

# Creating Opportunities for Rural Ireland





EuroVelo, the European cycle route network



 **EuroVelo**  
*the European cycle route network*

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway will form part of the international EuroVelo network of long-distance cycling trails in Europe.

It will be the first leg of the proposed Capitals Route (EuroVelo 2) between Galway and Moscow.

[www.eurovelo.com](http://www.eurovelo.com)



# The Galway to Dublin Cycleway

## An introduction

Tourism is a significant contributor to the Irish economy and benefits a wide community of interests. The proposed National Galway to Dublin Cycleway will be a dedicated coast to coast route for cyclists. Stretching 276 km across the country, the Cycleway will be a world-class amenity for families, communities and tourists to enjoy.

The project advisory group is made up of the National Roads Authority, the National Trails Office (Irish Sports Council) and Fáilte Ireland. The project has been delivered in partnership with seven local authorities, Galway and Dublin City Councils and the County Councils for Galway, Roscommon, Westmeath, Meath and Kildare.

This booklet has been produced for local businesses and communities, to show how the Galway to Dublin Cycleway creates new opportunities for those who are already involved in providing and facilitating visitor services—and offers exciting new opportunities to the wider community.

## Coast to Coast

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway is an exciting and ambitious project. The Cycleway is designed to present the most attractive scenery possible starting out from the lively cultural city of Galway on the Atlantic Ocean and journeying 140 km on a rural route to Athlone, with new bridges across the rivers Suck and Shannon. The route continues into the heart of the Irish countryside, among rolling green hills and on 45 km of disused railway line to Mullingar, and then travels for 91 km along the towpaths of the Royal Canal, finishing in the vibrant, fashionable docklands area of Dublin City. As it makes its way through charming towns and villages, visitors can cycle or walk at their own pace over a few days or a week, while taking in scenic views of a diverse landscape, including coastline, peatlands, woodlands and watercourses.

The vision is to create a world-class amenity which is of a scale that will allow Ireland to tap into the growing international tourism market for cycling and that will provide opportunities for new and existing local businesses across the country between Galway and Dublin. Over the following pages, we look at cycleways both at home and abroad showing some of the benefits they bring to communities. We also take a closer look at the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, the type of visitor we aim to attract to use it and the opportunities for local people and businesses along the route.



The National Cycle Network Scoping Study (2009) envisaged a national network of cycling routes that establish Ireland as a quality international tourism destination with high-quality, traffic-free, inter-urban routes that deliver economic benefits locally.

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway is an important first step in the development of Ireland's National Cycle Network.

