

Draft Sligo
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 Sligo 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 Sligo. 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. Sligo Population and Settlements

County Sligo is located in the north-west of Ireland, in the province of Connaught, and is bordered by the counties of Mayo, Roscommon and Leitrim.

According to the CSO 2016, the county has a population of 65,535 inhabitants. Table 2.1 below shows the population of towns within Sligo with at least 1000 people. Sligo City is the only settlement with at least 5,000 people with all other towns having a population of less than 5000.

Table 2.1: Population Settlements in Sligo

City/Town	Population (2016)
Sligo	19,199
Tobercurry	1,986
Strandhill	1,753
Colloney	1,610
Ballymote	1,549
Ballisodare	1,350
Enniscrone	1,156
Charlestown-Bellaahy	1,033

3. Existing Sligo Policy and Plans

The following are various policies and proposals that have been referenced to influence the development of the Sligo CycleConnects Network.

Sligo County Development Plan 2017 - 2023

The Sligo County Development Plan (SCDP) was published in 2017 and is the overarching strategic framework document for sustainable development in spatial, economic, social and environmental terms. This includes policies and objectives to meet various issues in Sligo as providing sustainable communities, better transport and adaptation to climate change.

Chapter 8 of the SCDP documents Transport and Mobility. This aims to integrate transport and land use in order to provide a sustainable framework for economic and social development

The Strategic Transport Policies of Sligo Are:

SP-TRA-1: Support the creation of an integrated and environmentally sound transport system, in particular with regard to accessibility and choice of transport, with a quality intercity bus and rail service, alongside the promotion of cycle facilities and pedestrian movements

SP-TRA-2: Make optimal use of existing transportation infrastructure by using traffic management in order to reduce travel times and congestion

SP-TRA-3: Encourage the shift from car use to more environmentally friendly modes of transport and ensure the provision of quality interchange facilities between road, rail, bus and bicycle in relevant settlements

SP-TRA-4: Plan for the future traffic and transportation needs in Sligo and ensure that new development does not compromise the expansion of rail, road and cycling corridors in the County. Proposed road realignment/improvement lines, road corridors and national cycle route corridors shall be preserved free from development that would prejudice the implementation of the schemes.

SP-TRA-5: Promote improved access to and sustainable development and operation of Sligo Port and Sligo Airport (Strandhill) and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

SP-TRA-6: Facilitate and encourage the provision of adequate car-parking facilities in Sligo City and the County's towns and villages.

SP-TRA-7: Facilitate the roll-out of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, in line with the National Renewable Energy Action Plan's target for 10% of Ireland's vehicles to be electric by 2020.

The Strategic Transport Objectives are:

SO-TRA-1: Develop a strategy to promote and facilitate greater use of sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling, in line with the Department of Transport's Smarter Travel, Cycle and Walking Strategies.

SO-TRA-2: Implement the relevant transportation policies of the DTTAS policy document Investing in our Transport Future - Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport, in partnership with funding agencies and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

SO-TRA-3: Initiate the preparation of a Transportation Study for Sligo City & Environs, subject to available funding, and implement the recommendations of this Study subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

Section 8.3 discusses Cycle and pedestrian movements. This includes its commitments to the NCPF as part of Smarter travel and the National routes published by TII of which Sligo is linked to three routes (to Dundalk, Letterkenny and Clifden/Westport via Ballina). Sligo has also been designated as a potential cycling Hub in Failte Ireland's *Cycling hubs & Gateways*. It also has looked at progressing two greenways in the county which are the Sligo and Northern counties Greenway which runs along an old railway to Enniskillen to County Fermanagh. Similarly, another greenway has been identified to run from Collooney to Charlestown in the southern border with Mayo. In summary, Sligo's walking and cycle policies include:

P-CW-1: Promote walking and cycling as sustainable transport modes and healthy recreational activities.

P-CW-2: Plan and make provision for the safe and efficient movement of cyclists and pedestrians in and around built-up areas.

P-CW-3: Make provision for the integration of pedestrian and cycle facilities (i.e. bicycle parking) at public transportation nodes and village/town centres, public car parks and Institutions.

P-CW-4: Ensure that adequate cycle facilities are provided in all new institutions, employment centres, sports complexes and leisure facilities, in the form of sheltered bicycle parking and locker rooms with shower facilities.

P-CW-5: Promote cycling as a viable commuting mode of transport.

P-CW-6: Require that all new developments are designed to integrate into a cycling network linking with adjoining development areas and schools, and provide cycle and pedestrian-friendly development layouts, infrastructure and facilities.

P-CW-7: Provide appropriate facilities for pedestrians and for people with special mobility needs.

