

Draft Donegal
CYCLE
Network



1. Introduction

AECOM, as part of the NTA Cycle Design Office, have been requested by the NTA to develop comprehensive cycle plans for counties outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including Donegal County Council. The CycleConnects is intended to form a comprehensive cycle network for all cycle user types across each county in Ireland and to develop on from the cycle network proposed for the counties in the GDA.

This will include existing cycle networks such as urban cycle routes, greenways and on-road tourist routes. This will be supplemented by proposed cycle routes/links outlined in latest development and transport plans, and other networks required to maximise the connection of the network to communities. It should be noted that this network does not specify any infrastructure types on any route and is focused on highlighting the key links required to form a comprehensive cycle network connecting all major communities and destinations.

This note will briefly summarise the proposed cycle network for Donegal. For details of methodology, national policy and the overall aspirations for the CycleConnects networks, please refer to the main report of which this technical note is an appendix of.

2. Donegal Population and Settlements

County Donegal is located in the most northern point of Ireland in the province of Ulster. It is bordered to the east by Northern Ireland and County Leitrim in the south.

According to the CSO 2016, the county has a population of 159,192 inhabitants. Table 2.1 below shows the population of towns within Donegal with at least 1000 people. Buncrana, and Letterkenny are the only settlements with at least 5,000 people with all other towns having a population of less than 5000.

Table 2.1: Population Settlements in Donegal

City/Town	Population (2016)
Letterkenny	19,274
Buncrana	6,785
Ballybofey – Stranorlar	4,852
Donegal	2,618
Carndonagh	2,471
Ballyshannon	2,299
Bundoran	1,963
Lifford	1,626
Convoy	1,526
AN Bun Beag – Doirí Beaga (Bunbeg-Derrybeg)	1,491
Moville	1,480
Ramelton	1,266
Killybegs	1,236
Muff	1,226
An Clochán Laith (Dungloe)	1,164
Raphoe	1,089
Newtowncunningham	1,080

3. Existing Donegal Policies and Plans

Donegal County Development Plan 2018-2024

The County Donegal Development Plan is the principal statutory land use plan for the County and it sets out a strategic vision for the future growth and development of the County over the six year life of the Plan (to 2024) and beyond to a 20 year timeframe (to 2038). This spatially-based strategic framework seeks to manage and coordinate change in land use in the County setting out a clear view ahead in development terms together with clear priorities to drive growth.

Within the wider context of the region, there are firmly established partnerships that are to be developed further in order to support a coordinated approach to deliver on regional priorities that are critical to facilitate the priorities of County Donegal. Given the diversity and geographical extent of County Donegal, opportunities for regional cooperation are being harnessed across all of the county's borders.

This area has been identified as the North West City Region and the Initiative has secured the establishment of a local government partnership between DCC and DCSDC that has been endorsed by both local authorities and, significantly, by both of the respective national governments.

The Partnership aims to work collaboratively to drive forward economic, environmental and social regeneration and prosperity in the North West City Region focussing across three pillars: economic development; physical development and; social and community planning.

Chapter 5 of the Development Plan looks at the infrastructure and transportation. Donegal council understand that a high quality and sustainable transport network is a crucial element in driving growth and development across all areas of social, environmental and economic development. The transportation network is particularly fundamental in attracting investment, developing the tourism industry, addressing climate change and in creating sustainable places and communities.

The following objectives and policies are listed within the Plan under the following headings relate to the provision and development of cycling infrastructure.

Road:

T-O-13: To support the development of new walkways, walking routes, trails, greenways and cycleways that maximise the potential for local, regional and all-island walking and cycling networks.

T-P-3: It is a policy of the Council to work in partnership with the Northern Ireland authorities to strengthen and improve existing cross border transportation links (including walking and cycling routes) and support the development of new links (including walking and cycling routes) to enable the targeted spatial and economic development of the North West City Region.

T-P-11: It is a policy of the Council to facilitate the appropriate development of affordable, multimodal transport solutions that offer communities and future generations real transport choices such as park and ride; pedestrian and cycling; bus and taxi services; and ancillary infrastructure.

T-P-14: It is a policy of the Council to require that adequate cycle lanes, stands and ancillary facilities be provided in appropriate development proposals having regard to the standards set out in Appendix 3 Development and Technical Standards.

Walking and Cycling:

Walking and cycling are the most sustainable forms of transport and are key components to movement and accessibility in urban and inter-urban areas. Walking and cycling benefit the environment and the population by reducing pollution, noise and traffic congestion, as well as contributing to healthy more active lifestyles.

