

**Leitrim County Council**

# Sligo, Leitrim, Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) Greenway

Option Selection Report

Volume 4 - Section 9 Stage 3 Preferred Option

Reference: ARP-PDV-P2-R-001

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## 9. Stage 3 - Preferred Option

### 9.1 Description of the Emerging Preferred Corridor

Drawings setting out the Emerging Preferred Corridor (EPC) are outlined in Figure 9-1, Figure 9-2, Figure 9-3, and Figure 9-4 below. These drawings can also be viewed in figures ARP-PDV-P2-DR-300 to ARP-PDV-P2-DR-303 in Appendix T.

The EPC is an end-to-end corridor option between Carraroe and Enniskillen, and broadly follows the Old Dublin Road, N4 Road Corridor and the line of the historic Sligo, Leitrim, Northern Counties Railway.



Figure 9-1 Stage 3 Emerging Preferred Corridor – Carraroe to Dromahair

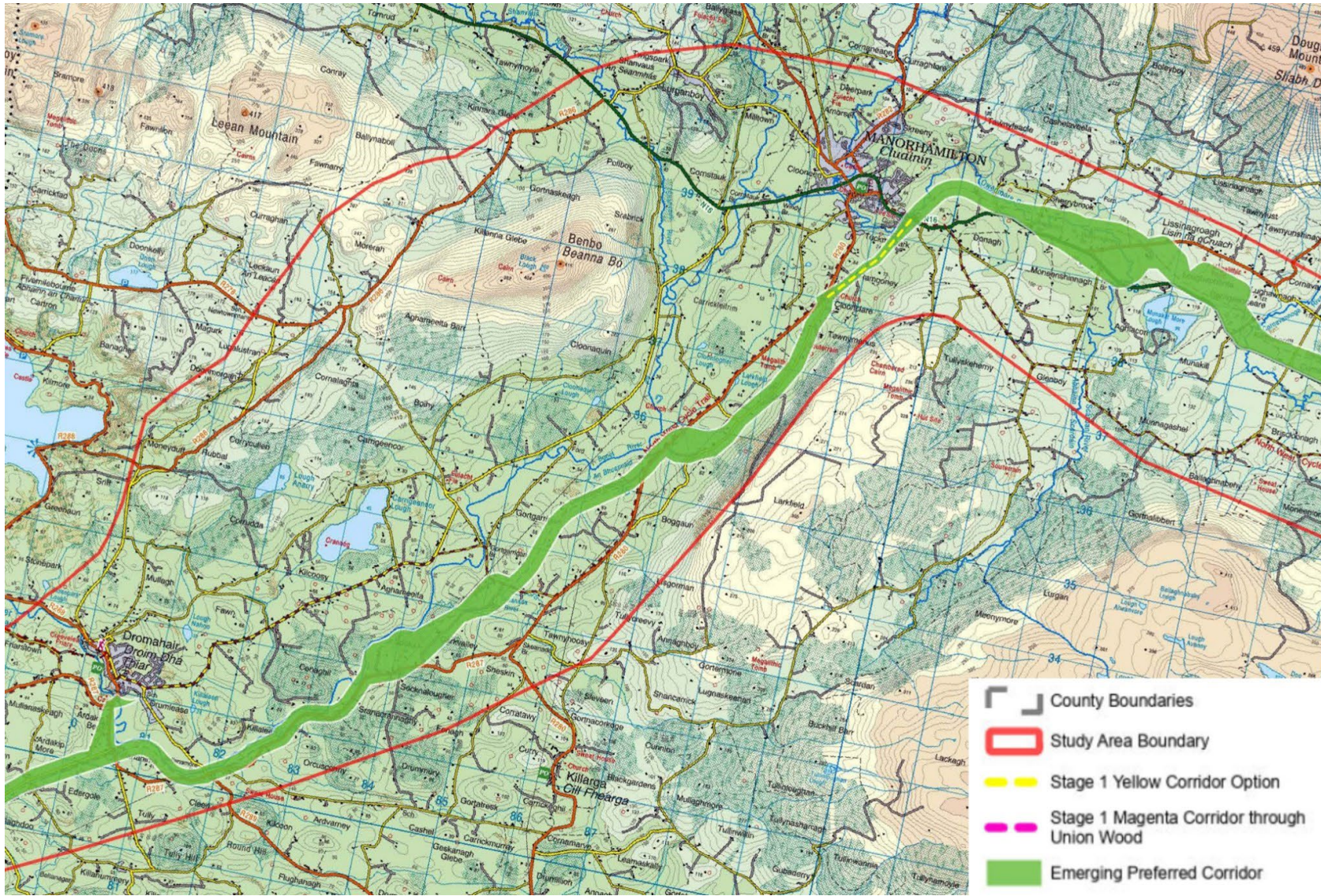


Figure 9-2 Stage 3 Emerging Preferred Corridor - Dromahair to East Bars

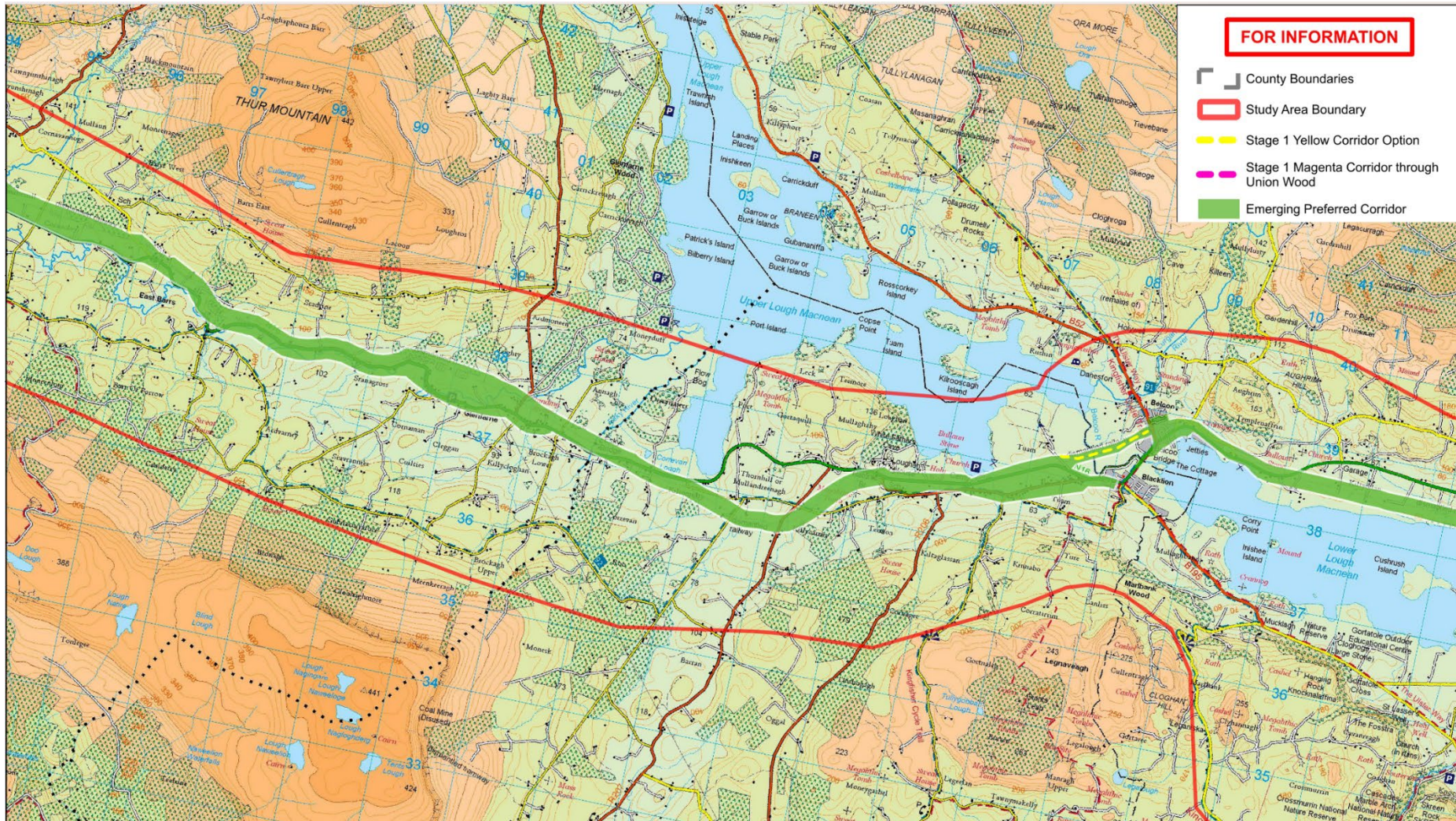


Figure 9-3 Stage 3 Emerging Preferred Corridor - East Barrs to Blacklion / Belcoo