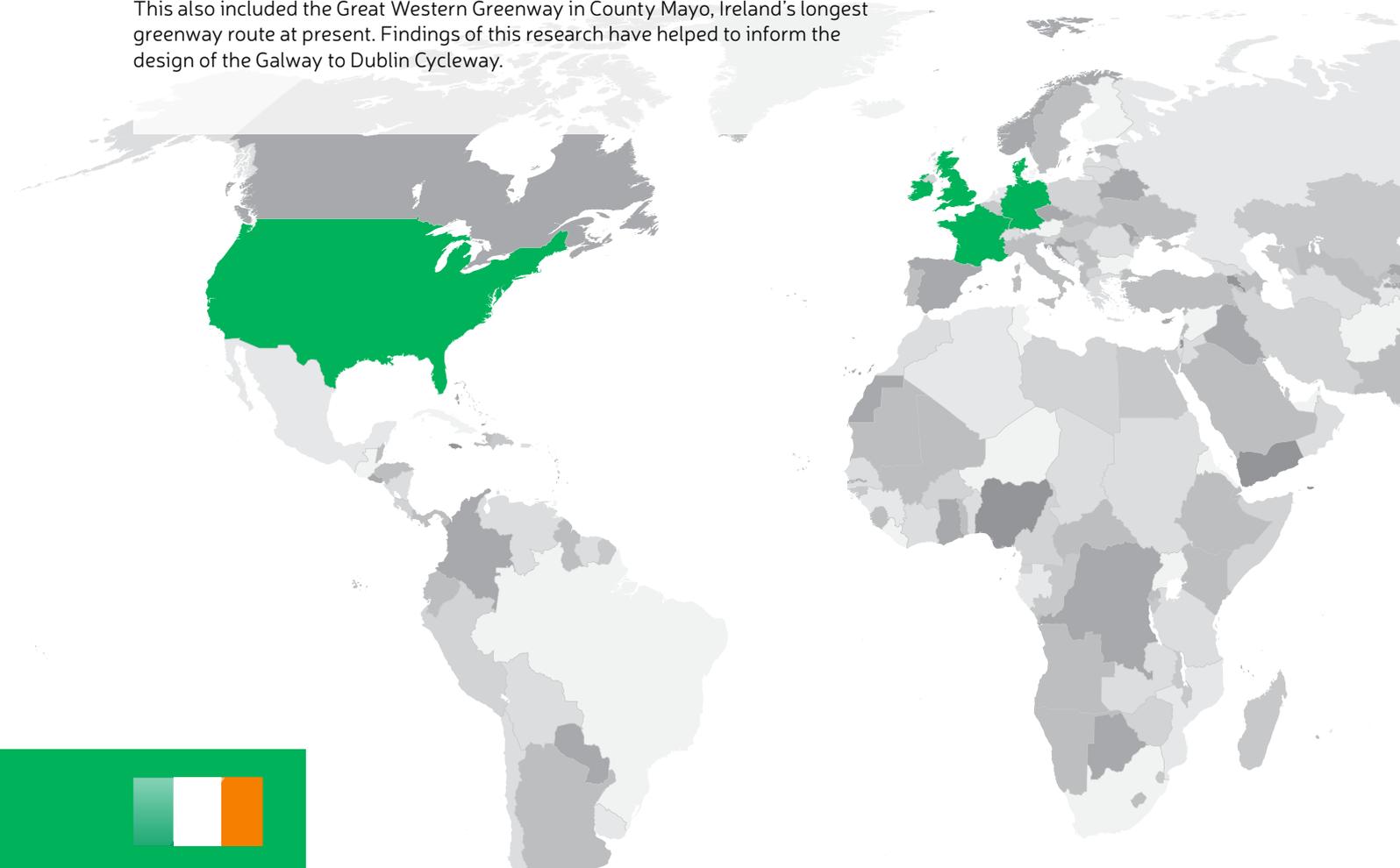
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# Cycleways, what we have learned

## Local and international cycleways

International research was undertaken to identify best practice and learn from countries that have an established cycling tourism offer.

This also included the Great Western Greenway in County Mayo, Ireland's longest greenway route at present. Findings of this research have helped to inform the design of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.



## The Great Western Greenway

The Great Western Greenway (Achill–Mulranny–Newport–Westport) is a traffic-free cycling and walking facility that primarily follows the line of the old Great Western Railway, which closed in 1937. The first 18 km of the Greenway, from Newport to Mulranny, opened in 2010, while the two extensions linking south to Westport and east to Achill formally opened in July 2011, lengthening the route to 42 km, mostly off road.

The development of the Greenway has involved a partnership between Fáilte Ireland, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Mayo Co. Council, as the major funders of the

project, with substantial support also provided by the local community and local landowners.

**In its first full year (2011) this initiative is estimated to have been worth €7 million to the local economy and to have created an estimated 38 new full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, with a further 56 existing FTE jobs also being sustained, significantly enhancing the local business community and improving local employment. Since then the number of people using the Mayo Greenway has doubled, with a corresponding increase in the employment and business opportunities for the region.**



### The GAP - Great Allegheny USA

The 150 mile Great Allegheny Passage connects with the 185 mile C&O Canal Towpath at Cumberland, MD to create a 335 mile route between Pittsburgh and Washington, DC. Cycling and hiking are the two most popular activities.

