



Draft CycleConnects: Ireland's Cycle Network - Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Report

National Transport Authority

CycleConnects: Ireland's Cycle Network
July 2024

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Supporting EqIA County Assessments (provided in standalone County Assessment Documents and including EqIA Mapbooks)

- 01 – Carlow
- 02 – Cavan
- 03 – Clare
- 04 – Cork
- 05 – Donegal
- 06 – Galway
- 07 – Kerry
- 08 – Kilkenny
- 09 – Laois
- 10 – Leitrim
- 11 – Limerick
- 12 – Longford
- 13 – Louth
- 14 – Mayo
- 15 – Monaghan
- 16 – Offaly
- 17 – Roscommon
- 18 – Sligo
- 19 – Tipperary
- 20 – Waterford
- 21 – Westmeath
- 22 – Wexford

Acronyms and abbreviations

GDA – Greater Dublin Area

SAPS – Small Area Population Statistics

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DTA - Dublin Transport Authority

EAPN Ireland – European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland

EqIA - Equality Impact Assessment

EU – European Union

IHREC - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

IPRT – Irish Penal Reform Trust

LGBTQIA+ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual

NCN – National Cycling Network

NTA - National Transport Authority

PCG – Protected Characteristic Group

RSES - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

TASC – Think-tank for Action on Social Change

TII – Transport Infrastructure Ireland

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is preparing, in consultation with government bodies and local authorities, the 'CycleConnects: Ireland's Cycle Network' Plan (hereafter referred to as 'CycleConnects') to establish cycle networks for all cycle user types across 22 counties in Ireland.

This document sets out the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the CycleConnects Plan and Network. The aim of this assessment is to identify potential impacts on the nine protected characteristic groups (PCGs) set out under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, as well as those living in deprived communities. The assessment also helps demonstrate the NTA's active compliance with equalities legislation during the development and implementation of the overall CycleConnects Network for Ireland.

1.2 The CycleConnects Network

The NTA is developing CycleConnects to establish comprehensive cycle networks for all cycle user types across each county in Ireland, building on the cycle network proposed for the counties in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and included in the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2042 (NTA, 2023). CycleConnects will provide an overarching plan comprising county cycle networks for the 22 counties of Ireland (including 57 urban networks for all towns above a population of 5,000) outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) area.

In the main the proposed CycleConnects Network will follow existing infrastructure, but additional infrastructure and new routes are also proposed to contribute to a more coherent network supporting connections for communities.

The proposed CycleConnects Network has been developed through a process of consultation with local councils, the Department of Transport, the public (in September 2022), iterative environmental assessment and further network development. This is presented in the draft CycleConnects Plan which comprises the CycleConnects Summary Report (NTA, 2024), county maps, urban maps and technical notes. The plan includes proposals for 22 county networks and 57 urban networks that complement existing and proposed national (i.e. National Cycle Network), GDA, metropolitan, as well as Northern Ireland cycle networks.

The proposed defined route types that comprise the CycleConnects Network, and are the subject of this EqIA, are set out in Table 1.1 and shown on Figure 1.1. Further detail on each proposed route type is provided in Table 2.2.

Table 1.1. Proposed principal route types considered within the assessment¹

Route type	Description
Urban Primary	<p>High quality cycle route that can accommodate a high volume of cyclists typical in most urban areas. These will look to feature on major desire lines in town centres and form distinctive radial and orbital cycle routes in the major towns and cities. These primary routes should also form a cohesive and connected network within the urban area that will be simple for all types of cyclists to navigate.</p> <p>Urban primary routes are proposed to be situated on the existing road network (Urban Primary), as well as on proposed new infrastructure (Proposed Urban Primary).</p>

¹ The route types in bold refer to the route descriptions provided on the CycleConnects network maps. Note that proposed bridge crossings as shown on the network maps are considered, where relevant, as part of the assessment of urban networks. Other route types described on the network maps are excluded from the assessment as they are already in existence or have previously been assessed under separate assessments or are shown for information only and are separate to the CycleConnects network.

Route type	Description
Urban Secondary	<p>Second tier cycle route in major urban areas to link with Urban Primary network to add greater route density and options on the network. These will typically be passing through residential areas, school and employment areas.</p> <p>Urban secondary routes are proposed to be situated on the existing road network (Urban Secondary), as well as on proposed new infrastructure (Proposed Urban Secondary).</p>
Inter-urban	<p>On-road cycle route to link key settlements and destinations outside urban areas. These may have potential to provide off-road/segregated routes parallel to the existing road in later years.</p> <p>Inter-urban routes are proposed to be situated on the existing road network (Inter-urban), as well as on proposed new infrastructure (Proposed Inter-urban).</p>
Greenway	<p>Off-road cycle route with no adjacent traffic for the majority of its route. These are typically located on old rail trails or along watercourses with cyclists sharing the route with pedestrians.</p> <p>Greenway routes considered include only those proposed but yet to be constructed (National and Regional Greenway (Proposed) and Local Greenway (Proposed)).</p>

This EqIA assesses the potential equality impacts associated with these route types (see Section 5 for further details) as well as the potential equality impacts associated with the implementation of these route types within and across each of the 22 counties included in the CycleConnects Network (see the County Assessment documents that accompany this EqIA Report for details). Section 2.8 sets out the assumptions and limitations regarding the assessment of any of these equality impacts.

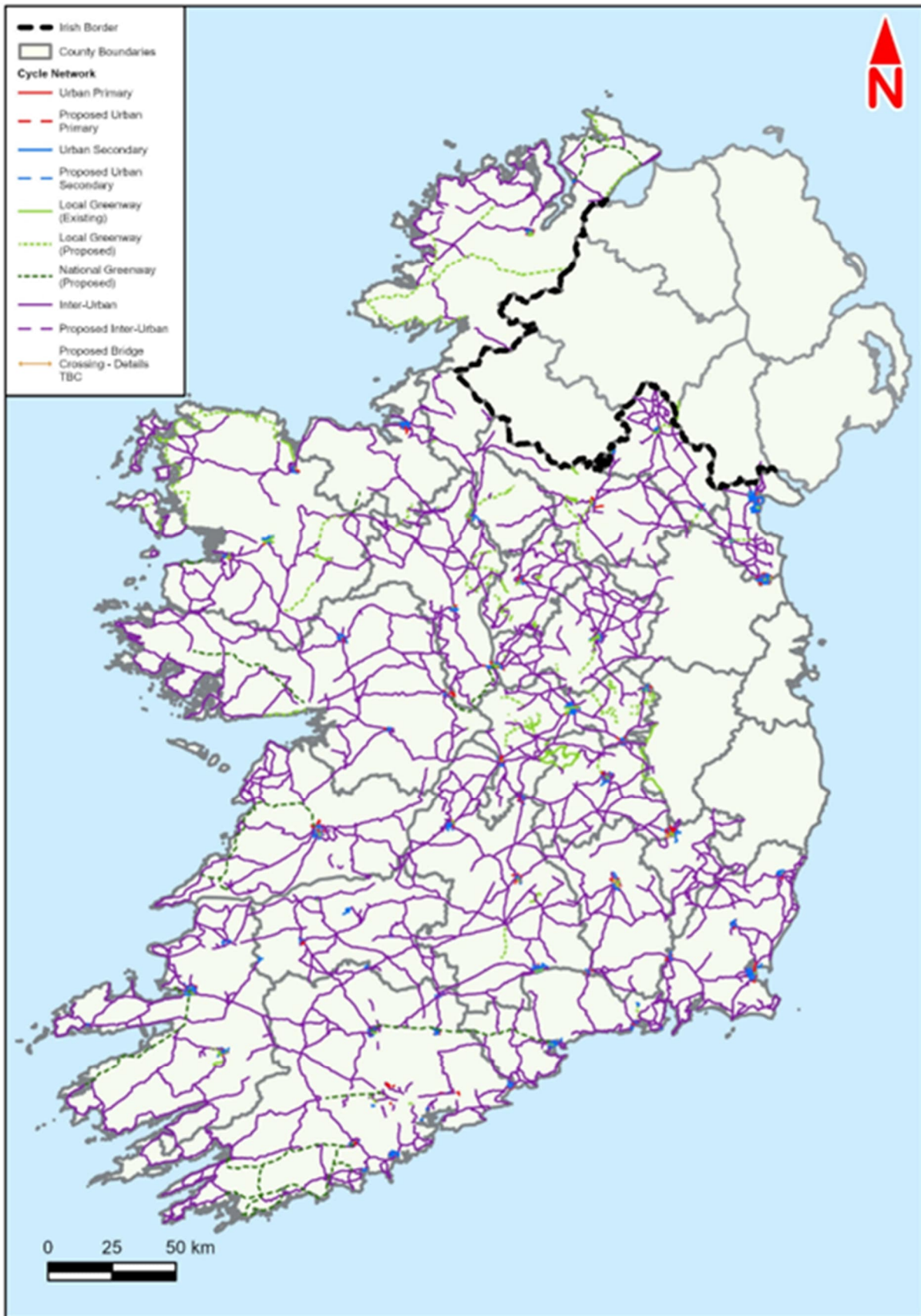


Figure 1.1: The assessed CycleConnects Network.

1.3 Overview of the EqIA Context

1.3.1 Equality and Ireland

Equality is an increasingly important and topical issue in Ireland and the law surrounding it has developed significantly since the 1970s (Galligan, 2000). The pursuit of equality is no longer seen as the exclusive concern of specialised equality agencies or initiatives (Mullally & Smith, 2000). Equality objectives are to be integrated into all aspects of the policy process, including planning, to ensure that PCGs “are provided with the necessary means and resources to participate in society as equal citizens” (The National Economic and Social Forum, 1996, p. 4).

Since 2014, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) has overseen human rights and equality in the country. The IHREC has five strategic priorities including:

- *“Seeking greater economic equality in housing, employment, income and for carers;*
- *Defending access to justice and rule of law in the international protection system;*
- *Respect and recognition including the eradication of racism, ableism, ageism and sexism;*
- *Future proofing and responding to crises which threaten rights and inequality e.g. climate change and the COVID pandemic; and finally;*
- *Encouraging and enforcing compliance of public bodies with the Public Sector Equality Duty” (IHREC, 2022).*

The importance of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality is reflected in Irish law which prohibits discrimination in a variety of settings and on a range of grounds, which is explained in the sub-sections below.

1.3.2 Equality Legislation in Ireland

Equality rights in Ireland are protected under Irish Constitution and international law, and many of the State’s equality and anti-discrimination protections are derived from EU law including the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights and the EU Equality Directives. The primary equality legislation is set out under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 (hereby referred to as ‘the Acts’).

The Acts prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, including transport, accommodation, and education on any ground such as gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, race, and membership of the Traveller community. In addition, the Acts prohibit discrimination in the provision of accommodation services against people who are in receipt of rent supplement, housing assistance, or social welfare payments, and victimisation. PCGs are shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Nine PCGs as outlined in the Acts.

Protected Characteristic	Description
Gender	Men, women, binary, non-binary gender, transgender, transitioning and other gender identities, married and single people; parenting, caring, flexible working and equal pay concerns.
Civil status	Discriminatory concerns based on less favourable treatment due to civil status of being single, married, separated or divorced, widowed, in a civil partnership or being a former civil partner in a civil partnership that has ended by death or been dissolved.
Family status	Including being pregnant or having responsibility as a parent or lone parent for a person under the age of 18 years or responsibility as a parent or resident primary carer of a person of 18 years or over with a disability requiring care or support.
Age	Children (0-16), young people (17-25), working aged people (15-64) and older adults (65 and over).

