communities (2002) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- The European Communities (2000) Managing Natura 2000: the provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats Directive’ 92/43/EC.

During the preparation of this report, consultation was carried out with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Lough Agency to identify their scoping opinions in relation to the proposed plan and potential impacts on the ecological constraints and sensitivities of the habitats and species in the area.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AND THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

“The Greenway will be approximately 7.5 km in length, running along the N15 between Lifford and Castlefinn, Co. Donegal ([Appendices 1a and 1b](#)). It is proposed to build a c. 3 m wide smooth hard-surface path. The corridor of the road (with 3 m on each side) is taken as the project footprint to cater for a possible change in roadside should the need arise. However, a stretch of road at Ballylast will see the Greenway located on the northern side of the road to avoid impacting any of the habitats within River Finn Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

There will be a requirement for crossing points along the route at both urban and rural locations. As a result, existing public lighting will have to be assessed and upgraded where required or new installations provided to ensure safe, lit facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. It is proposed to provide 3 crossings at:

- The community centre in Castlefin (within the 60kph speed limit)
- A location adjacent to Ballylast National School (100kph speed limit – periodical speed limits also in place)
- Within the existing 60kph speed limit of Lifford.

All works will be carried out following best practices that have been developed with this report ([Appendix 6](#)) and appear in the Method Statement (to accompany this application), which comprises all the environmental precautions of works carried out near rivers and streams. Inclusively, Donegal County Council and EPA guidelines will be followed if and where the route encounters invasive species.

Where required, pedestrian/cyclist guardrails may be erected (e.g., lateral restraint at a bridge parapet and cannot achieve the minimum separation between the existing carriageway and the proposed Greenway).”

Brief description of the receiving environment

The route is mostly in a rural agricultural landscape, with the exception of the approaches to Lifford and Castlefinn towns. Outside the towns, very few private dwellings are located immediately along the road. The proposed road will be closest to the River Finn Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Ballylast. However the boundary of the River Finn SAC is following the disused railway line on the southern side (closest to the River Finn which is located some 30 m from the road at this location). The proposed greenway will remain between the road and north of the disused railway line and will not encroach the SAC (see [Appendix 2a](#)).

Elsewhere, the route is separated from River Finn by grassland fields and forestry. At its furthest extent, River Finn is located 600 m downstream. The whole route is relatively level as it leaves Lifford but undulates gently towards Castlefinn. There are no lakes in the vicinity. The entire route is within the Finn sub-catchment [Finn_SC+030]. Six streams cross or are in the vicinity of the route, all are either order 1 and 2 (i.e., small streams) and all flow southwards down towards River Finn. From Lifford to Castlefinn, they are as follows: (1) Coneyburrow (order 1), (2) Carricknaslate (order 1), (3) Portinure (order 2), (4) Keeloges (order 2), (5) Tawnacrom (order 1), and (6) Stranamuck (order 2) (see [Appendix 2a](#)). These streams are piped, and the construction of the Greenway would not interfere with the culverts.

The soil type is mainly fine loamy over shale and slate bedrock with river alluvium on the Finn side. The area is characterised by a poor aquifer with *high vulnerability*. The route is closest to River Finn SAC at Ballylast (where the boundary is on the southern side of the disused railway line within a small woodland, see photos in [Appendix 4](#)).

Initial environmental constraints have been identified and mapped from a desktop study ([Appendix 1b](#)). The route has been ecologically surveyed and points of interests noted and photographed ([Appendix 5](#)).

Where the route is proposed, the road verges are mostly rough grassland with a small proportion of ‘artificial surfaces’, namely gravel or unfinished earth surfaces, entrances to driveways, or laneways with landscaped fronts. A few treelines are present at both town entrances. Elsewhere, small hedgerows of native species (mostly hawthorn, *Crataegus monogyna*) and vegetated fences are the dominant features along this road, low and immature at the Lifford end but becoming more mature and closer to the road towards Castlefinn. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), hawthorn, alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), birch (*Betula* spp.), willow (*Salix* spp.), oak (*Quercus* spp.) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) are the main species found along the route with ash, sycamore and oak, the more mature specimens. Several treelines of western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and a few sitka spruce (*Picea stichensis*) specimens of various ages are also present along the route. In general, mature tree specimens are few and are concentrated around Ballylast (on the river side, the trees are native while on the north side, they are planted as part of a landscaped garden).

At Ballylast, mature trees are also close to the N15 and separate the road from River Finn. These should not be removed, and the Greenway should be placed on the northern side of the N15. This is also the location of the invasive species, Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). See [Appendix 5](#) for photos.

River Finn is also located close to the proposed Greenway, just south of Urney Road, where a quarry is located between River Finn and the N15.

Invasive species are rare on this stretch of road and have mostly been recorded on the southern side of the route (see map of locations in [Appendix 2b](#)). Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) colonies occur in two locations very near to each other. These colonies have been managed by Donegal County Council following EPA guidelines and seem to be under control (see photos in [Appendix 5](#)). No other locations were recorded during this survey. If the route passes through these areas, guidelines should be followed to control these colonies. No soil/plant material should be removed from those areas, which should be clearly marked so that no machinery will come into contact with the plants (biosecurity cordon). A few specimens of Pampas grass (*Cortaderia sellana*) were also noted within the corridor of the route, (see location and photo in [Appendices 2b](#) and [5](#), respectively). While recognised as an invasive species with medium risk, it should be carefully managed so that it does not spread further. At this location, a clump of Himalayan balsam is also present. This is an invasive species with risk of high impact and should be carefully controlled if the northern side of the N15 is chosen as the route for the Greenway, as it is located near the Coneyburrow stream and should be managed carefully to prevent spread.

Small colonies of monbrieta (*Crocsmia crocosmiflora*) were noted at several spots (see location and photo in [Appendices 2b](#) and [5](#), respectively). While its status of invasiveness has not been assessed, these colonies should be removed by digging out and the entire plant, corms and rhizomes disposed appropriately, should this route be chosen. Finally, two specimens of Gunnera spp. located at the entrance to a private dwelling, may be located in the footprint of the route and should be removed carefully.

Identification of designated sites within the zone of influence

All European sites, namely SAC and Special Protection Areas (SPA), located within a 15 km radius of the proposed development site in either Republic of Ireland (ROI) or in Northern Ireland (NI) were reviewed. Following the Guidance for Planning Authorities (NPWS, 2010) and adopting the precautionary principle in identifying these sites, it was determined that given the nature and location of the project vis-à-vis natural features and surrounding topography all the European sites located outside the 15 km radius are not likely to be impacted by the proposed development (see map in [Appendix 2c](#)). However, European sites that are outside the 15 km radius were also identified but which are hydrologically connected to River Finn SAC, making them within the 'zone of influence' of the project.

A total of **five SAC** (one in ROI and four in NI) were identified within the 15 km radius and no **SPA** (see [Table 1](#) and [Appendices 2c, 2d](#)). A search for additional potentially important European sites within a 20 km radius revealed only Lough Swilly SAC and SPA, which are not hydrologically connected to the proposed route and are thus screened out.

The zone of influence is the 'effect area' over which changes could give rise to potentially significant impacts. The zone of influence over which the development may impact upon European Sites and their qualifying interests will differ for different ecological receptors depending on the pathway for potential impacts, as well as the specific nature of the habitats/species in question.

The proposed development site is not located within any European site but partly adjoins River Finn SAC (IE002301) for c. 100 m of the proposed route. Due to distance and presence of a hydrological pathway, this European site is deemed within the zone of influence and is screened in.

River Foyle and Tributaries (UK0030320) runs on the southern bank of River Finn (closest distance to route is 55 m). Due to distance, it is also deemed within the zone of influence and is screened in.

Moneygall Bog (UK0030211) is located 6.5 km south, Owenkillew River (UK0030233) is c. 14 km SE on the other side of Newtownstewart, while Fairy Water Bog (UK0016611) is located c. 15 km south of the route. Due to distance and lack of hydrological pathways, these three SAC are deemed outside the zone of influence of the proposed route.

Thus, the European Sites that require investigation in this report are River Finn (IE002301) and River Foyle and Tributaries (UK0030320).

Table 1: Designated European sites within 15 km of the proposed development, as well as those further away but hydrologically connected to River Finn.

Site Name & Code	Distance from development	Qualifying features (i.e. reasons for designation) (*=Priority Annex I Habitats)	Do any potential source-pathway-receptor links exist between the development and the European site?
River Finn SAC (002301)	10 m S (closest location at Ballylast on the other side of the disused railway line)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] • Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] • Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] • Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] • Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] 	Yes. There is a hydrological pathway connecting the proposed route to the river. Screened in.
River Foyle and Tributaries SAC (UK30320)	16 km S-W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] • Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] 	Yes. There is a hydrological pathway connecting the proposed route to the Finn river, which is partly included in this SAC. Screened in.
Moneygall Bog SAC (UK0030211)	6.5 SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7110 Active raised bogs * Priority feature 	No. Due to distance, the development will not directly impact the habitat. Any receptors (terrestrial habitat) of this SAC are not hydrologically connected to the source (another catchment). Indirect impacts are also deemed insignificant and thus it can be screened out.
Owenkillew River SAC (UK0030233)	14 km SE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles • 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation • 7110 Active raised bogs * Priority feature 	No. Due to distance, the development will not directly impact the habitats for which it has been designated. Any receptors (terrestrial and aquatic habitats) of this SAC are not hydrologically connected to the source (another catchment). Indirect impacts are also deemed insignificant and thus it can be screened out.
Fairy Water Bog SAC (UK0016611)	15 km S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7110 Active raised bogs* Priority feature 	No. Due to distance, the development will not directly impact the habitats or species for which it has been designated. Any receptors (terrestrial habitat) of this SAC are not hydrologically connected to the source (another catchment). Indirect impacts are also deemed insignificant and thus it can be screened out.

Description of the European sites and their conservation objectives

Identification and significance of potential impacts

Only those features of the project that have the potential to impact on the features and conservation objectives of the identified European sites are considered. Any element of a plan or project that has the potential to affect the conservation objectives of a European Site's integrity, including its structure and function should be considered significant. The following issues were examined in relation to the potential impacts of the project (either alone or cumulative) on the identified European sites:

➤ Habitat loss due to land-take

[Appendix 2a](#) depicts the proposed corridor for the Greenway and identifies sections where there could be some risk of impacts due to the proximity to River Finn SAC (see also [Appendix 5](#) for photos). No part of the SAC is included in the land-take. The corridor, being adjacent to an existing national road, does not cross any open habitats that could be important features for species or habitats for which this SAC was designated. The Greenway corridor will be at its closest location vis-à-vis the River Finn itself at Ballylast. However works will remain on the north side of the disused railway line which mark the boundary with the River Finn SAC. In addition, the standard guidelines will prevent any potential damage to nearby habitat at this location, namely:

- ➔ Site preparation and construction will adhere to best practices and conform to the Inland Fisheries Ireland Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites (www.fisheriesireland.ie).
- ➔ The removal of the existing trees will be following strict guidelines near stream and will be removed appropriately so that no debris or brash are left near the SAC boundary.
- ➔ No re-fuelling and maintenance of vehicles should occur within the sections 'at risks' (identified in [Appendix 2a](#)), which corresponds to potential impact via hydrological pathways.

