

Lough Boora Discovery Park Greenways & The Midlands Cycling Destination Strategy

**€998,155 Just Transition Funding
2021**

**€176,145 Match Funding from Offaly County
Council**



Element A: Lough Boora Discovery Park Greenways

Overview:

Enhancing the walking and cycling links from the Grand Canal Greenway to Lough Boora Discovery park which currently attracts c.100,000 visitors per year.

Completing the Greenway link from Tullamore to Lough Boora Discovery Park with a short and long option.



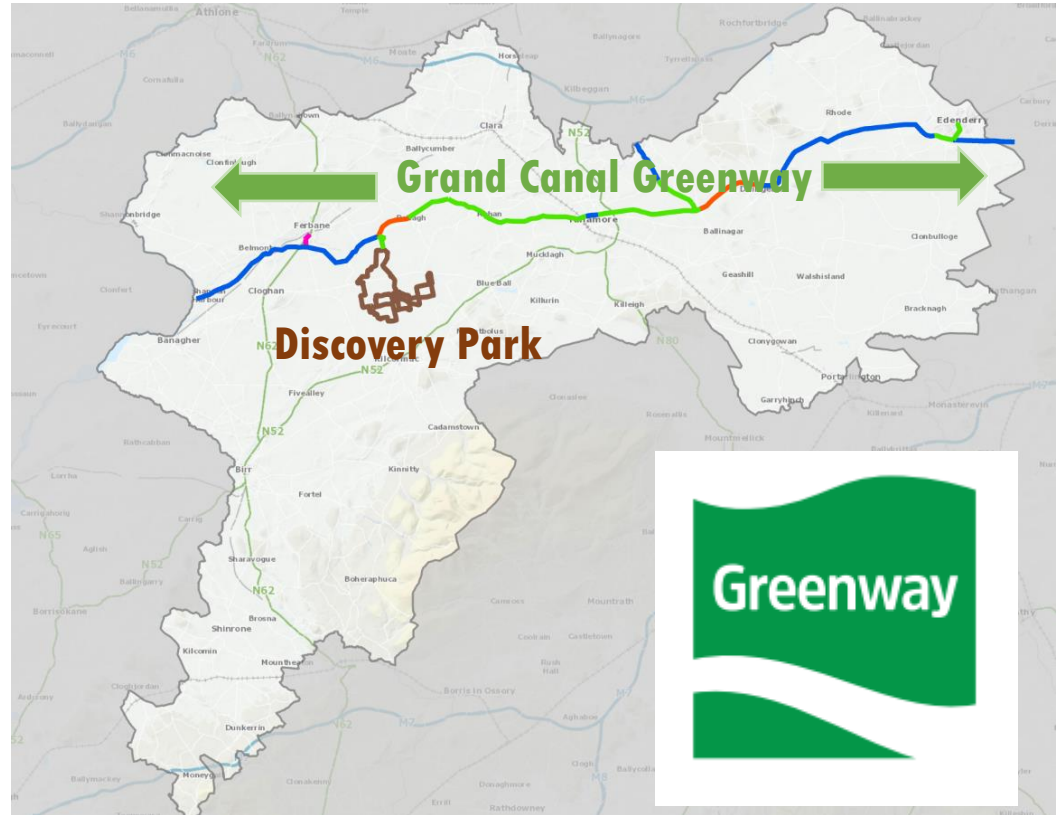
Discovery Park



Element A: Lough Boora Discovery Park Greenways

Seeking to achieve:

Greenway Standard connection from the Grand Canal Greenway to Lough Boora Discovery Park Visitor Centre



KPI's & Outcomes

- No. of users to be monitored by electronic counters.
- No. of Tourists over nights in area – Failte Ireland Stats.
- No. of Employees Direct & Indirect
- Economic spin-offs vs 2021 Baseline
- Eg. Bike Hire and Coffee shops – already noticeable



Element A: Lough Boora Discovery Park Greenways

Key Milestones

Q2 2022 – Delivery of Orange route upgrade - Turraun Wetlands to LBDP visitor centre

