

Draft Monaghan
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 Monaghan County Council. The CycleConnects 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 will also incorporate with the Northern Ireland cycle strategy. 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 Monaghan. For details of methodology, national policy and the overall aspirations for the networks, please refer to the main report of which this technical note is an appendix of.

2. Monaghan Population and Settlements

County Monaghan is in the north of the country in the province of Ulster where it sits on the border with Northern Ireland, with County Cavan and Meath to the south and Louth to the east.

According to the CSO 2016 the county has a population of 61,386 inhabitants. Table 2.1 below shows the population of towns within Monaghan with at least 1,000 people. Monaghan town and Carrickmacross are the only settlements with over 5,000 people, with all other towns having a population of less than 5,000.

Table 2.1: Population Settlements in Monaghan

City/Town	Population (2016)
Monaghan	7,678
Carrickmacross	5,032
Castleblayney	3,607
Clones	1,680
Ballybay	1,241

3. Existing Monaghan Policies and Plans

Monaghan Development Plan 2019-2025

The Monaghan Development Plan (MDP) was developed by Monaghan County Council to span the years 2019 to 2025. The plan was developed with the vision of Monaghan as the principal focus within the region, with the potential to generate and be the focus of significant employment and housing growth.

The strategic vision of the Plan is as follows:

“The Council’s open and transparent approach helps maximise operational efficiency, prioritise inclusive and accessible services to citizens, and continuously review value for money in service provision in order to deliver a broader range of services that promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities within the county.

The move to devolve greater decision-making to local level and give Elected Representatives and communities more control over a broader range of issues means the council is more responsive to local needs and circumstances and enables stakeholders solve problems at local level. This is enhancing the Council’s role in developing sustainable communities, improved community identity and is contributing to the effectiveness and credibility of democratic representation.”

This vision has a number of key ambitions for nature and all places to realise their full potential and these include to:

- Protect and enhance the environment
- Work to achieve economic prosperity and improve quality of life for all
- Accommodate expanded growth and development in suitable locations
- Promote the region’s international reputation as one of Europe’s most creative, innovative and greenest liveable regions

Throughout the Plan, there are a number of policies that make note of the facilitation and provision of cycle infrastructure and greenways, which have been listed under the following headings:

Cycling and Walking Policy

Chapter 7 of the MDP outlines the policies in relation to Transport and Infrastructure objectives for Monaghan. This included the primary objective outlined below:

- **TISO 1** – To achieve a sustainable, efficient and integrated transport system and ease of movement throughout County Monaghan by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of the road, cycling and pedestrian facilities and by promoting more compact urban forms close to existing facilities to encourage more sustainable movement patterns.

The Council recognises the importance of both walking and cycling in minimising environmental impacts while also contributing to improved wellbeing and quality of life. The provision of cycling infrastructure such as designated cycle paths, greenways, walking paths and trails also supports recreation and tourism. The enhancement of such provision and the promotion of a modal shift away from the use of the private car is a key objective of the Smarter Travel Document operated by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS).

Monaghan County published its first walking and cycling strategy in 2012 and a second Strategy was published in 2017. This Strategy provides a high-level framework for a modal shift from car travel to cycling and walking in response to the Smarter Travel Programme. The Walking and Cycling Strategy provides an analysis of existing cycling and walking

infrastructure in the County and outlines a policy framework to enhance existing and future cycling and walking projects to create a coherent network of sustainable infrastructure.

The following cycling and walking policies as set out in the plan relate to the provision of cycling and infrastructure development.

- **CWP 1:** To promote and facilitate the development of walkways, cycleways and recreational routes in appropriate locations throughout the County to deliver the objectives of the County Walking and Cycling Strategy and any subsequent strategy document.
- **CWP 2:** To promote and encourage the development of walks and cycle ways in accordance with the Smarter Travel Policy and to protect established routes from development which would adversely impact upon them.
- **CWP 3:** To develop, in co-operation and consultation with adjoining local authorities and cross border bodies, sections of the Ulster Canal Greenway to connect the main urban centres throughout central Ulster.
- **CWP 4:** To encourage the provision of bicycle infrastructure such as shelters and parking facilities in appropriate locations and make provisions for such infrastructure in new developments.