T-P-31: It is a policy of the Council to ensure that development proposals protect the route of potential linkages (such as linear parks, roads, footpaths, trails, greenways and cycleways) through the subject site where the planning authority considers that a strategic opportunity exists to provide a linkage to or between adjoining areas.

T-P-33: It is a policy of the Council to ensure that large scale development proposals provide walking and cycling infrastructure.

T-P-35: It is a policy of the Council to encourage and facilitate joined up long distance walking and cycling routes and greenways for recreation and as alternatives to the car, particularly in rural areas, between settlements. Adequate car parking facilities shall be provided, where required, in association with any such developments.

T-P-36: It is a policy of the Council to support and facilitate the maintenance, enhancement and expansion of the National Cycle Network.

Tourism:

The tourism sector is a potential differentiator for the County and significant progress has been made to begin to realise the full extent of the sectors opportunities for the economy. The success of the Wild Atlantic Way tourism initiative has led the council to see the potential that exists to further develop tourism products and experiences.

In addition to the above mentioned, existing products and attractions the Council acknowledges the potential of the Donegal's old railways lines and other potential linkages to act as Greenways for walking and cycling tourism. The Council will therefore continue to protect the routes of such potential greenways through the policies of this plan and will actively work with all stakeholders to facilitate the development of Greenways and walking and cycling routes throughout the County. Table below identifies potential Greenway Developments as follows:

Table 3.1: Proposed Greenways

1	Buncrana-Derry
2	Derry - Muff
3	Ballybofey - Donegal Town
4	Ballybofey - Glenties
5	Polestar - Dry Arch
6	Illistrin - Kilmacrennan
7	Carrigart - Downings
8	Buncrana - Carndonagh
9	Carndonagh - Malin Head
10	Carndonagh - Merville
11	Merville - Greencastle
12	Merville - Muff
13	Carrigans - Lifford
14	Dungloe - Glenties
15	Letterkenny - Burtonport
16	Ballyshannon - Belleek
17	Donegal Town - Killybegs
18	Donegal Town - Bundoran
19	Lifford - Letterkenny
20	Lifford - Ballybofey
21	Falcarragh - Bunbeg

The following tourism objectives and policies relate to the provision and development of cycling infrastructure:

- **TOU-O-9:** To support the development of new, and protect the functionality of existing, Greenways, walking and cycling routes as keys components of an overall green tourism infrastructure and as standalone tourism products in their own right.
- **TOU-P-9:** It is policy of the Council to:
 - Conserve lands zoned Amenity/Green space/Open Space in settlement frameworks/urban areas for exclusively for public amenity/recreational use.

- Protect the routes of, not permit development which would hinder the creation of, and otherwise positively facilitate the development of, future 'Greenways', walking and cycling routes including those identified in this Plan.
- Protect the extent, quality, visual setting and functionality of existing 'Greenways', walking and cycling routes including those identified in this Plan.

North West Greenway Network Project

In 2016 Derry and Strabane District Council, Donegal County Council, the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) (NI) and Sustrans (the UK-based cycling and walking charity), were awarded €14.8 million funding, with match funding provided by DFI and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in Ireland, to construct 46.5kms of cross-border greenway.

The main vision and objectives of the project is to:

To develop a cross border network of greenways that link people with places locally, regionally and nationally – bringing social, economic and environmental well-being to all;

- To construct 46.5kms of greenway and cycling/walking routes
- Encourage a minimum of 500 people to cycle or walk to school, work or college by 2022
- Reduce carbon dioxide emissions entering our atmosphere by over 300 carbon tonnes per annum by 2023
- Encourage more people to walk and cycle as part of their daily routine
- Invest in the wider economic and social infrastructure in the North West Region

The proposed routes link Derry to Buncrana via Bridgend; Muff to Derry via Culmore; and Lifford to Strabane. Once completed, this will result in a greenway network of approximately 126.5km in the North West, of which 76.5km will be classified as high quality greenway.

Future Local Transport Plans

Donegal County Council are required to develop Local Transport Plans as part of their Development Plan process. While the cycle network outlined in this plan has been created to reflect current transport arrangements, it may be subject to change based on the more detailed analysis and recommendations developed as part of the LTP process.

4. Proposed Donegal Cycle Network

Introduction

Following a review of existing data, policies and conducting workshops with Donegal County Council to review the draft cycle network, the following summarises the methodology and proposed cycle network development for Donegal. The full details of how all the CycleConnects networks were developed are available in the NTA Consultation website.

