

Draft Leitrim
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 Leitrim 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 interurban 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 highlight 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 Leitrim. 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. Leitrim Population and Settlements

County Leitrim is in the northwest of the country on the border with Northern Ireland, in the province of Connaught. It is bordered by Donegal to the north, Fermanagh to the north-east, Cavan to the east, Longford to the south, Roscommon to the south-west and Sligo to the west.

According to the CSO the population is 32,044 as of the 2016 Census. Approximately 30% of the population of the county live in Carrick-on-Shannon. The next largest towns are Manorhamilton and Kinlough. These are denoted at Tier 2A and 2B towns respectively, in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Population of settlements in Leitrim

| City/Town | Population (2016) |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Carrick- on- Shannon | 4,062 |
| Manorhamilton | 1,466 |
| Kinlough | 1,032 |
| Ballinamore | 914 |
| Drumshanbo | 902 |

3. Existing Leitrim Policies and Plans

In order to inform network development and design a number of policies, plans and guidance documents were consulted and reviewed.

Draft Leitrim Development Plan 2023-2029

The draft Leitrim County Development Plan was published in 2022 to cover the years of 2023 to 2029. It was developed by Leitrim County Council for the purpose of ensuring the sustainable physical and social development of the county and ensuring the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment. The draft plan aims to grow sustainable tourism, diversify rural enterprise and encourage remote working hubs throughout the county, all facilitated by the rollout of broadband infrastructure.

The modal share of trips recorded by the 2016 Census is displayed in Figure 3.1. It shows a 66% dependency on motor cars in comparison to 1.5% cycling. Further analysis of the POWSCAR data shows trip distribution by distance travelled, with many cycling trips not longer than 3 km. The Draft Plan notes that the lack of segregated cycling facilities may have a negative impact on cycling levels in the county. Other influences may be concerns in relation to cycling safety, network design and security

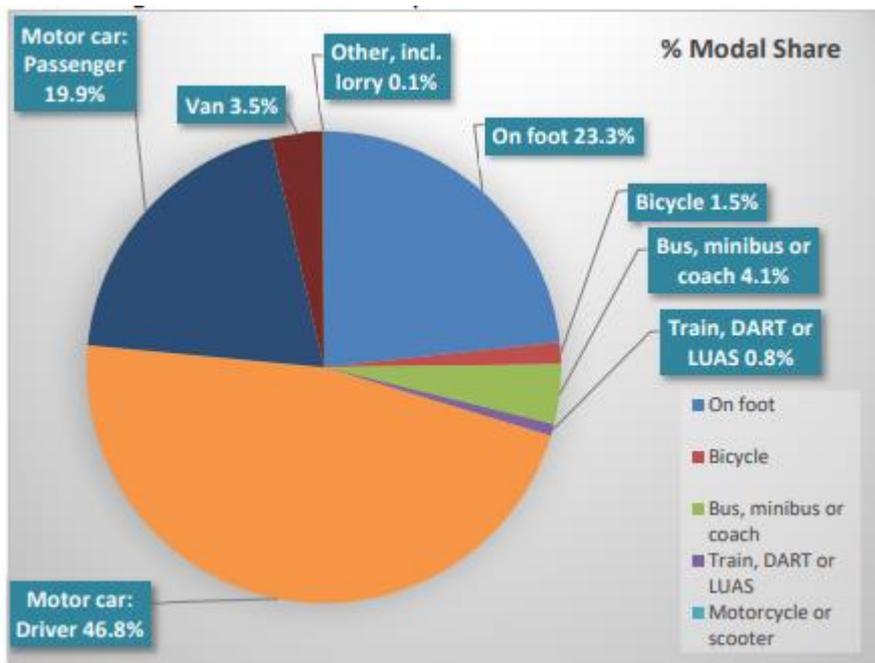


Figure 3.1: Modal share of trips for Leitrim

The core strategy of the plan provides a medium to long term plan for the spatial development of County Leitrim. The vision of the development plan is

“Co. Leitrim to be a vibrant, creative, economically strong, socially inclusive, progressive and distinctive county, providing a quality experience for all who live in, work in, invest in and visit our county, fostering the development and wellbeing of our communities, offering excellent opportunities for employment across a diverse range of sectors, embracing the challenges which climate change presents in a responsible and practical manner while protecting, conserving and enhancing the best of the natural and built environment”.

Transport Objectives

The Strategic Transport aim of the Draft Development Plan is as follows:

“to support increased use of sustainable modes of transport; the integration of spatial planning more closely with transport planning to reduce the need for travel; enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the county and regional accessibility; transitioning towards a low carbon energy efficient transport system, and; the development of a safer, more efficient, effective and connected transport system within Co. Leitrim”.