Monaghan County Walking and Cycling Strategy 2021-2026

The Monaghan Walking and Cycling Strategy was published by Monaghan County Council in 2021. The purpose of this document is to outline the proposed strategy to promote walking and cycling in County Monaghan through policy and infrastructure. The strategy takes into account the county's role as an important agent of change in driving a number of key national programmes.

The main mission of the council as stated within the strategy is as follows:

- To develop safe and appealing walking & cycling infrastructure in Co. Monaghan
- To create an environment in which people will find it easy and attractive to walk and cycle, both recreationally, and for everyday journeys.

The document looks at how the council proposes to develop walking and cycling infrastructure and promote walking and cycling as activities which support the economic, cultural and social wellbeing of the people of Co Monaghan. It looks at walking and cycling both as recreational activities and at the crucial role that they play in helping to address Climate Change through the promotion of Active Travel. The Strategy also supports the development of greenways and networks of walking and cycling routes as tourism amenities as well as necessary active travel infrastructure.

Cycling figures in Monaghan were interrogated as part of data collection and as such it was identified that cycling uptake within County Monaghan are lower than the national average at 0.45% in comparison to 2.8% on average. When solely focused on students, the number increases to 0.5%. Of these, 41% of commuters are undertaking a journey of less than 15 minutes. This indicates that there is a large group of people who could adjust their commuting habits by switching to cycling.

Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy

The Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy provides councils with the opportunity to collaborate on a project which will help each individual area connect to a wider region. Local authorities are the key drivers behind the development of the proposed greenway which could provide

economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs to establish and enhance businesses and bring much needed prosperity to the mainly rural area.

In June 2015 it was agreed that Waterways Ireland would lead on progressing development of a Greenway along the corridor of the Ulster Canal in association with relevant councils and stakeholders.

The central spine of the greenway route therefore started to form around the Ulster Canal. However, the local authorities were keen that the route served the population centres of the region, so that it could support the local authorities' work on promoting Local Agenda 21 around sustainable development, and in particular smarter travel choices. Therefore, the route expanded to include the main commuter destinations in the region, namely:

- Armagh
- Cavan
- Enniskillen

The long-term goal for this project is the creation of off-road walking and cycling paths using the original route of the disused Ulster Canal (as far as is practicable) and abandoned railway lines which link into it. Pathways which bring disused transportation infrastructure back into use are popularly known as 'greenways'.

Future Local Transport Plans

Monaghan 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 Monaghan Cycle Network