P-CW-8: Consider the use of off-road routes, such as disused railway lines and bridle paths, for both walking and cycling to improve access to rural tourist attractions. Where feasible, provide separate trails for walkers and cyclists in the interests of safety and convenience, with appropriate surfaces for each type of user and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

P-CW-9: Provide, improve and extend cycle and pedestrian routes on existing roads, proposed roads, roads being upgraded and green corridors (including river corridors), where feasible and practical and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

P-CW-10: Implement the relevant policies of the Department of Transport's National Cycle Policy Framework 2009–2020 and support the provision of a national cycle network.

P-CW-11: Implement the relevant provisions of the Department of Transport's Walking Policy, when published.

P-CW-12: Implement the measures in Sligo's Cycling Strategy and update the Strategy as appropriate.

These are supplemented by the following Cycle and Walking objectives which are:

O-CW-1: Develop cycle routes from Ballysadare and Collooney to Sligo City

O-CW-2: Develop a cycle route from the proposed Eastern Garavogue Bridge to Hazelwood House.

O-CW-3: Prepare an Integrated Transportation Plan for Sligo to include all modes of transport, with support from the National Transport Authority (NTA).

O-CW-4: Facilitate the pedestrianisation of Sligo City Centre by the development of link roads and footbridges and the introduction of a 30 km/h zone in the Centre of Sligo City.

O-CW-5: Seek the development of a footway and cycleway (greenway) on or alongside the closed railway line from Collooney to Bellaghy (Sligo/Mayo county boundary) insofar as such route does not compromise the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor, if reopening the railway line is deemed feasible.

O-CW-6: Seek the development of a footway and cycleway (greenway) on or alongside the abandoned railway line (SLNCR) from Collooney to Enniskillen, with a connection from Collooney to Sligo City, which can also serve as a Smarter Travel commuter route and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

This Development plan is scheduled to be updated in Summer 2022 with a view to be finalised in 2023.

Table 3.1: Walking and Cycle Trail identified in Sligo Development Plan

Potential project name	Description
Greenway on or along the Sligo-Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR)	Trail from Sligo to Enniskillen
Greenway on or along the Western Rail Corridor	Trail from Sligo to Bellaghy
Long Bank, Beltra	Walking route along the "Long Bank" land reclamation dam, providing exceptional views of Ballysadare Bay and the landscape beyond it
Beara Breifne Way	Walking route from Geevagh to Monasteraden, with potential to develop a greenway from the county boundary near Monasteraden to the Sligo-Dublin railway line and link with the Miners Way Historical Trail
Sligo Way	Realignment of the Sligo Way (Coolaney to Lough Easky), resulting in a long-distance off-road walking trail
Ben Bulbin Forest Walk	Link between existing walkway and the local road L-7216-21 to expand the existing trail network
Surf Centres	Development of surf centres and related facilities at Strandhill, Mullaghmore, Enniscrone, Easky and Dunmorán Strand

The Development Plan also highlights that cycling plays a minor role in long distance trips undertaken in the county. The provision of designated cycle routes, greenways and improved road surfaces would aid this. It is recognised that the provision of good quality, safe, long-distance cycling routes are important in encouraging leisure and tourist use of cycling as a mode of transport as well as commuters.