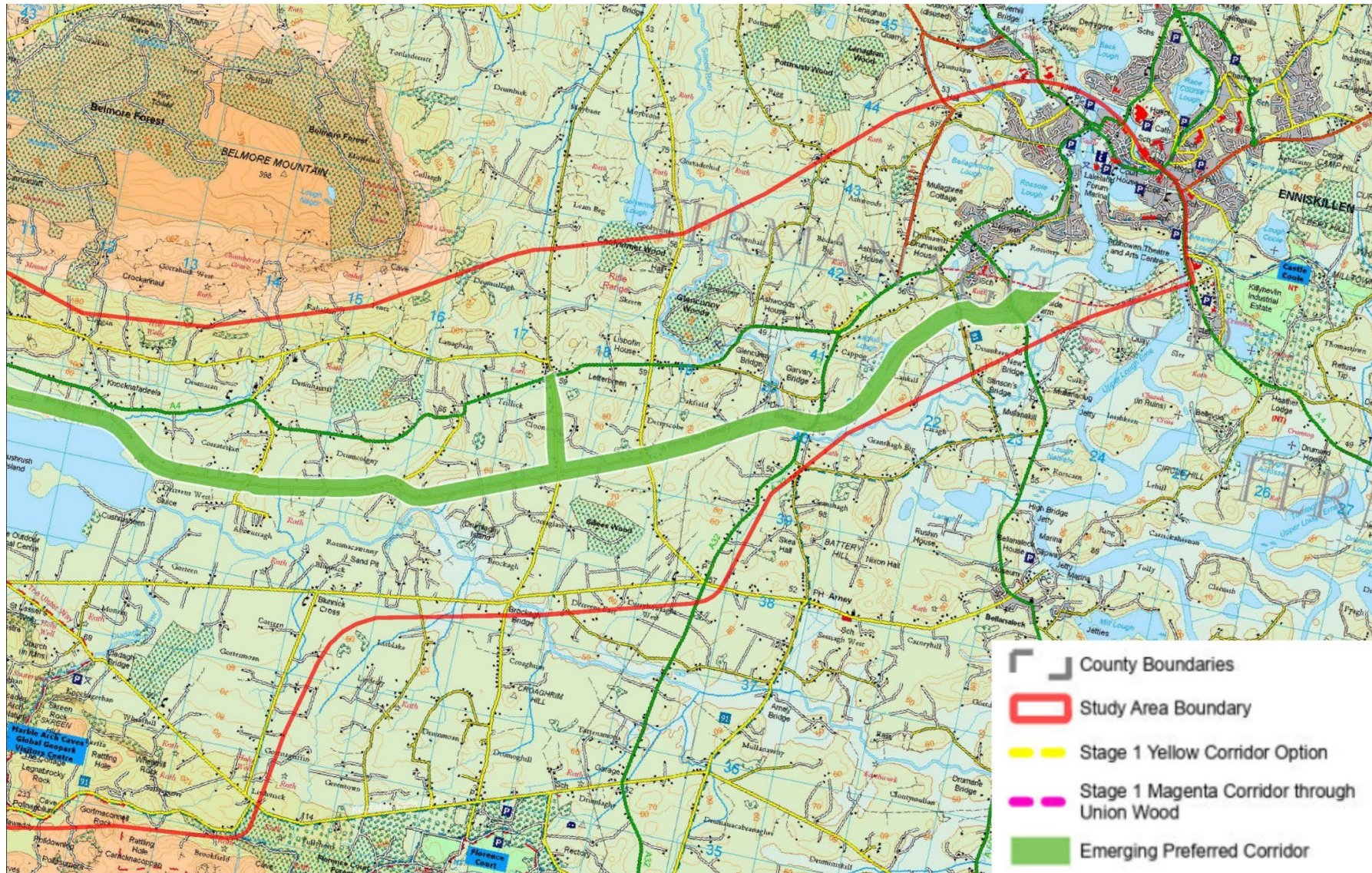


Figure 9-4 Stage 3 Emerging Preferred Corridor - Blacklion / Belcoo to Enniskillen

### *9.1.1.1 Section 1 – Carraroe to Collooney*

From Carraroe the EPC follows the N59 Old Dublin Road between Sligo Retail Park and the Balladrihid (S1) exit off the N4. The EPC uses the existing N59 underpass to pass under the N4 to the east of Ballysadare.

The EPC then runs in a southerly direction, parallel to the N4 in lands between the N4 and Sligo to Dublin railway line. An ‘at-grade’ crossing of the L3604 would be provided before passing under the N4 and joining an existing path to the east of the N4. The EPC continues south to join the existing walking/cycling path in Union Wood (SAC).

The EPC then follows existing paths within Union Wood. The EPC crosses the Unshin River (SAC) of Union Wood.

### *9.1.1.2 Section 2 – Collooney to Dromahair*

East of Collooney the EPC broadly follow the historic SLNCR line, passing through Ballygawley and to the south of Ballintogher. The EPC continues to follow the historic SLNCR before joining the existing SLNCR Greenway Dromahair.

### *9.1.1.3 Section 3 – Dromahair to Manorhamilton*

The EPC passes to the south of Dromahair following the historic SLNCR line adjacent the southern bank of the Bonnet River (part of the Lough Gill SAC) and sections of the R287, L62031 and R280 toward Manorhamilton. A link would be provided into Dromahair via new walking and cycling facilities along the R287. Upgrades non-motorised user (NMU) facilities over the Bonnet River may be required as part of this link. The EPC follows the route of the historic SLNCR line, before incorporating the Manorhamilton to Boggaun walking/cycling route.

Southwest of Manorhamilton the EPC follows the route of the historic SLNCR line, passing to the south and east of Manorhamilton in the vicinity of the Manorhamilton Mart.

### *9.1.1.4 Section 4 – Manorhamilton to Blacklion/Belcoo*

The EPC follows the historic SLNCR line as far as East Barrs where it ties into the existing SLNCR Greenway Glenfarne. At Glenfarne a walking and cycling link from the EPC to the village and Glenfarne Forrest would be provided via the R281.

East of Glenfarne the EPC follows the historic SLNCR line as far as Blacklion. At Blacklion the EPC includes two corridor options, one along the historic SLNCR where there could be an opportunity to provide a new bridge at the site of the historic SLNCR bridge over the Belcoo River. The second option would link into the existing Blacklion Village Trail (Cathal Bui Trail) via enhanced walking and cycling facilities along the N16.

### *9.1.1.5 Section 5 – Blacklion/Belcoo to Enniskillen*

Leaving Belcoo the EPC follows the A4 Sligo Road corridor following the historic railway along the northern shore of Lough MacNea Lower before joining the Sligo Line.

The EPC then follows the Sligo Line as far as it’s terminus at the site of the Old Florencecourt Station (now in private ownership) where it then continues to follow the historic SLNCR line before tying into the proposed walking and cycling facilities of the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass scheme<sup>1</sup> in the vicinity of the A509 Derrylin Road, west of Enniskillen.

## **9.2 Summary of Emerging Preferred Corridor**

Sections 9.2.1, 9.2.3 and 9.2.4 provide a high-level summary of the potential impacts of the Emerging Preferred Corridor, its alignment with the Project Objectives and it’s performance against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the project.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/a4-enniskillen-southern-bypass-overview>

## 9.2.1 Summary of potential impacts

### 9.2.1.1 Section 1 – Carraroe to Collooney

In Section 1 (Carraroe to Collooney) the EPC is wholly located within county Sligo. The EPC follows the Old Dublin Road out of Carraroe then briefly tracks next to the N4, before utilising existing pathways through Union Wood, and links into Collooney by running adjacent to a residential road just north of the Ballysadare River. Continuous walking and cycling facilities in the form of footways, cycle tracks and offline shared paths, including existing trails within Union Wood could be provided and it is anticipated that approximately four road crossing would be required. It is anticipated that the project would tie-into upgraded walking and cycling facilities on Pearce Road as part of the proposed Pearce Road Crozon Road Active Travel Scheme. Upgrades to Union Wood Road to achieve a ‘Quiet Streets’ layout will be considered along with offline options during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).

The Draft Sligo County Development Plan (SCDP) for the 2024-2030 period promotes an active and healthy lifestyle by supporting the development of Greenway infrastructure throughout the county, while also fostering sustainable socio-economic development. The proposed SLNCR Greenway project is strongly supported in policy within the SCDP. Section 7.1.2 of the Plan, states that:

*“Particularly relevant provisions for Sligo are contained in RPO 5.11 – supporting the upgrading of cultural facilities in Regional Growth Towns, and RPO 5.18 – development of regional greenway projects, such as the SLNCR (Sligo-Leitrim-Northern Counties Railway) Greenway and the Sligo Greenway (Collooney to Bellaghy).”*

This demonstrates the proposed SLNCR Greenway is supported by the SCDP and reaffirms the potential socio-economic benefits to the area of the project. Furthermore, utilisation and enhancement of existing paths through Union Wood supports Project Objective 7.1, which would represent a significant benefit to local communities.

The SCDP, references the Local Economic and Community Plan, which notes that:

*“Action 27(A-B) under Goal 3/Objective 3.1 (Reduce emissions) specifies: “Encourage smarter travel and increase and upgrade active travel infrastructure including cycleways, greenways and cycle paths across the county (long-term). This will include: (A) Developing a segregated cycling network through committing to all new cycle paths being segregated from other traffic (pedestrian and vehicular) where feasible and upgrade existing cycle paths to segregate from traffic where possible. (short-term); (B) Exploring options for the development of new greenways in the County. (short-term).”*

Further to this, the plan also references the benefits of the proposed SLNCR Greenway for both the local community and tourism, highlighting opportunities for enhanced socio-economic development. Policy P-ARH-7 aims to:

*“Protect and enhance the built heritage of the Sligo-Leitrim & Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) and Great Southern & Western Railway (GS&WR / Limerick & Sligo Branch) and associated structures.”*

The SCDP also includes policy to support the development of Greenways and associated infrastructure as such developments are seen as a means to bring opportunities for socio-economic development for the local communities and tourism.

The EPC provides opportunities to boost tourism and recreation by connecting with the existing EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route and the Sligo Way Trail, which may also result in upgraded facilities. Passing through Balladrihid, the EPC offers direct access to Ballysadare, providing access to local amenities and services, further supporting tourism and economic benefits for the town. This also provides direct and convenient benefits to local commuters, travelling to and from Ballysadare on a regular basis.

The EPC may lead to changes in road access arrangements for both residential and non-residential receptors in the area and passes through agricultural land, which could result in land-take and localised severance for some landowners. Additionally, the intersections with the N4 National Road and the proximity to the Sligo to Dublin railway present potential risks, exposing users to traffic, and associated air and noise pollution.