Protected Characteristic	Description
Disability	People with physical, mental, sensory, visible or hidden medical condition or impairment (e.g., cancer, HIV, dyslexia).
Race	People from various ethnic groups, including colour, nationality, ethnic background and national origin.
Religion or belief	People who have a religious belief; people who are atheist or agnostic; people who have a philosophical belief which affects their view of the world or the way they live.
Sexual orientation	Impacts based on sexual orientation of heterosexual or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual and queer people, and persons with other sexual orientations and gender identities.
Membership of the Traveller community	Member of the Traveller community' means a member of a community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.

For the purpose of this assessment, although not specified as one of the nine PCGs under the 2014 Act, people living in deprived areas are considered as a vulnerable group. Those in material or enforced deprivation in Ireland are those who cannot afford at least two of the eleven goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living (EAPN Ireland, 2019). People living in areas considered as deprived are more likely to experience lower life expectancy, poor general health, and high levels of unemployment than people in affluent areas and are therefore more vulnerable to the socio-economic and environmental impacts of transport infrastructure.

1.3.3 Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty – Human Rights and Equality Commission Act

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (hereby referred to as 'the Duty') is part of the legislative framework governing human rights and equality in Ireland and has been a statutory obligation for public bodies since the enactment of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

The Duty, requires all public sector bodies, including statutory and local authorities, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services; and
- Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

The Duty is a permanent and ongoing statutory obligation. Section 42 of the 2014 Act requires public bodies to assess, address, and report on equality and human rights issues relevant to their function and purpose in a manner that is accessible to the public as follows:

- Assess – the public body must set out in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body;
- Address – the public body must set out in its strategic plan the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues; and
- Report – the public body must report on developments and achievements in its annual report.

The IHREC assists public bodies in adhering to human rights and equality standards in their strategic and daily operations for both staff and service users. Where IHREC considers that there is evidence of a failure by a

public body to perform its functions in line with the Duty it has the power to invite a public body to carry out a review, or to prepare and implement an action plan related to the performance of its function.

1.3.4 The Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2015

The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment in access to and use of goods and services, accommodation and education. The nine protected groups under the Equal Status Acts are gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, age, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community. The Equal Status Acts also protect people in receipt of rent supplement, housing assistance payments or other social welfare payments against discrimination when they are accessing accommodation or related services and amenities.

1.3.5 Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 prohibit discrimination and harassment under the nine protected groups (gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, age, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community) in employment and stipulates that employers should make reasonable adjustments for employees with disability.

1.3.6 Other Relevant Legislation and Policies

Other legislation relevant to the Irish context includes:

- The Disability Act 2005 Part 5 - a statutory obligation on public service providers to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities.

Relevant Irish national policy commitments:

- The Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future (Government of Ireland, 2020a);
- The National Disability Strategy Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (Government of Ireland, 2020b);
- The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 (Government of Ireland, 2020c);
- The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (Government of Ireland, 2017); and
- The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 (Government of Ireland, 2020d).

1.4 EqIA Purpose

An EqIA considers the impact of a plan, policy or project on persons or groups of persons who share characteristics that are protected under The Acts. An EqIA might also include other cohorts that are not protected under The Acts that are considered to be vulnerable within society, such as those on a low-income. In this way, an EqIA can act as an information gathering tool that enables decision makers within public bodies to implement their Equality Duty, in accordance with the Duty.

This EqIA contributes towards both enabling and documenting the NTA's active compliance with its legal duties under the Duty during the design stage of the CycleConnects Network. It is a predictive assessment, considering in advance of implementation, the potential impacts arising from the implementation of the CycleConnects Network, and the likely or possible impacts of these impacts on PCGs. The EqIA serves to inform further design, mitigation, and other relevant project-related decisions.

The objectives underpinning this EqIA are to:

- **Identify protected groups:** Identify the presence of PCGs and those experiencing deprivation in the study area, in particular where such groups are disproportionately represented amongst those most likely to be impacted by the CycleConnects Network;
- **Identify potential impacts:** Identify potential positive and negative impacts of the CycleConnects Network on protected groups and those experiencing deprivation, including how the CycleConnects Network could impact relations between groups;
- **Understand stakeholder needs:** Draw on research and engagement with stakeholders to inform understanding of the likely needs of PCGs and those experiencing deprivation relevant to identified potential impacts; and
- **Identify potential equality impacts and mitigation:** Identify relevant measures, which, as part of the operation of the CycleConnects Network, could further enhance equality, address existing disadvantages or support good relations between PCGs and those experiencing deprivation. Furthermore, identify measures to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate possible negative equality impacts for protected characteristics groups.

1.5 Strategic and Policy Context

The following are various policies and proposals that have been referenced to influence the development of the CycleConnects Network and this assessment:

- Project Ireland 2040;
- Climate Action Plan 2024 (Government of Ireland, 2024).
- The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) (Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, 2019) (Southern Assembly, 2019) (Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2020);
- Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns (Department of Rural and Community Development) (Government of Ireland, 2022);
- National Cycle Network Scoping Study (Department of Transport, 2010);
- Cycle Design Manual (National Transport Authority, 2023);
- Greenways & Cycle Routes Ancillary Infrastructure Guidelines (Department of Transport, 2018);
- Code of Best Practice National and Regional Greenways (Department of Transport, 2021);
- Connecting Ireland 2021: Rural Mobility Plan (National Transport Authority, 2021);
- Active Scheme Funding Allocation 2022 (National Transport Authority, 2022a); and
- Building for everyone, a Universal Design Approach, external environment and approach (National Disability Authority, 2020).

Additional policies and development plans are also relevant at the county level, for example County Development Plans.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

As outlined in Section 1.1, this EqIA assesses the potential equality impacts associated with different route types (see Section 5 for further details) as well as the potential equality impacts associated with the implementation of these route types within and across each of the 22 counties included in the CycleConnects Network (refer to the County Assessment documents that accompany this EqIA Report for details).

An EqIA consists of four stages, screening, assessment, mitigation, and monitoring, which are outlined in more detail below. Undertaking EqIAs can be a useful process for organisations to assess, mitigate and monitor their impacts on equality for PCGs, as well as other diverse groups who are more likely to experience disadvantages. Note, this EqIA does not quantitatively assess the significance of impacts, instead provides qualitative descriptive judgements regarding the nature of potential equality impacts.

Equality impacts may occur where an intervention results in disproportionate and/or differential impact on PCGs.

Disproportionate impacts occur when an intervention has a proportionately greater impact on a PCG than on other members of the general population at a particular location. Disproportionate impacts can arise in two ways:

- Where an impact is predicted on a residential area where PCGs are known to make up a greater proportion of the affected resident population than their representation in the wider district and/or county/region; or
- Where an impact is predicted on a community resource predominantly or heavily used by PCGs (e.g., primary schools attended by children; care homes catering for very older adults).

Differential impacts occur when members of a PCG are affected differently by an intervention because of specific needs, sensitivities or vulnerabilities related to their protected characteristic. Differential impacts can be categorised as such regardless of the number of people affected.

2.2 Baseline

The EqIA baseline presented in the assessment of route types (presented in Section 5 of this report) and the assessment of the implementation of the route types at county level (presented in the County Assessment documents that accompany this EqIA Report) comprises two separate elements:

- Setting the context of the existing cycle network and usage by the general population in Ireland/by county; and
- Presenting the proportion of each PCG in Ireland/each county in comparison to the general population/Ireland.

A study area for data collection on PCGs was defined based on the geographical extent of the assessment and the corresponding availability of population demographic data at the time of assessment. Thus, 2016 Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) was used to ensure the appropriate level of granularity.

Future EqIAs will benefit from incorporating data on forecast changes to population characteristics, particularly those related to population density along planned cycle routes or changes in vulnerable populations residing near planned infrastructure as explained further in Section 2.7 and 2.8.

2.3 Screening

The screening stage determines which protected characteristics are likely to experience differential and/or disproportionate impacts as a result of the CycleConnects Network, and therefore require further consideration within the EqIA. A literature review has been undertaken providing an indication of the issues that are relevant to each PCG and is presented in Section 4 (Screening).

2.4 Assessment

The assessment stage aims to assess the likely differential and disproportionate impacts on PCGs. This EqIA has assessed the consideration of the CycleConnects Network in eliminating discrimination and promoting equality between PCGs. As mentioned in Section 2.1, significance of impacts has not been assessed, rather, qualitative descriptive judgements have been made regarding the nature of potential equality impacts. The assessment is structured around the following three questions:

1. How is this protected characteristic reflected in the county compared to the Ireland (national) average?

A baseline profile for each county has been compiled from publicly available data to provide context for the assessment. The Central Statistics Office's (CSO) Census 2016 SAPS were analysed to identify areas with a high concentration of PCGs in comparison to the average for each county and the national average for Ireland. Images in the EqIA Mapbooks provided in the County Assessment documents highlight areas with the 10% highest concentration of PCGs and sub-groups. The assessment of deprivation has considered the bottom quintile (20%) most disadvantaged areas as shown on the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase & Pratschke, 2017).

2. Will people with the protected characteristic be more affected by the proposals than those in the general population who do not share that protected characteristic?

The EqIA screening exercise in Section 4 of this report draws on available literature to assess where potential impacts could result in differential equality impacts on a PCG. In some cases, PCGs could be subject to both disproportionate and differential equality impacts. A high-level, qualitative analysis of differential impacts on protected groups has been undertaken and is presented in Section 5.

3. What likely positive, neutral or adverse equality impacts will the CycleConnects Network have on each PCG?

Table 2-1 outlines the questions that have been applied to this assessment. The questions were designed to focus on the ability of the proposals to address the needs of each PCG by providing an indication of the issues that are relevant to each group.

Table 2-1: Typical Assessment Questions

Protected Characteristic	Assessment Question
Age	Is the CycleConnects Network predicted to have adverse impacts on children's learning environment, access to school or places of recreation? Are the young or older persons disproportionately represented in the communities impacted by the CycleConnects Network?
Disability	Will provision be made for fully inclusive design as part of the CycleConnects Network?
Gender	Will the construction and/or operation of the CycleConnects Network have a disproportionate impact on availability of or access to services used by women or men? Will the construction and/or operation of the CycleConnects Network have a disproportionate impact on access to employment for women and/or men?
Family Status	Will provision be made for fully inclusive design for pregnant women and parents with young children to navigate active transport freely?

Protected Characteristic	Assessment Question
Civil Status	Is the CycleConnects Network predicted to have adverse impacts on those who are married or in a civil partnership? Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within this protected characteristic?
Race	Are particular racial or ethnic groups disproportionately represented in the communities impacted by the CycleConnects Network? Will the construction and/or operation of the CycleConnects Network impact on the cohesion of these communities?
Religion belief	Considering the racial profile of surrounding communities, are any places of worship likely to be affected by the implementation of the CycleConnects Network?
Membership of the Traveller Community	Will the construction and/or operation of the CycleConnects Network have a disproportionate impact on members of the Traveller community?
Deprivation	Will the construction and/or operation of the CycleConnects Network have a disproportionate impact on people living in areas of high deprivation or high affluence?
Sexual orientation ²	Are particular sexual orientation groups likely to experience a differential impact as a result of the CycleConnects Network?

2.5 Mitigation

Along with identifying mitigation measures where potential equality impacts are likely to occur in respect to PCGs, the assessment also aims to identify opportunities and relevant mitigation measures which can further enhance equality, address existing disadvantage, or support good relations between PCGs and other people. Mitigation measures could include inclusive design of cycle paths for people with disabilities, or provision of enhanced lighting to improve perceptions of safety for women cycling at night-time.

2.6 Monitoring

The Duty obliges a public body to monitor equality and human rights issues relevant to their organisation on an ongoing basis and deliver a report outlining developments annually. The Duty stipulates that continuous monitoring could be reflected in public sector strategic plans and annual work plans (IHREC, 2014).