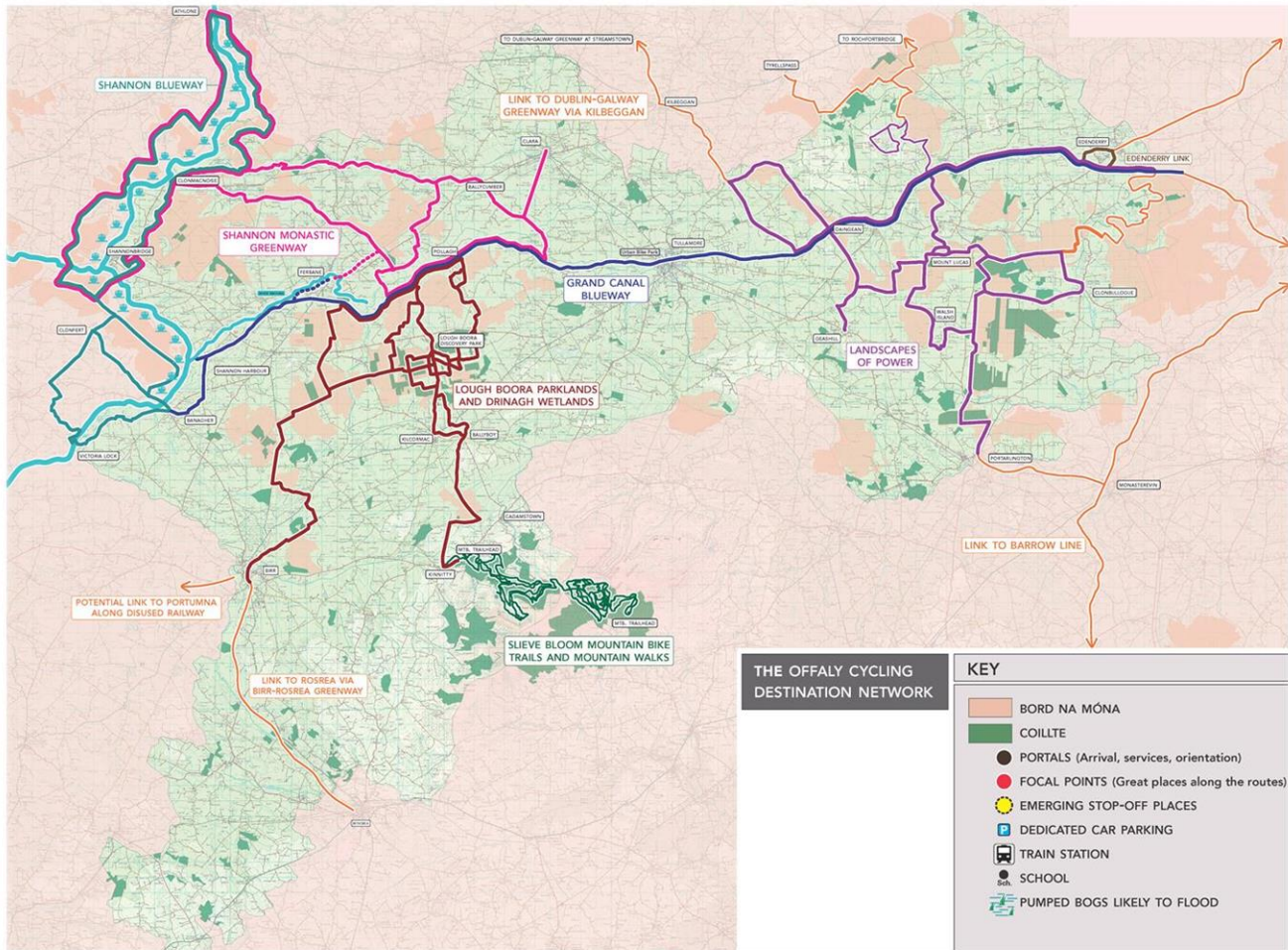
Q3 2022 - Delivery of Purple route upgrade – Turraun Wetlands to R357 crossing

- Delivery of Cyan route upgrade – R357 crossing to chainage 2000 m

- Delivery of Cyan / Red / Yellow route upgrades from chainage 2000m towards LBDP visitor centre (where necessary and within budget).



Element B: Midlands Cycling Destination – Offaly, Feasibility Study 2016



Overview / Seeking to Achieve: Grand Canal Greenway as the 'spine' of a 300km+ mostly off-road network, predominantly on publicly-owned lands



Progress to Date – June 2021



 **Constructed**

 **Planning in place**

 **Under Construction**

 **Planning in place & Funded**

 **Currently on-road / shared**

 **Feasibility Studies 2021**

Midland Cycling Destination – Offaly

The Compelling Case for Delivery...