The EPC passes through or within rural landscapes and agricultural fields, in addition to Union Wood SAC, which is of International Importance. The EPC passes through ‘Sensitive Rural Landscape’ around Union Wood and Collooney.<sup>2</sup> While the EPC would offer improved access to amenities and settlements, it equally has the potential to negatively affect the SCDP VVAs around the Union Wood area in particular, potentially altering the character of the forested area and greenfield sites. There are a relatively small number of residential receptors likely to be affected by the EPC, although it equally provides access to the discussed amenities. That said, existing road infrastructure, historic railway infrastructure and forestry trails run could be utilised to minimise potential visual impacts.

Union Wood is part of a wider demesne landscape associated with Markree Castle, located further to the southeast. The woodland is accessed via a number of existing footpaths and contains structures (Beehive Lodge and Deerpark Lodge) directly associated with the demesne that are located in close proximity to the EPC. No direct impacts or significant indirect impacts are anticipated upon the Cultural Heritage resource as a result of the development of the Greenway as the upstanding structures can be avoided and the landscape is currently accessible to the public for recreational use.

Section 1 of the Preferred Corridor is located in proximity to the “The Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo” (Tentative WHP) but analysis of the potential for the greenway to impact on the cultural significance of the Passage Tomb Landscape “... concluded that there is no potential for adverse impact on the second and third of these three attributes (landscape setting and interconnectivity) from any route option currently under consideration. Construction and operation of the SLNCR Greenway would have no impact on these attributes of the cultural significance of the Passage Tomb Landscape.”

Only a small portion of the Preferred Corridor in Section 1 falls within the 1% and 10% AEP (Annual Exceedance Probability) floodplain of the Unshin River (SAC) where it is proposed to utilise existing paths within Union Wood (SAC). Utilising existing paths and trails within the woods where practical would reduce the potential impacts of developing a Greenway within existing floodplain. The suitability of utilising / enhancing the existing bridge over the Ballysadare River to the south of Union Wood will be considered alongside offline options during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).

#### **9.2.1.2 Section 2 Collooney to Dromahair**

Section 2 (Collooney to Dromahair) of the EPC is located in both counties Sligo and Leitrim. A continuous walking and cycling facility, predominantly in the form of an offline shared path could be provided between Collooney and Dromahair. The EPC includes the existing SLNCR Greenway demonstration section at Dromahair which could form part of the Preferred Route.

It is anticipated that approximately ten road crossings would be required to accommodate the proposed greenway. In addition to the commentary relating to the SCDP provided in the previous section, the Leitrim County Development Plan (2023-2029) (LCDP) also supports the development of Greenways as a means to generate recreational and socio-economic opportunities for rural communities in County Leitrim. Section 5.5 of the LCDP states that:

*“The development of Blueways and Greenways presents valuable opportunities for rural communities to attract more visitors. These values lie not only in the recreational opportunities that they offer but also in their potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas. Leitrim County Council is committed to the development of further Blueways and Greenways during the life of the County Development Plan.”*

Policy Objective BG OBJ 1 states that Leitrim aims...

*“To facilitate and lead in the delivery and completion of the Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway Greenway along/adjoining the former Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) between Collooney, Co. Sligo and Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh in co-operation with Sligo and Cavan County Councils and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council subject to obtaining the necessary planning consent and only where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment,*

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<sup>2</sup> [SCDP 2024-2030 Landscape Characterisation Map](#)

*including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.”*

This objective highlights the importance which the LCDP places on the successful delivery of this project and illustrates strong policy support for its realisation. At least one new pedestrian bridge is proposed over the Bonnet River, highlighting a planning opportunity to incorporate blueways into the route, the importance of which is also referenced above. This is also supported within the LCDP, which states that:

*“The value of the lakes and waterways in Leitrim from a tourism and amenity perspective is significant having regard to their scenic beauty, serene environment and natural heritage and habitat value.”*

Within this section the EPC is largely centred on the historic SLNCR which may result in the Preferred Route benefiting from the gentle linear gradient, direct connection between community centres, and existing similar infrastructure (e.g., Northwestern Cycle Trail, Northern Glens Trail). If the historic SLNCR is utilised, there would be a limited effects on landscape character.

In this Section the EPC predominantly passes through rural landscape in proximity to lakes and streams with the opportunity for a scenic, pleasant and safe user experience. Opportunities for the enhancement of cultural heritage appreciation also exist with potential access to numerous historical structures, all which present a draw for tourism and rural socio-economic benefits.

The EPC offers multiple benefits in terms of user experience. The EPC offers exposure to rural scenic landscape along a gentle gradient, with minimal interaction with roads and vehicular traffic. Access to visit cultural heritage structures/sites is potentially introduced, while the links between the towns of Ballygawley, Ballintogher, and Dromahair provide destinations with various amenities available for commuters and tourists.

While this EPC would offer access to these amenities, it equally has the potential to negatively affect the character of the greenfield sites. There is also potential for residential amenity to be impacted where detached residences and isolated clusters of development may be located adjacent to the proposed SLNCR Greenway. Potential effects may include changes to the immediate surroundings by way of alteration to existing vegetation, the introduction of ancillary infrastructures (e.g. bench rest areas, bike lock stations), as well as the potential increase in the frequency of passersby. Additionally, land take and/or severance may be required where the EPC transects private agricultural and greenfield sites.

Whilst this EPC is centred around the historic railway, the Corridor Option includes areas of flanking greenfield, which contains 13 recorded monuments. At one location, the earthworks associated with the railway impact one recorded monument, a ringfort (RMP LE014-019). Based on the historic OS map, the northwest quadrant of this monument was removed during the construction of the railway. Whilst there are a large number of monuments along and adjacent to the EPC, it is probable that direct and significant indirect impacts can be avoided with relative ease at the design stage as no significant ‘pinch points’ between monuments have been identified within the EPC.

The western end of the EPC in Section 2 crosses a section of demesne landscape associated with Markree Castle. This section of demesne land formed a corridor between the main demesne, to the southeast, and Union Wood, to the northwest. Two gate lodges associated with the estate are located within the Corridor Option (RPS 694 and NIAH 32402631). It is unlikely that the scheme would directly impact the upstanding structures associated with the demesne, but there is the potential for direct impacts on the remains of the demesne landscape in the form of a new Greenway through the landscape, which is characterised by mature tree belts, open pasture and some examples of mature specimen trees. Markree Castle itself is located c. 1.56km to the south-southeast of the EPC and is a protected structure and recorded monument.

The EPC includes some areas of general archaeological potential, as it crosses the Unshin River and includes a section of the Bonnet River to the south of Dromahair. It also crosses a number of smaller watercourses. If new bridges across watercourses are required, then negative direct impacts may occur on buried archaeological deposits or artefacts located within the watercourse channels where clear span structures are not practical.

The EPC overlaps with small sections of Annex I/ Article 17 grasslands of Unshin River SAC, as well as agricultural fields and local woodland. However, the historic SLNCR could be utilised to avoid any additional habitat loss within the Unshin River SAC.

The EPC is predominantly underlain by the Oakport Limestone Formation which is classified as a ‘Regionally Important Aquifer – Karstified (conduit)’ (Rkc) and has a groundwater vulnerability rating of ‘Moderate’ with segments of ‘Low’ and partial interactions with ‘High’. A segment of the EPC between Collooney and Ballygawley includes Molinia meadows [6410] within the corridor which can be sensitive to groundwater quality and levels. Groundwater vulnerability in this Section is predominantly ‘Moderate’ with segments of ‘Low’ and partial interactions with ‘High’.

The EPC in Section 2 lies within the 1% and 10% AEP floodplain at several crossing points, posing a potential flood risk. It traverses the Unshin River SAC between Collooney and Ballygawley and the River Bonet (part of the Lough Gill SAC) towards Dromahair which will require consideration in Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation). However, it has been noted that the presence of the historic SLNCR railway line could present a route along which at a local level is either elevated from the existing floodplain or once was.

### *9.2.1.3 Section 3 - Dromahair to Manorhamilton*

Section 3 (Dromahair to Manorhamilton) of the EPC is wholly located within county Leitrim. As such, the LCDP and context described in Section 9.2.1.2 is relevant to this section also.

Continuous walking and cycling facilities, predominantly in the form of an offline shared use path could be provided within the EPC it is anticipated that approximately four road crossing would be required. Upgrades to the sign posted SLNCR - Manorhamilton to Boggaun walking and/or cycling route along with offline options will be considered during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).

The longer-term potential of socio-economic benefits of providing continuous walking and cycling facilities in this Section would take the form of increased tourism, recreation, an alternative means for commuting, and linkages between population centres (and amenities) of Dromahair and Manorhamilton. The EPC will also offer access to the amenity of the designated Northwestern Cycle Trail, LCDP road routes on which views are available and LCDP AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

While the EPC would offer access to these amenities, it equally has the potential to negatively affect the character of the LCDP AONB and potentially alter the view from the LCDP road routes on which views are available. This EPC has the potential to use the historic SLNCR, passing through greenfield rural landscape setting. If the historic SLNCR is utilised, there would be a limited effect on landscape character.

There is also potential for residential amenity to be impacted where detached residences and isolated clusters of development may be located adjacent to the proposed SLNCR Greenway. In Section 3 there are relatively few private residences/households within the EPC that could be impacted by the introduction of Greenway infrastructure. Potential effects may include changes to the immediate surroundings by way of alteration to existing vegetation, the introduction of ancillary infrastructures (e.g. bench rest areas, bike lock stations), as well as the potential increase in the frequency of passersby. Additionally, land take and/or severance may be required where the EPC transects private agricultural and greenfield sites.

Whilst this EPC is centred on the historic railway, the historic line is flanked by greenfields, which contain 15 Recorded Monuments, the majority of which represent early medieval ringfort sites. Whilst there are a large number of monuments along and adjacent to the EPC, avoidance of direct impacts on these sites is probable during the design process as the sites are not clustered together, which means there are no significant ‘pinch points’ between monuments within the wider Preferred Corridor. The construction of the railway avoided impacts on the monuments located within the EPC, so the historic SLNCR could be utilised to avoid any additional impacts.