Monitoring progress following the completion of this EqIA on the CycleConnects Network allows the NTA to demonstrate how it has delivered on its proposals and also provide a framework to identify gaps and to inform the focus of future strategic plans. The NTA EqIA guidance emphasises the importance of addressing equality considerations in both the initial and subsequent design stages of projects. Additionally, it recommends incorporating monitoring and evaluation processes for at least six months to a year following implementation. Information from this monitoring phase will be used to make any changes necessary to improve the CycleConnects Network and provide evidence of unforeseen potential impacts that may be used to direct change where appropriate and proportionate. If the monitoring and analysis of results show that the proposals result in greater adverse impacts than predicted, or if opportunities arose that would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the NTA should ensure that the CycleConnects Network is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

2.7 Data Sources

The CSO's Census 2016 SAPS were used to source data on age, disability, gender, civil status, family status, race, religious belief and Traveller Communities within each county. The Census does not include data on sexual orientation and therefore qualitative data has been sourced from available peer reviewed literature. Similarly, this Census data does not include deprivation data and the Pobal index was used to source deprivation data. Government policy documents and available literature has also been used to inform the

² As described in Section 4 – Screening, potential impacts on sexual orientation/LGBTQIA+ people are not assessed at county level, but for cycle route type only.

identification of potential impacts on PCGs. As part of the EqIA, results from the CSO's 2019 National Travel Survey have also been included.

The 2022 Census was undertaken by the CSO in April 2022 and its outputs were periodically published throughout 2023. It should be noted that at the time of writing, data from the 2022 Census was not available for SAPS areas. Census data from 2022 has been used for the national scale baseline but where comparison with SAPS areas has been undertaken, 2016 Census data has been used for consistency with the plan's development timeframe. Future EqIA work will prioritise the use of the latest available data, in accordance with the Irish Public Sector Equality Duty and its emphasis on continuous improvement. This ensures EqIAs remain relevant, reflecting the evolving demographics of the population.

Data regarding the travel behaviours of PCGs and barriers faced by them in relation to cycling has been gathered from a range of academic literature and research papers available online. Data relating specifically to Ireland has been sourced where possible and supplemented by research from the UK where required.

2.8 Assumptions and Limitations

Changes in public policy, economic and other wider factors will shape, in both intended and unintended ways, the social, economic, and environmental conditions that influence equality impacts and the way they are experienced amongst affected communities. This imposes limitations on identifying the precise impacts directly attributable to the CycleConnects Network.

Where the baseline characteristics of the study area are based on 2016 data, reflecting the plan's development timeframe, it is well understood that population demographics are dynamic and will evolve over time. This includes, but is not limited to, potential changes in age distribution, immigration patterns and socioeconomic factors. Future EqIAs will benefit from incorporating data on forecast changes to population characteristics, particularly those related to population density along planned cycle routes or changes in vulnerable populations residing near planned infrastructure. This information will be integrated into the baseline of future project level EqIAs for the CycleConnects Network where relevant. Similarly, open communication with stakeholders regarding potential population shifts will be essential for adapting the CycleConnects Network to best serve the evolving needs of the community.

Similarly, while it is recognised that the level of implementation of the CycleConnects Network is likely to differ in each county in terms of timing and extent, for the purposes of assessing all potential impacts on PCGs it has been assumed that the CycleConnects Network will be implemented in full across all counties.

For the majority of proposed urban route types within the metropolitan areas of Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick/Shannon, whilst included in the CycleConnects Network, these are not assessed within this EqIA as the proposals are largely consistent with those identified within separate Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies (MATS) for these areas. As such, these proposed routes have already been assessed during the development of these strategies and plans. Any changes to the urban route types within these Metropolitan Areas identified as part of the CycleConnects Network but not assessed in the MATS are assessed within this EqIA.

Assumptions in relation to specific route types comprising the CycleConnects Network considered within this EqIA are outlined in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Assumptions relating to specific route types.

Route type		Nature of Proposed Route	Assumption
Urban Primary		Existing – Proposed route to be based on existing infrastructure	The implementation of proposed urban primary routes on existing infrastructure are expected to be based on existing roads/paths and to include improvements for safety and accessibility ranging from providing appropriate signage, road markings, road surfacing and in some locations speed restrictions, measures for traffic

Route type		Nature of Proposed Route	Assumption
			calming, widening and/or segregation of traffic and junction improvements. Construction works to achieve these improvements on existing infrastructure are largely expected to be small scale and within the boundary of the existing carriageway.
		Proposed – Proposed route to be based on new infrastructure	The implementation of proposed urban primary routes on new infrastructure is assumed to require any and all works required to bring it into operation, including full excavation, grading and paving / surfacing works on undeveloped lands where necessary. This also includes where proposed routes are considered new but make use of existing, but disused, infrastructure (i.e. disused rail lines, bridges, etc.).
Urban Secondary		Existing – Proposed route to be based on existing infrastructure	Assumptions are the same as those above in respect to the implementation of urban primary routes on existing infrastructure.
		Proposed – Proposed route to be based on new infrastructure	Assumptions are the same as those above in respect to the implementation of urban primary routes on new infrastructure.
Inter-urban		Existing – Proposed route to be based on existing infrastructure	The implementation of proposed inter-urban routes in the county network are expected on existing road/path infrastructure. Therefore, works associated with the delivery of these routes are expected to be mainly improvements for safety and accessibility ranging from providing appropriate signage, road markings, road surfaces and potentially in some locations speed restrictions. Some limited construction works may be required within the existing road corridor but this will be identified at project level stages.
		Proposed – Proposed route to be based on new infrastructure	The implementation of proposed inter-urban routes on new infrastructure is assumed to require any and all works required to bring it into operation, including full excavation, grading and paving / surfacing works on undeveloped lands where necessary. This also includes where proposed routes are considered new but make use of existing, but disused, infrastructure (i.e. disused rail lines, bridges, etc.).
Greenway		Existing – Proposed route to be based on existing infrastructure	Excluded from the scope of the EqIA as they are already in existence.
		Proposed – Proposed route to be based on new infrastructure	The implementation of proposed greenways routes on new infrastructure is assumed to require any and all works required to bring it into operation, including full excavation, grading and paving / surfacing works on undeveloped lands where necessary. This also includes where proposed routes are considered new but make use of existing, but disused, infrastructure (i.e. disused rail lines, bridges, etc.).

3. Baseline Context

3.1 Cycling in Ireland

The National Travel Survey (2019) found that, in Ireland, 15% of over 18's undertake journeys by bicycle, of which 6.1% travel via this mode less than monthly (CSO, 2019). The top reasons for choosing to cycle were stated as enjoying cycling (55.7%), keeping fit/exercise (49%), greater freedom (17.6%) and greater convenience (16.5%). When respondents were asked what would encourage them to make more cycling journeys in the future, the most common response was safer cycling routes (31.7%) followed better health (20.5%) and more specific cycling routes (17.3%) (ibid.).

Between 2011 and 2016 there has been a notable increase in the number of people cycling to work with 39,803 travelling in 2011 compared to 56,837 in 2016 representing a 43% increase (CSO, 2016). The greatest increase (81%) was seen in the 15 to 24 age group which represents 8% of cyclists in Ireland (ibid.). Those under 40 make up almost 60% of cyclists and 48% of the commuting workforce. For those over 40, there has been a 43% increase in the number of cyclists since 2011, growing to 23,556 (ibid.).

Image 3.1 shows the distribution of those cycling to work, college or school across Ireland. Cycling is most common in Ireland's cities, particularly in Dublin, Galway, Cork and Limerick where, in some locations, over 16% of the population cycle to work school or college. Across the majority of Ireland, the cycling rate to school, work or college is less than 4%. The images in the EqIA Mapbooks provided in the County Assessment documents accompanying this report illustrate these proportions at a more granular county level.

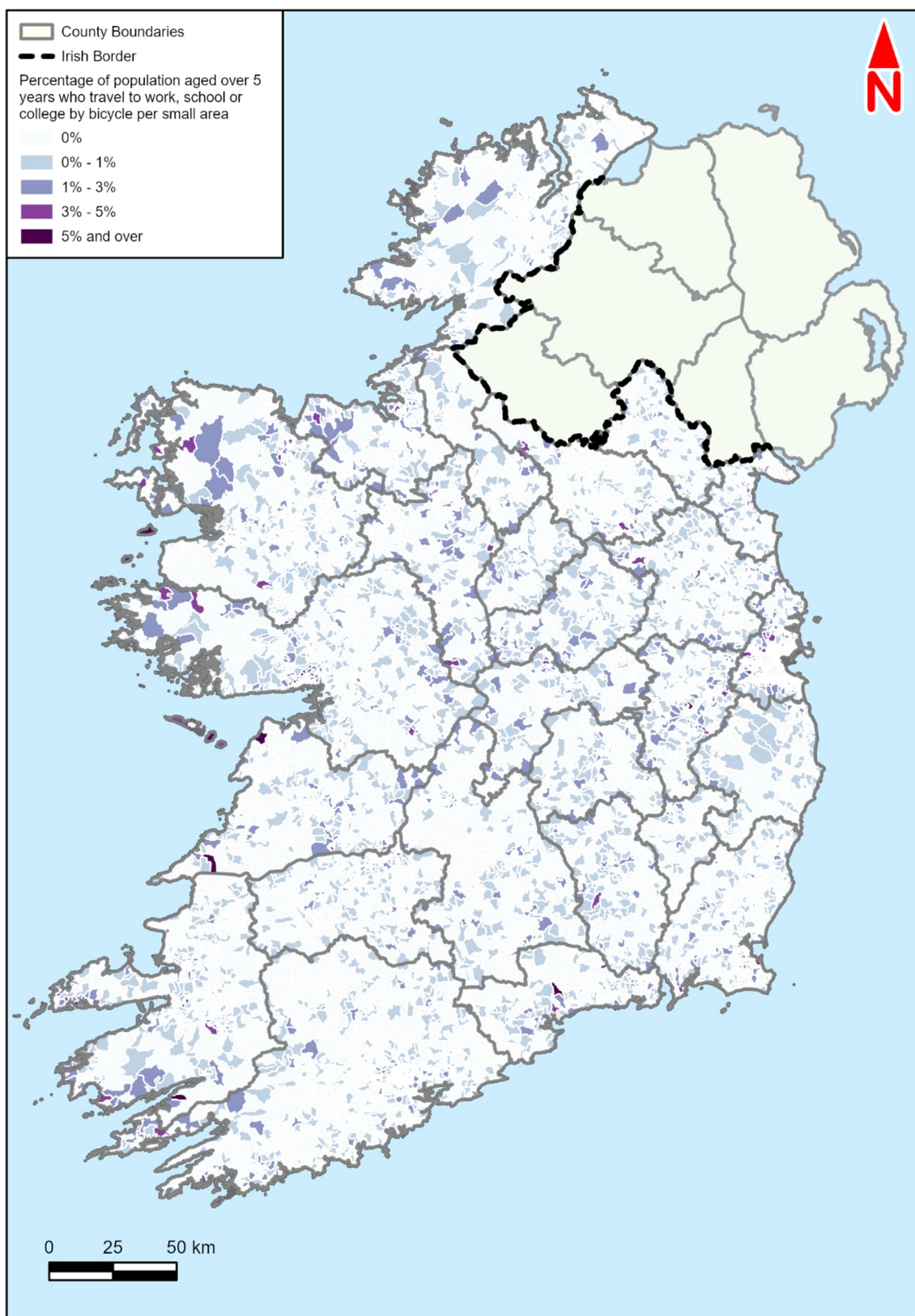


Image 3.1: Percentage of population who travel to work, school or college by bike in Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2016). Note: Although shown on the map, counties within the GDA are not included in the CycleConnects Network.