Potential for Ireland to develop further as an international destination for cycling & walking

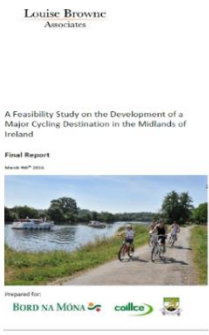
- Long distance and circular greenway routes.
- Includes extremely important national & regional linkages.
- 49% of cycling tourists stay for 6-14 nights. 32% stay for >15 nights.

Potential to increase the numbers of domestic cycling and walking tourists, especially in the off-season

- Offers routes which can be ‘mixed and matched’ and tackled in ½ day chunks.
- Offers many options, predominantly across flat terrain.
- c.2 million people live within about an hours drive of this cycling and walking network.

Potential to attract visitors on their way between the major tourist areas of Dublin and the West coast

- Could reduce pressure on some key tourist areas, including existing Greenways.
- Can spread the tourism spend into rural areas in need of a boost in the Midlands.



Midland Cycling Destination – Offaly

The Compelling Case For Delivery... (continued)

The ‘Post Peat’ Midlands, Just Transition, Climate education & leadership and The Responsible Tourist

The product passes right through the centre of the area in the Midlands of Ireland most affected by ‘post-peat’, job losses in peat harvesting and power generation. Therefore, the project is hugely important to the ‘Just Transition’. There is major potential to incorporate ‘climate leadership’ & education into a major tourism product.

Linking into the Development of Failte Ireland Brands....

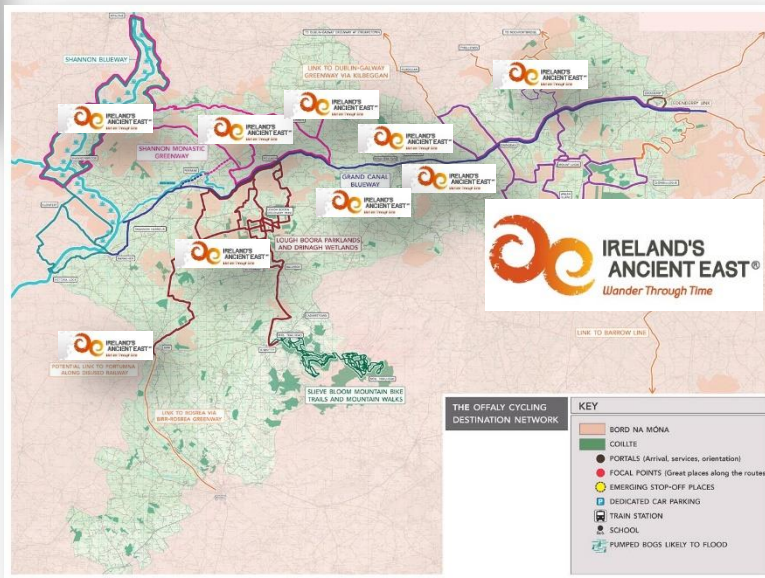
Louise Browne
Associates

A Feasibility Study on the Development of a Major Cycling Destination in the Midlands of Ireland