➤ Habitat degradation via water quality degradation and impact on species

Disturbance of habitats near a European site may affect the designated habitats or associated species (salmon) via indirect linkages via habitat disturbance due to water quality deterioration. In this case, the water quality of River Finn SAC and its tributaries are considered some of the best areas on the island of Ireland for salmon. Their conservation objective is dependent on the quality of the water in this channel. In spring, smolts leave Irish rivers to migrate along the North Atlantic drift. In summer, the adult salmon return to their rivers.

Overall, the proposed Description of Works (see [Appendix 6](#)) associated with this project aim to minimise risks of inputs of pollutants to aquatic systems and of serious pollution incidents.

Of particular importance is the fact that the Greenway path crosses over six streams that all provide hydrological pathways to the River Finn, namely Conneyburrow, Portinure, Carricknaslate, Keegloges, Townacrom and Stranamuck. Should the preferred route be located in the N15 corridor, there is potential for pollutants runoff and especially hydrocarbon pollution events from traffic and a risk to qualifying interests of the River Finn SAC. However, any drainage proposals from this project that may discharge into the above watercourses should have petrol interceptors installed ([Appendix 6](#)), thus preventing any pollution risks downstream to the River Finn SAC and its species.

Water quality in the River Finn SAC will also be assured thanks to the following items in the Method Statement:

- ➔ They include good standards that conform to the Inland Fisheries Ireland Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites (www.fisheriesireland.ie).
- ➔ The contractors will be made aware of the boundaries of River Finn SAC, as well as the location of all streams, to prevent any damage or accidents that would impact the protected area directly or indirectly.
- ➔ No re-fuelling and maintenance of vehicles to occur within sections 'at risks' (identified in [Appendix 2a](#)), which corresponds to the corridor route that is close to the SAC boundary.
- ➔ Any earthworks required on the banks of crossing streams will be undertaken only when appropriate measures are in place. Such measures will include silt fencing where needed. This will be agreed in advance of construction works commencing as detailed in the Description of the Works
- ➔ Fuel to be stored in bunded tanks or bowsers away from drainage ditches or grated gullies.
- ➔ Refuelling will only be conducted in an appropriately bunded designated refuelling area located on a level surface, and by personnel that have undertaken the site induction.
- ➔ Waste segregation areas are to be established utilising containers of an appropriate design to ensure that no waste can escape.
- ➔ All machinery used in the Greenway construction corridor site will be kept in good mechanical order with no oil or hydraulic fluid leaks.
- ➔ There shall be no disposal of waste to any streams, ditches or storm drains.
- ➔ No excavated material should be disposed of within or near River Finn SAC boundaries.
- ➔ No cement/concrete should enter the storm drain system. Where necessary, a concrete washout area will be designated for washing out concrete delivery lorries, concrete pumps and grout lines. Concrete and cement mixing will be sited at least 10 m away from the River Finn SAC boundary and any crossing streams.
- ➔ All hazardous chemicals shall be stored in a designated lockable bunded storage where bunding will be of sufficient capacity to hold 25% of the total of the containers or 10% of the largest container, whichever is greater.
- ➔ Appropriate spill kits will be kept on site in strategic locations, such as close to refuelling areas, chemical handling areas or waste storage areas. Staff will be trained in their use and in deployment of the spill kits.

Thus, no negative impacts on the water quality of River Finn and River Foyle and Tributaries SACs are foreseen and thus their qualifying interests of River Finn SACs, in particular its species will remain the same after the project.

- Habitat degradation/loss of species due to inadvertent dispersal of invasive and non-native species

Due to the presence of high and medium risk invasive species, as well as non-native species (locations identified within the corridor route only as part of the preliminary ecological appraisal of the route and shown in [Appendix 2b](#)), measures to guard against dispersal must be adopted to protect habitats nearby within European sites and to reduce the construction contractor's exposure to risk of legal infringements.

- ➔ Contractors will be made aware of the location of past and current invasive species infestations.

- ➔ There will be strict biosecurity protocols in place for Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan balsam, in particular. All measures will be designed to reduce the risk of illegal dispersal and will be required irrespective of European Sites designations.

The known conservation objectives for each relevant qualifying interests associated with the screened-in European sites are presented, and the potential impacts are summarised, in [Table 3](#).

- Disturbance to other protected species: otters and birds

The project does not involve any works near the river banks and will not interfere with any habitats associated with otters. Thus this species, a qualifying interest of the River Finn SAC will not be impacted by the project.

There are no SPAs within the zone of influence of the project. The construction of the Greenway will take place during day light. The upgrade of all existing lighting and 1 new set of lights at Ballylast will not impact any bird species or other protected avi-fauna species (bats).

Table 3: Description, significance of potential impacts on qualifying Interests of the identified European sites. Note only the qualifying interests, as published on 30 September 2014, are provided here. Version 1 was assessed.

Qualifying interests	Conservation Objectives	Sensitivity	Potential threat from proposed development
River Finn SAC (IE002301)			
Oligotrophic lakes [3110]	Version 2017 - Version 1 -To restore the favourable conservation condition of Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) as defined by eighteen attributes and targets	Nutrient enrichment from agricultural practices including overgrazing and fertilisation; afforestation and waste water from housing in rural areas.	Lake habitat [3110] occurs in the larger lakes in River Finn SAC, such as Lough Derg (26 km S from the route), Finn Lough (34 km W) and Belshade Lough (30 km SW). All are upstream from the proposed works and so no connectivity exists (see Appendix 4). The route is not located or impacting any other waterbodies with potential for such habitat. It is thus deemed that the project will have no significant negative impact on this qualifying interest .
Wet heath [4010]	-To restore the favourable conservation condition of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> as defined by twenty attributes and targets	Overgrazing and trampling, drainage, afforestation, peat extraction, burning and wind farms.	This habitat does not occur within or immediately adjacent to the proposed works area. The approximate area of Wet Heath habitats within River Finn SAC is 187 ha. Mapping of Wet Heath habitats has not been carried out for River Finn SAC as data currently available is not sufficient to facilitate an accurate habitat map (NPWS, 2017). The part of the river where works will take place is within lowland agricultural settings, and upland areas where Wet Heath would occur are upstream of the route. As such, no connectivity exists and it is thus deemed that the project will have no significant negative impact on this qualifying interest .
Blanket bog [7130] (Active)*	-To restore the favourable conservation condition of Blanket bogs (*if active bog) as defined by nineteen attributes and targets	Overgrazing and trampling, drainage, afforestation, peat extraction, burning and wind farms.	This habitat does not occur within or immediately adjacent to the proposed works area. The habitat covers around 9% of the SAC. Mapping of Blanket bog habitats has not been carried out for River Finn SAC as data currently available is not sufficient to facilitate an accurate habitat map (NPWS, 2017). The part of the river within the vicinity of which works will take place is within lowland agricultural settings, and upland areas where blanket bogs would occur are upstream of these works. As such no connectivity exists. The

			project will have no significant negative impacts on this qualifying interest.
Transition Mires [7140]	-To restore the favourable conservation condition of Transition mires and quaking bogs as defined by thirteen attributes and targets:	Overgrazing and trampling, drainage, afforestation, peat extraction, burning and wind farms.	This habitat does not occur within or immediately adjacent to the proposed works area. There are no data available with which to estimate and map the approximate areas of Transition mires in the SAC (NPWS, 2017). Transition mires occur in peatland habitats. The part of the river in the vicinity of where works will take place is within lowland agricultural settings, and upland areas where peatlands would occur are upstream of these works. As such, no connectivity exists. The project will have no significant negative impacts on this qualifying interest.
Salmon [1106]	-To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon which is defined by six attributes and targets	Artificial barriers Water quality eutrophication	No works will be carried out within the river or its banks. The impact assessment of the proposed project with the given project prescriptions, has not identified potential significant impacts or contribution to any of the threats (habitat and water quality degradation). The water quality of River Finn will not be negatively impacted by the proposed project and thus this qualifying interest will remain the same after the project.
Otter [1355]	- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter as defined by seven attributes and targets:	Habitat destruction (including river drainage and the clearance of bank-side vegetation). Pollution.	Otter communiting areas (see Appendix 4) are associated with the larger waterbodies located upstream from the proposed greenway. No works will be carried out within the river or its banks. The streams that are tributaries of River Finn will not be significantly disturbed. The impact assessment of the proposed project with the given project prescriptions, has not identified potential significant impacts or contribution to any of the threats (habitat and water quality degradation). Thus, this qualifying interest will remain the same after the project.
River Foyle and Tributaries (UK0030320)			
Watercourses of plain to montane levels with the	2017 – Version 3	Water quality eutrophication.	The occurrence and description of this habitat within the River Foyle and Tributaries are not yet available. It is likely these are

<p>Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]</p>	<p>-To maintain (or restore where appropriate) to favourable condition as defined by 4 targets:</p> <p>Maintain and if possible enhance extent and composition of community.</p> <p>Improve water quality</p> <p>Improve channel substrate quality by reducing siltation.</p> <p>Maintain and if feasible enhance the river morphology</p>	<p>Habitat or flow modification.</p>	<p>located upstream from the junction with River Finn, thus upstream from the proposed project. Thus, this qualifying interest will remain the same after the project.</p>
<p>Salmon [1106]</p>	<p>-To maintain (or restore where appropriate) to favourable condition as defined by 2 targets:</p> <p>Maintain and if possible expand existing population numbers and distribution (preferably through natural recruitment), and improve age structure of population.</p> <p>Maintain and if possible enhance the extent and quality of suitable Salmon habitat - particularly the chemical and biological quality of the water and the condition of the river channel and substrate.</p>	<p>Water quality eutrophication</p> <p>Bank and channel modification</p> <p>Substrate siltation</p> <p>Water abstraction</p> <p>Fly tipping</p> <p>Alien species</p>	<p>The river has the largest population of Atlantic salmon in Northern Ireland, with around 15% of the estimated spawning numbers. The majority of the salmon returning are grilse (single wintering salmon), with a smaller but important number of spring salmon (multi-wintering salmon) also occurring.</p> <p>The impact assessment of the proposed project with the given project prescriptions, has not identified potential significant impacts or contribution to any of the threats. The water quality of River Finn and River Foyle will not be negatively impacted by the proposed project and thus this qualifying interest will remain the same after the project.</p>
<p>Otter [1355]</p>	<p>-To maintain (or restore where appropriate) to favourable condition as defined by 2 targets:</p>	<p>Habitat destruction (including river drainage and the clearance of bank-side vegetation).</p> <p>Pollution.</p>	<p>This species is widespread within this SAC and its conservation status is favourable. No works will be carried out within River Foyle or its banks. The streams which are tributaries of River Foyle will not be significantly disturbed. The impact assessment of the proposed project with the given project prescriptions, has not identified potential significant impacts or contribution to any of the</p>

	<p>Maintain and if possible increase population numbers and distribution.</p> <p>Maintain the extent and quality of suitable otter habitat, in particular the chemical and biological quality of the water and all associated wetland habitats.</p>		<p>threats (habitat and water quality degradation). Thus, this qualifying interest will remain the same after the project.</p>
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Table 4: Finding of No Significant Effects report matrix.