A relatively small number of recorded built heritage sites are located along the EPC and those that are present have an association with the railway. This includes a group of five protected structures at the site of the station to the south of Dromahair and a former station building at Bellanamore Level Crossing, along with a station building to the east of Manorhamilton. Direct impacts on upstanding structures are very likely to be avoided by the proposed scheme, although there is the potential for indirect impacts, these are not anticipated as being significant.

The EPC includes some areas of general archaeological potential, including the River Bonet and its margins; the River Skeanada and its margins and the Owenmore River. Former railway bridges crossing the watercourse

have been removed and it remains possible that, if new bridges are required, direct impacts may occur upon the watercourses where clear span structures are not practical. This may result in negative direct impact on buried archaeological deposits or artefacts located within the watercourse channels.

The EPC is predominantly underlain by Bundoran Shale Formation which is classified as a ‘Locally Important Aquifer - Bedrock is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones’ (LI) and has a groundwater vulnerability rating of ‘Low’ with localised areas to the south west of Manorhamilton rated as ‘Moderate’ and ‘High’.

Sections of the EPC lies within the 1% and 10% AEP floodplain of the River Bonet (part of the Lough Gill SAC), particularly between Dromahair and Sox which will require consideration in Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation). The Preferred Corridor overlaps in parts with Lough Gill SAC, as well as agricultural fields and local woodland. It has been noted that the presence of the historic SLNCR railway line could present a route along which avoids any additional habitat loss within Lough Gill SAC and at a local level is either elevated from the existing floodplain or once was.

#### *9.2.1.4 Section 4 – Manorhamilton to Blacklion/Belcoo*

Section 4 (Manorhamilton to Blacklion/Belcoo) of the EPC is located within counties Leitrim and Cavan. Both the Leitrim County Development Plan (2023-2029) (LCDP) and Cavan County Development Plan (2022-2028) (CCDP) provide policies supportive of Greenway infrastructure development with emphasis on the utilisation of the historic SLNCR. As noted above, the LCDP is strongly supportive of the principle of the proposed development. This is also reflected in the CCDP, which has a wealth of policy in support of the development of Greenway routes throughout the county. An overall objective of the plan is to:

*“Promote the development and reuse of the railway line as an amenity area, walking and cycle route in partnership with Meath County Council, Irish Rail and communities involved. Developments in proximity to the rail line shall make adequate allowance for the proper development of a walking and cycling greenway along the Railway Line and its linkage to the town centre.”*

Specifically, Policy Objective CTH 04 sets out to *“Support the extension of Cavan Greenway and disused railway lines.”* Additionally, the potential to enhance existing trails and new amenities supporting Project Objectives is a benefit.

The EPC will also provide access to the population centres of Manorhamilton, Blacklion and Belcoo. It would also offer access to the amenity of the designated Northwestern Cycle Trail, Northern Glens Trail and CCDP Scenic Route 2.

While the EPC would offer access to these amenities, it equally has the potential to negatively affect the character of the CCDP Scenic View 1. This EPC has the potential to use the historic SLNCR, passing through greenfield rural landscape setting. If the historic SLNCR is utilised, there would be a limited effect on landscape character.

There is also potential for residential amenity to be impacted where detached residences and isolated clusters of development may be located adjacent to the proposed SLNCR Greenway. In Section 4 there are relatively few private residences/households within the EPC that could be impacted by the introduction of Greenway infrastructure. Potential effects may include changes to the immediate surroundings by way of alteration to existing vegetation, the introduction of ancillary infrastructures (e.g. bench rest areas, bike lock stations), as well as the potential increase in the frequency of passersby. Additionally, land take and/or severance may be required where the EPC transects private agricultural and greenfield sites.

The EPC is centred on the now disused historic railway as well as areas of flanking greenfield which contain 14 Recorded Monuments. The construction of the railway has impacted on the site of a ringfort (SMR FER228:067) and post medieval fortification (SMR FER228:102) in the townland of Belcoo West. Whilst there are a large number of monuments along and adjacent to the EPC, avoidance of direct impacts on these sites is probable during the design process as the sites are not clustered together, which means there are no significant ‘pinch points’ between monuments within the wider EPC.

A relatively small number of recorded built heritage sites are located along the EPC in Section 4 and the majority of those that are present have an association with the railway. This includes a group of five protected structures at the site of Glenfarne Station and the two Listed Buildings at Blacklion (Station and signal box).

Direct impacts on upstanding structures can be avoided by the proposed scheme, although there is potential for indirect impacts, albeit these would not be anticipated as being significant.

Four demesne landscapes are located within the EPC in this Section. The EPC passes through the demesne associated with Fortland House. The principal structure is present but is only listed in the NIAH. If the scheme were to run outside of the railway track (and within the demesne) there is the potential for direct or indirect impacts on the demesne, although these would not be significant.

The small section of Derryfane Hall demesne that is within the EPC has lost its mature planting shown within the historic maps and any potential impacts in this area would be minimal. The principal structure is no longer extant, and the site is covered with forestry.

The section of demesne associated with Loughran House has lost elements of its original form, although the principal structure remains present and is included in the RPS. The southern portion of the demesne has been truncated by the N16 and industrial development has occurred in the eastern portion of the landscape and to the immediate north and northwest. To the east of St. Patrick's National School is Killinagh Glebe demesne, which is truncated by the N16 (following the route of the railway). Here, the principal structure remains present and is listed in the RPS, c. 23m north of the EPC. The remainder of the landscape, whilst subject to some development, is relatively well preserved and it is possible that direct or indirect impacts will occur in this area, although it is unlikely that these would be significant.

The EPC includes some areas of general archaeological potential, including the Scardan River and its margins; the Glenfarne River and its margins; part of the southern margins associated with Upper Lough MacNean and a crossing of the Belcoo River (which also forms the boundary between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland). Former railway bridges crossing the watercourses have been removed and it remains possible that, if new bridges are required, direct impacts may occur upon the watercourses where clear span structures are not practical. This may result in negative direct impact on buried archaeological deposits or artefacts located within the watercourse channels.

The EPC overlaps in parts with Lough Gill SAC and Article 17 habitat, as well as agricultural fields and local woodland. It has been noted that the presence of the historic SLNCR railway line could present a route along which avoids any additional habitat loss within Lough Gill SAC and the Article 17 habitat.

The EPC is predominantly underlain by Dartry Limestone Formation which is classified as 'Regionally Important Aquifers – Karstified (conduit)' (Rkc) and the Carraun Shale Formation which is classified as a 'Poor Aquifer - Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones' (PI). Groundwater vulnerability along the EPC is variable with localised areas in the vicinity of Munakil Mor Lough and Lough MacNean Upper rated as 'Moderate' and 'High'.

There are areas along the EPC where the 1% and 10% AEP floodplain spans the extents of the Corridor. For example, to the west of Munakil Mor Lough and at Glenfarne which will require consideration in Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation). However, it has been noted that the presence of the historic SLNCR railway line which could, at a local level be either elevated from the existing floodplain or once was.

There is also an abstraction point (Tates Quarry) within 200m of the EPC and two springs, a cave and swallow hole located adjacent to the N16 (within the EPC) which may have a hydrological connection with Lough MacNean Upper.

#### **9.2.1.5 Section 5 – Blacklion/Belcoo to Enniskillen**

In Northern Ireland (Section 5 – Blacklion/Belcoo to Enniskillen), the EPC continues to be centred on the historic SLNCR before tying into the proposed walking and cycling facilities of the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass scheme in the vicinity of the A509 Derrylin Road, west of Enniskillen. This scheme includes the provision of a 3.5 m cycleway/footway along the full length of the Bypass and extends along the Dublin Road and Derrylin Road to connect into existing active travel infrastructure. It is anticipated that approximately eleven road crossing would be required and upgrades to the Sligo Line to achieve a 'Quiet Streets' layout will be considered along with offline options during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).

The Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Local Development Plan (2030) (FODCLDP) includes policy which supports the use of the historic SLNCR for recreational and tourism-related use, specifically through

the development of Greenways. As with the previous the Sections, the EPC is broadly centred on the historic railway which offers access to rural scenic landscape along a gentle gradient track. The EPC leaves Belcoo following the A4 Sligo Road corridor before joining the Sligo Line Road corridor (formerly the historic SLNCR). This is supported in Section 6 of FODCLDP, which notes that:

*“Disused railway lines also have the potential to be re-used as transport routes including conversion to Greenways for walking and cycling. Two projects of this type which, subject to funding, may see fruition within the timescale of the Plan, are the Enniskillen to Sligo Greenway and Enniskillen to Clones Greenway.”*

This is further embedded within planning policy objective TR06 which states that:

*“Disused Transport Routes Development proposals on a disused transport route will not be permitted where it would prejudice its future re-use as either: a) a transport route; or b) a recreational, nature conservation or tourism-related use.”*

This highlights the appropriateness of the proposed development and its alignment with overarching policy objectives.

This EPC has the potential to use the historic SLNCR, passing through greenfield rural landscape setting. If the historic SLNCR is utilised, there would be limited effects on landscape character. The EPC will also provide access to the population centres of Blacklion, Belcoo, Letterbreen and Enniskillen. It could also offer access to the amenity of the FODCLDP Area of High Scenic Amenity that surrounds the banks of Lough MacNean. While this EPC would offer access to these amenities, it equally has the potential to negatively affect the character of Lough MacNean, greenfield and forests. There are a relatively small number of residential receptors likely to be affected by the EPC, although it equally provides access to the discussed amenities.

Whilst the EPC is centred on the now disused historic railway, the Corridor includes areas of flanking greenfield, which contains three recorded archaeological sites, with one representing a Scheduled Monument and the remaining two listed in the SMR. The construction of the railway did not impact on these sites. There are relatively few monuments along and adjacent to the EPC, and it remains probable that direct and significant indirect impacts could be avoided at design stage as no significant ‘pinch points’ between monuments have been identified within the EPC.