Prior to developing the Donegal County Network, a GIS model was established for the county. This model mapped all existing information made available for the county, supplied by various bodies including the NTA, Department for Transport, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Department for Education and Donegal County Council. The data collected includes;

- Locations of major employment and job density
- Existing cycle infrastructure and routes
- Existing bus stops, rail lines and other public transport
- Location of schools and education centres
- Shopping centres, hospitals and other destinations that may attract cyclists

The collation of this data has aided the selection of cycle routes in Donegal that are available to as many people as possible. It has also allowed for the servicing of key destinations within County Donegal.

Methodology

Following the collation of existing data, the cycle network plan for Donegal was developed. This is based on a three-tier system outlined in Figure 4.1 below.

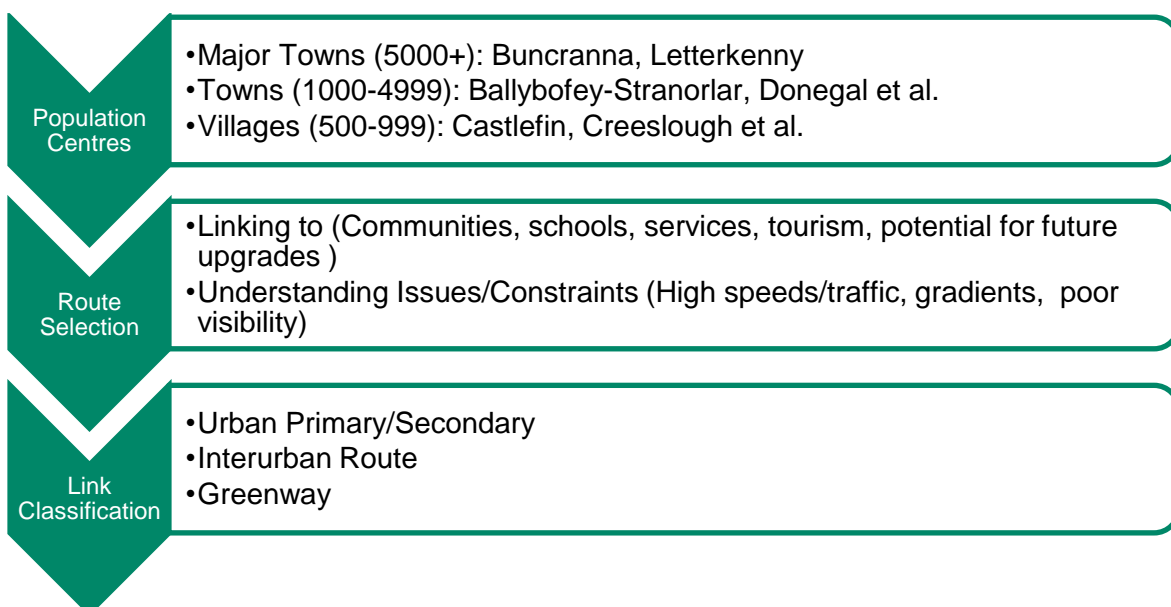


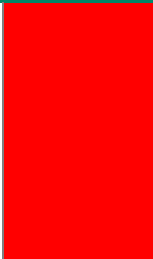

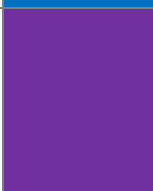

Figure 4.1: Cycle Network Development Methodology

Population Centres: The Donegal CycleConnects Network will look to link towns and villages together as part of a fully connected network. Thus, all towns were mapped with the larger towns such as Letterkenny and Buncrana noted. By mapping all towns and villages, a profile emerged of where most people in Donegal were situated and where potential cycle routes should be provided. CSO Settlement data was also referenced to inform where people were located within the county.

Route Selection: Once the population areas were established, potential routes were then considered along strategic corridors. This allowed multiple communities to be linked along individual interurban routes. Where possible, these routes were also located within TII National Cycle Network Corridors. This avoided too many parallel cycle routes being developed and for an integrated cycle network to be developed within the county.

Cycle Route Classification: The route classification for each route has been summarised below in Table 4.1. It should be noted that this link classification does not reflect the existing condition of roads for cycling but seeks to highlight their potential for various route classifications. For example, while there are many interurban routes that currently have no cycle infrastructure, the aspiration will be to target these over the next decade for appropriate upgrades.