3.2 Protected Characteristic Groups

Census data from the 2022 Census pertaining to the baseline population demographics for Ireland as a whole has been collected for each PCG and is presented in Table 3-1. The 2022 Census reported the total population of Ireland as 5,149,139 (Central Statistics Office, 2022).³

Table 3-1: Baseline Population Demographics of Ireland by PCG (2022)⁴

Protected Characteristic Group	Sub-Group	Number In Sub-group	Percentage in Ireland (%)
Age	0-19	1,349,915	26.2%
	20-39	1,318,043	25.6%
	40-64	1,704,866	33.1%
	65-84	691,874	13.4%
	85 and over	84,441	1.6%
Disability	Females	578,350	11.2%
	Males	531,207	10.3%
	Overall	1,109,557	21.5%
Gender	Female	2,604,590	50.6%
	Male	2,544,549	49.4%
Family Status	Families/ Couples with Children	665,903	12.9%
	Families/ Couples without Children	394,052	7.7%
	One Parent Families	219,996	4.3%
Civil Status	Single	2,773,334	53.9%
	Married	1,912,850	37.1%
	Separated	119,452	2.3%
	Divorced	133,420	2.6%
	Widowed	210,083	4.1%
Race	White Irish	3,893,056	76.6%
	White Irish Traveller	32,949	0.6%
	Other White	518,140	10.2%
	Black or Black Irish	76,245	1.5%
	Asian or Asian Irish	166,206	3.3%
	Other	85,107	1.7%
	Not Stated	313,176	6.2%
Religion / Belief	Catholic	3,540,412	68.8%
	Other	508,107	9.9%
	No Religion	755,455	14.7%
	Not Stated	345,165	6.7%

³ Note that whilst the data presented is for 2022, as outlined in Section 2, the EqIA county level assessments in the County Assessment Documents rely on 2016 Census data in line with the Plan's development timeframe. Future EqIAs will benefit from incorporating data on forecast changes to population characteristics, particularly those related to population density along planned cycle routes or changes in vulnerable populations residing near planned infrastructure.

⁴ Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Protected Characteristic Group	Sub-Group	Number In Sub-group	Percentage in Ireland (%)
Membership of the Traveller Community	White Irish Traveller	32,949	0.6%

4. Screening

This section sets out the initial EqIA screening exercise undertaken to identify which PCGs are likely to experience differential and/or disproportionate impacts as a result of the implementation of the CycleConnects Network, and therefore require further consideration within the EqIA. The outcomes of the screening exercise are outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Screening Outcomes

Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact	Screened in? Yes/No
Age	<p>School age safety: A 2015 survey of 1,301 11–17 year-olds in secondary education and colleges found that 'almost half (47%) said parental worries were preventing them from starting to cycle or cycling more' (Brake, 2015). Similarly, 75% of UK parents do not think the route between their child's school and home is safe enough to walk or cycle, citing traffic as the issue (Brake, 2015).</p> <p>Older populations: Older people are considered to have an increased dependency upon public transport and often place high importance on the availability of routes close to home. Changes to the accessibility of public transport is therefore likely to have differential impacts on older members of local communities (International Transport Forum, 2017). Evidence suggests that older people have a lesser likelihood of being able to walk long distances. For this reason, the introduction of a physical barrier within the local community could increase their journey times and reduce their ability to access community facilities (Jones, Midell, & Anciaes, 2015). A study by Sustrans also found that older people cycle less than any other adult age group and less interest exists amongst older people to start cycling; 10% of people aged 65+ cycle once a week, compared to 35% of people aged 16–25 (NTA and Sustrans, 2022). Older people also generally do not think cycling is safe (Sustrans, 2020).</p>	Yes
Disability	<p>Reliance on private cars: People with a mobility impairment can often only achieve a seamless journey by relying on the private car (for example, either as a driver, a passenger or in a taxi) (Clatyon, Parking, & Chris, 2017). However, 24% of individuals with a disability did not have access to a car or van compared to 12% of the general population in Ireland (Disability Federation of Ireland, 2019). As a result, Woodcock (2008) argues people with disabilities would benefit from improved access to non-car transport.</p> <p>Social context: Interaction on public paths can create a negative experience for people with a social impairment who might find the increase in the number of cyclists challenging (Clatyon, Parking, & Chris, 2017).</p> <p>Demographic context: Almost 1 in 5 Irish Travellers are categorised as having a disability. The most common type of disability was 'difficulty with pain, breathing or any other chronic illness', followed by a 'difficulty with basic physical activities' (Central Statistics Office, 2006). The potential impacts outlined in this section should be considered in conjunction with socio-economic factors and personal safety concerns outlined in the 'membership of the Traveller community' section below.</p> <p>Cyclists with disabilities: Cycling rates amongst people with disabilities are lower than those who have not, even though 65% of cyclists with disabilities find cycling easier than walking, with the same proportion using their cycle as a mobility aid (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2020). In the Dublin Metropolitan Area, 8% of people with a disability cycle at least once a week, compared to 27% of people without a disability (NTA and Sustrans, 2022).</p> <p>Cyclists with disabilities cite inaccessible cycle infrastructure, route quality, cost of adapted cycles, parking for adapted cycles, risk of loss of cycle, risk of breakdown and legibility of cycle infrastructure as barriers (Hickman, 2015) (Andrews, 2018) (Clatyon, Parking, & Chris, 2017).</p>	Yes

Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact	Screened in? Yes/No
Gender	<p>Cycling Rates: Women are significantly less likely to cycle than men within Ireland, latest figures indicate that while cycling rates have increased generally within the last 10 years in Ireland, only approximately 25% of cyclists are female. The gendered cycling gap is even more pronounced amongst young people, with only 10% of teenage girls actively cycling (Central Statistics Office, 2019),</p> <p>Physical and personal safety: Key themes indicated across literature as the cause of Ireland's cycling gap is the increased perception of risk held by women. 59% of women in the Dublin Metropolitan Area consider their neighbourhood safe for cycling compared to 71% of men (NTA and Sustrans, 2022). This centres around risk to physical safety from other forms of traffic (e.g. motorised traffic) as well as risk to personal safety (e.g. sexual harassment). An Irish campaign group, 'Women on Wheels' found various reports of women experiencing intimidating behaviour from men when cycling including car horns and verbal harassment which acts as a barrier to cycling (O'Dowd, 2019). This has led to cycling and cycle routes becoming a 'male landscape' (Carroll, 2020); (O'Dowd, 2019).</p> <p>Bike storage: Various studies have found that women are more likely to be put off from cycling due to a lack of bike storage/parking facilities, particularly in apartment blocks and the inconvenience associated with transporting the bicycle from the building entrance to the individual's apartment (Carroll, 2020).</p> <p>Cycling to school: A study by Higgins (2021) found multi-factorial barriers to cycling to school for girls compared to boys including uniforms, traffic concerns, physical efforts of cycling, impact on personal appearance and the influence of peers and parents (Higgins & Aoife, 2021).</p> <p>Rural versus urban: It is also noted that female participation in cycling is lower, and therefore the gendered cycling gap more pronounced, in urban areas when compared to rural areas (Sustrans, 2018) (Sustrans, 2018). This again is due to perceptions of infrastructure insufficiencies such as cycle lanes being too narrow and/or close to motorised traffic and fear of personal attack (ibid.). One study found that routes with segregated cycle lanes have significantly higher cycling rates, and while this impact is stronger for females, it was not found to be statistically different across genders.</p> <p>Medical Facility Utilisation: According to the 2019 NHS Summary Report, (National Healthcare Service, 2019), 57.8% of hospital attendances were women compared to 40.6% men. More specifically to Ireland, the annual attendance of GP visits per year for men is 3.5, whereas for women it is 4.5 (Department of Health, 2019). Thus, women are more likely to use/require medical facilities and healthcare services, and so accessibility by all forms of transport including active modes of travel is important for women and their wellbeing.</p>	Yes
Family status	<p>Cycling with children: Through focus groups, evidence was found to suggest that many people in the UK worry about cycling with children (Sustrans, 2020). While 65% of residents in the Dublin Metropolitan Area thought the level of safety for cycling in their area was good, this percentage decreased to 56% when asked about the level of safety for children cycling. This could create a barrier for cycling as a travel choice for families with children.</p>	Yes
Civil status	<p>Equality: In Ireland, the overall treatment of people across the system and institution of marriage, civil partnerships and cohabiting couples is not always consistent, or equitable, and this can have a direct bearing on economic equality (TASC, 2015). However, there is no evidence to suggest that this PCG experiences proportionately worse transport service today than other groups.</p>	No
Race	<p>Car usage: In the absence of suitable statistics for Ireland, UK statistics show that ethnic minority groups are disproportionately less likely to have access to a private car (GOV, 2023) compared to white people aged 17 and over (76%), only 53% of black people hold a full driving licence. This suggests that Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnicities</p>	Yes

Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact	Screened in? Yes/No
	<p>are less likely to use a private vehicle and may therefore be more dependent on public transport and active travel modes (GOV.UK, 2020).</p> <p>Ethnic minority cyclists: While 29% of people from ethnic minority groups in the Dublin Metropolitan Area cycle at least once a week, a similar percentage (27%) currently do not cycle and say they would like to (NTA and Sustrans, 2022). Barriers stated are lack of confidence in cycling skills, lack of facilities at home or work (e.g. secure bike storage) and the cost of cycling (Sustrans, 2020).</p> <p>Racism: Fear of harassment and crime impacts ethnic minority communities using public spaces as pedestrians or while on public transport (Palacin, Vigar, & Peacock, 2016). While the impact of fear of racial harassment in cycling is under-researched, Goodman and Aldred (2018) suggest this fear could be a barrier to cycling.</p>	
Religion	<p>Safety: Perceptions of safety can differ between different cultures and faiths, particularly those with concerns related to hate crime. For religious people who have a marked religious identity through clothing there is an increased risk of harassment or discrimination in public (Immigrant Council of Ireland Independent Law Centre, 2016),</p> <p>Cultural and religious barriers: Based on Chaudhry's study (2020), Muslim women in London identified cultural barriers to cycling based on religious beliefs and community norms and expectations. An Irish study identified other barriers such as those related to clothing, access to bicycles and infrastructure that was perceived as unsafe, as well as attitudes of motorists to cycling (EPA, 2013).</p>	Yes
Membership of the Traveller Community	<p>Deprivation and/or unemployment: Members of the Traveller community are significantly more likely to face socio-economic adversity and/or high levels of multiple deprivation (Nolan & Maître, 2008). Economic inactivity is particularly high among members of the Traveller community, with an unemployment rate of 80.2% (CSO, 2019). High levels of deprivation and employment may result in Travellers experiencing exclusion from the cycle pathways due to lack of resources to purchase a bicycle as well as personal protective equipment (e.g. helmet, bicycle lights, bell, etc.) (Oglivie & Goodman, 2012).</p> <p>Harassment and discrimination: Members of the Traveller community were identified as a particularly vulnerable group as part of the National Action Plan- Social Inclusion (2007-2016). Members of the Traveller community are ten times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination which could limit the extent to which Irish Travellers use an exposed form of transport such as cycling from fear of harassment and/or discrimination (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2017).</p> <p>Geography: Logistically, Irish Travellers may be more excluded from participating in modes of public transport given that Irish Traveller sites are often remote and therefore access to public provisions is often difficult and, in some instances, almost non-existent (Cemlyn, 2009).</p>	Yes
Deprivation	<p>Perceptions of safety: There is a strong correlation between the level of deprivation and perception of a space as more 'unsafe' (IPRT, 2012). Equally there is a parallel between perception of a space being 'unsafe' and lack of space use due to an increased perceived risk and fear to personal safety (e.g. physical attack, harassment, discrimination (Jones A. H., 2009). In a survey conducted by the NTA and Sustrans (2022), 59% of the socio-economic group containing semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations; homemakers, and people not in employment thought cycling safety in their Dublin Metropolitan Area was good. This is in comparison to 65% of the socio-economic group which includes professionals and managerial roles.</p> <p>Evidence shows that higher levels of deprivation can have an adverse 'compound' impact on certain positionalities because of those people with protected characteristics feeling disproportionately vulnerable to attack in spaces of high deprivation, for example younger children, older adults, people with disability, and people of ethnic minority groups (Scharf, 2005) (Bassul, 2021).</p>	Yes

Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact	Screened in? Yes/No
	<p>Cost of cycling: Individuals facing economic deprivation and/or deprivation can also be disproportionately excluded from participating in cycling due to lack of resource to purchase a bicycle and/or safely store said bicycle (Ogilvie & Goodman, 2012). Therefore, high levels of socio-economic deprivation can act as an excluder for participation in cycling itself and/or act as an exaggerator to further prohibit people already largely excluded from cycling because of additional protected characteristics.</p> <p>Social Class: The distribution of how people of different classes are distributed geographically interacts with how they travel and what travel modes they can access. People of a higher class/with more money have more options of where to live and how to travel – with transport links being a key component of land/house value (NatCen, 2019).</p> <p>Opportunities: Public transport is important for accessing opportunities such as jobs and education, as well as services such as healthcare and social services. Where people are experiencing disadvantages based on socio-economic deprivation and location, this could prevent them from using transport methods e.g. even where local transport is available in an area of deprivation, there may be limited opportunities in the area; travelling further and spending more to travel would act as a barrier for those already in socio-economic deprivation (NatCen, 2019).</p>	
Sexual Orientation	<p>Participation in cycling: There is little data available on the participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+) people in cycling, as this group have been overlooked from previous surveys and strategies. An open letter from LGBTQIA+ cyclists and allies to British cycling organisations and government bodies called for research to be done to increase the visibility of LGBTQIA+ people in the sport, including data collection and how to overcome the specific challenges faced by this PCG (PrideOut, 2021).</p> <p>Equality of opportunity: This letter states that opportunities for LGBTQIA+ people to access and enjoy cycling are not equal for many reasons; for example, due to the cost of owning a bike and accessories or as a result of poor experiences of physical education at school. A report by Sport England (SportEngland, 2016) found that LGBTQIA+ people are nearly twice as likely to be inactive as the general population. In addition, 29% of gay men and 24% of transgender people report being attacked in public, meaning these groups are more likely to feel unsafe using public spaces such as cycle paths (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2019). The available data illustrates that LGBTQIA+ people are less likely to cycle than the general population, for varied and complex reasons.</p> <p>Lack of data: Data on the population of LGBTQIA+ people in Ireland is limited and is not available at a county or SAPS level. Therefore, this PCG have not been assessed at a county-wide level but commentary is provided regarding the potential impacts of various cycle route types in Section 5.</p>	Yes

5. Assessment

5.1 Introduction

The EqIA presented in this section has been undertaken for the CycleConnects Network which comprises cycle networks for the 22 counties of Ireland outside the GDA area, subject to the assumptions described in Section 2.8.

This assessment does not consider potential equality impacts across the CycleConnects Network at a specific route level. The assessment has considered:

- i) The potential impacts of cycle routes based on their typology (Table 5.1 in Section 5.2); and
- ii) Potential impacts on PCGs from the proposed CycleConnects network at a county level (presented for each county in the County Assessment documents that accompany this EqIA report and summarised in Table 5.2 in Section 5.3).

5.2 Assessment of Proposed Route Types

The proposals consist of a defined cycle network (i.e. the CycleConnects Network) within 22 counties of Ireland that is made up of proposed (cycle) routes on both new and existing infrastructure. The proposals do not seek to identify the exact works or route alignments required to physically create the proposed routes set out as part of the CycleConnects Network. Such works will be undertaken at a later date should any of the proposed routes seek development or planning consent.

The different types of proposed route are likely to create different equality impacts as outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Assessment of Cycle Route Types on PCGs.

Protected Characteristic Group	Urban Primary	Urban Secondary	Inter-urban	Greenway
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Primary and Secondary routes are likely to benefit working age people by increasing access to urban centres and therefore allow for further access to employment opportunities. Similarly, for those attending school, Urban Primary and Secondary routes can provide routes to education and amenities while also helping to incentivise a healthy lifestyle. Whilst many routes will be made wider, high volume traffic in proximity to these route types could exclude certain age profiles such as older adults and children who may prefer or require additional space to cycle safely, reducing the accessibility of Urban Primary and Secondary routes for these age groups. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-urban routes are proposed to be situated on the existing road network. This means cyclists will share the road with vehicles, which could pose a safety concern for all age groups. Children, older adults, and parents may have greater concerns about safety. Children and older adults might feel this risk more due to a perceived need for more space to cycle comfortably. Furthermore, the safety of cycle routes for children is of concern for parents, particularly in regards to routes adjacent to traffic. These routes may have potential to provide off-road/segregated routes parallel to the existing road in later years. This would make them feel safer in the long run and encourage younger people to utilise these routes. Similarly, plans to reduce default speed limits on national secondary, rural and local roads in Ireland will further improve the safety of these routes and reduce risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routes which are 'off-road' in the sense that they are not adjacent to moving traffic, could be more accessible to older people and children due to their enhanced safety. Pedestrians along Greenway routes with auditory difficulties (e.g. older adults) may find the increase in cyclists difficult or even may be put at risk if they cannot hear approaching cyclists sharing the route (Clatyon, Parking, & Chris, 2017). Access to open space and nature has wellbeing benefits for all age groups, however children may benefit particularly due to increased access to green space, instilling healthy habits for later life.
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the high quality of these routes, Urban Primary and Secondary routes may be more accessible for people with disabilities. This could in turn provide an affordable form of transportation for people with disabilities and allow for further connectivity to amenities (e.g. service provision, support groups, employment opportunities). Given Urban Primary and Secondary routes will be designed to support a high volume of cycle traffic, and feature on major desire lines, it is likely that 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Inter-urban routes represent an increased hazard for all groups as it is proposed that they will share space with vehicles. However, these hazards will likely be felt more strongly by people with disabilities using adapted bikes that may be lower to the ground. Cyclists who are lower to the ground often feel vulnerable at traffic lights, as they fear they are less likely to be seen by vehicles (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2020). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrians along Greenway routes with auditory difficulties or social impairment may find the increase in cyclists difficult or even may be put at risk if they cannot hear approaching cyclists sharing the route (Clatyon, Parking, & Chris, 2017). Routes which are 'off-road' in the sense that they are not adjacent to moving traffic, could be more accessible to people with disabilities due to their enhanced safety.

Protected Characteristic Group	Urban Primary	Urban Secondary	Inter-urban	Greenway
	<p>these routes will also be better signposted. If so, these routes could be easier to navigate for people with cognitive disabilities and allow for easier wayfinding. However, people with disabilities may require adapted bikes which may be larger/wider than non-adapted bikes. Individuals with disabilities who require adapted bikes could be discouraged from using these routes and therefore excluded from the network with the anticipated high volume of cyclists along these routes where space may be limited.</p>			
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limiting factor to women cycling is the perceived threat to physical and emotional safety from other road users. Women could feel more comfortable using Urban Primary and Secondary routes given that the anticipated high volume of traffic would mean that women may not feel as isolated and at higher risk of threat (O'Dowd, 2019). • Similarly, segregated lanes typically have higher cycling rates and this could result in more women taking up cycling due to an increased perception of safety (Sustrans, 2018). • On the other hand, insufficient infrastructure such as cycle lanes being too close to motorised traffic may inhibit women or transgender people from cycling on these routes due to safety concerns (Sustrans, 2018). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting on Inter-urban routes is likely to be less frequent. This may make the perceived risk of abuse to woman higher, particularly at night, acting as a barrier to the use of Inter-urban routes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting on Greenway routes is likely to be less frequent. This may make the perceived risk of abuse to woman higher, particularly at night, acting as a barrier to the use of Greenway routes. • On the other hand, research suggests segregated lanes generate higher cycling rates, and as a result, Greenway routes may encourage female cycling via increased perception of safety (Sustrans, 2018).

Protected Characteristic Group	Urban Primary	Urban Secondary	Inter-urban	Greenway
Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families with children may benefit from proposed Urban Primary and Secondary routes which are designed to connect to town centres as well as residential, education and employment areas, by providing same routes to amenities used by families. On the other hand, increased numbers of cyclists and concerns over safety on busy routes could result in families feeling unsafe or uncomfortable to travel with children (Sustrans, 2020). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data gathered for the county level assessments (see the County Assessment documents) suggests that generally, families with children are more likely to live outside of urban centres, and single people are more likely to live within urban areas. Therefore, families with children may benefit from the connectivity provided by Inter-urban routes from their residential settlements into urban centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families are more likely to use off-carriageway facilities (Department of Transport, 2020). Greenway routes are those which are typically situated away from other road users and transect open greenspace area. As a result, they would benefit from Greenway routes, as these routes could be perceived as quieter and safer routes, away from high volume traffic and its associated risks.
Civil Status	N/A – screened out of assessment			
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the absence of suitable statistics for Ireland, UK statistics show that ethnic minority groups are disproportionately less likely to have access to a private car (GOV, 2023) and are therefore more dependent on alternative forms of transport. Providing a high quality cycling route connecting urban areas (such as the proposed Urban Primary and Secondary routes) can offer an affordable, healthy alternative to private car use and motorised public transport options. As a result, access to facilities and employment opportunities could be improved for this group. Ethnic minority groups also experience greater fear of harassment or abuse when using public spaces or waiting for public transport (at bus stops). Although the perceived fear of harassment for ethnic minorities while cycling is an under studied area, it has been suggested that this fear could extend to choosing cycling as a transport method and therefore this could act as barrier to their use (Palacin, Vigar, & Peacock, 2016) (Goodman & Aldred, 2018). 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in urban areas with poor access to green spaces (Runnymede, 2020). Greenway routes could therefore provide additional opportunities for accessing nature from urban areas, improving the wellbeing of ethnic minority groups (Runnymede, 2020). Research suggests that a barrier to cycling for ethnic minorities is related to a lack of confidence. Greenway routes could be easier to navigate than urban cycle lanes adjacent to a road with traffic, and thereby provide additional opportunity to take up cycling.
Religion / Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence suggests that people of certain religious beliefs are more likely to be subject to discrimination and harassment in public places. Good quality cycle routes in urban areas (such as the proposed Urban Primary and Secondary routes) may help to reduce this risk by providing a safe and accessible form of transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People of certain religious beliefs have reported they are more likely to be subject to discrimination and harassment in public places. Inter-urban and Greenway routes are generally more secluded in areas with less traffic, which may result in certain religious groups feeling vulnerable to harassment due to the lack of informal security. Cycling may be generally less accessible for those who wear certain types of religious clothing which are restrictive or suitable to cycle in. In additional, cultural norms and behaviours could act as a barrier preventing some religious groups from using the routes. 		

Protected Characteristic Group	Urban Primary	Urban Secondary	Inter-urban	Greenway
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cycling may be generally less accessible for those who wear certain types of religious clothing which are restrictive or unsuitable to cycle in. In addition, cultural norms and behaviours could act as a barrier preventing some religious groups from using any of the route types. 			
Membership of the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish Travellers often reside in rural locations. Thus, Urban Primary and Secondary routes and those connecting urban areas (i.e. Inter-urban routes) will provide a benefit, through access to and between urban centres which were previously unavailable due to the lack of sufficient public transport (Cemlyn, 2009). This improved accessibility could also provide increased education and employment opportunities. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish Travellers tend to face higher levels of deprivation (Nolan & Maître, 2008) and undergo higher economic inactivity (80.2% unemployment according to the CSO in 2019). This may lead them to being less able to afford the necessary cycle equipment required to make use of Greenway routes.
Sexual Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A limiting factor to LGBTQIA+ is the perceived threat to physical and emotional safety from other road users. For all route types, there is potential for safety improvements (e.g. lighting) to increase uptake of cycling within this PCG. This could result in better access to facilities and employment, thereby increasing equality of opportunity for this group. 			