A relatively small number of recorded built heritage sites are located along the EPC with only three Listed Buildings present, one of which is ‘record only’. One of the buildings does represent the remains of Florencecourt Station and an adjacent Goods Shed (which is now in private ownership). There are 15 sites listed within the Industrial Heritage record and the majority of these relate to the railway. Of the 15 sites, only five appear to be extant. Direct impacts on upstanding structures could be avoided by the proposed scheme, although there is the potential for indirect impacts to occur, albeit these would not be anticipated as being significant.

The EPC includes some areas of general archaeological potential, as it passes around the northern margins of Lower Lough MacNean; crosses the Sillees River and passes along the eastern margins of Lankill Lough. It also crosses a number of smaller watercourses. Former railway bridges crossing the watercourses have been removed and it remains possible that if new bridges are required, direct negative impacts may occur upon buried archaeological deposits or artefacts located within the watercourse where clear span bridges are not practical.

The EPC overlaps in parts with DAERA Priority habitat, as well as agricultural fields and local woodland. That said, the historic SLNCR could be utilised to avoid any additional habitat loss.

The EPC is predominantly underlain by Bundoran Shale Formation which is classified as a Locally Important Aquifer comprising of bedrock which is Moderately Positive only in Local Zones (LI). The EPC would also pass over the Florence Court – Drumgormley Ground Water body which may create a hydrological link with Lough MacNean Upper.

While there are areas along the EPC which are located within both the 1% and 10% AEP floodplains the risk of flooding could be mitigated by the presence of the historic SLNCR railway line which could present a route along which at a local level is either elevated from the existing floodplain or once was.

### 9.2.2 Connectivity Strategy

A Connectivity Strategy has been prepared to consider how the EPC will be connected to the wider greenway network, facilities, amenities, and nearby conurbations. The full Connectivity Strategy can be viewed in Appendix Y.

Integrating the SLNCR Greenway with existing walking and cycling facilities, amenities, recreation centres, heritage sites, population centres, and local and regional economies offers a wealth of benefits. Creating seamless links between these elements, the Greenway would enhance accessibility, fostering greater community engagement and encouraging physical activity. This connectivity would not only enrich the recreational experience for individuals but could also drive economic growth by increasing foot traffic to local businesses and cultural attractions.

It could stimulate local economies by attracting tourists and encouraging spending in nearby shops, restaurants, and services. Enhanced connectivity could support local employment by boosting the viability of recreation centres and cultural sites, while also providing economic opportunities through improved infrastructure development. Additionally, increased access to green spaces and heritage sites could contribute to overall well-being and quality of life, promoting healthier lifestyles and stronger community ties.

The SLNCR Greenway will be developed in alignment with the Department of Transport's Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, following the Code of Best Practice for National and Regional Greenways (CBPN&RG) and adhering to TII Project Management Guidelines.

The Connectivity Strategy confirms that the EPC aligns with the Project Objectives and sub-objectives around connectivity and accessibility, specifically:

“ ...

*3.1 To support the development of cycling and walking culture in Ireland and Northern Ireland by connecting to centres of education, centres of employment, and leisure destinations along the route.*

...

*6.2 To encourage a shift to active modes by connecting both visitors and local users to places of employment, schools and urban centres.*

*7 To contribute towards the creation of a national and regional cycle network linking the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.*

*7.1 To support links to other existing and proposed cycle infrastructure such as EuroVelo 1 and the Sligo Greenway.*

*7.2 To support links to tourism attractions such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.”*

In Phase 3, the integration and connectivity with other greenways and the existing road networks will be further enhanced. Additionally, improved access to recreational activities, tourism hubs, and nearby population centres will be a key focus of development. Additionally, the connectivity strategy will be updated in Phase 3 to incorporate emergency access and submitted to the Sponsoring Agency Management Group for review.

### 9.2.3 Alignment with Project Objectives

As outlined in Section 1.6 the project objectives for the SLNCR Greenway align with both the “Five S” criteria set out in the *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways* and the Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF) criteria and sub-criteria. Table 9-1 (below) summarises how the EPC aligns with the project objectives.

**Table 9-1 Alignment of the EPC with the Project Objectives**

	Project Objectives	Alignment
1	To support the economic prosperity of the north west and border region by increasing the attractiveness of the area for visitors and businesses	The EPC would attract local, domestic and international visitors by offering ‘Lots to see and do’ by connecting into local attractions such as Union Wood, Creevelea Friary, O’Donnell’s Rock, Manorhamilton Castle, the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance and providing connections to regional attractions such as Marble Arch Caves, Florence Court and the Cavan Burren Park.
1.1	Provide an attractive and scenic route that integrates with local attractions / activities between Sligo and Enniskillen (“Lots to see and do”).	Beyond the Greenway visitors would also have the opportunity to partake in activities such as golf at Castle Dargan Hotel and Golf Club, hiking trails in Glenfarne Demesne, fishing on Lough MacNean, visiting the Headhunters Railway Museum or kayaking on the proposed Arney River Canoe Trail. Visitors could also stay at local businesses such as Markree Castle, MacNean House, Custom House Country Inn or Clancy’s of Glenfarne.
1.2	Provide a route that connects local, domestic and international visitors with local attractions, activities, businesses and town environments.	The EPC would support economic prosperity by connecting each of the urban centres within the Study Area, namely Sligo (via Carraroe), Enniskillen, Ballysadare, Collooney, Ballintogher, Dromahair, Manorhamilton, Glenfarne, Blacklion, Belcoo and Letterbreen.
2	To improve safety and security for vulnerable road users and reduce the risk of collisions.	An indicative alignment within the EPC indicates that approx. 85% of the route within the EPC could consist of off-road segregated cycle and walking trail compared to circa. 87% of the route which currently does not provide dedicated facilities. Of the remaining 15% of the indicative route within the EPC, a combination of on-road cycle-track with physical separation from traffic and a ‘Quiet Streets’ approach is currently being considered which would represent a significant improvement in safety and security for vulnerable road users.
2.1	Provide a route that segregates, to the greatest extent possible the interactions between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic.	
2.2	Minimise conflicts with side roads, private accesses, etc. and where appropriate give precedence to off-road infrastructure.	
3	To promote physical activity in a safe outdoor environment and increase the number of people using active travel modes	The EPC would link each of the population centres within the Study Area and provide a continuous walking route between centres of education, centres of employment, and leisure destinations where there currently isn’t any. It will support the development of cycling and walking by providing a safe environment for locals and visitors alike to use active travel modes and increase physical activity through a combination of both long and short trips.
3.1	To support the development of cycling and walking culture in Ireland and Northern Ireland by connecting to centres of education, centres of employment, and leisure destinations along the route.	

	Project Objectives	Alignment
3.2	To promote both long and short trips along the route servicing visitors and local users in a consistent manner.	
4	To minimise where practical the environment impacts of the project.	Phase 3 (Design & Environmental Evaluation) will continue to seek to minimise impacts on the designated Natura 2000 sites and avoid/minimise impacts on biodiversity. Opportunities to protect and enhance the local environments and biodiversity of the area have been considered and will be developed further in Phase 3 where opportunities for net biodiversity gain will also be identified.  Phase 3 will continue to seek to minimise the impact to local watercourses and associated floodplains, in particular the Lough MacNeane Upper (pNHA), Unshin River (SAC), and tributaries to Lough Gill (SAC), such as the River Bonet.  Site visits have confirmed that existing paths in Union Wood (SAC) and existing demonstration sections of the SLNCR Greenway could form part of a preferred route within the EPC in line with sustainable developments principals.
4.1	To minimise where practical the impacts on designated Natura 2000 sites.	
4.2	To protect and enhance the local environments and biodiversity of the area and seeking opportunities for net biodiversity gain along all or some of the route.	
4.3	To ensure consideration of sustainable development principles and measures to minimise effects on the environment to support the government's Climate Action Plan.	
5	To provide opportunities to enhance the local amenity and heritage value of the area.	A comprehensive desktop assessment of the local amenity and heritage value has been undertaken. Known sites of historical, industrial, archaeological and architectural heritage interest have been identified, these informed the development of the EPC and mitigation measures will be developed further as part of Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).
5.1	To protect Cultural Heritage through the avoidance of direct impacts on known sites of historical, industrial, archaeological and architectural heritage interest.	An independent assessment around the potential constraints and/or opportunities around the Passage tomb Landscape of County Sligo that are included on the UNESCO Tentative List for inscription on the World Heritage List. This assessment returned that "No direct or indirect impacts are predicted on the UNESCO tentative World Heritage Property (Passage Tomb Landscape of Sligo), resulting from the development of this Corridor Option" (now part of the EPC).
5.2	To promote Cultural Heritage by making local sites accessible and highlighting their unique amenity value and cultural significance.	Opportunities to promote Cultural Heritage by making local sites accessible and highlighting their unique amenity value and cultural significance have been identified and will be developed further as part of the next Phase (3 Design and Environmental Evaluation).
6	To provide a high level of accessibility for vulnerable road users and be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities.	The EPC would link each of the population centres within the Study Area and provide a continuous walking and cycling facilities between centres of education, centres of employment, and leisure destinations where there currently isn't any. It will support the development of cycling and walking by providing a safe environment for vulnerable road users of all abilities.
6.1	To provide a high level of accessibility for vulnerable road users and be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities.	