[www.atatrail.org](http://www.atatrail.org)



### The Otago Central Railway New Zealand

New Zealand's first Rail Trail and Original Great Ride opened in 2000, the 152 km long trail follows the former route of the Otago Central Railway. The former railway line was ideal for New Zealand's first off-road cycleway and walking trail.

[www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz](http://www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz)



### The C2C - Coast to Coast UK

The Sea to Sea (C2C) cycle route was opened in 1994 running from Whitehaven on the west coast of Cumbria to the north-east coast at Sunderland, and has an average of between 12,000 and 15,000 cyclists completing the route every year (and literally hundreds of thousands of others doing shorter sections). This is contributing around £12 million a year to the regional economy.

[www.c2c-guide.co.uk](http://www.c2c-guide.co.uk)



### The West Coast Route Denmark

Part of EuroVelo Route 12, this route is 560 km long, starting in Rudbøl and finishing in Skagen. Approx. 70% of the route is paved, but long sections consist of sand and gravel tracks.

[www.northseacycleroute.dk](http://www.northseacycleroute.dk)



### The Elbe Cycle Route Germany

This route is 1,260 km long, starting from Cuxhaven and finishing at the grand cliffs of the national park region, Saxon Switzerland. Running along the Elbe riverbank, it is flat and free of vehicles and takes in many historic cities and towns including Hamburg and Magdeburg and includes the Saxon wine region.

[www.elbe-cycle-route.com](http://www.elbe-cycle-route.com)



### The Velodyssey Cycle Route France

The Velodyssey is the longest cycle route in France, covering more than 1,200 km from Brittany down the Atlantic coast to the border with Spain. The route is divided into 14 sections, allowing visitors to discover the best each region has to offer.

[www.velodyssey.com](http://www.velodyssey.com)



# Coast to Coast

## And Everything in Between!

In market research commissioned by Fáilte Ireland in 2013, nearly 15,000 interviews were conducted across the Irish and four key overseas markets of Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

As part of this research, consumers were asked to indicate the types of things that make up a good cycling destination. Beautiful landscape and scenery were among the most important criteria by a significant margin, followed by segregated (off-road) cycling, which provides access to attractive urban areas at intervals along the route.

- Beautiful landscape and scenery
- Traffic-free cycling
- Safety of cycling routes
- Access to towns and villages
- Attractive cities and towns

From the research findings and inputs, it is clear that a strong business case can be made for the development of cycling tourism with significant markets to target. This can provide a range of opportunities for local communities, once the right infrastructure is in place on the ground.

Visitors will choose a destination based on the overall experience of what they can see and do and cycling is an enjoyable means of experiencing those other activities.

It is also important that the route allows visitors to have a rounded holiday experience by frequently incorporating interesting places to visit.

It was proposed that six main sections of the route are named with reference to local attractions, events and activities. This reflects the unique character of each area, these sections are only used as examples. Lots to see and do is essential to the success of the cycleway.

# Galway-Dublin Cycleway

## Proposed Sections

### Day 1: Limestone Plains

#### Galway-Loughrea

Our Coast to Coast experience begins in Galway, a bustling city of pubs and restaurants. One of Ireland's premier cultural centres, there are always festivals and events to enjoy, along with teeming street life. The route goes south via Galway Bay, skirting the Atlantic, with splendid views of the Burren. We journey through the Limestone Plains on the outskirts of Galway as the Cycleway turns eastwards towards Loughrea.



### Day 2: Kilreekill Ridge

#### Loughrea-Ballinasloe

Our second day takes us over Kilreekill Ridge. The historic Battle of Aughrim took place in 1691 and we can spend some time learning about this event in the interpretive centre in Aughrim village. We continue onwards along the route, entering the market town of Ballinasloe via Garbally Demense where there is a magnificent mansion house (1819) of the Earls Clancarty.