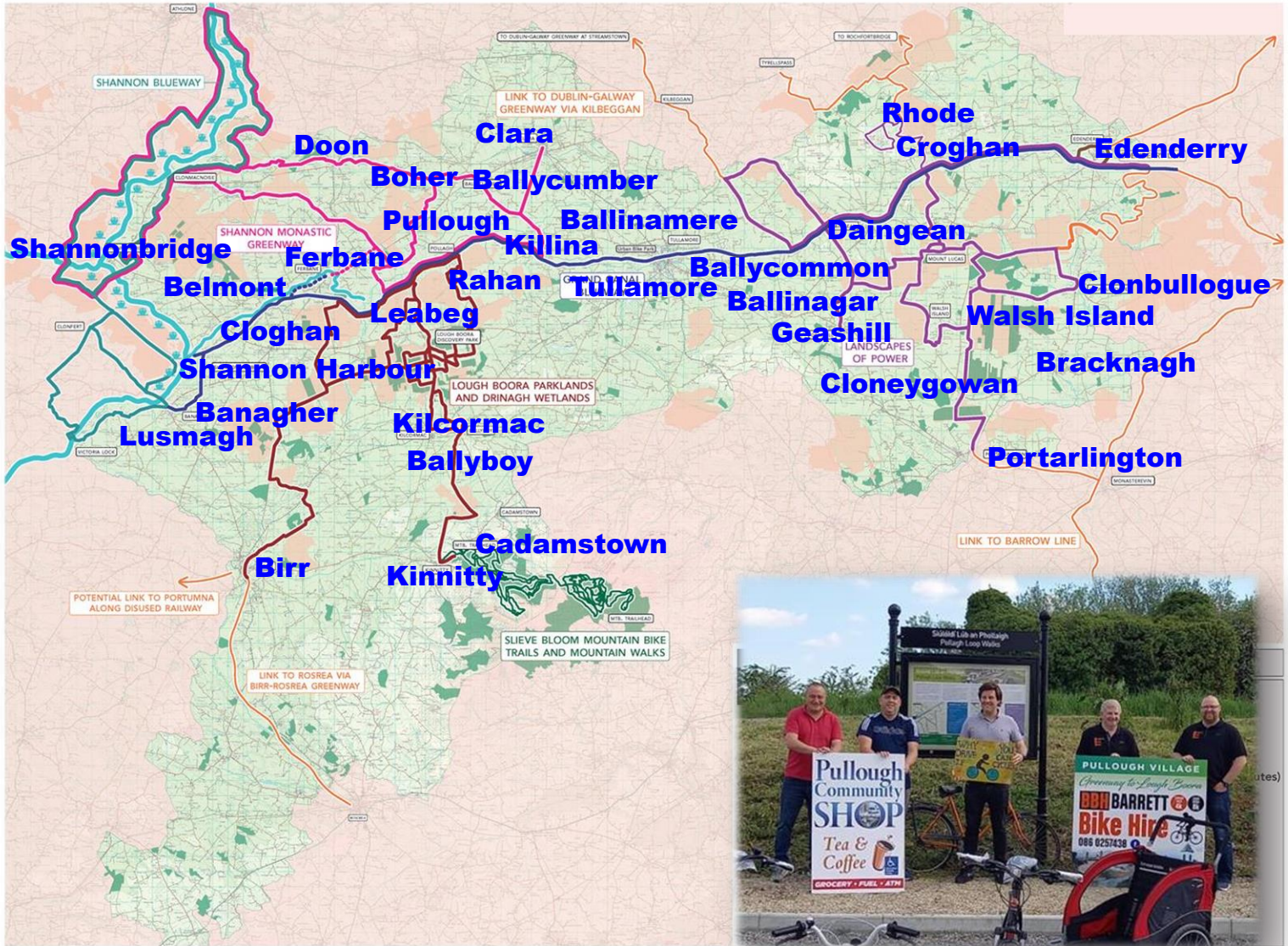
Final Report
March 2021



Prepared for:
BORD NA MONA



Opportunities for Communities



Opportunities for Communities

Potential for the 'Complete Package' in Offaly

Food, drink & toilets every approx. 15 km, shorter distances for young families – Greenway Development toolkit

Villages – mini-trailheads; small scale accommodation; old-style pubs

Services for Dublin – Galway Eurovelo Route 2

Food excellence potential

Water based activities – rivers and canal

Birr – Fáilte Ireland Destination Town. Smaller towns and villages build up complementary offerings within a short distance

Monastic heritage / pilgrims path attractions

Community activities / play areas

Greenway / walking trails services; bike hire, food, toilets; complementary activities; accommodation.