	Project Objectives	Alignment
6.2	To encourage a shift to active modes by connecting both visitors and local users to places of employment, schools and urban centres.	
7	To contribute towards the creation of a national and regional cycle network linking the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.	The EPC would offer the opportunity to link to / replace a section of EuroVelo1 between Ballysadare and Collooney and provide onward connectivity the Sligo Greenway at Collooney.
7.1	To support links to other existing and proposed cycle infrastructure such as EuroVelo 1 and the Sligo Greenway.	The EPC would support links to tourism attractions such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands by offering a link between the two promotions.
7.2	To support links to tourism attractions such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.	Corridor 6 of the National Cycle Network, linking Sligo to Enniskillen would be served by the EPC. The EPC would also align with Objective 3.4 of the Department of Transport's National Cycle Network (NCN) Plan to "Integrate with existing and proposed cycle infrastructure in Northern Ireland..."
7.3	To support the realisation of the National Cycle Network ambitions in the north west and border region.	

## 9.2.4 Performance against KPIs

Objective	KPI	Appraisal / Evaluation	Commentary
<p>1. To support the economic prosperity of the north west and border region by increasing the attractiveness of the area for visitors and businesses</p> <p>1.1 Provide an attractive and scenic route that integrates with local attractions / activities between Sligo and Enniskillen (“Lots to see and do”).</p> <p>1.2 Provide a route that connects local, domestic and international visitors with local attractions, activities, businesses and town environments.</p>	<p>Increased local and domestic visitor numbers.</p> <p>Increased national and international visitor numbers.</p> <p>Emergence of new tourism and travel services in both regions.</p>	<p>‘Piggyback’ on Failte Ireland’s regular surveys on domestic visitors and visitors from abroad, measuring numbers attracted by the Project.</p> <p>Request feedback from Failte Ireland, Leitrim County Council, Sligo County Council, Cavan County Council and Fermanagh &amp; Omagh District Council regarding the number of accommodation centres, food and beverage services and ancillary service before and after the Project is delivered.</p> <p>Request feedback from local amenities regarding visitor numbers before and after the Project is delivered.</p>	<p>Not applicable at Phase 2 (Options Selection).</p>
<p>2. To improve safety and security for vulnerable road users and reduce the risk of collisions.</p> <p>2.1 Provide a route that segregates, to the greatest extent possible the interactions between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic.</p> <p>2.2 Minimise conflicts with side roads, private accesses, etc. and where appropriate give precedence to off-road infrastructure.</p>	<p>Demonstrate that visitors perceive the facility to be safe and an enjoyable environment for pedestrians and cyclists.</p>	<p>Survey visitors about perceived safety, comfort and any risks encountered.</p> <p>Undertake Roads Safety Audits, and internal and PSDP reviews.</p> <p>Quantify the lengths of segregated facilities that have been provided and demonstrate that the number of conflict points along the Project (e.g. side road crossings and at private driveways) has been reduced during the design process</p>	<p>Selection of the EPC was informed by a Stage F Part 1 Road Safety Audit.</p> <p>The EPC has been subject to an independent Stage F Part 2 Road Safety Audit.</p> <p>The lengths of segregated facilities and approximate number of road crossing have been identified for the indicative alignment within the EPC and will be assessed further during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).</p>
<p>3. To promote physical activity in a safe outdoor environment and increase the number of people using Active Travel modes</p> <p>3.1 To support the development of cycling and walking culture in Ireland and Northern Ireland by connecting to centres of education, centres of employment, and leisure destinations along the route.</p>	<p>Increase the number of people using active transport.</p>	<p>During the option selection process demonstrate how the design has quantified/assessed trip attractors, places of education, places of worship, number of residential units and local businesses within the catchment of facility.</p> <p>The extent to which the Project attracts commuters will be determined via census</p>	<p>The Option Selection Report and Phase 2 Connectivity Strategy demonstrate how the design has quantified/assessed trip attractors, places of education, places of worship, number of residential units and local businesses within the catchment of facility.</p>

Objective	KPI	Appraisal / Evaluation	Commentary
<p>3.2 To promote both long and short trips along the route servicing visitors and local users in a consistent manner.</p>		<p>questions on usual mode of travel to work or education.</p> <p>Survey users and ask about the local services they used whilst using the improved or new infrastructure and whether they would previously have used a vehicle to do so.</p>	<p>Further assessment will be undertaken during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).</p>
<p>4. To minimise where practical the environment impacts of the project.</p> <p>4.1 To minimise where practical the impacts on designated Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>4.2 To protect and enhance the local environments and biodiversity of the area and seeking opportunities for net biodiversity gain along all or some of the route.</p> <p>4.3 To ensure consideration of sustainable development principles and measures to minimise effects on the environment to support the government’s Climate Action Plan.</p> <p>5. To provide opportunities to enhance the local amenity and heritage value of the area.</p> <p>5.1 To protect Cultural Heritage through the avoidance of direct impacts on known sites of historical, industrial, archaeological and architectural heritage interest.</p> <p>5.2 To promote Cultural Heritage by making local sites accessible and highlighting their unique amenity value and cultural significance.</p>	<p>Establish the environmental baseline within the preferred option corridor.</p> <p>Quantify the direct and indirect impacts on the Natura sites as part of the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive.</p> <p>This will be documented in the Appropriate Assessment for the project.</p> <p>Quantify the reduction in operational carbon emissions arising from any mode shift from private vehicle to active travel modes for a purposeful journey on this corridor.</p> <p>Demonstrate how sustainable development considerations have been identified and where practicable, applied to this project.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for improvements to the natural environment along the route.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for improvements of access to cultural heritage sites.</p>	<p>Quantify and assess any potential impacts on the integrity of the Natura sites.</p> <p>During the option selection process demonstrate how the design has quantify/assessed places of environmental constraints.</p> <p>Quantify the increased provision of habitat such as trees, hedgerow, etc.</p> <p>Assess embodied carbon against previous projects and demonstrate benefits.</p> <p>Demonstrate how Sustainable Drainage principles have been applied as part of the preferred option.</p> <p>Quantity and demonstrate how vegetation loss and landtake / severance has been limited through the design process.</p> <p>Seek to achieve a Net Zero Biodiversity Loss for the Project. Lands may be required to satisfy the requirement for Net Zero Biodiversity Loss.</p>	<p>The Option Selection Report and Environmental Evaluation Report present desktop studies which assess any potential impacts on the integrity of the Natura sites and demonstrate how the design has quantify/assessed places of environmental constraints.</p> <p>Further assessment will be undertaken during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).</p>
<p>6. To provide a high level of accessibility for vulnerable road users and be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities.</p> <p>6.1 To provide a high level of accessibility for vulnerable road users and be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities.</p>	<p>Demonstrate that visitors perceive the facility to be safe and an enjoyable environment for pedestrians and cyclists.</p>	<p>Survey visitors about perceived safety, comfort, any risks encountered, the lengths of Project used and ease of access.</p> <p>Demonstrate how existing access provisions via walking and cycling modes have been assessed and record the measures taken to improve these provisions</p>	<p>Not applicable at Phase 2 (Options Selection).</p>

Objective	KPI	Appraisal / Evaluation	Commentary
6.2 To encourage a shift to active modes by connecting both visitors and local users to places of employment, schools and urban centres.			
<p>7. To contribute towards the creation of a national and regional cycle network linking the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>7.1 To support links to other existing and proposed cycle infrastructure such as EuroVelo 1 and the Sligo Greenway.</p> <p>7.2 To support links to tourism attractions such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.</p> <p>7.3 To support the realisation of the National Cycle Network ambitions in the north west and border region.</p>	Demonstrate how links to other Greenways, active travel infrastructure and tourism attractions have been investigated and how visitors have been made aware of other attractions nearby.	<p>Quantify and document increases in permeability and new links to other existing (and proposed) greenways, blueways, active travel infrastructure and tourism attractions.</p> <p>The attitudinal surveys of visitors proposed for other objectives will also gather information on the number of users who have also used an/or plan to use connected facilities.</p>	Not applicable at Phase 2 (Options Selection).

(below) summarises how the EPC aligns with the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) which will be used to show how the project has met each objective.

**Table 9-2 Alignment of the EPC with the project KPIs**

Objective	KPI	Appraisal / Evaluation	Commentary
<p>1. To support the economic prosperity of the north west and border region by increasing the attractiveness of the area for visitors and businesses</p> <p>1.1 Provide an attractive and scenic route that integrates with local attractions / activities between Sligo and Enniskillen (“Lots to see and do”).</p> <p>1.2 Provide a route that connects local, domestic and international visitors with local attractions, activities, businesses and town environments.</p>	<p>Increased local and domestic visitor numbers.</p> <p>Increased national and international visitor numbers.</p> <p>Emergence of new tourism and travel services in both regions.</p>	<p>‘Piggyback’ on Failte Ireland’s regular surveys on domestic visitors and visitors from abroad, measuring numbers attracted by the Project.</p> <p>Request feedback from Failte Ireland, Leitrim County Council, Sligo County Council, Cavan County Council and Fermanagh &amp; Omagh District Council regarding the number of accommodation centres, food and beverage services and ancillary service before and after the Project is delivered.</p> <p>Request feedback from local amenities regarding visitor numbers before and after the Project is delivered.</p>	Not applicable at Phase 2 (Options Selection).