The report notes that the delivery, expansion, and maintenance of a well-functioning, multi modal transport network is essential to delivering the county’s economic competitiveness, improving the quality of life of residents and achieving better social cohesion.

The Council aims to achieve a more balanced and sustainable pattern of movement within the county and will endeavour to facilitate a greater choice of transport modes to encourage a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport and transitioning to a low carbon transport system. The Plan also encourages sustainable development that can reduce the need to travel and reduce the extent of car dependency.

The Draft Plan contains a number of transport policies and objectives that relate to the promotion of cycling as a method of transport and which the development of a cycle network can assist in meeting these objectives:

- **ILU POL 2:** To support the development of a low carbon transport system by continuing to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport in circumstances where alternative options are available.
- **ILU POL 3:** To support the enhancement of the country’s existing transport infrastructure to ensure its optimal use and seek to undertake appropriate traffic management measures to reduce congestion and minimise travel times.
- **ILU POL 5:** To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment and minimisation of environmental impacts
- **ILU POL 6:** New transport infrastructure projects, including blueways and greenways, that are not already provided for by existing plans/programmes, which have been subject to environmental assessment, or are not already permitted, will be subject to feasibility assessment, considering need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report, and objectives relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, a Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken, where appropriate, in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection; and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection.
- **ILU OBJ 1:** To transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of sustainable transport and ‘walkable communities’ together with the achievement of compact settlement forms close to established public transport.
- **ILU OBJ 2:** To promote and deliver a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with ease of movement throughout Co. Leitrim by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of road, bus, rail, cycling and pedestrian facilities

Cycling Objectives

The Draft Development Plan also outlines a number of cycling specific objectives.

- **WC POL 1:** To promote walking and cycling as efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport by securing the development of a network of direct, comfortable, convenient and safe cycle routes and footpaths, particularly in town centres and in the vicinity of schools.
- **WC POL 3:** To design pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and international best practice.
- **WC POL 4:** To require that consideration be given to sustainable transport movement at the earliest design stage of development proposals, to ensure accessibility by all modes of transport and all sections of society and promote the provision of parking space for bicycles in development schemes.
- **WC POL 5:** To work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Department of Transport and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling in Co. Leitrim
- **WC OBJ 1:** To support the establishment of a network of interlinked cycle ways and walkways in the county and linking with the adjoining counties, having regard to best practice standards including the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the NTA Cycle Manual or any amending/superseding national guidance or manuals.
- **WC OBJ 2:** To enhance placemaking and improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to existing train stations (Carrick-on-Shannon and Cortober) and improve bus stops/future transport interchanges.
- **WC OBJ 3:** To improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience, including separation for pedestrian infrastructure from vehicular traffic.
- **WC OBJ 4:** To investigate the feasibility of providing a 'Bike Sharing Scheme' for Carrick-on-Shannon to facilitate and encourage modal shift.

The Council aims to expand its network of blueways and greenways in the county to maximise pedestrian and cycle access.

Leitrim County Council received confirmation of funding from the Department of Transport to bring the former Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway Greenway project through the planning process, detailed design and construction which will be subject to final planning approval. This project requires the co-operation of four Local Authorities – Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan County Councils along with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. This is proposed to connect Collooney to Enniskillen via Dromahair, Manorhamilton and Glenfarne.

The Cavan Leitrim Greenway project requires the co-operation of Cavan County Council and a preliminary feasibility study including screening for Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment has been completed. The Council will continue to work with Cavan County Council and local rail to trail groups to bring this project to planning and design stage. This greenway is proposed to connect Dromod and Belturbet via Mohill, Fenagh, Ballinamore and Garradice.

The plan outlines a number of policies and objectives related specifically to the development of a blueway and greenway network in the county.

- **BG POL 1:** To continue to support the develop an integrated and connected network of sustainable greenways, blueways and green routes within Co. Leitrim and into adjoining counties.