Activity packages to keep Shannon boaters in Offaly for a couple of days

Clonmacnoise - complementary services to increase 'dwell time' in Offaly

Camping / Glamping / Campervan sites

Blueway potential – canoe trails

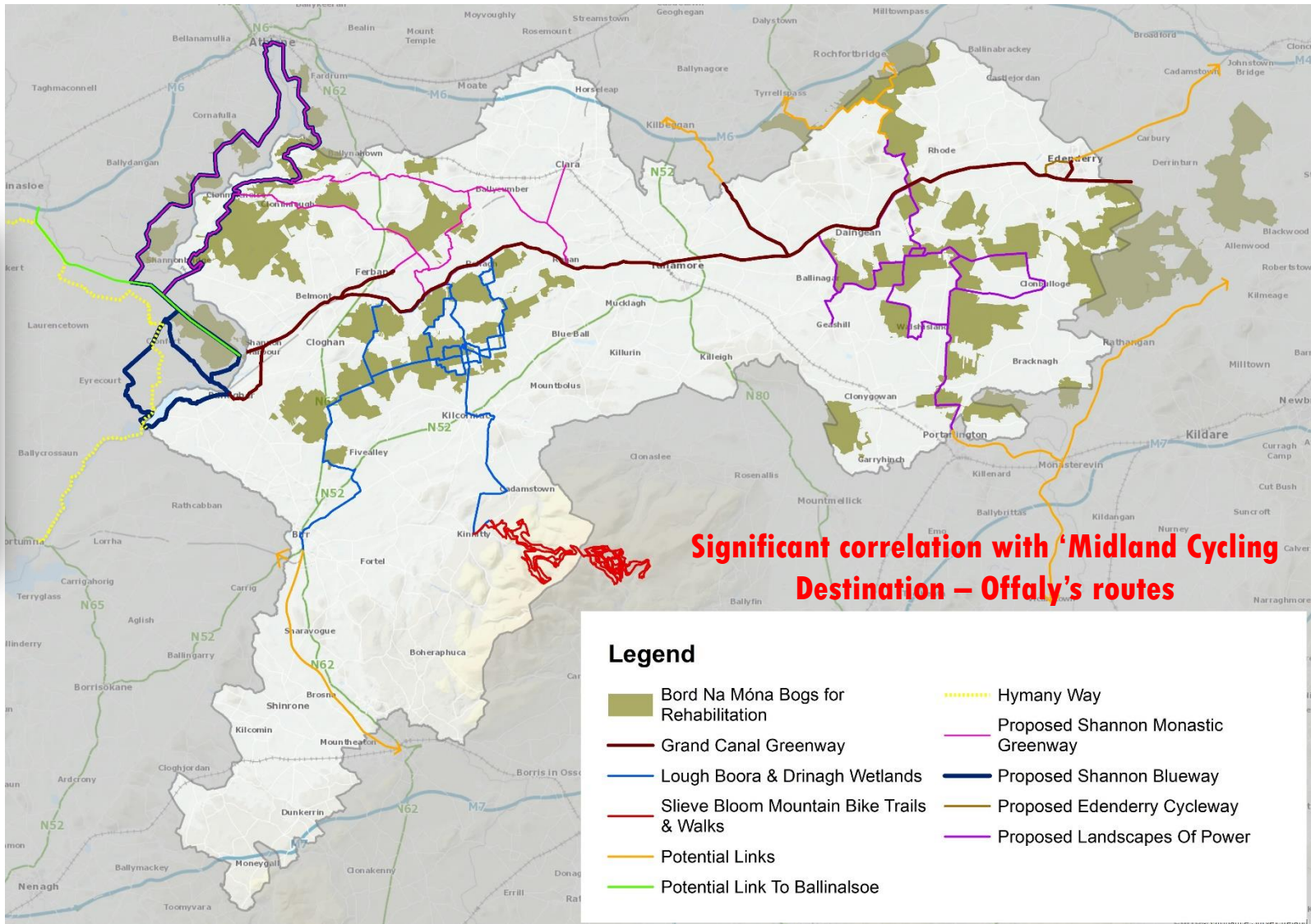
Don't forget walking trails – bogs / forests / rivers. Nice to get off the bike for a while!

'Post peat' experiences and education

Meeting spaces / focal points



Bord na Móna's Peatland Climate Action Scheme (PCAS) Bogs for Rehabilitation*



Successes to Date... only getting started..

Important to remember that Offaly County Council, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Mona etc. build trails, BUT communities and local businesses create the 'Experience'.



Pullough Community Shop & Bike Hire



Ballycommon Bakehouse & Dick's Bike Hire

Midlands Cycling Destination – Offaly

Key Milestones & KPI's

End 2022 – Implementation Strategy Complete, also Environmental Assessments, ready for planning consent

2023 – Applications for Funding to Complete the Network and Provide Supporting Infrastructure and Services, Assistance to Businesses etc.

2028 – Completion

KPI's

The 2016 Feasibility Study forecast the creation of 285 jobs. This forecast will be updated as part of the current project.

Employment in the tourism area will be measured against 2016 or 2022 census baselines.

Creation of new businesses will be measured against 2021 baseline