Objective	KPI	Appraisal / Evaluation	Commentary
<p>2. To improve safety and security for vulnerable road users and reduce the risk of collisions.</p> <p>2.1 Provide a route that segregates, to the greatest extent possible the interactions between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic.</p> <p>2.2 Minimise conflicts with side roads, private accesses, etc. and where appropriate give precedence to off-road infrastructure.</p>	<p>Demonstrate that visitors perceive the facility to be safe and an enjoyable environment for pedestrians and cyclists.</p>	<p>Survey visitors about perceived safety, comfort and any risks encountered.</p> <p>Undertake Roads Safety Audits, and internal and PSDP reviews.</p> <p>Quantify the lengths of segregated facilities that have been provided and demonstrate that the number of conflict points along the Project (e.g. side road crossings and at private driveways) has been reduced during the design process</p>	<p>Selection of the EPC was informed by a Stage F Part 1 Road Safety Audit.</p> <p>The EPC has been subject to an independent Stage F Part 2 Road Safety Audit.</p> <p>The lengths of segregated facilities and approximate number of road crossing have been identified for the indicative alignment within the EPC and will be assessed further during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).</p>
<p>3. To promote physical activity in a safe outdoor environment and increase the number of people using Active Travel modes</p> <p>3.1 To support the development of cycling and walking culture in Ireland and Northern Ireland by connecting to centres of education, centres of employment, and leisure destinations along the route.</p> <p>3.2 To promote both long and short trips along the route servicing visitors and local users in a consistent manner.</p>	<p>Increase the number of people using active transport.</p>	<p>During the option selection process demonstrate how the design has quantified/assessed trip attractors, places of education, places of worship, number of residential units and local businesses within the catchment of facility.</p> <p>The extent to which the Project attracts commuters will be determined via census questions on usual mode of travel to work or education.</p> <p>Survey users and ask about the local services they used whilst using the improved or new infrastructure and whether they would previously have used a vehicle to do so.</p>	<p>The Option Selection Report and Phase 2 Connectivity Strategy demonstrate how the design has quantified/assessed trip attractors, places of education, places of worship, number of residential units and local businesses within the catchment of facility.</p> <p>Further assessment will be undertaken during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).</p>
<p>4. To minimise where practical the environment impacts of the project.</p> <p>4.1 To minimise where practical the impacts on designated Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>4.2 To protect and enhance the local environments and biodiversity of the area and seeking opportunities for net biodiversity gain along all or some of the route.</p> <p>4.3 To ensure consideration of sustainable development principles and measures to</p>	<p>Establish the environmental baseline within the preferred option corridor.</p> <p>Quantify the direct and indirect impacts on the Natura sites as part of the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive.</p> <p>This will be documented in the Appropriate Assessment for the project.</p> <p>Quantify the reduction in operational carbon emissions arising from any mode shift from</p>	<p>Quantify and assess any potential impacts on the integrity of the Natura sites.</p> <p>During the option selection process demonstrate how the design has quantify/assessed places of environmental constraints.</p> <p>Quantify the increased provision of habitat such as trees, hedgerow, etc.</p> <p>Assess embodied carbon against previous projects and demonstrate benefits.</p>	<p>The Option Selection Report and Environmental Evaluation Report present desktop studies which assess any potential impacts on the integrity of the Natura sites and demonstrate how the design has quantify/assessed places of environmental constraints.</p> <p>Further assessment will be undertaken during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).</p>

Objective	KPI	Appraisal / Evaluation	Commentary
<p>minimise effects on the environment to support the government's Climate Action Plan.</p> <p>5. To provide opportunities to enhance the local amenity and heritage value of the area.</p> <p>5.1 To protect Cultural Heritage through the avoidance of direct impacts on known sites of historical, industrial, archaeological and architectural heritage interest.</p> <p>5.2 To promote Cultural Heritage by making local sites accessible and highlighting their unique amenity value and cultural significance.</p>	<p>private vehicle to active travel modes for a purposeful journey on this corridor.</p> <p>Demonstrate how sustainable development considerations have been identified and where practicable, applied to this project.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for improvements to the natural environment along the route.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for improvements of access to cultural heritage sites.</p>	<p>Demonstrate how Sustainable Drainage principles have been applied as part of the preferred option.</p> <p>Quantity and demonstrate how vegetation loss and landtake / severance has been limited through the design process.</p> <p>Seek to achieve a Net Zero Biodiversity Loss for the Project. Lands may be required to satisfy the requirement for Net Zero Biodiversity Loss.</p>	
<p>6. To provide a high level of accessibility for vulnerable road users and be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities.</p> <p>6.1 To provide a high level of accessibility for vulnerable road users and be attractive to people of all age groups and abilities.</p> <p>6.2 To encourage a shift to active modes by connecting both visitors and local users to places of employment, schools and urban centres.</p>	<p>Demonstrate that visitors perceive the facility to be safe and an enjoyable environment for pedestrians and cyclists.</p>	<p>Survey visitors about perceived safety, comfort, any risks encountered, the lengths of Project used and ease of access.</p> <p>Demonstrate how existing access provisions via walking and cycling modes have been assessed and record the measures taken to improve these provisions</p>	<p>Not applicable at Phase 2 (Options Selection).</p>
<p>7. To contribute towards the creation of a national and regional cycle network linking the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>7.1 To support links to other existing and proposed cycle infrastructure such as EuroVelo 1 and the Sligo Greenway.</p> <p>7.2 To support links to tourism attractions such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.</p> <p>7.3 To support the realisation of the National Cycle Network ambitions in the north west and border region.</p>	<p>Demonstrate how links to other Greenways, active travel infrastructure and tourism attractions have been investigated and how visitors have been made aware of other attractions nearby.</p>	<p>Quantify and document increases in permeability and new links to other existing (and proposed) greenways, blueways, active travel infrastructure and tourism attractions.</p> <p>The attitudinal surveys of visitors proposed for other objectives will also gather information on the number of users who have also used an/or plan to use connected facilities.</p>	<p>Not applicable at Phase 2 (Options Selection).</p>

### 9.3 Summary of Road Safety Audit

Following completion of the Road Safety Audit (RSA) Stage F Part 1 on the Stage 1 Corridor Options, an RSA Stage F Part 2 was undertaken on the Emerging Preferred Corridor. The RSA Stage F Part 2 was carried out in accordance with TII’s GE-STY-01024 Road Safety Audit Standard and GE-STY-01027 Road Safety Audit Guidelines. The Audit was undertaken by an independent, TII approved Road Safety Audit Team.

GE-STY-01024, states that a “... *Once the option has been chosen, Part 2 of the audit shall be carried out on the chosen option, in the standard problem and recommendation format.*” In line with the GE-STY-01027 checklist for a Stage F RSA, plan and profile drawings for an indicative alignment of the EPC and an initial junction strategy was provided to the Audit Team as part of the Road Safety Audit Brief.

A Designer’s Response to the Problems raised in the Stage F Part 2 Audit has been approved and closed-out, and a copy of the audit included in Appendix U. In summary, the Designer has accepted each of the ten Recommendations made by the Road Safety Audit team and will begin actioning these recommendations during Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation) when the preferred route is developed further following consultation with affected landowners.

### 9.4 NIFTI Investment Priorities Alignment

In this section, Table 9-3 demonstrates the Preferred Corridor’s alignment with the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) Investment Priorities.

Where mitigation measures have been identified these will be used to inform the design of the preferred route in Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).

	Decarbonisation	Protection and Renewal	Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas	Enhance Regional and Rural Connectivity
<b>Emerging Preferred Corridor</b>				
Impact Score	Positive	Neutral	Positive	High Positivity
Impact after Mitigations	High Positivity	Positive	Positive	High Positivity

**Table 9-3 NIFTI Investment Priorities alignment**

#### 9.4.1 Decarbonisation

The SLNCR Greenway would offer an alternative to the private car for commuters by providing continuous walking and cycling facilities between the urban centres within the Study Area where they are currently very limited. While it is acknowledged that providing the facility may lead to increased emissions associated with visitors to the area travelling the facility these impacts can be partially mitigated through the provision of Public Transport links and the provision of EV charging facilities. These mitigation measures would also support the Climate Action Plan’s ambition for the adoption of low-emission vehicles and related infrastructure. Impacts associated with visitor emissions would also be counteracted by “... *positive spillovers for other NSOs, such as compact growth, and will have health, environmental and quality of life benefits ... such as improved air quality and increased levels of physical activity*” which the Greenway would support. [NIFTI, 2021]<sup>3</sup>. This results in a “High Positivity” with respect to Decarbonisation after mitigations are implemented.

<sup>3</sup> National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland - <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/211869/00417bf1-9473-41e2-bd91-327686e92081.pdf#page=null>

#### 9.4.2 Protection and Renewal

A 'Neutral' 'Impact Score' has been assigned under the 'Protection and Renewal' priority heading as it is acknowledged that the historic SLNCR is no longer state owned and cannot be considered part of the 'existing land transport network'. However, it was at one time and its presence within the EPC may offer an opportunity to rehabilitate / repurpose historic railway features such as bridge abutments and watercourse crossing locations. Targeting existing walking and cycling infrastructure, such as the demonstration SLNCR Greenway sections and existing forest trails within Union Wood, incorporating abandoned sections of National Road Network along the N16 and considering a 'Quiet Streets' approach where appropriate offer the SLNCR Greenway project the opportunity to have a 'Positive' 'Impact after Mitigations'.

#### 9.4.3 Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas

While it is acknowledged that the SLNCR Greenway would have limited benefit for the movement of Goods and is primarily a 'rural' project, when considered alongside the proposed Pearse Road Crozon Road Active Travel Scheme, the SLNCR Greenway has the potential to encourage some level of modal shift and to ease urban congestion along this commuter corridor between Ballysadare and Sligo by offering improved walking and cycling infrastructure.

#### 9.4.4 Enhance Regional and Rural Connectivity

The SLNCR Greenway would improve connectivity by providing continuous walking and cycling facilities between the urban centres within the Study Area where they are currently very limited. As a new link between communities on both sides of the border the SLNCR Greenway would support regional and rural accessibility and provide a boost to the local economy.

### 9.5 Public Consultation 3 – Emerging Preferred Corridor

The purpose of the third Public Consultation was to inform the public of the Emerging Preferred Corridor that has been developed as part of Phase 2 of the project along with the key constraints identified to date and the programme for advancement of the project. The third Public Consultation took place between 29 April 2025 and 3 June 2025. The public were notified of the public consultation period and consultation events through advertisement on different forms of media, including the project website, the Irish governments consultation website, print, broadcast, and social media.