Introduction

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

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

Methodology

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

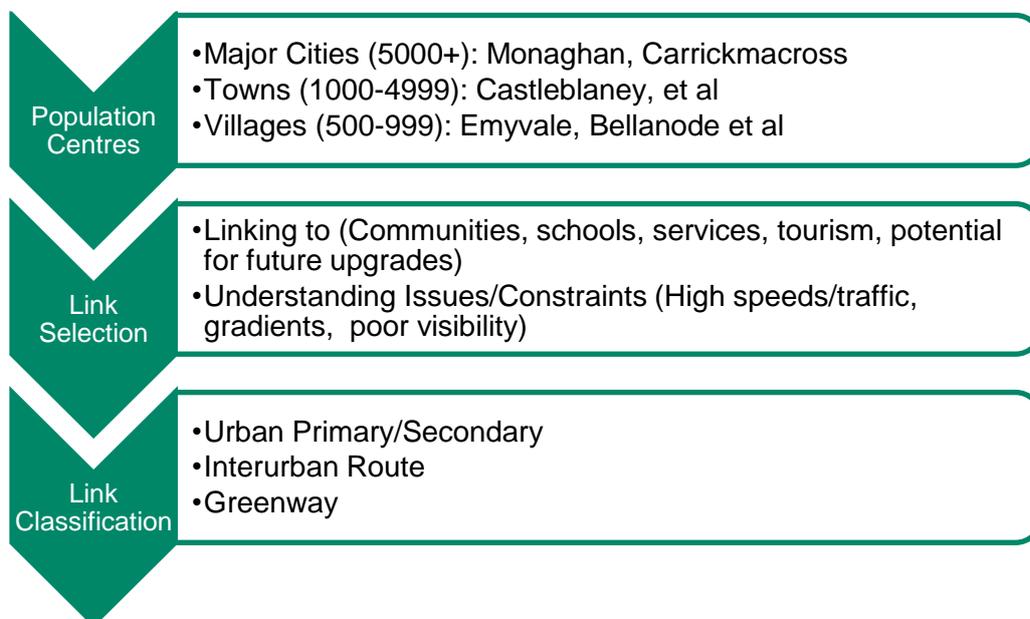


Figure 4.1: Cycle Network Development Methodology

Population Centres: The Monaghan 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 Monaghan Town and Carrickmacross noted. By mapping all towns and villages, a profile emerged of where most people in Monaghan 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. 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. 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 blueways (routes parallel to rivers, canals and lakes) with cyclists sharing the route with pedestrians.

Proposed Monaghan County Network

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

Table 4.2: Monaghan CycleConnects Network – List of Maps

Cycle Map List
Monaghan Cycle Network
Monaghan Urban Cycle Network
Carrickmacross Urban Cycle Network

The Monaghan CycleConnects Network primarily extends the network beyond the key settlement areas of Monaghan town and Carrickmacross. In summary, it will consist of an urban cycle network for Monaghan, with interurban connectors between the towns of Castleblaney, Clones and Ballybay. These then extend into adjoining counties forming a comprehensive and connecting cycle network nationally.

Interurban Link Development

The primary towns with a population of over 1,000 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 Ardee, Dundalk, Armagh City, and Cavan Town. 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 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 that overlap with this proposed network connect Monaghan town to Dundalk in the east and to Sligo in the west. These most likely coincide with the proposed interurban connections between Monaghan town and Castleblaney/Carrickmacross, Castleblaney to Armagh City, Monaghan Town to Armagh City, and Monaghan town and Clones.

Greenway and Blueway Routes

Kingscourt to Carrickmacross Greenway

An indicative greenway route has been selected between Kingscourt and Carrickmacross, 30km in length. 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.

Carrickmacross to Dundalk Greenway

The Carrickmacross to Dundalk Greenway project is a proposed 20km off-road route. The proposed greenway will generally follow the original line of the 19th century Great Northern Railway spur between Carrickmacross in County Monaghan and Dundalk in County Louth. At the historic village of Iniskeen, located halfway along the proposed route, the Greenway would provide access to village amenities and a number of heritage sites, including the Patrick Kavanagh Centre. 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.

Clones to Castleblayney Greenway (via Ballybay)

An indicative greenway route has been selected between Clones and Castleblayney Greenway (via Ballybay). 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.

Ulster Canal Greenway

This includes 74km of canal route with 93km between Lough Neagh and Lough Erne. It uses the towpath of the abandoned Ulster Canal. Heritage structures along the route include three bridges, a lock house and two locks. The Greenway contains a mix of rural and urban landscapes and is designed to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. It is graded as an 'easy' route, suitable for the moderately fit, and is accessible to wheelchair users.

Blackwater Greenway

A potential 26-kilometre greenway route west from Armagh City through Killylea, through Tynan, turning south past Caledon and Glaslough on the way to Monaghan town. Located on a former railway. 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.

Orchard Greenway

A 56-kilometre route south out of Armagh City following the former Great Northern Railway line, crossing the Tassagh Viaduct into Keady, before continuing through the rolling County Armagh countryside into Monaghan and Louth, passing through Castleblayney before terminating in Dundalk. The route is located on a former railway. 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.