Information about the project	
Brief description of the project	<p>c. 7.5 km of 3-m wide, hard surface Greenway</p> <p>Roadside areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adjoining River Finn for c. 100 m stretch. -No resource requirements (water abstraction etc.) and no atmospheric emissions other than emissions from the works vehicles. None or shallow excavation for the sub-base. Delivery of all material via adjacent road. -Short-term duration of construction.
Brief description of European sites within the likely scope of influence of the project	<p>The European Sites considered necessary to investigate in this screened report are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -due to proximity: River Finn SAC (IE002301) in ROI -due to hydrological connectivity: River Foyle and Tributaries (UK0030320) in NI
Is the project or plan directly connected with the management of any European site?	No.
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project being assessed could affect the site	<p>No. Past and current planning permissions or refusals in the vicinity of the route were reviewed. Very few planning applications have been recorded and all recent projects have been screened out for Appropriate Assessment. The dredging for flood relief works along River Finn had a Natura Impact Statement, which concluded that with the mitigation measures, no impacts would remain (Woodrow, 2019).</p> <p>There are no other known projects to be developed in the same location that would contribute with the proposed development to the deterioration of any European sites.</p>
Assessment of significance of effects	<p>The scope of influence of the project is regarded to be insignificant due to the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -location and type of development (prescriptions). -small construction footprint and temporary low impact associated work and thus limited disturbance. -no works carried out within River Finn or its banks. -only upgrading of all existing lighting and supplying 1 new lighting location at Ballylast school.

	Therefore, it is anticipated that the proposed project would not result in any direct or indirect disturbance to species or habitats associated with this SAC.
Describe the individual elements of the project likely to give rise to impacts on the European site.	No negative impacts are foreseen.
Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:	
-reduction of habitat area within European sites:	-None
-disturbance to key species:	-Potential for disturbance in River Finn SAC where it is closest to the proposed greenway for a short distance (c. 100) at Ballylast, has been assessed and the route will be located away from this area to ensure that no disturbance will occur. Long term impacts due to additional anthropogenic presence in the area is deemed insignificant due to the existing adjacent road.
-habitat fragmentation:	-There will be no fragmentation of habitats either terrestrial or freshwater or designated that could impact upon the qualifying interests of the identified European sites.
-reduction in species density:	-No mechanism to cause reduction in species density has been identified relating to the SACs.
-changes in key indicators of conservation value:	- The main risk to water quality identified is accidental pollution incidents. Standard measures to protect the aquatic environment will be expected of the construction contractor(s) and will be written into the tender documents, which will reduce to insignificant, the risk of any accidental discharges into River Finn either directly or via ditches or drains.
Describe any likely impacts on the European site as a whole in terms of interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site.	No likely significant impacts.

CONCLUSION

In order to determine the potential impacts, if any, of the development on any European Sites, an Appropriate Assessment Screening Exercise was undertaken and resulted in a statement of Appropriate Assessment (i.e., this Screening Report). The conclusion of the Screening process is that:

1. The project is **not** directly connected to the management of any European sites.
2. The project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects is **not likely** to have significant effects on any habitats or species for which a European site was designated.
3. Negative impacts from the project are not foreseen on species or habitats for which European sites have been designated.
4. Therefore, it can be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed development, on its own, or in cumulation with other projects, will have a significant effect on European sites and thus **Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required for this project.**

References

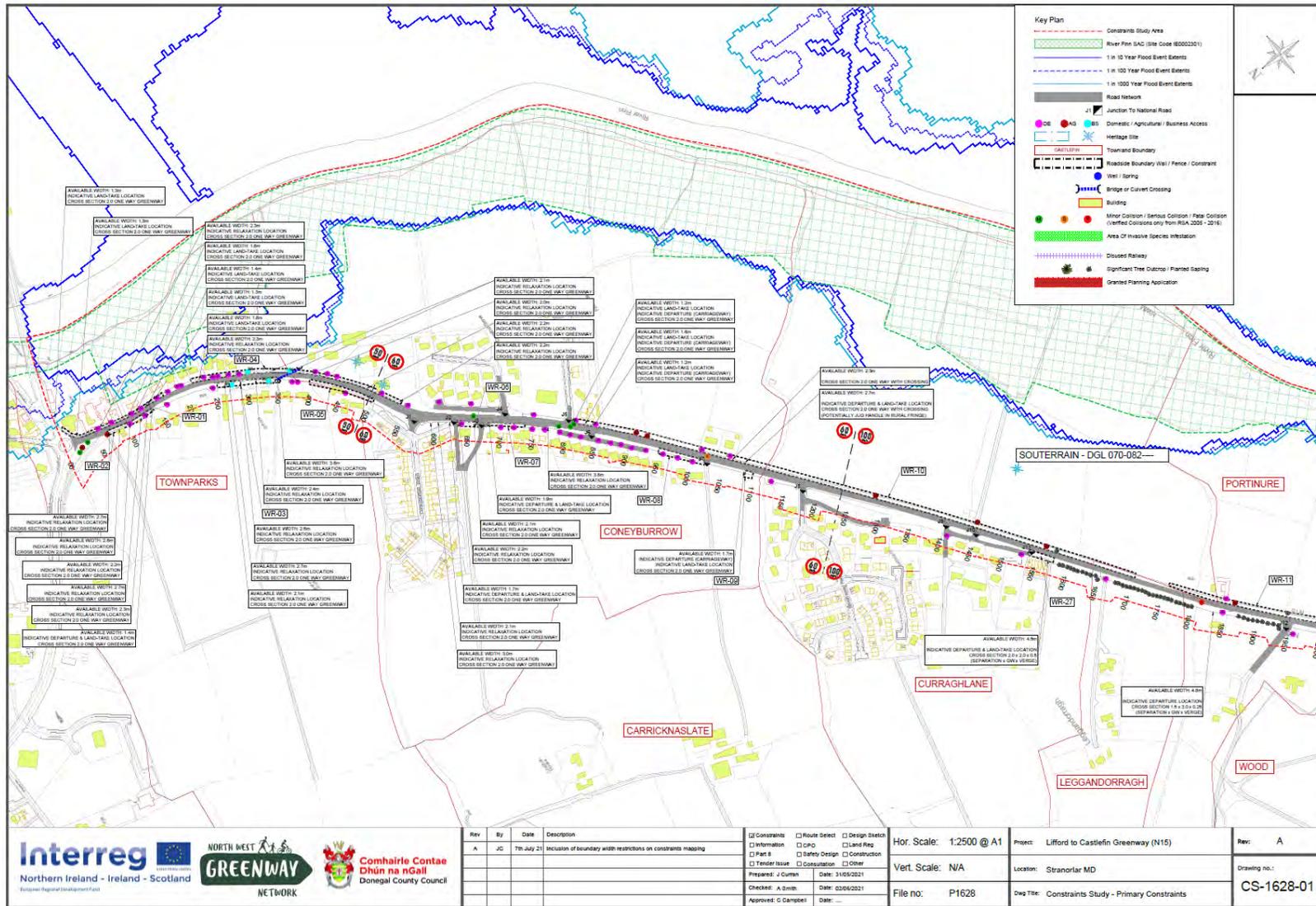
NPWS 2017 Conservation Objectives: River Finn SAC 002301. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

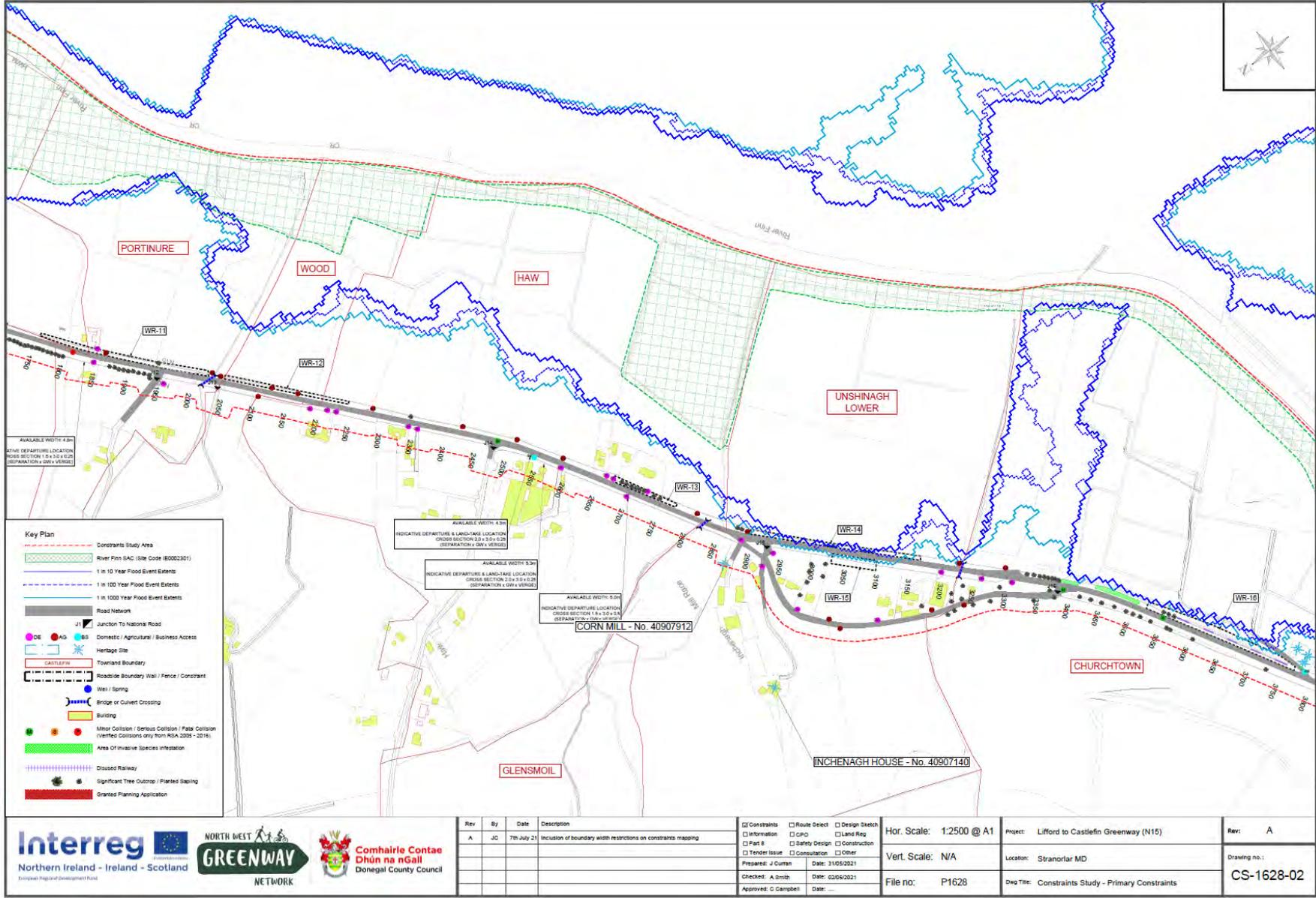
DEFRA <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUcode=UK0030320>