5.3 County Level Assessment Summary

The CycleConnects Network has the potential to increase equality of opportunities for PCGs by providing increased accessibility to local amenities and employment opportunities and offering safe and affordable active travel routes.

For all counties, it is expected that women, ethnic minority groups and religious groups could benefit from improvements to existing infrastructure in the urban environment such as enhanced lighting⁵ along cycle routes, causing them to feel safer and at a lesser risk of harassment. People with disabilities are also likely to experience an improvement in equality as a result of infrastructure improvements that improve accessibility through compliance with the Cycle Design Manual (e.g. gradient design requirements), though specifics are unknown at this early stage in the design process. This manual delves into design issues such as topographical constraints as well as vehicular environment and pedestrian environments.

Overall, the CycleConnects Network is expected to have positive impacts for all PCGs. Positive impacts predominantly relate to increased accessibility to facilities and opportunities, as well as safety improvements which could encourage uptake of active travel among PCGs. However, it is important that potentially adverse impacts on PCGs are considered further during the preliminary design stage, and that options for enhancing positive impacts are explored.

Table 5.2 provides a summary of the potential impacts on PCGs at a county level. Detailed baseline and assessment information for each county included in the scope of the CycleConnects Network is presented in the County Assessment documents that accompany this EqIA Report.

⁵ Commuter lighting should follow Guidance note 8 (Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2023) to ensure lighting responds adequately to permit safe usage, but avoids over-illumination and potentially disruptive dimming states of lighting groups. For recreational use alternative low-wattage ground level luminaires are preferable to avoid impacts on biodiversity.

Table 5.2: Summary of the Potential Impacts on PCGs for Specific Counties

County	Summary of Potential Impacts on PCGs
Carlow	<p>The CycleConnects Network in County Carlow is likely to have particular benefits for younger people (i.e. 0 to 19 year olds and 20 to 39 year olds) and people with disabilities, particularly in Carlow (Town), where the proportion of these groups is higher than the Ireland national average. For younger people, the CycleConnects Network will improve access to key educational facilities including Saint Joseph's Catholic School, St Leo's College, and Presentation College Carlow. Additionally, access to medical facilities such as Saint Fiaccs House, Carlow District Hospital and Caredoc Carlow, will be increased by the CycleConnects Network, which is likely to have benefits for people who use these facilities more regularly, such as women, pregnant women, older adults, and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Carlow (Town) is set to benefit from improvements to proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes as well as proposed Inter-urban routes extending to the rural areas. For families with children residing in rural areas, this could increase access to key amenities within population centres. In Carlow (Town), proposed routes and upgrades to existing infrastructure could result in accessibility improvements to Carlow Islamic Cultural Centre and Carlow Cathedral for relevant religious groups.</p> <p>Further consideration should be given to the Irish Travellers who often face increased levels of deprivation and may experience inequalities because of a lack of connectivity via active travel. Affordability of cycle equipment may also be a factor in preventing the Traveller community from taking up this mode of travel.</p>
Cavan	<p>The CycleConnects Network in County Cavan includes a new Greenway route, traversing from the south of the county from the border with County Longford into Cavan (Town) and continuing to Killashandra. The Greenway route may benefit the PCGs living along this route and those who have reason to travel into the towns that the route connects (e.g. for employment, education, medical or religious reasons). These PCGs include in particular 40 to 64 and 65 to 84 year olds; families with children; members of the Traveller community; religious groups travelling to places of worship; and those living in deprived areas outside of these towns.</p> <p>Improvements and upgrades to proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes in Cavan (Town) and Inter-urban routes across the county may benefit the PCGs that are more likely to reside there, specifically people living in urban deprived areas, ethnic minority groups and younger age groups. Families with young children, women, pregnant women, people with disabilities and older adults living in Cavan (Town) could benefit from improved accessibility to Cavan Hospital, as they tend to use medical facilities more frequently.</p>
Clare	<p>The proposed CycleConnects Network in County Clare includes a proposed National Greenway Route connecting Ennis to Kilkee and Kilrush, via Ennistymon and various smaller settlements. This proposed route is likely to benefit PCGs living in rural areas and settlements served by the Greenway route along its extent, particularly people aged 65 and over, families with young children, and the Traveller community. Additionally, the presence of such a Greenway route of high amenity value could encourage uptake of recreational cycling among the elderly population, who are generally less likely to cycle than any other adult age group.</p> <p>New routes and upgrades, particularly in Ennis, would benefit the PCGs who are more likely to live in these urban areas including people with disabilities, families without children and one parent families, people in socio-economic deprivation, ethnic minority groups and people of 'Other' religious belief. The proposed urban routes network should provide equitable access to key amenities and employment opportunities. The geographical extent of the CycleConnects Network should provide safe and accessible cycle routes to facilities such as Holy Family Junior school, Ennis Community College, St. Flannan's College, Ennis National School, and the Ennis Educate Together National School. This should result in positive impacts for families with children, who are known to have safety concerns when travelling by bike.</p> <p>Additionally, improved access to places of worship in Ennis, such as the Ennis Mosque and Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Ennis, would differentially benefit people of 'Other' and Catholic religious faiths respectively. Additionally, people who require access to medical facilities and hospitals more frequently, such as people with disabilities, older adults, women, pregnant women, and families with young children could benefit from improved accessibility to these facilities in Ennis.</p>
Cork	<p>The CycleConnects Network in County Cork includes several new Greenway routes, to the east of Mallow, along the south coast, and extending west and southwards from Bandon. These proposed Greenway and the Inter-urban routes may benefit the PCGs living along these routes and those who have reason to travel into the towns' urban centres</p>

County	Summary of Potential Impacts on PCGs
	<p>that these routes connect (e.g. for employment, education, medical, recreational, or religious reasons). These PCGs include all age groups except 20 to 39 year olds, people with disabilities, families with children, members of the Traveller community, religious groups travelling to places of worship and ethnic minority groups.</p> <p>Improvements and upgrades to proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes in Mallow, Bandon, Clonakilty and Kinsale and Inter-urban routes throughout the county may benefit the PCGs that are more likely to reside in these settlements, specifically people living in urban deprived areas, ethnic minority groups and younger age groups. Families with young children, women, pregnant women, people with disabilities and older adults living in and around Mallow could benefit from improved accessibility to Mallow Hospital, as they tend to use medical facilities more frequently. While the proposed routes do not directly intersect Cork City, the proposed Inter-urban routes joining the outskirts are expected to improve connectivity into the county's main city.</p> <p>County Cork is one of Ireland's most affluent counties. However, people living in deprived areas in the north of Cork City and in Mallow could benefit from proposed upgrades to route infrastructure that intersects these areas.</p>
Donegal	<p>There are several new Greenway routes proposed in County Donegal as part of CycleConnects. These routes pass through areas with a high representation of 0 to 19 year olds and families with children who are likely to benefit from greater accessibility to nature and recreation, as well as to urban centres to access amenities and education facilities.</p> <p>The majority of proposed cycle routes intersect areas of higher than average ethnic minority populations and people with disabilities in Letterkenny and Buncrana, and Traveller Communities on the periphery of these towns. These groups could experience a disproportionate benefit from better accessibility to education and employment.</p> <p>The proposed routes will also increase accessibility to medical facilities across County Donegal. This would benefit all groups but may have particular benefits for elderly and pregnant individuals or those with disabilities who are more likely to use medical services. Catholics living near Buncrana would experience a benefit from better access to Catholic churches in the town, as a result of proposed Inter-urban routes and a new Greenway route. Similarly, Muslims living near Letterkenny would experience a benefit from better access to Islamic centres as a result of proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes as well as Inter-urban and Greenway routes.</p> <p>County Donegal is the least affluent county in Ireland, and the majority of these deprived areas will be well connected via proposed Urban Primary, Urban Secondary and Inter-urban routes. These proposed routes, in addition to the proposed Greenway routes nearby, could benefit these highly deprived areas, particularly in Letterkenny and Buncrana. However, for socio-economically deprived communities, including Irish Travellers, the cost of cycling equipment could continue to be a barrier preventing them from adopting this mode of transport.</p>
Galway	<p>The CycleConnects Network proposes new Greenway routes, located across County Galway. These are likely to benefit the groups which live along these routes and have reason to travel into newly connected towns (e.g. for employment, education, medical or religious reasons). These PCGs include in particular 40 to 64 year olds; families with children; White Irish people; Catholics; and people living in affluent areas which the Greenway routes intersect.</p> <p>Proposed routes in urban areas have the potential to allow for improved accessibility to education facilities such as St. Patrick's College, Trinity Primary School and Archbishop McHale College (Tuam), Ahascragh National School, St. Joseph's Secondary School, Garbally College and Creagh National School (Ballinasloe), and Scoil Ide Primary and Loughrea Community Pre-School (Loughrea). These facilities are more likely to be used by families with children, resulting in a benefit for this group. Similarly, there may be a differential benefit for those of Catholic religion living along the proposed Greenway and Inter-urban routes in rural areas, particularly in terms of improved access to significant places of worship in the main settlements, such as the Galway Cathedral. Those of Islamic faith living in the suburbs of Galway City may benefit from better accessibility to Maryam Mosque and the Galway Islamic Cultural Centre, as a result of potential improvements in access provided by as a result of proposed Inter-urban routes.</p> <p>Proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes in Tuam and Ballinasloe and Inter-urban and Greenway routes connecting into Galway City may benefit the PCGs that are more likely to reside there. This includes those living in deprived areas, ethnic minority groups including the Traveller community, and younger age groups. The CycleConnects Network should improve access to key amenities and employment opportunities for these groups.</p>