Future Local Transport Plans

Sligo 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 Sligo Cycle Network

Introduction

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

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

Methodology

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

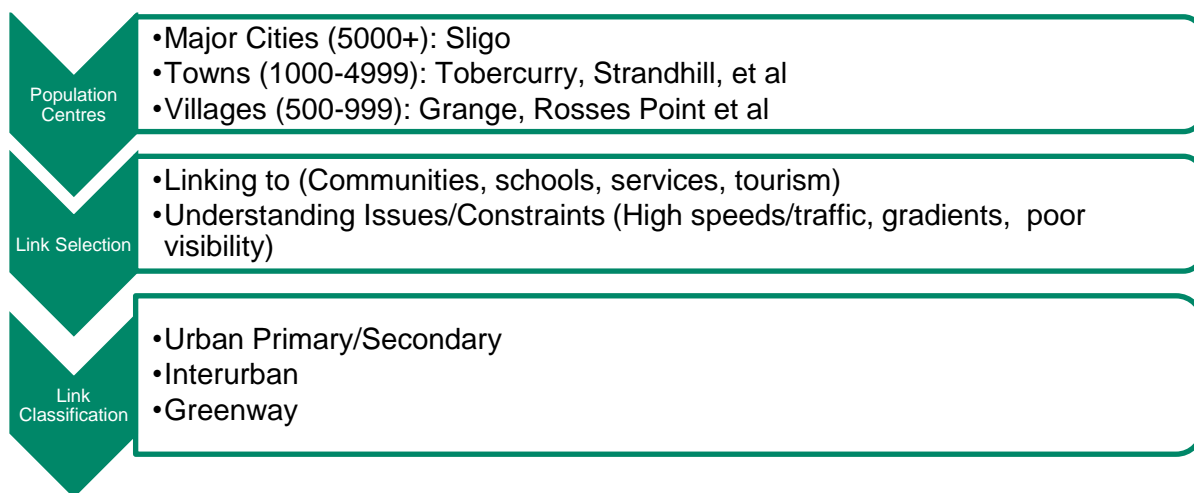


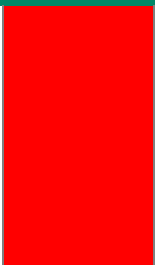
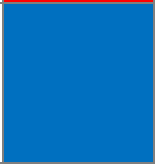
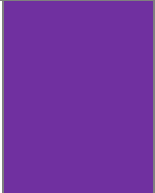
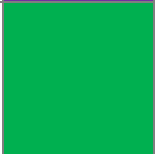
Figure 4.1: Interurban route selection methodology

Population Centres: The Sligo 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 Sligo City noted. By mapping all towns and villages, a profile emerged of where most people in Sligo 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 Classifications

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 blueways (routes along rivers, lakes and canals) with cyclists sharing the route with pedestrians.

Proposed Sligo County Network

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

Table 4.2: Sligo CycleConnects Network – List of Maps

Cycle Map List
Sligo County Cycle Network
Sligo 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 route of the latest Eurovelo Route was also considered when considering the best route options between settlements. Connections were also made to larger cross border towns such as Carrick-On-Shannon and Ballina. 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. 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 have also been used to overlap corridors these include corridors and routes into counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo.

Greenway Route Development

Collooney to Charlestown Greenway

The Sligo Greenway is proposed to be a 35.5km off road route that links Charlestown/ Bellaghy with Collooney and on to Sligo City. This is proposed as part of the Western Rail Trail connecting Athenry (Galway) to Sligo. The proposed route connects Charlestown, Curry, Tobercurry, Coolaney and Collooney.

A feasibility study was conducted for this proposed greenway in December 2018. It examined the technical and practical aspects of the development of the greenway on the disused rail line. It concluded that there are no technical reasons as to why this project should not proceed. The report notes that the greenway would “provide a sustainable, scenic and safe walking and cycling facility which will benefit the wider Northwest region.” Public meetings have also been regarding the proposal.

There is potential for this greenway to connect further on to Swinford, Claremorris and Athenry. This would be a 128 km greenway known as the Western Rail Trail, making use of the rail line from Athenry in Galway to Collooney in Sligo.

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.

Collooney to Enniskillen Greenway

This proposed 72km greenway aims to connect Enniskillen in Northern Ireland to Collooney in Sligo. The trail will convert the disused railway route between Collooney and Enniskillen into a multi-use rail trail for cyclists, walkers and the mobility challenged. Starting in Collooney it passes through Ballintogher, Dromahair, Glenfarne, Blacklion and Enniskillen.

The main challenges with developing these greenways will be obtaining planning approval and facilitating the potential for a dual cycle and rail route in the future. In the case of the Western Greenway, a design may have to be considered whereby a rail line may be provided in the future without compromising the location of the greenway cycle and walking route.

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: Sligo City

With a population of over 5000 inhabitants, an urban cycle network has been developed for Sligo City. The urban network design is comprised of primary orbital routes and a larger amalgamation of both primary and secondary routes that encompasses the city.

An outer orbital primary route has been provided using the western distributor road, Finisklin Road, Cleveragh Drive, the proposed Garavogue Bridge Crossing and N16/Ash Lane. An additional orbital route is provided in the city centre from the N15 in the north via Union Street, Adelaide Street, Template Street and City gate in the south.

Locations that are served by the orbital route includes but not limited to:

- Sligo Regional Sports Centre
- Sligo University Hospital
- Doorly Park and Playground
- Ursuline College Sligo
- Kevinsfort/Mitchel Curley Park
- Gaelscoil Chnoc na Ré
- Dick Kent Park
- Markievicz Park GAA Stadium

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. Various radial routes also feed into these primary routes such as Cartron Hill, Bundoran Road, Pearse Road, Church Hill and Knappagh Road.

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:

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

- Atlantic Technological University Sligo
- Sligo Bus & Train Station
- Carbury FC
- Scoil Ursula
- The Showgrounds Stadium

- Sligo Grammar School
- Carbury National School
- Sligo College of Further Education
- MSLETB Training Centre, Sligo
- ATU Sligo Student's Union

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. A greenway link to Hazelwood is also proposed to link into the Sligo City Urban Cycle Network. These urban routes then link to various interurban routes that link Sligo City to other parts of Sligo County and adjacent counties.

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 Sligo and Sligo City.

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

Cycle Map List
Sligo County Cycle Network
Sligo Urban Cycle Network

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