Table 4.1: CycleConnectsRoute Classification

City/Town	Colour	Description
Urban Primary		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 types of cyclist to navigate
Urban Secondary		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
Interurban		On-road cycle route to link all key settlements and destinations outside urban areas both within the county and into adjacent counties. These may have potential to provide off-road/segregated routes parallel to the existing road in later years.
Greenway		Off-road cycle route with no adjacent traffic for the majority of its route. These are typically located on old rail trails, proposed/existing blueways (routes along rivers, lakes and canals) with cyclists sharing the route with pedestrians.

Proposed Donegal County Network

Following the methodology outlined above, the Donegal CycleConnects Network has been outlined in a series of maps shown in Table 4.2 below. These are also available to view as an individual PDF when selecting county Donegal in the NTA consultation page.

Table 4.2: Donegal CycleConnects Network – List of Maps

Cycle Map List
Donegal County Cycle Network
Letterkenny Urban Cycle Network
Buncrana Urban Cycle Network

Interurban Link Development

The primary towns with a population of over 1000 were connected via interurban links. Where possible, towns with a lower population that were located along the route were included in the routes. The latest Eurovelo route was also referenced when selecting interurban routes between key towns and settlements. Connections were also made to larger cross border towns in order to create a more comprehensive cycle network and meet objectives set out as part of the 'shared island' initiative. The selection of interurban routes was also influenced by the location of schools/sports grounds on various parallel routes.

As part of the development of the interurban network, the Google travel planning tool was utilised to assist in selecting the most appropriate route between the various settlements. This included avoiding routes/routes with excessive gradients. In some cases, selecting a sufficiently flat route was not available. Thus, the the most available flattest route was selected. However, some routes were modified slightly to connect with adjacent towns/villages or key destinations such as schools, sports pitches or tourist attractions.

The TII National Cycle Network Corridors and Northern Irish Cycle Network have also been used to overlap corridors. These include corridors and routes into counties Derry, Fermanagh, Leitrim and Sligo.

Greenway Route Integration

There are a number of greenways included in the CycleConnects Network Map. There are a number of planned interurban greenways throughout County DonegalMayo, many of which are outlined in the Northwest Greenway Network Plan.

The finalised routes for these greenways are still unknown at this stage so it is shown as being indicative only on the relevant maps and may be subject to change at once the finalised route is known.

North West Greenway Network

The Northwest Greenway Network is a joint project between Derry and Strabane District Council, Donegal County Council, the Department for Infrastructure (NI) and Sustrans. They have proposed a number of greenway routes that have been included in the CycleConnects Networks. Many of the routes for these greenways are still to be confirmed.

- The Inisowen Greenway consists of the proposed
 - Buncrana to Carndonagh Greenway
 - Derry to Buncrana Greenway
 - Carndonagh to Merville Greenway
 - Merville to Muff Greenway
- Letterkenny to Strabane Greenway

Additional Greenway Routes

Additional Greenways are also being proposed as part of the Donegal County Development Plan. Many of these are at feasibility stages so the routes are shown as indicative on the relevant maps. These include:

- The Glenties to Dungloe Greenway is to be delivered as part of the planned N56 realignment
- The Glenties to Ballybofey Greenway
- Letterkenny to Burtonport Greenway
- Glencolmcille to Dungloe Greenway
- Glencolmcille to Donegal Greenway
- Donegal to Bundoran Greenway
- Ballyshannon to Belleek Greenway.

Urban Network Development: Letterkenny

With a population of over 5000 inhabitants, an urban cycle network has been developed for Letterkenny. The network is comprised of mainly primary routes and is supplemented by a number of secondary routes, allowing for further connectivity in the town. The cycle network for Letterkenny also includes a number of urban greenways in the southeast of the town.

There is a large orbital route that encircles the town. Within this orbital route there are a number of other primary and secondary routes intersecting it. The orbital route begins in the north of the town at the junction of the N56 on Business Park Road and Kilmacrenan Road. Here it continues along the N56 on Business Park Road, Middle Road and Ramelton Road. It then travels along Neil T Blaney Road. At Forte Roundabout it turns onto Paddy Harte Road and then on to Larkins View. The route travels along Lower Main Street briefly, then continues north along Convent Road, College Road and Glencar Road. The cycle route then travels east along Glencar Road and Circular Road until the junction with Kilmacrennan Road. It travels north along Kilmacrennan Road and joins the starting point of the orbital route outside Letterkenny Office Park.