### Day 3: Callows and Heather

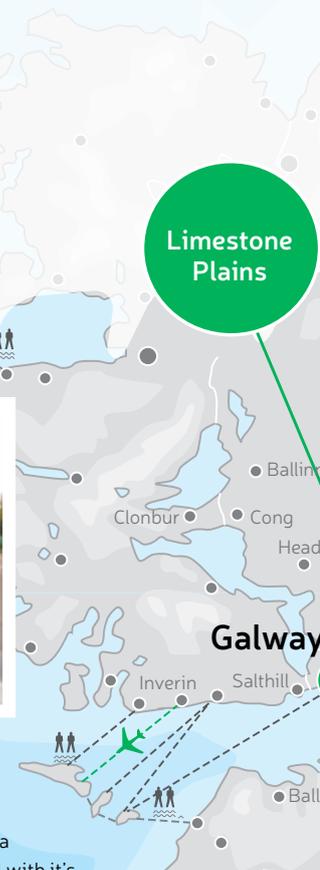
#### Ballinasloe-Athlone

Exiting Ballinasloe, we will follow a towpath on a decommissioned section of the old Grand Canal with its last remaining bridges and earthworks.

Following the low-lying wet grasslands of the Suck River Callows, we bridge the river near Correen Wood and can call into Shannonbridge with its Napoleonic fortifications. We continue along the River Shannon Callows, stopping off for a view of the medieval churches and round tower of the early Christian monastery, Clonmacnoise.

We pass by many peatlands where milled peat harvesting is taking place, and Carrickynaghtan, a raised bog of conservational significance, where we can enjoy the colours and smells of heather, moss and furze.

We finally enter the town of Athlone and can enjoy further cultural and historical highlights such as Athlone Castle and the Luan Gallery.



## Day 4: The Old Rail Trail

### Athlone–Mullingar

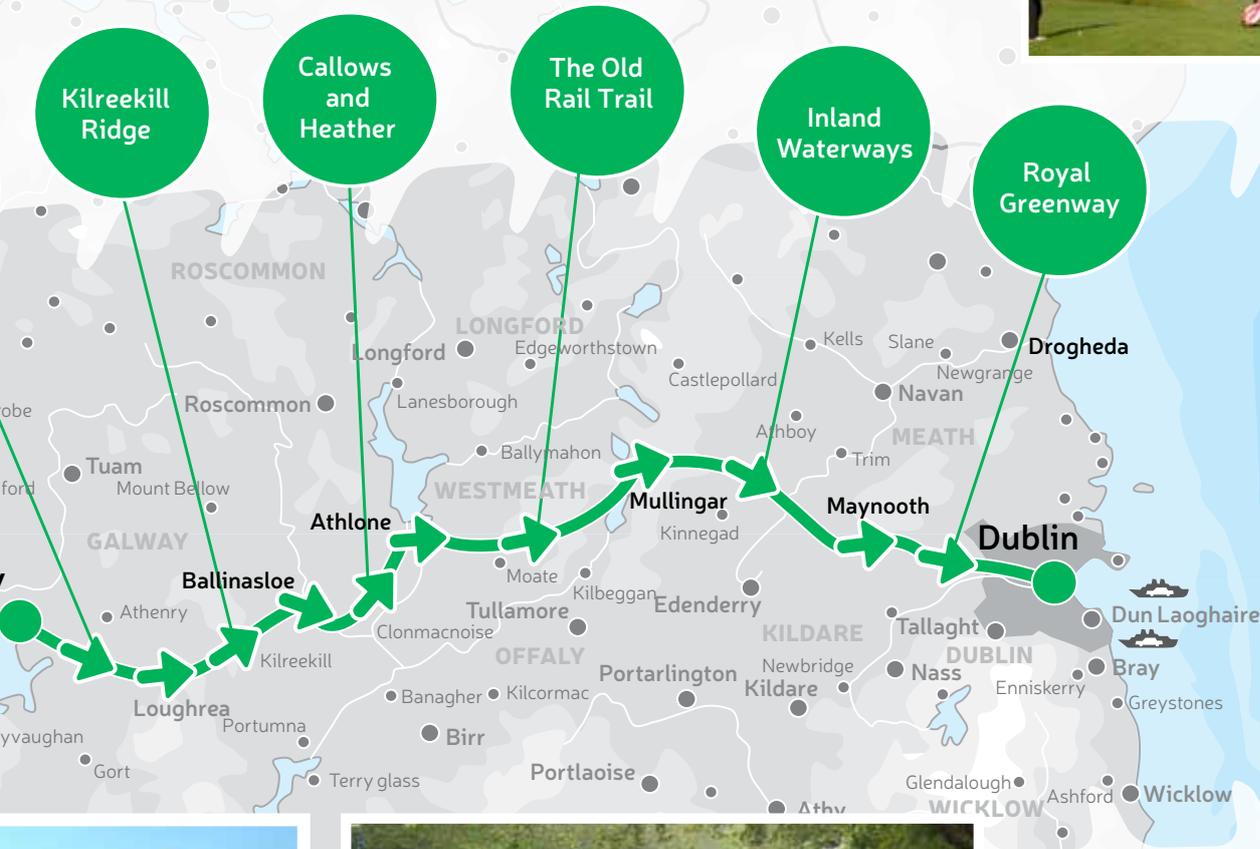
Crossing the river Shannon via an elegant, purpose-built bridge, we continue out of Athlone on a converted stretch of the Midlands Great Western Railway. This 43 km leg of our journey takes us through rich fertile farmland, away from the hustle of towns, in a beautiful rural setting to the market town of Mullingar, well known for fishing on Lough Ennel or the Royal Canal or simply putting your feet up.



