

Outline Funding Criteria for the development of National and Regional Greenways

Objectives

The objective of this Strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenways users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity. To achieve these objectives, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will ensure that project promoters will work with Local Communities, Local Landowners, Local Authorities and other relevant State Bodies and organisations.

Funding of €53m is available for the period 2019 to 2021. The Department reserves the right not to award the full amount in the initial funding call that follows the publication of the Strategy, this will depend on the quality of the applications received and the likelihood of the completion of projects within the timeframe.

A detailed application form will be published in the coming weeks that will set out the criteria to be fulfilled in order for a project to potentially be successful.

Focus of the Strategy

The potential of Greenways and cycle tourism to act as economic drivers in local areas was set out in detail in the public consultation document. This was informed by market research carried out on behalf of Fáilte Ireland which demonstrates that, along with the already existing growth in cycling and walking activities, there is great tourism potential for Greenways, particularly where the right type of infrastructure can be developed in the right places for the right people.

Furthermore, Greenways can assist in attracting visitors away from the busy traditional tourist centres and into rural communities. The associated job creation potential in local tourism and hospitality businesses is significant.

The Strategy focusses on the provision of Greenways of scale, by this we mean regional greenways of 40km length and National Greenways of 100km. This type of Greenway is best placed to make a return on the investment required as it is likely to generate a proportion of overnight stays. Projects below 40km will be considered but only those that are longer than c.20km and/or those that are regarded as Strategic in nature (when we talk about strategic we mean projects that have the potential to link to or extend existing Greenways).

Scenery and See and Do

Based on these factors, project promoters **must** identify the particular elements of their proposals that will satisfy the needs of tourists, particularly with regard to Scenery and things to See and Do that are accessible from or on the Greenway. Whilst Scenery is subjective, project promoters will be required to submit photographs and video footage (including drone footage where possible) of the scenery that will be visible from the Greenway or that will be visible from a safe, traffic-calmed location near the Greenway that will be usable by less experienced cyclists.

The facilities along and adjacent to the proposed route of the project in terms of accommodation, shops, cafés, restaurants and bars will also need to be set out in detail. However, it is noted that one of the benefits of Greenways is the potential to facilitate the growth of such features so a plan for future provision of facilities will also be considered.

Project Development, Consultation, Planning and Design Status

Projects that meet the criteria and are most likely to be delivered in the near future will be best placed to be allocated funding. Therefore projects that have comprehensively developed their route through local consultation and have the requisite support and buy-in, have clarity regarding access to the land on which the Greenway will be built as well as having planning permission in place, or that are expected to have planning permission in place within the first quarter of 2019, will be in a stronger position for this round of funding.

Projects seeking funding will need to describe the consultative process undertaken and provide clarity on mitigation measures to be provided to landowners and attempts to minimise severance of landholdings. The outcome of this process should be set out. The Strategy sets out a guide as to how consultation on Greenway proposals and route development should be progressed. As part of their work on the Galway-Dublin Greenway, over the coming months TII with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Department of Rural and Community Development, representatives of the landowner organisations and other relevant bodies will develop a Code of Best Practice for Greenway development. While this will be primarily relevant for that route, this Code will serve as a guide for other proposed developments particularly projects that plan to involve the use of private land. The development of this Code does not preclude the submission of proposals that have already been developed prior to this funding call provided they have community and landowner support and have settled issues such as planning and land access.

Projects funded under this Strategy will have to comply with the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Rural Cycleway Design (Offline) Standard. It is important to note that this standard permits a number of relaxations. Any such relaxations would need to be highlighted in the application form, any subsequent unapproved relaxation from the Standard could lead to the potential repayment of grant funded money to the Department. Any departure from the Standard must be approved by TII.

Greenways are designed to be used by as many people as possible whether they are walking, cycling any type of bicycle, in a wheelchair or pushing a child in a buggy. A statement on the accessibility of the project will be required.

A separate document on Ancillary infrastructure is also being published that will address a number of facilities that will be required on Greenways funded under this Strategy. The application form will require the provision of such detail.

Business Case

Projects will need to adhere to the Public Spending Code and also this Department's Common Appraisal Framework. Projects will need to accurately estimate the costs and benefits of their proposal using realistic forecasts of user numbers including the likely overseas and domestic visitors and the anticipated economic impact. Project promoters will also need to provide a marketing and communications plan for their project and how it would tie in with their other tourism offerings.

Wider infrastructure

Project promoters will be required to provide details of other cycling and walking infrastructure including routes using lower-trafficked roads that can provide access to places of interest and links to their proposed Greenway route, thereby placing the proposed Greenway within a broader infrastructural context. In this way the Department will be in a position to map out a more extensive network of routes around the country. Such routes should follow the criteria laid out in Eurovelo, that they have fewer than 2,000 vehicle movements per day and preferably 500 per day. Traffic calming measures and speed limit reductions may be required and applicants should set out how they would develop such routes and the wider cycling and walking infrastructure.

Other funding opportunities

Projects should be in the order of 20 kilometres in length to qualify for funding under this call unless they qualify under the Strategic heading and are extending a current greenway or

are part of a Greenway that can be extended in future. Funding for shorter, more local routes may be available under the Rural Recreation Grants scheme administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Projects that are within the areas administered by the National Transport Authority (GDA, Regional Cities) and that are principally designed for use by commuting cyclists will not be funded under this call, however projects that are strategic and/or tourism focussed within those areas may be eligible for funding under this call. There are a number of Greenways included in the NTA's GDA Cycle Network and the Galway, Waterford, Limerick and Cork cycle networks.

Ongoing maintenance

Project promoters will have the option of maintaining the Greenway themselves or through using a payment scheme similar to the Walks Scheme implemented by the Department of Rural and Community Development whereby modest payments are made to landowners or adjacent landowners on an annual basis to maintain a certain portion of Greenway. This should create a greater sense of ownership amongst the community.

Environment

Projects should be designed to take into account, and avoid where necessary, the sensitivities of the natural heritage and must be planned and constructed in compliance with the requirements of Irish and European law including, but not limited to, EU Directive 2014/52/EU. Projects will need to provide details of engagement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and NPWS agreement of any mitigation measures proposed if required.

Funding Allocations

The Department reserves the right not to award the full amount of funding from this funding call if it deems the applications received not to be of sufficient merit and there may be further funding calls in the future. Work should not cease if projects are not successful in this round of funding, projects that are sufficiently advanced will always be in a better position to attract funding.

Department of Transport Tourism and Sport

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