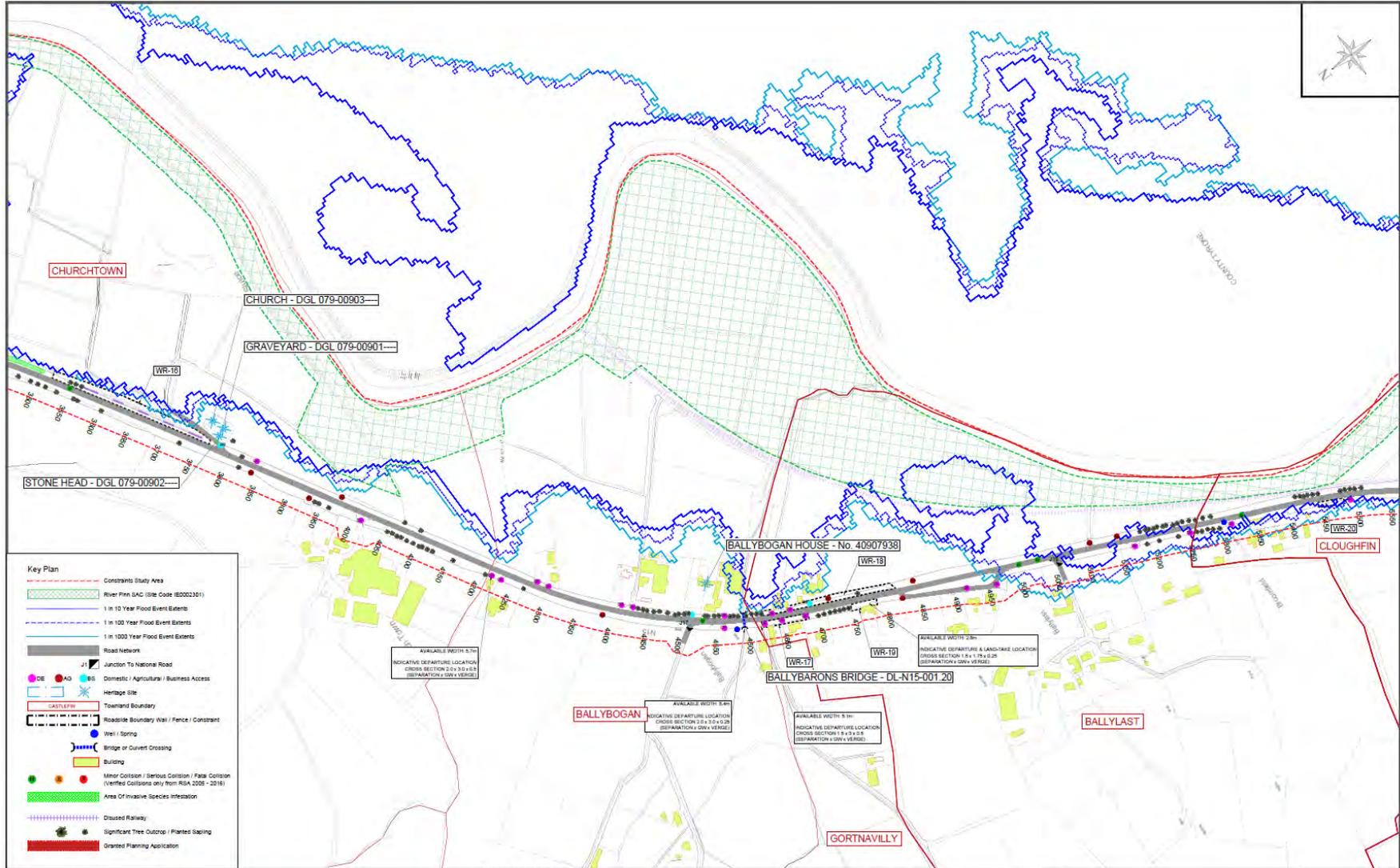
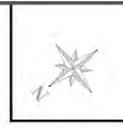
Appendix 1a: Site location and aerial view.



Appendix 1b: Site layout plan and constraints study drawings.







Key Plan

- Constraints Study Area
- ▨ River Pinn SAC (Site Code: B2002301)
- 1 in 10 Year Flood Event Extents
- 1 in 100 Year Flood Event Extents
- 1 in 1000 Year Flood Event Extents
- Road Network
- J Junction To National Road
- Domestic / Agricultural / Business Access
- Heritage Site
- Townland Boundary
- Roadside Boundary Wall / Fence / Constraint
- Well / Spring
- Bridge or Culvert Crossing
- ▭ Building
- Minor Collision / Serious Collision / Fatal Collision (Vertical Collisions only from RSI 2005 - 2016)
- ▨ Area Of Invasive Species Infestation
- Disused Railway
- Significant Tree Outcrop / Planted Sapling
- ▭ Granted Planning Application

AVAILABLE WIDTH: 5.1M
INDICATIVE DEPARTURE LOCATION
CROSS SECTION 2.0 x 3.0 x 4.0
(SEPARATION & SWAY VERGE)

AVAILABLE WIDTH: 5.1M
INDICATIVE DEPARTURE LOCATION
CROSS SECTION 2.0 x 3.0 x 4.0
(SEPARATION & SWAY VERGE)

AVAILABLE WIDTH: 5.1M
INDICATIVE DEPARTURE LOCATION
CROSS SECTION 2.0 x 3.0 x 4.0
(SEPARATION & SWAY VERGE)

AVAILABLE WIDTH: 2.8M
INDICATIVE DEPARTURE & LANDSCAPE LOCATION
CROSS SECTION 1.0 x 1.0 x 2.0
(SEPARATION & SWAY VERGE)



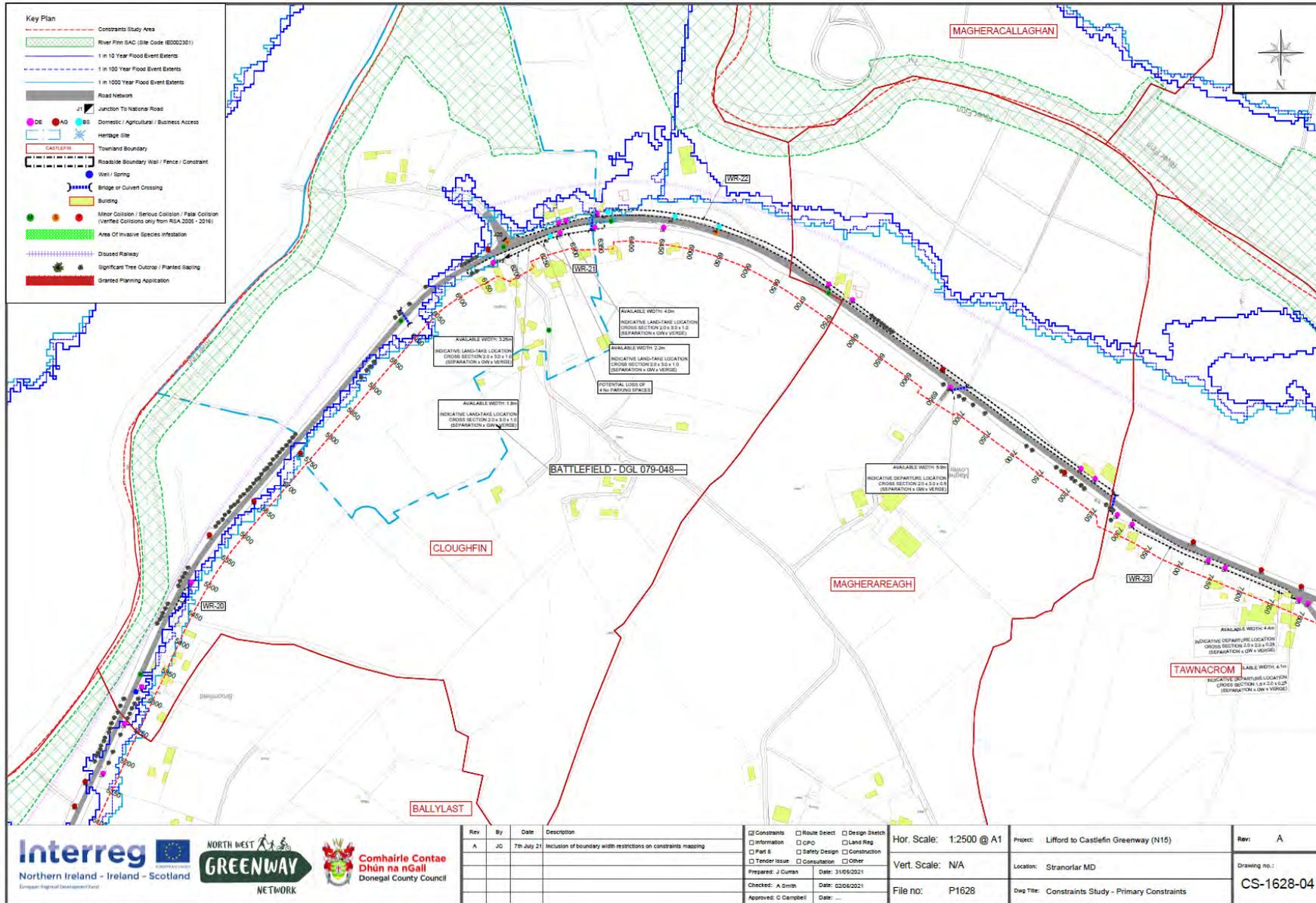
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A	JC	7th July 21	Inclusion of boundary with restrictions on constraints mapping

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<input type="checkbox"/> Information	<input type="checkbox"/> CAD	<input type="checkbox"/> Land-Reg
<input type="checkbox"/> Part 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety Design	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> Tender Issue	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Prepared: J Cuman	Date: 31/05/2021	
Checked: A Smith	Date: 02/06/2021	
Approved: C Campbell	Date: ---	

Hor. Scale: 1:2500 @ A1
Vert. Scale: N/A
File no: P1628

Project: Lifford to Castletin Greenway (N15)
Location: Stranorlar MD
Dwg Title: Constraints Study - Primary Constraints

Rev: A
Drawing no.: CS-1628-03



Interreg
Northern Ireland - Ireland - Scotland
European Regional Development Fund

NORTH WEST GREENWAY NETWORK

Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

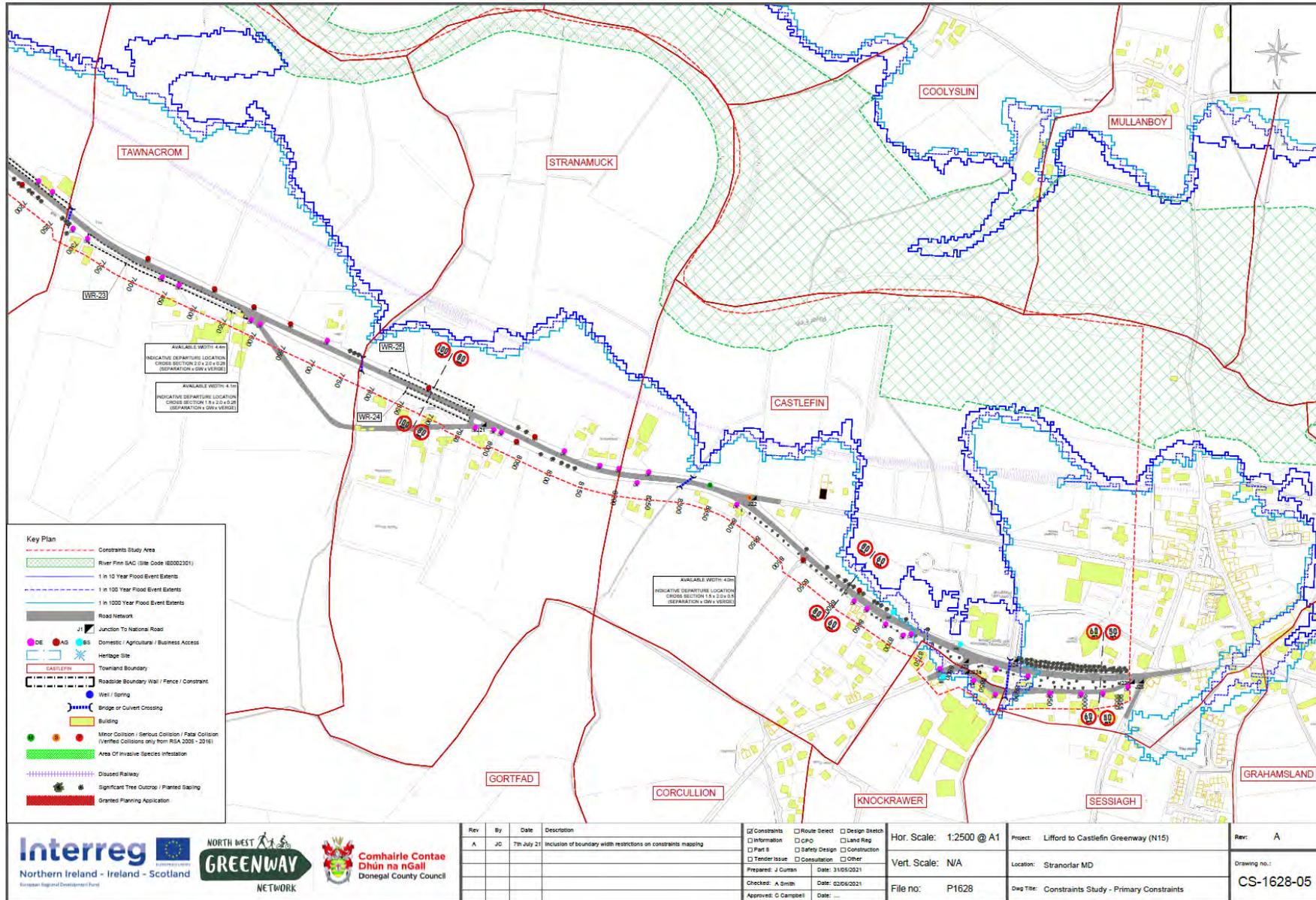
Rev	By	Date	Description
A	JG	7th July 21	Inclusion of boundary with restrictions on constraints mapping