## Day 5: Inland Waterways

### Mullingar–Maynooth

Leaving Mullingar, we are now on the banks of the Royal Canal and heading towards the university town of Maynooth. At one end of the town we have the championship golf course at Carton House, and at the other we have Maynooth Castle and St Patrick's College, a historic college of the National University of Ireland.



## Day 6: The Royal Greenway

### Maynooth–Dublin

We conclude our coast-to-coast journey with a leisurely cycle along the Royal Greenway, entering Dublin city via the Royal Canal and finishing at the vibrant Dublin Docklands, where we can see the river Liffey as it enters Dublin Bay on the Irish Sea—truly coast to coast and everything in between!

# Who will use the Cycleway?

Despite our undeveloped profile as a cycling destination, 242,000 overseas visitors to Ireland included a cycle trip in their holiday in 2014 and the estimated income from these visitors was over €231 million. (Table 1)

A strong business case can be made for the development of cycling tourism with some significant markets to target if the right infrastructure can be delivered on the ground.

Market research into the potential for cycling in Ireland identified a core market potential of over 20 million visitors in a number of our key overseas markets.

| Visitors        | Numbers        | Total Spend           |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Britain         | 44,000         | €24.2 million         |
| North America   | 22,000         | €26.2 million         |
| Northern Europe | 154,000        | €145.3 million        |
| Other Areas     | 22,000         | €36.2 million         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>242,000</b> | <b>€231.9 million</b> |

Table 1

The Cycleway can be used by three broad types of users:

## 1. Commuters

Local people living, studying and working adjacent to route sections.



## 2. Leisure cyclists and walkers

Individuals, families and groups cycling and walking for recreation, fun and fitness interest.



## 3. Touring Cyclists

Visitors journeying from place to place in stages of up to 100 km per day.



## The Visitors

Market research has identified two segments for the Galway to Dublin Cycleway as a priority focus for Ireland in the main overseas markets. A study was carried out by using a tried and tested consumer global segmentation model. Segmentation is simply the grouping of people according to criteria, the model used in this study was based on values and motivations. It looks at why people take holidays and what they want to feel both during and after their visit. Importantly both segments are responsible tourists and leave a holiday destination as they found it.