- **BG POL 2:** To support the implementation of the strategy for Greenway Development in Ireland - “Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways” in relation to the development and extension of greenways throughout the county.
- **BG POL 3:** To progress the expansion of the National Cycle Network.
- **BG POL 4:** To protect established Greenways and Blueways within the county against inappropriate new vehicular accesses and increased traffic movements.
- **BG POL 5:** To engage in the Compulsory Purchase Order process, when required, to facilitate the timely delivery of the Greenway and Blueway programme within the county.
- **BG OBJ 1:** To facilitate and lead in the delivery and completion of the Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway Greenway along/adjoining the former Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) between Collooney, Co. Sligo and Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh in co-operation with Sligo and Cavan County Councils and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.
- **BG OBJ 2:** To seek to advance the design and obtaining necessary planning consent to construct a Greenway along/adjoining the former Cavan & Leitrim Rail line between Dromod and Belturbet, Co. Cavan in co-operation with Cavan County Council. The required planning consent will require the demonstration that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
- **BG OBJ 3:** To develop, in conjunction with the Local Rail to Trail Group and local communities, demonstration stretches along/adjoining the former Cavan & Leitrim Rail line subject to undertaking the necessary environmental assessment, obtaining the necessary planning consents and obtaining the legal agreement of affected landowners.
- **BG OBJ 4:** To deliver a Blueway linking Carrick-on-Shannon to Leitrim Village and onwards to Battlebridge subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.
- **BG OBJ 5:** To complete the Blueway from Kilclare to Ballinamore subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives
- **BG OBJ 10:** To maximize both pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the network of existing greenways and blueways within the county.
- **BG OBJ 11:** To work with the Active Travel Initiative of the National Transport Authority and other stakeholders such as Fáilte Ireland and Waterways to develop a co-ordinated approach to the selection, delivery and servicing of future greenways, blueways and trails throughout the county.
- **BG OBJ 12:** To support and facilitate the development of a greenway linking Spencer Harbour to Drumkeeran subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse

effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.

Future Local Transport Plans

Leitrim 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 Leitrim Cycle Network

Introduction

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

Prior to developing the Leitrim 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, CSO, Department for Transport, Traffic Infrastructure Ireland, Department for Education and Leitrim 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 Leitrim that are available to as many people as possible. It has also allowed for the servicing of key destinations within County Leitrim.

Methodology

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

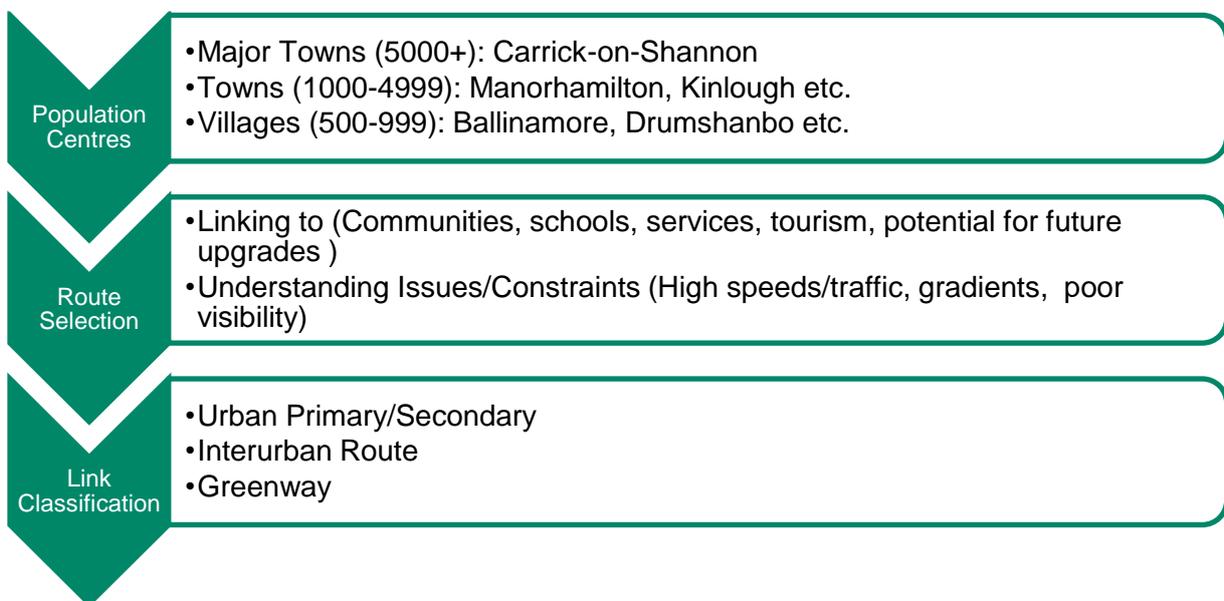


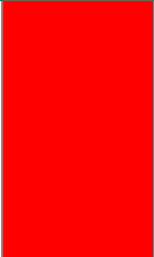
Figure 4.1: Cycle Network Development Methodology

Population Centres: The Leitrim 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 Leitrim Town noted. By mapping all towns and villages, a profile emerged of where most people in Leitrim 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: CycleConnects Route 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 cyclists 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 and existing/proposed blueways (routes along rivers, lakes and canals) with cyclists sharing the route with pedestrians. |

Proposed Leitrim County Network

Following the methodology outlined above, the Leitrim 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 Leitrim in the NTA consultation page.