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<input type="checkbox"/> Information	<input type="checkbox"/> CIPD	<input type="checkbox"/> Lane Req
<input type="checkbox"/> Part 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety Design	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> Tender Issue	<input type="checkbox"/> Computation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Prepared: J Curran	Date: 31/05/2021	
Checked: A Smith	Date: 02/06/2021	
Approved: C Campbell	Date: —	

Hor. Scale: 1:2500 @ A1
Vert. Scale: N/A
File no: P1628

Project: Lifford to Castlefin Greenway (N15)
Location: Stranorlar MD
Dwg Title: Constraints Study - Primary Constraints

Rev: A
Drawing no.: CS-1628-04



Appendix 2a: Sections of the corridor route considered to have potential 'risk' to European sites.



Hydrological pathway via stream

Hydrological pathway via stream

Due to close proximity: SAC (hashed green) is located on the other side of the disused railway

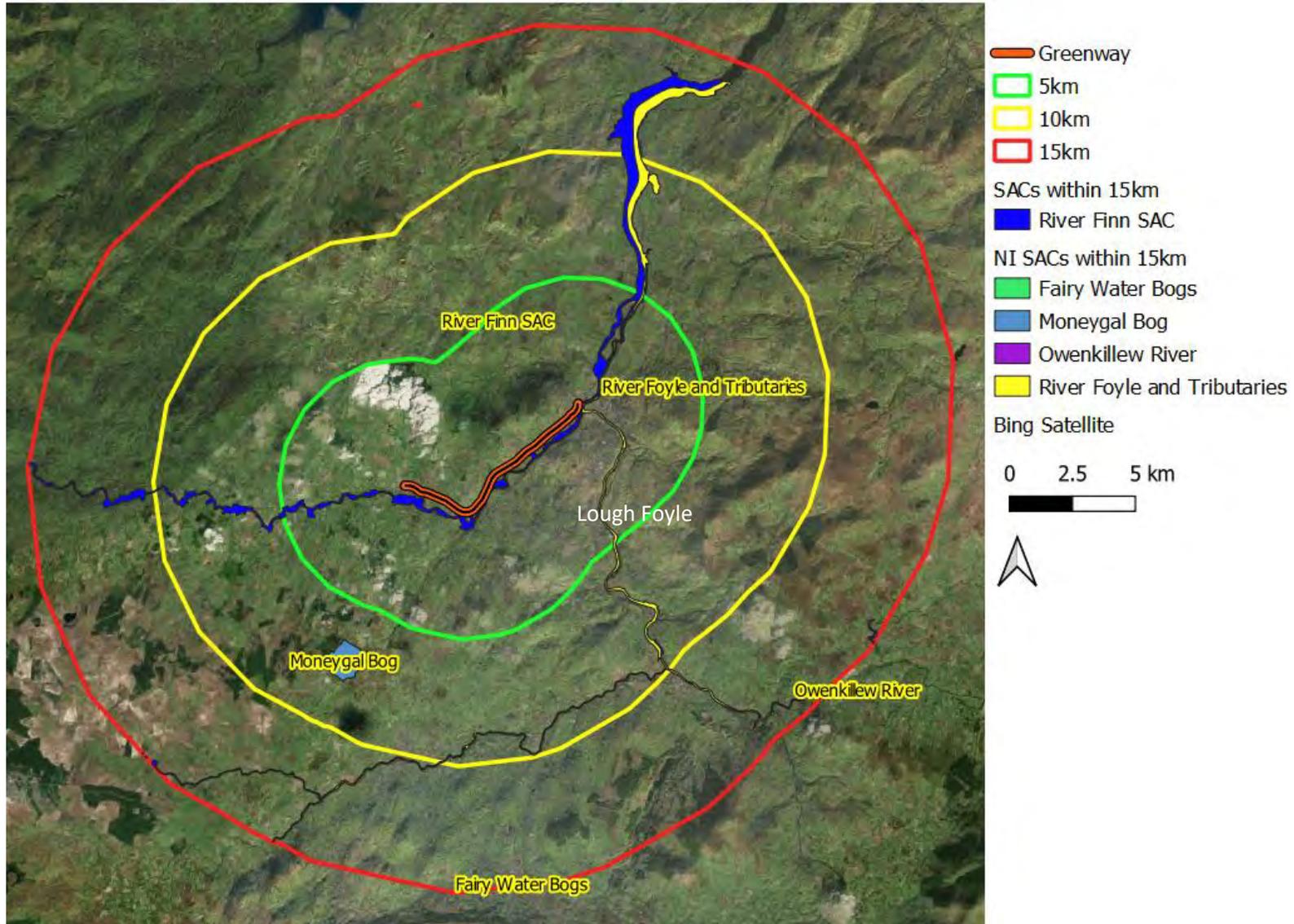


Hydrological pathway via stream

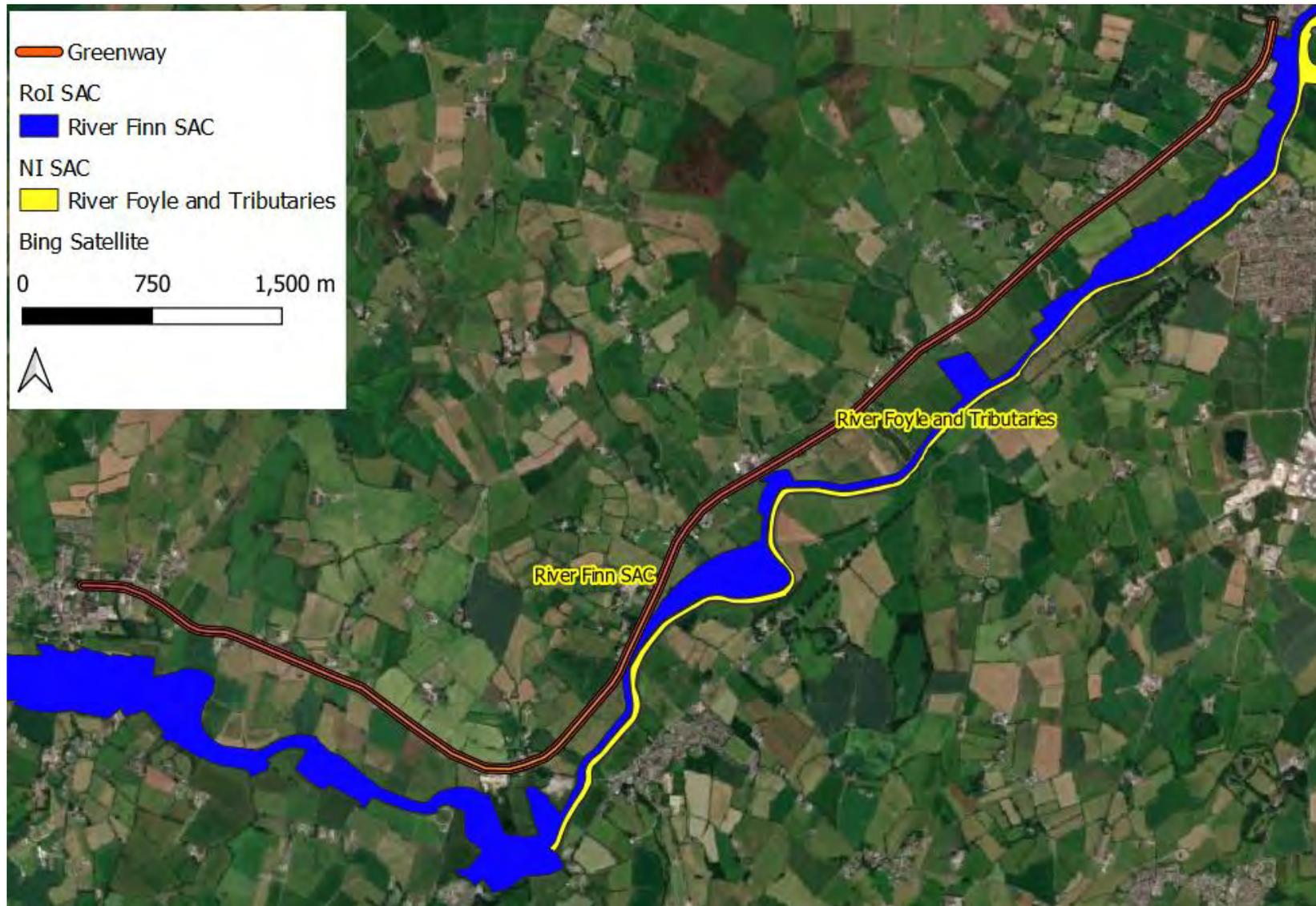
Appendix 2b: Invasive species locations along the proposed route.



Appendix 2c: Location of Greenway between Lifford and Castlefinn vis-à-vis European Sites (SAC and SPA) within 5, 10 and 15 km radius.



Appendix 2d: Site location vis-à-vis European Sites (SAC and SPA) in close proximity to the proposed Greenway.



Appendix 3: Site Synopsis and Conservation Objectives of identified European sites.