County	Summary of Potential Impacts on PCGs
Kerry	<p>The upgrades and improvements to urban cycle infrastructure proposed as part of the CycleConnects Network in County Kerry is likely to have greatest benefit for the PCGs who are in close proximity to the routes – people aged 0 to 19 and 20 to 39 years old, people with disabilities, families without children, ethnic minority groups including Irish Travellers, and people of 'Other' religious belief.</p> <p>Families with children living in Killarney and Tralee are expected to experience a differential benefit from the provision of proposed routes in urban areas, upgrades to the urban networks, resulting in better access to CBS Primary School Tralee, Christian Brothers Secondary School Tralee, Tralee Town Park, Killarney Sports & Leisure Centre and Killarney Community College.</p> <p>Improved access to key places of worship across the county, such as the Kerry Islamic Cultural Centre and Church of Resurrection, St Mary's Cathedral, Ballyheigue Church, and Church of the Immaculate Conception, would differentially benefit people of the Islamic and Catholic religious faiths respectively.</p> <p>Additionally, people who require access to medical facilities and hospitals more frequently, – people with disabilities, older adults, women, pregnant women and families with young children, – could benefit from improved accessibility to these facilities throughout the county served by the proposed Inter-urban routes network.</p>
Kilkenny	<p>The majority of proposed routes set out as part of the CycleConnects Network in County Kilkenny improvements are located within and around Kilkenny City. This is likely to result in benefits for 20- to 39-year-olds, who are well represented in Kilkenny City as well as people with disabilities, all ethnic groups and all religious groups. Benefits are likely to extend to those living in areas of high deprivation and Traveller Communities. The geographical extent of the CycleConnects Network in County Kilkenny should provide all PCGs with greater access to facilities within Kilkenny City including Kilkenny College, CBS Kilkenny, Starburst school of speech and drama, Kilkenny Employment for Youth and Loreto Secondary School. Access to these facilities and opportunities could help to reduce deprivation and socio-economic inequalities across the county.</p>
Laois	<p>The CycleConnects Network in Laois is likely to benefits 0 to 19 year olds and people with disabilities across Portlaoise and Mountmellick in the north which are connected via a proposed Greenway route, as these groups are disproportionately represented in these areas. Additionally, the majority of proposed cycle routes intersect areas of higher than average ethnic minority populations in Portlaoise and Portlinton, which could reduce gaps in equality in access to safe active travel routes.</p> <p>Upgrades to the existing infrastructure to accommodate proposed routes as well as the development/construction of proposed routes as set out as part of the CycleConnects Network will increase accessibility to medical facilities across County Laois, benefitting elderly and pregnant people as well as those with disabilities and women, who are more likely to use medical services. In Portlaoise for example, access to the following facilities will be enhanced: Emergency Department Portlaoise, Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, Midland Health Board – Lab and An Triú Aois Day Hospital, Psychiatry of Later Life.</p> <p>There are a significant number of small areas in County Laois within Ireland's list of 20% most deprived areas, the majority of these areas will be well connected via proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes as well as Inter-urban routes. Therefore, improvements to existing infrastructure to accommodate proposed routes as set out as part of the CycleConnects Network could benefit these highly deprived areas including Stradbally in the east, rural areas near to Wolfhill in the southeast and areas around Errill and Donaghmore in the west.</p>
Leitrim	<p>The proposed CycleConnects Network proposals in County Leitrim includes significant Greenway routes: one running eastwards from Carrick-on-Shannon, through Leitrim town and Keshcarrigan, and a parallel route running eastwards from Drumshanbo. The Greenway routes may benefit the PCGs living along these routes and those who have reason to travel into the settlements that the route connects (e.g. for employment, education, medical or religious reasons) as well as for leisure purposes. These PCGs include 0 to 19 year olds and over 85 year olds; people with disabilities; Catholics; family groups with and without children; and people living in the most deprived rural areas.</p> <p>Improvements and upgrades to Urban Primary and Urban Secondary Routes in Carrick-on-Shannon and Inter-urban are likely to benefit those living in urban deprived areas, religious groups, ethnic minority groups and the Traveller community.</p>

County	Summary of Potential Impacts on PCGs
Limerick	<p>People living in the surrounding towns and rural areas around Limerick City will benefit from upgrades to the proposed Inter-urban routes that provide access to the periphery of the city. These proposed routes will link in with other transport modes or cycle routes and facilitate improved accessibility to employment, education, community facilities and places of worship within Limerick City.</p> <p>The geographical extent of the CycleConnects Network should provide safe and accessible cycle routes to facilities such as Courtenay National School, Scoil Dean Cussen, St. Nicholas National School, and Scoil Naomh Iosaf. This should give rise to positive impacts for families with one parent who are more likely to live in town centres and families with children who live outside of the centres and require access to education facilities.</p> <p>Additionally, families with young children and pregnant women may require access to hospitals and medical facilities more frequently than the general population. The proposed Inter-urban routes may improve access via active modes of travel to the periphery of Limerick City, facilitating onwards travel to St. John's Hospital, University Hospital, St. Camillus Hospital, University Maternity Hospital and Bon Secours Hospital in the city centre.</p> <p>It is noted that some groups – particularly Irish Travellers and people living in areas of socio-economic deprivation - may not reap the full benefits of the CycleConnects Network due to socio-economic deprivation and a lack of affordable cycling equipment.</p>
Longford	<p>The proposed Inter-urban and Greenway routes across County Longford are likely to have benefits for young people, 0 to 19 year olds, as well as 20 to 39 year olds, and people with disabilities where the population is higher than the Ireland national average, particularly in Longford (Town). Rural areas have higher populations of families with children, the Inter-urban routes and proposed and upgraded Greenway routes will improve accessibility to amenities in urban settings while also providing leisure opportunities.</p> <p>Families with young children, women, pregnant women, people with disabilities and older adults living in Longford (Town) could benefit from improved accessibility to medical facilities, as they tend to use these more frequently than the general population. People with No Religion, Other or Not Stated, have a high representation in the towns of Longford (Town), Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon and Lanesborough. The proposed urban and Inter-urban network improvements routes could increase accessibility to places of worship for these groups.</p> <p>County Longford has significantly more people living in Ireland's most deprived areas. The CycleConnects Network will promote equal opportunities via increased access to employment and education facilities across urban and rural areas. Thus, this will reduce inequalities for people susceptible to high levels of deprivation, including Irish Travellers across County Longford.</p>
Louth	<p>The CycleConnects Network is likely to have particular benefits for all PCGs residing around the outskirts of Drogheda and Dundalk where proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes will increase connectivity from the rural areas surrounding these towns to the facilities and amenities within the town centres. Certain religious groups may experience a differential benefit from improved accessibility to places of worship including Dundalk Baptist Church, Saint Malachys Dominican Church, Lighthouse Church Dundalk, Dundalk Muslim Community Centre, Yaqeen Islamic Community Centre and Dundalk Muslim Community Mosque.</p> <p>The proposed Greenway route along the R167 in Drogheda will increase accessibility to Voice of Victory International Church, New Life Family Church, St. Augustine's Church while Urban Primary routes are set to improve accessibility to the Drogheda Islamic Centre.</p> <p>Additional benefits arise where proposed Greenway routes and Inter-urban routes along the outskirts of these towns are expected to reduce safety risks for women, people with disabilities and religious people vulnerable to harassment in rural areas. Greenway routes, such as that proposed heading eastwards from Ardee to Mullincross, should also provide recreational benefits for cyclists, offering opportunities for improved mental and physical wellbeing.</p>
Mayo	<p>The proposed CycleConnects Network in County Mayo is expected to benefit all PCGs, but particularly young people, families with young children, older adults and women. The presence of a new Greenway route of high recreational value could encourage uptake of cycling among these groups, who are more likely to have safety concerns regarding this active travel mode.</p>

County	Summary of Potential Impacts on PCGs
	<p>The upgrades and improvements to urban cycle infrastructure, particularly in the urban centres of Castlebar, Ballina and Westport would benefit the PCGs who are more likely to live in these areas (i.e. people aged 20-39 and 65-84 years old, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, one parent families and people of non-Catholic faith). Families with children living in the suburbs of these towns would also experience a differential benefit from upgrades to the urban networks the provision of proposed routes, resulting in better access to schools and recreational facilities.</p> <p>It is noted that potential for improved access to key places of worship across the county would differentially benefit people of Catholic and non-Catholic religious faiths. Additionally, people with disabilities, older adults, women, pregnant women and families with young children could benefit from improved accessibility to medical facilities throughout the county served by the proposed Inter-urban network.</p> <p>The proposed urban routes may reduce social inequality for people living in deprived areas in Castlebar, Ballina and Westport, by providing access to key amenities and employment opportunities via affordable means of active travel. However, the expense of cycle equipment could prevent people living in socio-economic deprivation from adopting this mode, even if they are well connected by the proposed routes.</p>
Monaghan	<p>In terms of new proposed routes, the proposed CycleConnects Network in County Monaghan includes an extension to the existing Greenways route in Monaghan (Town), joining the existing Greenway route that runs through the county from the west and continuing east to Northern Ireland. Such extension improvements and upgrades to the Greenways route could benefit those aged 40 to 65, 60 to 84 and people aged 85 years and over living adjacent to the proposed route, through increased accessibility to facilities and recreational opportunities. Young people aged 0 to 19 years old would benefit from better accessibility to education facilities, such as St. Louis National and Secondary Schools and St. McCartan's College in Monaghan, and Patrician High School and Inver College in Carrickmacross. Similarly, those of Catholic religion would benefit from an increase in connectivity to places of worship such as St. Joseph's Catholic Church within Carrickmacross and Saint Patrick's Church within Monaghan Town.</p> <p>Other PCGs in the county are also likely to benefit from the Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes upgrades proposed in Monaghan (Town) and Carrickmacross as well as the proposed upgrades to the Inter-urban routes connecting the county's other settlements and suburbs. These proposed routes may benefit people aged 0 to 17, 19 to 39 and 40 to 65 years old; people with disabilities, families with children; people of ethnic minorities; people of 'Other' religions; the Traveller community and people living in deprived areas. For these PCGs, the Cycle Connects Network is likely to improve connectivity within and between settlements and increase access to recreational facilities, places of worship and employment/education.</p>
Offaly	<p>The CycleConnects Network in County Offaly is likely to have benefits for older people 65 to 84 and 85 years old and over, and people with disabilities, particularly in areas of high representation across Edenderry, Birr and Tullamore. Proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes will enhance connectivity to key amenities, and safety improvements could increase the uptake of cycling by these groups.</p> <p>For the high population of females around Kilcormac and Ferbane, the proposed routes, particularly local Greenway routes and route upgrades, could increase perceptions of safety and personal security. Additionally, Muslims who live along the proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes across Tullamore, an area with a high representation of this religious group, could experience a differential benefit, by way of an improvement in accessibility to religious facilities, such as to Tullamore Mosque.</p> <p>County Offaly is one of the least affluent counties in Ireland. The CycleConnects Network could have disproportionate benefits for people living in deprived areas and members of the Traveller community who are more likely to experience socio-economic deprivation. The proposed Greenway routes, urban and Inter-urban routes intersect many areas of high deprivation. The CycleConnects Network improvements therefore will enhance access to amenities and employment and increase connectivity between rural and urban areas, potentially reducing socio-economic inequalities for these groups.</p>
Roscommon	<p>The CycleConnects Network in County Roscommon includes new Greenway routes, in the east of the county, converging on Strokestown, as well as two smaller scale Greenway routes within the more urban Roscommon (Town). The more rural Greenway routes are likely to have greatest benefit for the PCGs living in proximity to them including 65 to</p>

County	Summary of Potential Impacts on PCGs
	<p>84 year olds; families with children; White Irish; Catholics; and those living in deprived areas, particularly around Strokestown and those who have reason to travel into the towns that the routes connect (e.g. for employment, education, medical or religious reasons).</p> <p>Families with young children, women, pregnant women, people with disabilities and older adults living in Roscommon (Town) are also set to benefit from improved accessibility to Roscommon Hospital, as these groups are known to use medical facilities more frequently.</p>
Sligo	<p>The CycleConnects Network in County Sligo includes a new National Greenway route within the south of the County. PCGs living along this route and those who have reason to travel into the towns that the route connects are likely to benefit e.g. for employment, education, medical or religious reasons. These PCGs include people aged 65+ year olds; families with children; White Irish Individuals; and Catholics.</p> <p>Proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes in Sligo (Town) as well as Inter-urban routes are likely to have benefits for PCGs including people with disabilities, people living in urban deprived areas, ethnic minority groups, non-Catholic religious groups, the Traveller community and younger age groups. Families with young children, women, pregnant women, people with disabilities and older adults living in Sligo (Town) could also benefit from improved accessibility to the Sligo University Hospital, as they tend to use medical facilities more frequently than the general population.</p>
Tipperary	<p>The CycleConnects in County Tipperary includes urban route upgrades and extensions in Clonmel, Nenagh, Carrick-on-Suir, Thurles, and Roscrea, as well as the Greenway to the south of Cashel. Upgrades to the cycle network in Clonmel, Nenagh, Carrick-on-Suir, Thurles, and Roscrea could improve accessibility to schools and leisure centres, resulting in a disproportionate and differential benefit for young people and families with children. These upgrades would also benefit PCGs that are disproportionately represented in urban areas, by way of improved accessibility to community facilities, employment and education opportunities, and places of worship. In particular people aged 20 to 39 and 40 to 65 year olds; people with disabilities; ethnic minorities; people living in deprived areas; and people in religious groups would benefit.</p>
Waterford	<p>The proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes as well as and Inter-urban routes proposed as part of the County CycleConnects Network in County Waterford are likely to have particular benefits for young people in terms of accessing educational opportunities between rural and urban areas. Similarly, people with disabilities, – particularly in Waterford City, Tramore and Dungarvan - will experience benefits as a result of route upgrades which could improve wayfinding, and make routes safer, enhancing the accessibility of cycle routes (and cycling in general) for people with disabilities and increasing uptake of cycling among this group. Potential disbenefits may arise for older people due to fear of shared-use cycle routes; however, the increased safety and accessibility across the CycleConnects routes Network may mitigate these concerns.</p> <p>Pregnant women, women, older adults and people with disabilities require access to hospitals and medical facilities more frequently than the general population. Depending on the improvements and new routes proposed in urban areas, there is potential for increased accessibility to these facilities in locations such as Dungarvan and Tramore. These areas also see a high proportion of people belonging to the Traveller community who also have good access to proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes.</p>
Westmeath	<p>The proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes proposed as part of the CycleConnects Network in County Westmeath will provide enhanced access to most key amenities across Athlone and Mullingar including religious, educational, medical and employment facilities. The proposed CycleConnects Network is likely to have particular benefits for young people (i.e. 0 to 19 and 40 to 64 year olds) who reside on the outskirts of Athlone and Mullingar. The proposed Urban Network development will increase connectivity to the key amenities in the Central urban areas, such as Athlone Community College and Mullingar Community College as well as key employment centres. The proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes will increase access to medical facilities in Athlone and Mullingar, which are vital for the older age groups, 65 to 84 and over 85-year-olds, as well as for people with disabilities, women, and families with children.</p> <p>Irish Travellers are located on the outskirts of Athlone and Mullingar town and are well connected by the proposed urban routes and could benefit from improved connectivity and accessibility to town centres. This could reduce socio-economic inequality within this group. However, there are issues of affordability of cycling equipment that could continue to prevent the uptake of cycling as a mode of travel even where routes are available for this particular PCG.</p>