Urban Network Development: Monaghan

With a population of over 5,000 inhabitants, an urban cycle network has been developed for Monaghan town. 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. This also includes the Ulster Canal Greenway which runs through the centre of the town. Starting at Old Cross Square, the primary orbital route travels west along Broad Road and north at the N54 – Dawson Street junction. Continuing north along North Road and then the route travels south, the route travels South along the N54 (Glaslough Street/Dublin Street) until returning to the Old Cross Square, completing the orbital route. Locations which are served by the orbital route and existing greenway routes includes:

- Monaghan Town Centre
- Peter's Lake, Monaghan
- Monaghan Bus Station

- Monaghan Modal School
- Monaghan Harps GAA Club

In addition to the orbital route, 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 radial routes usually travel in a north/south and east/west direction and comprise of normally primary routes however some secondary routes formulate part of these routes. The radial routes are described below:

- An east/west radial route from the R186 – Clones Road Junction continues in the Eastern direction along the N54 until reaching Old Cross Square. The route then continues along the Dublin Road until ceasing at the Corlat Roundabout where a connection is made with an interurban route at the southern end of the Monaghan Town Bypass.
- A north/south radial route starts in the south at the junction of Glen Road/Mall Road and continues north along Dawson Street and then the subsequent N2 Armagh Road.

Locations which are served by these radial routes include:

- St. Louis National and Secondary Schools
- Coral Leisure Centre
- Beech Hill College
- The Fitness Habitat Gym
- Monaghan Institute
- St. McCartan's College

A number of secondary routes are also proposed along streets such as Armagh Road, Derrynagrew, Old Armagh Road, Black Lane, Glenview Heights, Park Road and High Street. These are intended 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 Monaghan General Hospital.

Urban Network Development: Carrickmacross

With a population of just over 5,000 inhabitants, an urban cycle network has been developed for Carrickmacross. The urban network design is comprised of a smaller inner primary orbital route and a larger amalgamation of both primary and secondary routes that encompass the town.

The orbital route in the centre of the town is comprised of streets such as Rockdaniel Road, Cloughvalley, Parnell Street, Shercock Road, Ross Road, Castleblaney Road and Inner Park. A radial primary route runs in a north-south direction through this orbital route on Monaghan Street. Locations which are served by this orbital route include:

- Carrickmacross Town Centre
- Patrician High School
- Inver College
- Carrickmacross Playground

A primary orbital route is present on the south of the town which includes streets such as Oriel Road, Castle Street, O'Neill Street, and Dundalk Road. This then connects to proposed greenways to Dundalk in the east and Kingscourt in the south. Locations which are served by this orbital route include

Locations which are served by this orbital route include:

- St Louis Secondary School
- St. Joseph's National School
- Lisanisk Lake
- Carrick Aces Athletic Club

In addition to the orbital route, a number of radial routes are also proposed to provide connectors with interurban routes in addition to serving locations that were not picked up on the orbital loop roads. The radial routes usually travel in a north/south and east/west direction and comprise of normally primary routes however some secondary routes formulate part of these routes. The radial routes are described below:

A north/south radial route begins at the Ballybay Road Roundabout and travels along the Nafarty and Castleblaney Road until ending at the junction intersection point with the Castleblaney Road/R180 junction.

Locations which are served by the radial routes include:

- Carrickmacross Emmets Gaelic Football Club
- Carrick Aces Athletic Club
- Phoenix Sports & Leisure Centre

A number of secondary routes are also proposed along streets such as Ballybay Road, Donaghmoyne Road, Dundalk Road, Riverside Road, Kingscourt Road, and Mullanary Street. These are intended 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.

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 Monaghan and the towns of Monaghan and Carrickmacross.

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

Cycle Map List
Monaghan Cycle Network
Monaghan Urban Cycle Network
Carrickmacross Urban Cycle Network

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