Site Name: River Finn SAC

Site Code: 002301

This site comprises almost the entire freshwater element of the River Finn and its tributaries the Corlacky, the Reelan sub-catchment, the Sruhamboy, Elatagh, Cummirk and Glashagh, and also includes Lough Finn, where the river rises. The spawning grounds at the headwaters of the Mourne and Derg Rivers, Loughs Derg and Belshade and the tidal stretch of the Foyle north of Lifford to the border are also part of the site. The Finn and Reelan, rising in the Bluestack Mountains, drain a catchment area of 195 square miles. All of the site is in Co. Donegal. The underlying geology is Dalradian Schists and Gneiss for the most part though quartzites and Carboniferous Limestones are present in the vicinity of Castlefinn. The hills around Lough Finn are also on quartzite. The mountains of Owendoo and Cloghervaddy are of granite felsite and other intrusive rocks rich in silica. There are many towns along the river but not within the site, including Lifford, Castlefinn, Stranolar and Ballybofey.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[3110] Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals
[4010] Wet Heath
[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*
[7140] Transition Mires
[1106] Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)
[1355] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)

Upland blanket bog occurs throughout much of the upland area of the site along the edges of the river. However, more extensive examples are found at Tullytresna and in the Owendoo/Cloghervaddy bogs. The blanket bog is dominated by Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Deergass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). Pool and hummock systems are a feature of the flatter areas, with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), mosses (*Racomitrium lanuginosum*, *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. papillosum*), lichens (e.g. *Cladonia portentosa*) and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea* occurring abundantly on the hummocks. The scarce bog boss *S. imbricatum* is a component of some hummocks. *Sphagnum magellanicum* is found in wet flats by pools, while *S. cuspidatum* occurs abundantly within the pools themselves.

Towards the base of the northern slope and on the southern slope at Tullytresna flushes occur with bright green lawns of bog mosses and abundant rushes, particularly Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Jointed Rush (*J. articulatus*). On the summit is an undulating system of hummocks and hollows, and Heather is more common.

A valley bog fills the low lying areas to the north-east of Lough Finn which is dominated by Deergass, cottongrass, Purple Moor-grass and Heather. Mossy hummocks occur in the wetter areas.

Transition mires (or quaking bogs or scraws) occur at several locations, usually at the interface between bog and lake or stream. In Owendoo/Cloghervaddy there are many examples of small lakes south of Belshade. Some of the lakes contain floating scraws of the bog moss *S. recurvum*, Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Bog-sedge (*C. limosa*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). West of Owendoo River there is an extensive area of scraw with a similar suite of species but in differing abundances. Quaking areas are also associated with blanket bog at Cronamuck and Cronakerny. At Cronamuck, a small, level flushed area occurs at the base of a slope leading into a flushed stream. Diversity, including diagnostic species, is good.

Wet heath is associated with the blanket bog throughout the site and is found on the shallow peats and better drained slopes. In Owendoo/Cloghervaddy this is mostly characterised by Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Heather, Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). The heath often grades into flush vegetation dominated by Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*).

Lowland oligotrophic lakes are found at Loughs Finn, Belshade and Derg, as well as in many of the smaller lakes within the site. Lough Derg is a large oligotrophic lake situated north of Pettigo. An extensive area of blanket bogs and conifer plantations make up the lake catchment. Typical species seen at the three lakes include a sparse covering of Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*) along the lake shores, Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*), the moss *Fontinalis antipyretica*, Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), with Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) and Broad-leaved Pondweed (*P. natans*) in the margins.

On the tidal stretches within the site the main habitats are the river itself, mudflats and the extensive reedbeds that have colonised the former mudflats. The habitats found are typically freshwater in nature. The large reedbeds are dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), with some Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*). Succession is demonstrated nicely within a small area, with the change from mudflats to reedbeds, and on to willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) scrub.

Other habitats present within the site include a fringe of wet grassland/marsh along some river stretches dominated by rushes, grading into species-rich marsh in which sedges are common. Among the other species found in this habitat are Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and Soft Rush. Around Lough Derg wet fen type vegetation occurs in places with

Purple Moor-grass, Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Jointed Rush and Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*). There is also some Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*).

Where banks are steeper, particularly around Lough Derg and along the deep mountain valley of the upper stretches, dry, steep slopes support Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Heather, Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). There are areas of scrub surrounding parts of the lake margins, along the channels and on the ungrazed islands. These are composed of Alder, willows, Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). Understorey plants include abundant ferns and mosses. The rare Narrow-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) occurs on the shores of Lough Derg. This species is listed in the Irish Red Data Book and is protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999.

Small pockets of conifer plantation, close to the lakes and along the strip both sides of the rivers, are included in the site.

Lough Finn holds a population of Arctic Char (*Salvelinus alpinus*). This fish is a relative of salmon and trout, and represents an arctic-alpine element in the Irish fauna. In Ireland this fish occurs only in a few cold, stony, oligotrophic lakes. It is listed in the Irish Red Data Book as threatened. The Arctic Char in Lough Finn are unusual in that they are dwarfed. These only occur in one other lake in Ireland, Lough Coomasahom, Co. Kerry and they are therefore of national importance. Arctic Char are very sensitive to water quality and therefore changes in the catchment such as afforestation should be avoided to maintain this population. Lough Derg is also important for Arctic Char, though the species was last recorded there in 1990/91.

The Finn system is one of Ireland's premier salmon waters. Although the Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) is still fished commercially in Ireland, it is considered to be endangered or locally threatened elsewhere in Europe and is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Commercial netting on the Foyle does not begin until June and this gives spring fish a good opportunity to get into the Finn. The Finn is important in an international context in that its populations of spring salmon appear to be stable, while they are declining in many areas of Ireland and Europe. The salmon fishing season is 1st March to 15th September. Fishing for spring salmon is best east of Stranolar while the grilse run through to the upper reaches. The grilse run peaks here, depending on water, usually in mid June. The estimated rod catch from the Finn is approximately 500-800 spring salmon and 4,000 grilse annually, producing about 40% of the total Foyle count. The Loughs Agency has a management regime in place called the 'control of fishing regulations'. If enough salmon are not past the counter at Killygordon at a certain key date then both the angling and commercial fishing can be closed for set periods.

The site is also important for Otter (*Lutra lutra*), another species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. It is widespread throughout the system. In addition, the site also supports many more of the mammal species occurring in Ireland. Those

which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book include the Badger and the Irish Hare. Common Frog, another Red Data Book species, also occurs within the site.

Golden Plover, Peregrine and Merlin, threatened species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, breed in the upland areas of the site. The Red Listed species Red Grouse occurs on the site, while the scarce Ring Ouzel, another Red List species, is also known to occur.

Agriculture, with particular emphasis on grazing, is the main land use along the Finn and its tributaries. Much of the grassland is unimproved but improved grassland and silage are also present, particularly east of Ballybofey. The spreading of slurry and fertiliser poses a threat to the water quality of this salmonid river, particularly in this region as the river is subject to extensive flooding. Fishing is a main tourist attraction on the Finn and there are a large number of Angler Associations, some with a number of beats. Fishing stands and styles have been erected in places. The River Finn is a designated Salmonid Water under the E.U. Freshwater Fish Directive. Other aspects of tourism such as boating are concentrated around Lough Finn.

Afforestation is ongoing, particularly along the western sections of the site adjacent to the headwaters and around the shores of Lough Derg. Recent planting has been carried out along the Cronamuck River. Forestry poses a threat in that sedimentation and acidification occurs. Sedimentation can cover the gravel beds resulting in a loss of suitable spawning grounds.

The site supports important populations of a number of species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and several habitats listed on Annex I of this Directive, as well as examples of other important habitats. Blanket bog is a rare habitat type in Europe and receives priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The overall diversity and ecological value of the site is increased by the presence of populations of several rare or threatened birds, mammals, fish and plants.

Qualifying Interests

** indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive*

002301	River Finn SAC
1106	Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>
1355	Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>
3110	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)
4010	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>
7130	Blanket bogs (* if active bog)
7140	Transition mires and quaking bogs

Please note that this SAC overlaps with Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA (004039) and Lough Derg (Donegal) SPA (004057) and adjoins Meentygrannagh Bog SAC (000173), Dunragh Loughs/Pettigo Plateau SAC (001125) and Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC (002047). See map 2. The conservation objectives for this site should be used in conjunction with those for the overlapping and adjoining sites as appropriate.

Reasons for designation as a Special Area of Conservation

Area name: **River Foyle and Tributaries**
Administrative area: **Tyrone**
Component ASSI: **River Foyle and Tributaries**

This area has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because it contains habitat types and/or species which are rare or threatened within a European context. The ASSI citation describes the special interests for which the site was notified in the Northern Ireland context. [NB: not for marine interests below mean low water mark]. The interests for which the site was selected as ASSI may differ from the interests selected in a European context.

The habitats and/or species for which this area has been designated as a SAC are listed below. The reasons for their selection are listed, together with a brief description of the habitats and species as they typically occur across the UK. This area contains the interests described although it may not contain all the typical features.

European interest(s):

1. *Lutra lutra*

- for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.

Otter. Otters are semi-aquatic mammals, requiring both good fishing grounds for food and suitable shelter on land for resting and breeding. Once widespread in Europe, the otter population declined sharply during the 1960s and 1970s. It is now showing signs of recovery in the UK and is spreading to repopulate its former areas. The UK, and in particular Scotland, supports some of the largest concentrations of otters in Europe, with both freshwater and coastal populations.

2. *Salmo salar*

- for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.

Atlantic salmon. The Atlantic salmon is the largest of our migratory fish and spawns in the least polluted rivers of north-west Europe. It has declined due to over-fishing at sea, pollution and barriers to migration within its spawning rivers. The UK supports a large proportion of the salmon population in the European Union.



3. Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculon fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation

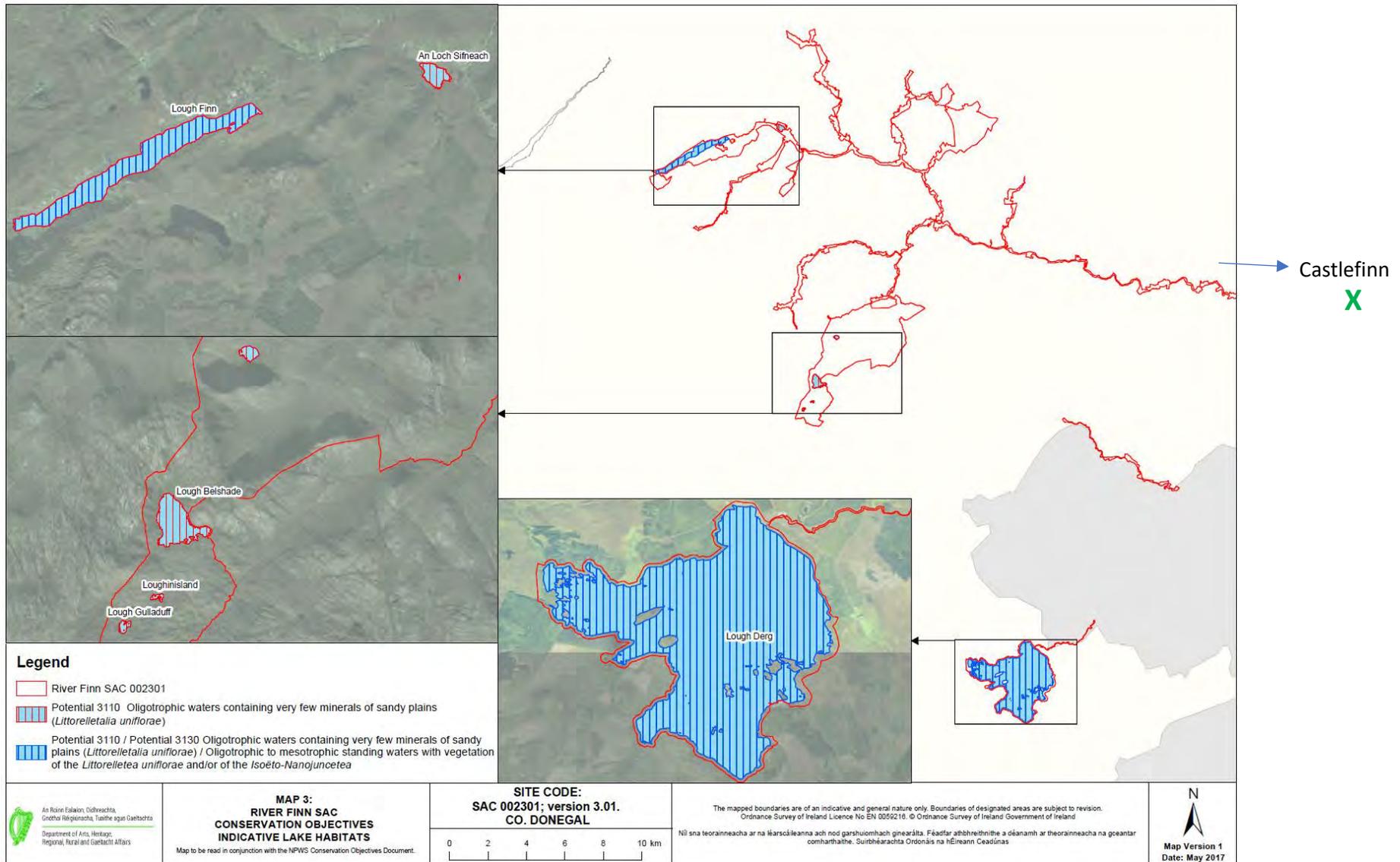
- for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.