1. Culturally Curious
2. Great Escapers

## Culturally Curious - Great Britain



### Alexander Gorney

Age: 57 | Married. Land Rover Engineer

Alex's logical and curious mind translates into his holiday research and planning habits. He spends time pre-trip researching destinations, talking with friends and visiting official tourist sites to discover the must-dos of an area. Avid cyclists, Alex and his wife Sue have recently toured in Denmark and Croatia visiting heritage sites, and exploring regional cuisine en route.

Sites such as the Battle of Augrim visitor centre, Clonmacnoise and Dublin Castle will all satisfy an interest in history and Christian relics. Restaurants en route in the large towns and in Galway will afford the opportunity to meet local people and enjoy good food and drink, particularly oysters from Galway Bay and home-grown organic vegetables, washed down with a locally-brewed Irish craft beer.

## Great Escaper - The Netherlands



### Lisette Vos

Age: 32 | Single. Clinical Nurse Manager

Lisette resides in the suburbs of Amsterdam. When she is not working in a busy city centre hospital, she enjoys keeping in touch with friends on social media and reading blogs especially about the favourite destinations on her 'bucket list'. She is a keen skier and cyclist and uploads photos of her trips and follows the Lonely Planet.

Lisette enjoys finding breath taking landscapes and exploring the lesser travelled parts by bicycle. Cycling allows her to get physical with nature and to bond with loved ones, have fun and share laughs together during much needed downtime. Feeling the earth beneath her feet and soaking up the natural beauty of the outdoors are what makes her holiday special.



#### Culturally Curious

Like to visit local festivals and markets and enjoy local specialities



#### Great Escapers

Are likely to actively explore more remote places



#### Culturally Curious

Love country houses and museums and to discover something that is out of the ordinary



#### Great Escapers

Like to spend time bonding with those closest to them

# From the community—for the visitor

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway presents a new and unique opportunity for businesses and communities in the West, Midlands and East to benefit from increased tourism activity.

To be successful, the cycleway needs to develop attractive experiences and services for the visitor. Getting involved by developing community initiatives, services and products will be rewarded by tourists, local recreational cyclists and local commuters.

## *Here is how you can get involved*

Creating an environment that presents a pleasant countryside with cycle-friendly towns and villages to pass through requires the input of communities everywhere along the route. Furthermore the creation of a 'Gourmet Greenway' helps to develop compelling and unique experiences.



The experience of this 'hidden Ireland' for the visitor will be enhanced through the input of local people who have first-hand knowledge of the area and can interpret and tell the stories of local sites of interest, landscape features and the living culture of the area for those passing through.

Individuals, businesses and community are encouraged to support the Cycleway proposition by looking at ways to improve and add value to existing heritage sites, tourism attractions and cultural centres in towns, villages and around the countryside. It is also not confined to existing heritage—new ideas and attractions are welcome.

*The visitor experience is enhanced by both organisation and imagination.*



# Who can get involved?

The Galway to Dublin Cycleway depends on the whole community to make it a reality and a memorable experience for those who will use it.

People who own land along the route, the farming community, local B&Bs, hotels and hostels and camping sites all have an important role in its success.

Local shops, pubs and supply stores and Post Offices all stand to benefit from the opportunities that come with increased visitor numbers.

Community groups and Interests are vital to the creation of new ideas and helping to establish tourism information centres and services.

- Farmers
- Landowners
- Local Shops
- Local Hotels and B&Bs
- Heritage Centres
- Sports and Recreation facilities
- Arts and Culture Groups
- Transport Services Providers

## Ideas with opportunities...

Bike and luggage transport



B&B&B  
Bed, board  
& bike package



Open  
Farm tours



Local maps  
and guides



Special offers  
for Cyclists &  
Walkers



Home  
accommodation



Wayside  
gardens



Tastings and  
market stalls



Vintage folk  
and farm  
Museum





For further information on the Galway to Dublin Cycleway please visit: [IrelandsCycleways.ie](http://IrelandsCycleways.ie) or email: [info@IrelandsCycleways.ie](mailto:info@IrelandsCycleways.ie)