Table 4.2: Leitrim CycleConnects Network – List of Maps

| Cycle Map List |
|--|
| Leitrim County Cycle Network |
| Carrick-On-Shannon 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. Connections were also made to larger cross border towns such as Sligo town, Cavan town and Roscommon town. Selection of interurban routes also were 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. The provision of interurban routes primarily originates from larger settlements such as Carrick-On-Shannon.

The TII National Cycle Network Corridors have also been used to overlap corridors these include corridors and routes into counties Sligo, Donegal, Fermanagh, Cavan, Longford and Roscommon.

Greenway Route Development

Sligo to Enniskillen Greenway

The proposed 72km greenway trail will convert the disused Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) railway route which ran through Sligo, Leitrim and border towns in Cavan and Fermanagh into a multi-use rail trail route between Collooney and Enniskillen for cyclists, walkers and the mobility challenged. Starting in Collooney it passes through Ballintogher, Dromahair, Glenfarne, Blacklion and Enniskillen.

Cavan to Leitrim Greenway

The proposed Cavan Leitrim Greenway is a joint proposal from Cavan and Leitrim County Councils to open a quality greenway on the route of the disused narrow-gauge railway between Mohill, Co Leitrim and Belturbet, Co Cavan. The proposed route is 42 km in length and has been split into the following 3 sections:

- **Section 1:** Mohill – Fenagh – Ballinamore, 15 kms
 - Completed 2kms, Ballinamore towards Fenagh on Shannon- Erne Blueway.
- **Section 2:** Ballinamore – Templeport – Ballyconnell, 16 kms
 - Completed 2.5 kms towards Corgar.
 - Completed 1.7 kms at Templeport.
 - Completed 5.5 kms, Ballyheady to Ballyconnell on Shannon- Erne Blueway
- **Section 3:** Ballyconnell – Belturbet. 10 kms.

Ballinamore to Dromod Greenway

The Ballinamore to Dromod Greenway is to run from Dromod to Mohill and on to Ballinamore. In Ballinamore it will connect to the Leitrim to Ballinamore Blueway and the Cavan to Leitrim Greenway.

The finalised route for the greenway is 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.

Leitrim to Ballinamore Blueway

This 20km route travels from Leitrim Village Marina through to Kilclare Locks, onto Keshcarrigan Marina, then to Castlefore, Ballyduff Lock and arrives at Ballinamore Marina. The route therefore involves five individual journeys of no more than 6km each.

Leitrim to Boyle Greenway

A proposed greenway is currently in development to link Carrick-on-Shannon with Boyle in County Roscommon. This is being led by TII with no specific route being detailed at this point.

Urban Network Development: Carrick-On-Shannon

With a population of just over 4000 and being the largest town in Leitrim, an urban cycle network was developed for Carrick-on-Shannon. The urban network design comprises of an inner primary orbital route and a larger amalgamation of both primary and secondary routes that encompasses the town.

Starting at the Attifinlay Roundabout on the N4 on the east of the town, the orbital route continues westward along the N4 Dublin Road and then continues north along Bridge Street and then east along Main Street and then Summerhill Road in the east of the town.

Locations which are served by the orbital route will include but not limited to:

- Carrick-on-Shannon Town Centre
- River Front Amenity Park
- Carrick-On-Shannon Train Station
- Scoil Mhuire
- St Mary's Boys School
- Carrick-On-Shannon Community School
- Aura Leitrim Leisure Cdaentre
- Páirc Seán Mac Diarma

In addition to the orbital routes a number of radial routes are also provided to provide connectors with interurban routes in addition to serving locations that were not picked up on the orbital loop roads.

- The east/west radial route is the main route through the town centre. It begins at the Drishoge Roundabout and travels in the Eastern direction along the N4 Boyle Road, making a turn at the Main Street-Bypass Road junction and continuing along the N4

until ceasing at the Coreen (Leitrim), Ard na Si bus stop and the connection point with the interurban route to Drumsna and Roscommon.

- The north/south radial route begins at the junction between the R280 and Shannon Grove and travels south along the R280 for the remainder of the Leitrim Road. Turning east onto Dublin Road, the route continues South along the R280. Taking the eastern exit at the Attifinlay roundabout onto the N4, the route continues along the N4 before ceasing, again, at the Coreen (Leitrim), Ard na Si bus stop and the connection point with the interurban route to Drumsna and Roscommon.

Locations which are served by the radial routes will include but not limited to:

- Carrick-On-Shannon Education Centre
- River front Amenity Park
- Shannon Blueway Carrick Trailhead

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 located on orbital or radial routes previously mentioned such as linkage to St. Patrick Community Hospital.

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 Leitrim and the town of Carrick-on-Shannon.

The network design for Leitrim 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: Leitrim CycleConnects Network – List of Maps

| Cycle Map List |
|--|
| Leitrim County Cycle Network |
| Carrick-on-Shannon Urban Cycle Network |

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