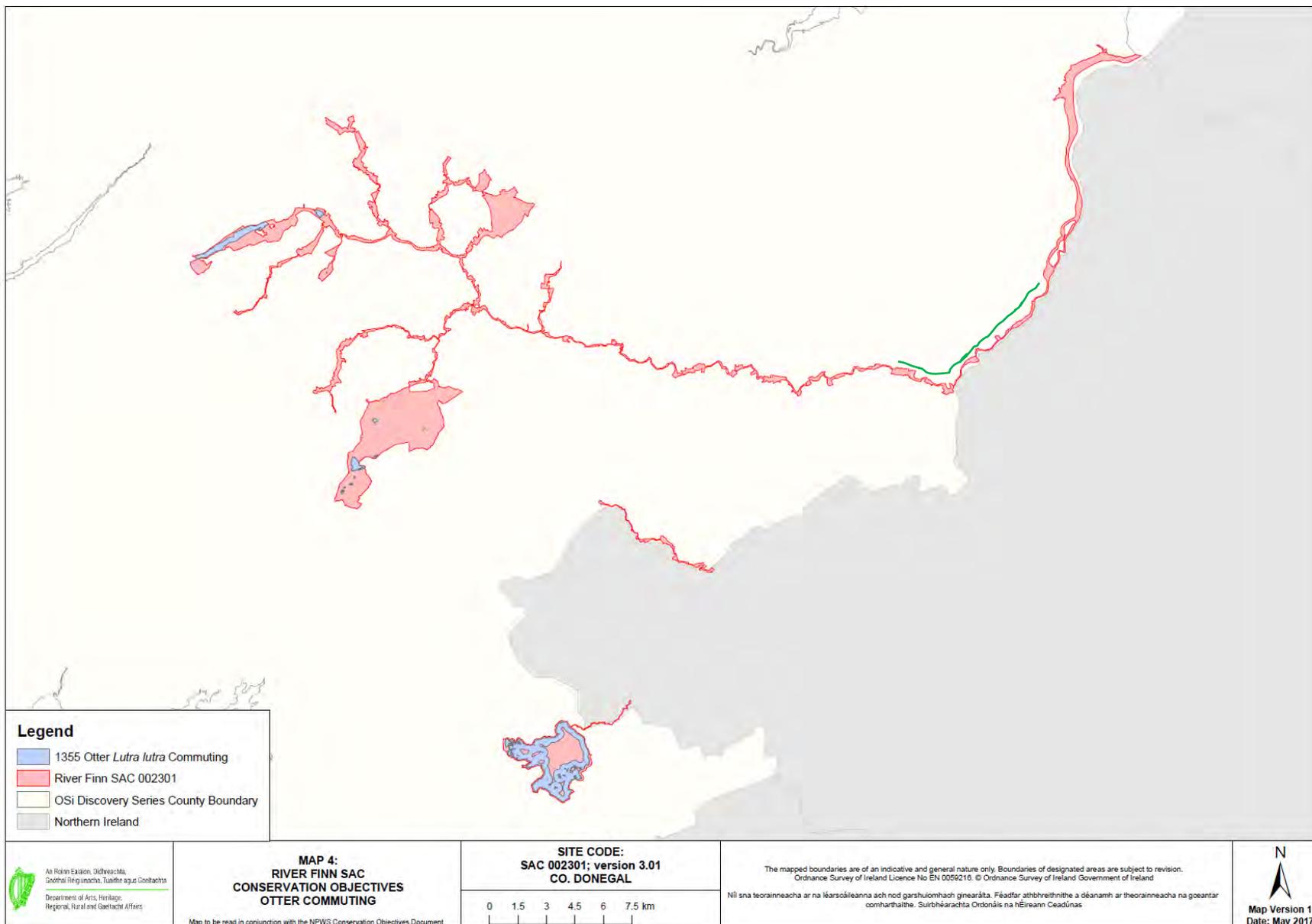
Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot. Rivers that support characteristic communities of water-crowfoot *Ranunculus* species, which often dominate the plant community in the river channel. This vegetation occurs in relatively unpolluted waters, in a diverse range of river types.

The Register of European Sites in Northern Ireland

Register reference number:	UK0030320
Date of Registration	30 March 2007
Signed by:	G R Seymour
on behalf of the Department of the Environment	

Appendix 4: Proposed project (Greenway, green cross) vis-à-vis location of conservation objectives.





Appendix 5: Photos (Sept 2021), ordered from Lifford towards Castlefinn.

Start of Greenway at Lifford Three coins roundabout (54.831806, -7.483707).



N15 at Townparks, Lifford (54.830907, -7.484005).



Conneyborrow Road (facing east (54.827702, -7.488164)).

GPS

Latitude 54; 49; 39.2662999999883766

Longitude 7; 29; 17.57040000000005323



Exit from Lifford on N15 showing cycle path at Curragehalane (54.822264, -7.498992).

GPS

Latitude 54; 49; 20.1070999999936362

Longitude 7; 29; 56.641199999998193



Typical hedgerow and grassland field that separates the route from River Finn.

GPS

Latitude 54; 49; 25.3149599999886732

Longitude 7; 29; 43.7567989999988072



Typical grass verge and hedgerow (54.82198, -7.49939).

GPS

Latitude 54; 49; 19.118640000000795

Longitude 7; 29; 57.7935590000015509



Pampas grass on the left of the road (54.822686, -7.497253).



Himalayan balsam colony near Conneyburrow stream (facing north).



Montbrieta colony at Wood (54.819223, -7.506060).

GPS

Latitude 54; 49; 8.7094999999709235

Longitude 7; 30; 21.2292000000016401



Wide verges at Haw (Pattersons Kitchens) (54.816315, -7.511450) facing east.



Small treatment plant at Unshinagh lower (54.812374, -7.520052).



Japanese Knotweed under treatment at Unshinagh Lower (54.811618, -7.521682).



Japanese Knotweed under treatment at Unshinagh Lower (54.811430, -7.521910).



View of both locations of Japanese Knotweed from the N15 facing east: 54.811627, -7.521668.



Wide grassy verge at Churchtown (54.809456, -7.527618).



View of River Finn at Churchtown (54.808708, -7.529994), 12 m from N15.

GPS

Latitude	54; 48; 31.3506000000053575
Longitude	7; 31; 47.9769600000000196



Wide grassy verge at Ballybogan (54.809456, -7.527618).



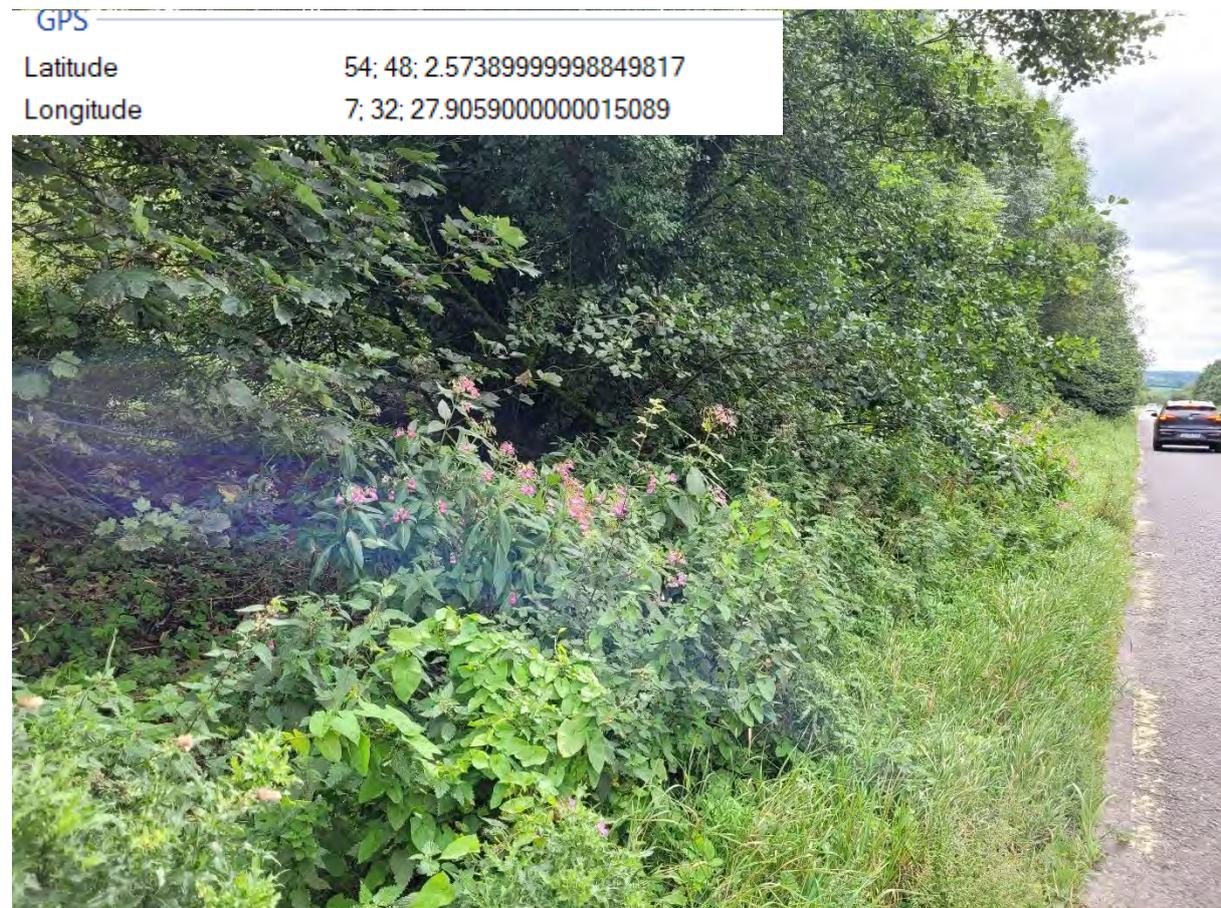
St Columbas NS Ballylast (54.804798, -7.537561)



Mature trees at Ballylast (54.800793, -7.540953), the closest location to River Finn.