County	Summary of Potential Impacts on PCGs
Wexford	<p>The CycleConnects Network in County Wexford is likely to have particular benefits for young people, 0 to 19 as well as 20 to 39 year olds, and people with disabilities where the population is higher than the national average; particularly in Wexford Town, Enniscorthy and New Ross. Key benefits derived from the CycleConnects Network for these PCGs is access to employment and other key amenities such as town centres, train stations, business parks (i.e. Wexford Business and Technology Park and Enniscorthy Enterprise and Technology Centre), green spaces (Kennedy Park), as well as schools and colleges (i.e. Creagh College and Gorey Community School).</p> <p>Women, older adults, pregnant women and people with disabilities are more likely to visit medical facilities than the general population, and the proposed Urban Primary and Urban Secondary routes will improve access to facilities such as Slaney Clinic Hospital, Wexford Accident and Emergency, St. John Community Hospital and New Ross Health Centre via active modes of travel, resulting in a differential benefit for these groups.</p> <p>County Wexford is one of the least affluent counties in Ireland, and deprivation is widespread across urban and rural areas. While some of the smaller rural communities are not directly intersected by the CycleConnects Network, across the county many of these areas are expected to have increased accessibility due to the CycleConnects Network and therefore people living in these areas may experience a benefit from improved access to community facilities, employment and education. Improving access to amenities, employment and education could help to reduce socio-economic inequalities within such areas, particularly within the Traveller community who are more likely to experience poverty and deprivation.</p>

6. Mitigation, Enhancement, and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The Duty sets out a requirement of public bodies to 'eliminate discrimination' and 'promote equality of opportunity' among PCGs. Therefore, where disproportionate or differential impacts on PCGs are identified as a result of a policy, plan, or project, mitigation measures should be employed to ensure compliance with the Duty. Additionally, the Duty obliges a public body to monitor equality and human rights issues relevant to their organisation on an ongoing basis and deliver a report outlining developments annually.

This section sets out the mitigation measures and enhancement opportunities that are expected to be employed across the CycleConnects Network to reduce potential equality impacts. Recommendations are made for a monitoring and evaluation programme to identify potential for unforeseen impacts, impacts that may be worse than those assessed, or additional opportunities for enhancing equality outcomes.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Review of inclusive design guidance

Comprehensive guidance on planning, designing, and maintaining good quality, safe cycle routes as outlined in the Cycle Design Manual (National Transport Authority, 2023) will ensure mitigation through inclusive design. Additionally, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) published the Rural Cycleway Design (Offline & Greenway) (2022), which sets out the requirements for planning, designing and developing rural cycleways.

The Cycle Design Manual (National Transport Authority, 2023) provides an overarching approach to plan, design, and maintain a needs-led, high quality and safe cycle network. The manual also references additional guidance 'Building for Everyone: External Environment and Approach Manual' (National Disability Authority, 2020). The following recommendations are suggested to further optimise potential positive equality impacts and mitigate potential negative equality impacts across the CycleConnects Network:

1. Adequate Lighting Across All Route Types

Ensure adequate appropriate lighting across all types of cycle routes, including cycle routes outside of built-up areas (i.e. Inter-urban routes for example). Currently the Cycle Design Manual states that *"outside of built-up areas, recreational routes will not normally require lighting unless there are specific road safety concerns e.g. at junctions or crossings"*. Adequate lighting could work to decrease the perceived risk to personal safety for several PCGs (e.g. women, LGBTQIA+ people) and therefore, if implemented across all route types, could work to increase the usability of the CycleConnects Network overall. Lighting should be of at least 100w to allow visually impaired people to be able to read signage (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2020). Where possible (typically recreational routes), biodiversity should also be considered, see guidance note 8 (Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2023). Avoiding over-illumination (on routes where required) ensures minimal disruption on wildlife commuting patterns. Finally, implementing CCTV in certain areas along routes could also be considered as a means of reducing the perceived risk to personal safety for PCGs.

2. Guidance on Gradients, Surface and Pathfinding

Careful consideration should be given to the gradients of routes, as steep gradients are more likely to deter people with disabilities and older cyclists. Three wheelers are adversely affected by steep cambers and can end up being driven into the gutter or even overturn (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2020). Speed humps/cushions can also be problematic as they create unavoidable cambers which can cause tricycles to tip over, which could disproportionately impact PCGs more likely to use this mode (e.g. older people and people with disabilities). Shallow gradients and

sinusoidal speed humps should be used where possible to improve the accessibility of the cycleways for older people and people with disabilities (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2020) (National Transport Authority, 2024).

3. Coherent Infrastructure and Wayfinding

Infrastructure should be coherent and intuitive, and understood by all users. Cycle infrastructure and routes should always be clearly marked and delineated to allow wayfinding with ease, with signage provided in a large font to allow it to be legible by visually impaired people. Where cycle lanes narrow in width, adequate signage and warning in advance of the obstacle should be provided to tell the user where cycle lanes may be narrow, or when cyclists are required to dismount, as not all users may be able to do so (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2020).

4. Full Review of Infrastructure Equality Guidance

The National Transport Authority has released Infrastructure Equality Guidance to promote equality within transport and eliminate all forms of discrimination in the provision of goods, services, accommodation, and education (National Transport Authority, 2024). This guide sets out key considerations for designing cycle infrastructure for people with disabilities and includes solutions to these issues. It is recommended that this guidance document is reviewed and its adjustments for disabilities are taken into account, where possible, during the preliminary and detailed design stages of any of the proposed routes included as part of the CycleConnects Network.

It is recommended that these additional considerations and guidance are taken into account throughout the design and build of the CycleConnects Network.

6.2.2 Route Level EqIA

As mentioned in Section 5, the EqIA presented in this report comprises an assessment of the potential equality impacts of the CycleConnects Network as a whole. It does not include for the consideration of potential equality impacts across the CycleConnects Network at a specific route level. Should any of the proposed routes in the CycleConnects Network seek development or planning consent, an EqIA audit should be undertaken, as appropriate, at project level following the NTA's Infrastructure Equality Guidance and based on the latest population data to determine equality impacts at route level once detailed design information is available.

The purpose of conducting 'route' or 'project'-level EqIAs is to help ensure the potential equality impacts of individual proposed routes are identified and not masked through a network-wide hierarchy of data. Understanding more localised positive and negative impacts works to provide a more representative, meaningful overview of positive and negative impacts on certain PCGs as a result of specific proposed routes as well as the overarching network in which it is a part.

6.2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

As set out in Section 2.6, monitoring progress in relation to the EqIA is a requirement under the Duty. This monitoring stage in the EqIA process will allow the NTA to demonstrate how it has delivered on its plan to establish the CycleConnects Network. Monitoring and evaluation can demonstrate the positive impacts facilitated by the CycleConnects Network for PCGs. Likewise, monitoring can enable, at an early stage, the identification of adverse impacts which will allow the NTA to undertake appropriate remedial action if required.

It is recommended that a Monitoring Plan is implemented as outlined in the Strategic Environmental Assessment undertaken for the CycleConnects Network and Plan produced by the NTA alongside this EqIA. The Monitoring Plan outlines the tasks and timescales required to periodically undertake monitoring and evaluation of the plan to ensure accountability and continuous improvement in outcomes for PCGs.

Tasks to be undertaken for monitoring and evaluation, where appropriate, comprise the following:

- Develop baseline indicators for PCGs, against which key changes can be measured at a Plan level (e.g. number of school children travelling to school by bicycle);
- Undertake EqIA audits at a project level, which establish baseline indicator data for PCGs;
- Undertake relevant stakeholder consultation (qualitative feedback that may not be captured through quantitative data gathering, for example, analysis of network users, comments, complaints and/or other feedback);
- Periodically update baseline indicator data for PCGs and compare to previous datasets, EqIA conclusions and other performance measures;
- Outlining appropriate remedial actions where impacts on PCGs are found to be worse than those reported in this EqIA; and
- Highlight positive outcomes for PCGs and take steps to enhance these where possible.

It is recommended that the outcome of the tasks outlined above are recorded at Plan level and considered within an EqIA audit to be undertaken at project level following the NTA's Infrastructure Equality Guidance.

7. Summary

The EqIA as set out in this report has highlighted several key positive impacts on PCGs by cycle route type and county level, as follows:

- Increased accessibility to opportunities and key facilities: employment, education, healthcare and places of worship;
- Increased accessibility to active travel, recreation and greenspace;
- Increased affordability of travel across counties in Ireland; and
- Improved safety infrastructure and perceptions of safety.

Additionally, potential negative impacts on PCGs have been identified:

- Potential barriers relating to the uptake of cycling such as affordability, cultural attitudes and perceptions of safety; and
- Potential barriers surrounding accessibility to cycle routes in rural areas/areas of inadequate topography for cycle routes.

The EqIA identified various mitigation measures that can be applied to improve equality of opportunity for PCGs (see Section 6). These mitigation measures primarily relate to further review and implementation of accessibility and inclusion guidelines at project level for individual proposed routes as denoted within the Cycle Design Manual. It is important that potentially adverse impacts on PCGs are considered further during the preliminary and detailed design stages of individual proposed routes, and that options for enhancing positive impacts are explored. An EqIA audit should be undertaken, as appropriate, at project level following the NTA's Infrastructure Equality Guidance and based on the latest population data to determine equality impacts at route level once detailed design information is available.

Monitoring progress in relation to the EqIA is a requirement under the Duty. By developing a monitoring programme, the NTA will be able to monitor impacts on PCGs as designs develop. Similarly, if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the NTA will be able to ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

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9. Directives and Legislation

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Directive 2000/78/EC against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Directive 2006/54/EC equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation.

Directive 2004/113/EC equal treatment for men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.

Directive Proposal (COM(2008)462) against discrimination based on age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief beyond the workplace.

Disability Act 2005 Part 5 - a statutory obligation on public service providers to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities.

Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008

Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015

Equal Status Acts 2000-2018

European Union Charter on Fundamental Rights

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014