There are a number of primary urban routes that intersect the orbital route, providing connection through the centre of the town.

- There is a route running south along Kilmacrennan Road from the junction with Circular Road. It continues on to High Road until the junction with Upper Main Street, where it connects into another interurban route.
- There is route running from Kiltroy Road to the south west along Gortlee Road, Ramelton Road and Port Road. It continues on to Upper and Lower Main Street where it briefly overlaps with the orbital route. It then travels along Ballymacool Street then terminates at Ballymacool Roundabout outside St. Eunan's GAA Club.
- There is a route that runs from Polestar Roundabout along Port Road. At Station Roundabout it turns to the southeast and travels along Pears Road until the roundabout with Oldtown Road, where it terminates.
- There is a route that starts in the northeast of the town at the junction of Glencar Road and Cluain Ard and Long Lane. It travels south along Glencar Road and overlaps the orbital route for a along Circular Road. At Hospital Roundabout it travels along DeValera

Road and on to Ramelton Road and Ballyraine Road. The route terminates at the junction of Ramelton Road and the N56.

A number of key locations are serviced by these primary routes including;

- Letterkenny Town Centre
- Letterkenny University Hospital
- Ballyraine National School
- Errigal College
- Little Angels Special School
- Scoil Cholmcille
- Scoil Mhuire gan Smál
- Gaelscoil Adhamháin
- Loreto Secondary School
- Donegal Town Park
- Letterkenny Business and Technology Park
- Letterkenny Office Park
- Letterkenny Educate Together National School
- Ballyraine Industrial Estate
- St. Eunan's GAA Club
- Atlantic Technological University – Donegal Letterkenny Campus
- Letterkenny Community College
- Bernard McGlinchey Town Park
- St. Conal's Hospital

Urban Network Development: Buncrana

With a population of over 5000 inhabitants, an urban cycle network has been developed for Buncrana. The network is comprised of mainly primary routes and is supplemented by a number of secondary routes, allowing for further connectivity in the town.

Primary routes run in both a north to south and an east to west direction. These include:

- A route starting in the south of the town at the roundabout on the R238 on Derry Road and Old Road. It continues north along Derry Road and St Oran's Road. The route travels north along Saint Marys Road. As there is a one way system in place, it travels south along Main Street. At the north end of Saint Marys Road it continues along the R238 on Cockhill Road to the junction with Crana View where it terminates.
- There is another route that starts at the roundabout on the R238 on Derry Road and Old Road. It continues north along Old Road and MacCarter's Road. At the junction with Hillhead Road, it briefly travels east before continuing north along Marian Park and Cluain Mhuire. The route travels along Pairc Mor until the junction with Causeway Road where it is to tie into the proposed Buncrana to Carndonagh Greenway.
- There is a route running east to west along Hillhead Road between Ardarvan and the R238.

- There is a route running southeast along Causeway Road from the junction of the R238 on Cockhill Road and Causeway Road. It continues along Lisowen Court and Ardaravan until the junction with Hillhead Road where it terminates. Here it ties into an interurban route.
- There is also a route running east to west along Ferris Lane between Lissowen Court and the R238.
- There is a route running along Milltown Road and Millfield. It begins at the junction of Milltown Road and Hillhead Road, continuing in a southwest direction. Until the junction with Old Road where it connects to the primary route there.

The primary network serves key destinations including:

- Buncrana Town Centre
- Lough Swilly Ferry Link
- Gaelscoil Bhun Cranncha
- Colaiste Chineal Eoghain
- Crana College
- Buncrana National School
- Scoil Íosagáin
- Maginn Park
- Buncrana GAA Club
- Scoil Mhuire Buncrana
- Buncrana Community Hospital
- Buncrana Medical Centre

A number of primary and secondary routes are also proposed to act as interlinks to the orbital and radial routes in addition to serving locations that have not been located on orbital or radial routes previously mentioned.

5. Next Steps

AECOM, as part of the NTA Cycle Design Office, have been requested by the NTA to develop comprehensive cycle routes for County Donegal and the towns of Letterkenny and Buncrana.

The network design for Donegal has now been made available for public consultation. This will allow for members of the public to submit their feedback. Individual maps are available to view on the National Transport Authority website and are available in the links below:

Table 5.1: Donegal CycleConnects Network – List of Maps

Cycle Map List
Donegal County Cycle Network
Letterkenny Urban Cycle Network
Buncrana Urban Cycle Network

Following the public consultation, submissions will be reviewed and the network maps updated as required.