Himalayan balsam colony at Ballylast 1st location (54.800715, -7.541085).



Himalayan balsam colony at Ballylast 2nd location (54.800352, -7.541277).



Mature specimen garden trees opposite mature trees (on the northern side of N15), Ballylast (54.800681, -7.541321), showing sufficient verge space for the Greenway on the northern side of the road (facing north).



Same location as above facing east.



Closest location of N15 to River Finn (35 m on the right) at Ballylast (facing east) (54.797312, -7.565230).



Hedgerows at the approach of the crossroads between N15 and Urney Road at Cloghgin (54.800352, -7.541277).



Western red cedar tree line, as screening for the quarry at Cloghfin (54.794542, -7.558814).



Wide verge at Magherareagh (54.798190, -7.568803).



Gunnera spp. at Magherareagh, Cusheen (54.797312, -7.565230).



Eastern approach to Castlfinn, showing treelines on both sides (facing west).



Cycle path on northern side of N15 on approach to Castlfinn (facing east).



Cherry trees, Castlefinn.



Start/Finish at Castlefinn (facing east).



APPENDIX 6 – Description of the Works (Donegal County Council).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORKS

Site and Function

Site Location

The proposed greenway is located between the urban areas of Lifford and Castlefin in County Donegal.

Function of the Greenway

The primary function of the greenway is to provide a safe and accessible pedestrian/cyclepath to improve safety for vulnerable road users and reduce their interaction with vehicular traffic along the N15 between Lifford and Castlefin.

Site Description and Topography

The area comprises mostly of a rural setting with dispersed rural housing, businesses and agriculture land use. The urban sections under consideration in this project comprise mostly of town or terraced houses with mixed business and retail units that are located in close proximity to existing pedestrian facilities or the N15.

The terrain is typically good low-lying agricultural land, with mixed uses. The N15 national primary road traverses through the constraint area. The general topography north of the N15 rises steeply in places with unsuitable gradients in some locations, whereas the terrain south of the N15 is flatter but is low-lying and is prone to occasional flooding from the river Finn in some areas. It is considered the local terrain and topography in general is suited for this project.

Structure and Aesthetics

General Description

The proposed greenway will be 6m wide overall consisting of a 3m wide pedestrian/cycling path with grass separation verges on either side. The pedestrian/cycling path will be constructed of a base layer of crushed stone with a macadam top layer to provide a smooth finished surface for users. Given the nature of construction and end-user requirements, the path will follow a relatively level route to ensure gradients are suitable. Ground excavation will be limited as the pedestrian/cyclepath does not require significant support to function as intended. Appropriately sized filter drains will be included where required for surface water management. Safety barriers (in compliance with DN-REQ-03034 formally TD 19) may be required at some locations where the greenway is in close proximity to existing roads to ensure safety of greenway users along with pedestrian and cyclist guardrails.

Aesthetic Considerations

The greenway is located in a mixture of urban/suburban/rural areas and the aesthetic impact of the proposed structure will be considered accordingly in each area in regard to selection of landscaping and finishes. Greenways by their nature provide a functional yet attractive design.

Construction and Buildability

Access to the works area and construction activities shall be restricted to the working corridor along the route. The overall route will be divided into a series of works areas that will be constructed in

sequence to minimise impact on the area. Locally sourced aggregates from licensed facilities will be imported for construction of the greenway.

Construction of proposed structure

Construction of the proposed structure will require excavation of topsoil for re-use in separation verges and landscaping; excavation of sub-soil for re-use in raising low-lying sections of the works area; transportation of licensed fill material (stone) to construct the base course; transportation of macadam for construction of the finished surface.

The following gives an indication of the envisaged construction sequence:

- i) Install double silt fence around extents of proposed works area;
- ii) Excavate to proposed base of crushed stone base-course level. If dewatering of excavation is required, the water will be pumped to a temporary settling pool in adjacent fields;
- iii) Install crushed stone basecourse to appropriate level and compact;
- iv) Install permanent filter drains as required for surface water management of the path;
- v) Form separation verges and finish with topsoil
- vii) Install safety barriers (if required) and kerbing where required
- vi) Install path surfacing and finishes;
- vii) Landscaping

It is proposed to dispose of excavated material unsuitable for use within the works area to a licensed facility.

The Contractor shall undertake the works in such a manner as to avoid degradation of water quality at any tributary to the River Finn either by pollution from oil spills, or contamination due to concreting operations, ensuring that there is no generation of suspended solids or other deleterious matters to the river channel. The Contractor shall take all appropriate measures to avoid causing turbidity in watercourses due to disturbance of silt or spoil from excavation or construction operations.

The Contractor shall be required to undertake the following specific measures to prevent the above:

- (i) The appointed contractor will have in his possession, be familiar with and adhere to the relevant measures detailed within the 'Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites: Guidance for Consultants and Contractors (SP156) (CIRIA 2002);
- (ii) Site preparation and construction will adhere to best practices and conform to the Inland Fisheries Ireland 'Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites' (www.fisheriesireland.ie).
- (iii) Construction method statements will be submitted to the Loughs Agency for approval prior to commencement of construction.
- (iv) Contractors plant, equipment etc. shall be free of any mechanical defects, and be well maintained and serviced so as to prevent oil or fuel leaks into the river;
- (vi) Fuels, lubricants and hydraulic fluids for equipment used on the construction site will be stored in bunded tanks or bowsers away from drainage ditches or grated gullies and carefully handled

to avoid spillage, properly secured against unauthorised access or vandalism, and provided with spill containment according to codes of practice;

(vi) No re-fuelling and maintenance of vehicles should occur within sections at risk to potential impacts via hydrological pathways. Refuelling to be conducted in an appropriately bunded designated refuelling area located on a level surface, and by personnel that have undertaken the site induction.

(vii) Waste oils and hydraulic fluids will be collected in leak-proof containers and removed from the site for disposal or re-cycling. Appropriate spill kits will be kept on site in strategic locations, such as close to refuelling areas, chemical handling areas or waste storage areas. Staff will be trained in their use and in deployment of the spill kits.

(viii) All hazardous chemicals shall be stored in a designated lockable bunded storage where bunding will be of sufficient capacity to hold 25% of the total of the containers or 10% of the largest container, whichever is greater.

(ix) No batching of concrete will occur onsite, concrete for kerbing will be delivered to site and carefully placed at the location required. The pouring of concrete, sealing of joints, application of water-proofing paint or protective systems, curing agents, etc will be completed in dry weather.

(x) No cement/concrete should enter the storm drain system. Where necessary, a concrete washout area will be designated for washing out concrete delivery lorries, concrete pumps and grout lines. Concrete and cement mixing will be sited at least 10 m away from the River Finn SAC boundary and any crossing streams.

(xi) The removal of existing trees will follow strict guidelines near streams and will be removed appropriately so that no debris or brash are left.

(xii) Throughout all stages of the construction phase of the project the contractor shall ensure that good housekeeping is maintained at all times and that all site personnel are made aware of the importance of the surrounding environment and the requirement to avoid pollution of all types;

(xiii) Foul drainage from site compound etc. will be stored for periodic transfer to a suitable treatment facility.

(xiv) Waste segregation areas are to be established utilising containers of an appropriate design to ensure that no waste can escape. There shall be no disposal of waste to any streams, ditches or storm drains. No excavated material should be disposed of within or near River Finn SAC boundaries.

(xv) Any earthworks required on the banks of crossing streams will be undertaken only when appropriate measures are in place. Such measures will include silt fencing where needed.

(xvi) Strict biosecurity protocols are to be put in place with measures designed to avoid the risk of dispersal of Invasive Species. Contractors staff to be made aware of the location of past and current invasive species infestations.

(xvii) Should the preferred route be located in the N15 corridor, there is potential for hydrocarbon runoff from traffic and a risk to hydrological links to the River Finn. The watercourses that form direct pathways to the River Finn SAC are: Conneyburrow Stream, Portinure Stream, Carricknaslate Stream, Keegloges Stream, Townacrom Stream, Stranamuck Stream. Any drainage proposals from this project that discharge into the above watercourses should have petrol interceptors installed.

Existing and Proposed Services

The following existing services have been identified following consultation and desk top analysis.

- Existing watermain pipe along the N15 corridor
- Overhead ESB lines along the N15 corridor.
- Public Street lights in urban areas along the N15 corridor.
- Overhead Eircom line along the N15 corridor.

Lighting

We will be upgrading all existing lighting and supplying 1 new lighting location at Ballylast school.

The works will be undertaken during daylight hours so as to avoid any disturbance to wildlife from temporary lighting.

End of report

APPENDIX D – PLANNING SITE NOTICE

SITE NOTICE

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (as amended)
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS 2001 (as amended)
ARTICLE 81

NOTICE PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 81, PART 8 OF THE ABOVE REGULATIONS, RELATING TO A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT BY DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Take Notice that Donegal County Council proposes to carry out the following development on the existing N15 National Primary Road in the urban environs of Lifford located in the Lifford / Stranorlar Municipal District as detailed in the schedule below:

SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED WORK

No.	Title	Townlands	Local Roads Office for Viewing Plans
1	N15 Lifford Active Travel Project	Townparks, Conneyburrow and Curraghlane	Online at https://consult.donegal.ie/browse Donegal County Council Offices, County House, The Diamond, Lifford, Co. Donegal, F93 Y622
Description and Extents			
Donegal County Council proposes to provide a new shared use pedestrian and cyclist facility adjacent to the existing N15 National Primary Road in accordance with the Part 8 application. The project will include:			
a) Provision of a shared use cycle / pedestrian facility on the northern side of the existing N15.			
b) Reduction in mainline road width and reallocation of space to the shared facility within the scheme extents.			
c) Provision of appropriate road crossings both controlled and uncontrolled within the scheme extents.			
d) Provision of upgraded public street lighting within the scheme extents.			
e) Provision of all appropriate drainage, earthworks, road marking and road signage for the project.			
f) Minor localised realignment of the existing roads, accesses, and junctions to accommodate the new facility.			
g) All other ancillary and tie in works to TII, DMURS and National Cycle Manual standards.			

The plans and particulars for this proposed development will be available for inspection at the following locations:

- Donegal County Council Offices, County House, The Diamond, Lifford, Co. Donegal, F93 Y622
- Plans and particulars for this proposed development will also be available for inspection or download at <https://consult.donegal.ie/browse>

The proposals will be available for inspection from 9am on Thursday 12th October 2023 until 4pm on Monday, 13th November 2023.

Submissions and observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and development of the area in which the development is situated may be made in writing to The County Secretariat Office, Donegal County Council, Lifford, County Donegal or emailed to activetravel@donegalcoco.ie before **4.00pm on Wednesday 29th November 2023**.

Note that in accordance with Article 120(1)(b)(i) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) Donegal County Council has concluded, based on a preliminary examination of the nature, size, and location of the development, that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required.

Please mark the front of the envelope with the project name as per the above Schedule Title.

**Bryan Cannon,
A/Director of Service,
Roads & Transportation,
Donegal County Council,
County House,
Lifford.**

APPENDIX E – NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT



**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council**

Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)

ARTICLE 81

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- Provision of all appropriate drainage, earthworks, road marking and road signage for the project.
- Minor localised realignment of the existing roads, accesses, and junctions to accommodate the new facility.
- All other ancillary and tie in works to TII, DMURS and National Cycle Manual standards.

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**Bryan Cannon, A/Director of Service,
Roads & Transportation, Donegal County Council,
County House, Lifford.**