A total of three in person consultation events were held on the following dates:

- Public Consultation Event 1: 06 May 2025, 12.00-20.00 Sligo Park Hotel & Leisure Club, Pearse Road, F91Y762, Co. Sligo
- Public Consultation Event 2: 07 May 2025, 12.00-20.00 Dromahaire Branch Library, Main Street, Dromahair, F91 YF6E, Co. Leitrim
- Public Consultation Event 3: 08 May, 12.00-20.00 Community Centre Belcoo, 68 Lattone Road, Gorteen, BT93 4EA, Co. Fermanagh

As part of this public consultation an exercise was completed to identify landowners who are impacted by the Emerging Preferred Corridor. Landowner data was sourced from the Land and Property Service (Northern Ireland) in June 2023 and the Property Registration Authority (Ireland) in March 2023.

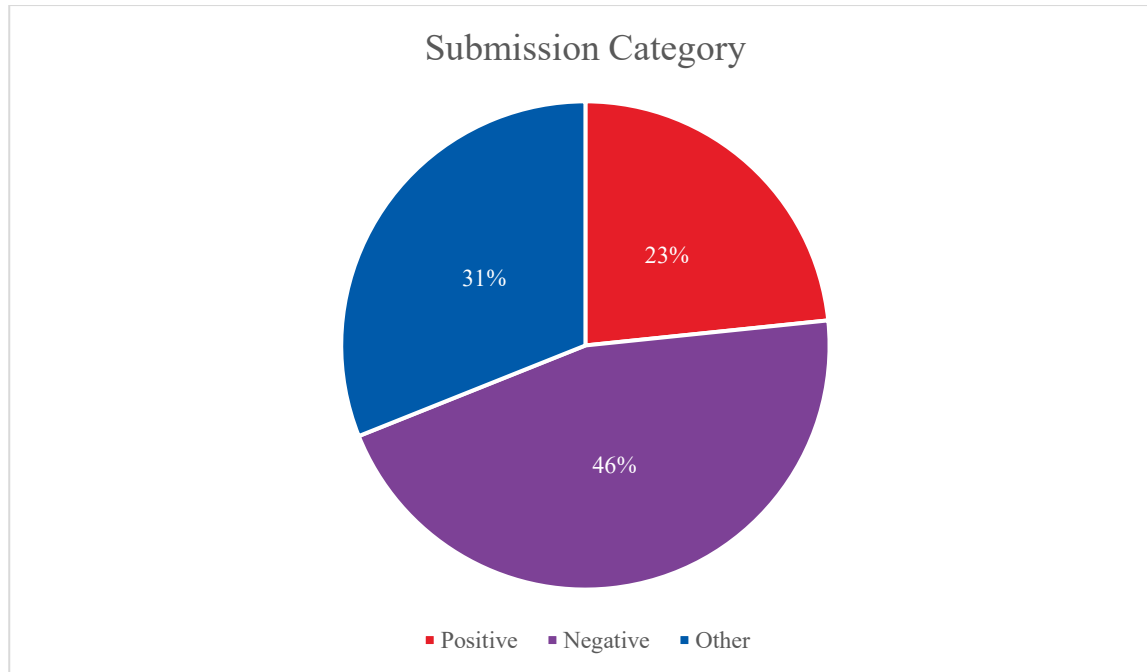
In advance of the consultation period, approximately 1240 letters were issued to impacted landowners between 20 March 2025 and 27 March 2025. These letters provided background information on the project and enclosed a map(s) that showed their property/properties in relation to the Emerging Preferred Corridor.

During the public consultation period, a total of 2616 users (unique IP addresses) visited the website. Between 29 April 2025 and 3 June 2025, the website was visited a total of 5211 times.

Throughout the public consultation period, formal submissions were accepted via post, feedback forms during the consultation events, the 'contact us' page on the website, and by email. A total of 351 individual submissions were received via the project website, project email and in-person submissions during the various consultation events.

The 351 submissions have been categorised into ‘Positive’ ‘Negative’ and ‘Other’ as follows and is represented in Figure 9-5 below:

- 82 Positive (23%)
- 160 Negative (46%)
- 109 Other (31%) (Includes neutral responses, general queries, and submissions with no comments)



**Figure 9-5 Submission Theme**

It is noted that nearly half of the submission expressed negative thoughts towards the project, primarily in relation to the impact the project may have on their land. 23% of submissions expressed support for the project. Respondents highlighted the potential positive impacts a Greenway could have on the local community, particularly in terms of economic benefits and enhanced recreational opportunities.

The submissions have been reviewed and categorised into common themes. These themes are outlined below, with subsequent sections providing more detail on each.

- Impact on Farming and Land Use
- Environmental and Landscape Concerns
- Safety, Crime and Privacy
- Mental Health and Community Wellbeing
- Consultation and Communication
- Land Use Planning and Future Development
- Financial, Legal and Operational Concerns
- Route Design
- Community Integration and Economic Opportunities

For more information on the submissions received during Public Consultation 3, refer to *Public Consultation Report – Emerging Preferred Corridor* in Appendix W.

## 9.6 Updates Resulting from Public Consultation 3

Throughout the third Public Consultation there were additional constraints and opportunities raised by the local community and stakeholders in relation to the EPC. In response, the design team made updates to the EPC extents which will now be incorporated into the Preferred Corridor. These updates will enable additional routes to be investigated within the next Phase. The updates to the EPC are outlined in the following Sections and are shown in Figures 9-7 to 9-19 by light green outline and hatching. The extents of the EPC are shown in dark green outline and hatch.

### 9.6.1 Section 1 – Carraroe to Collooney

The Preferred Corridor now extends into Ballysadare and Collooney as shown in Figure 9-6 and Figure 9-7. This is to ensure a clear link to the town is provided and to enable the possibility of potential upgrades of the existing facilities to be provided as part of the project. This aligns with the project objectives, specifically Objective 1.2 – “provide a route that connects local, domestic and international visitors with local attractions, activities, businesses and town environments” and 6.2 – “To encourage a shift to active modes by connecting both visitors and local users to places of employment, schools and urban centers”.



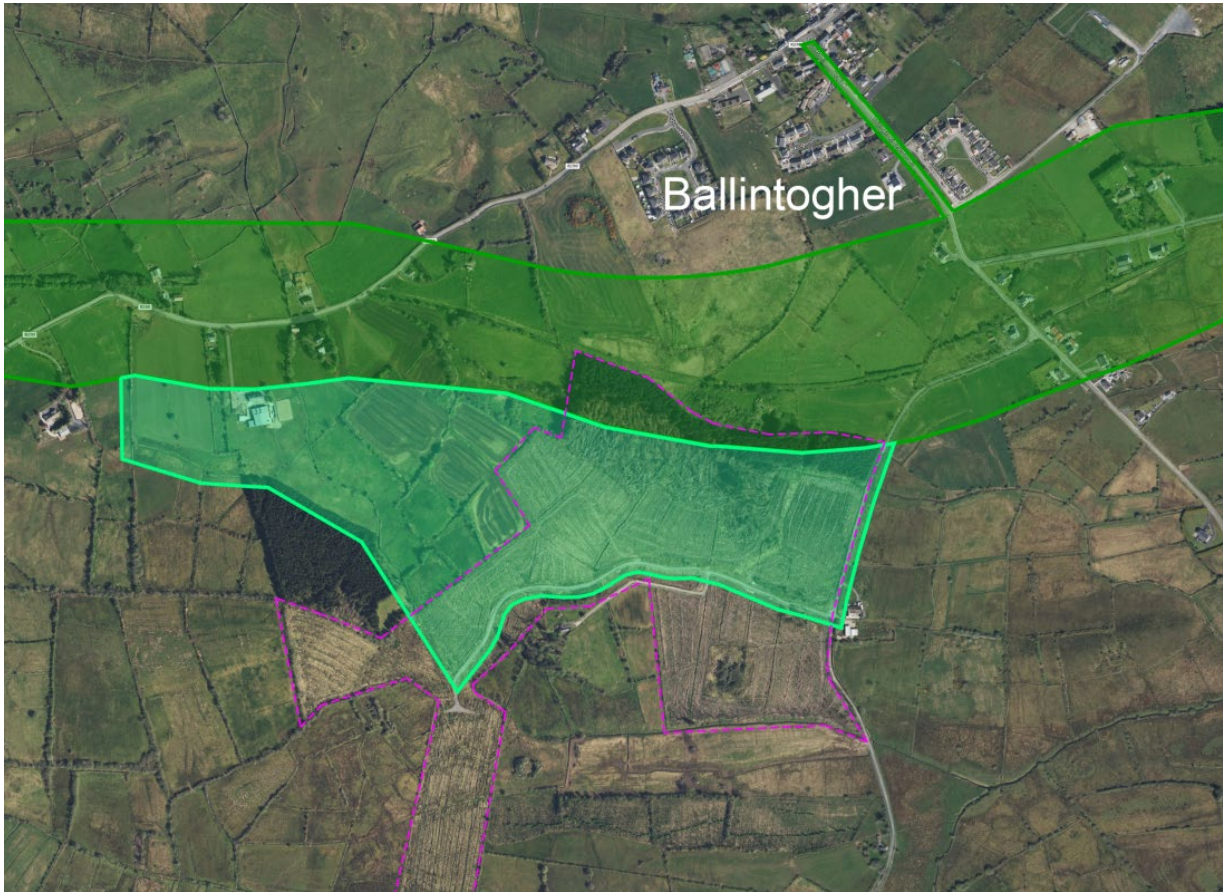
Figure 9-6 Corridor Update in Ballysadare



**Figure 9-7 Corridor Update in Collooney**

**9.6.2 Section 2 – Collooney to Dromahair**

South of Ballintogher the Preferred Corridor has been extended as shown in Figure 9-8. This extension was made in response to feedback from adjacent landowners who identified an opportunity to use publicly owned land to minimise land severance. This was highlighted under the Key Theme of ‘Impact on Farming and Land Use’. The publicly owned land is indicated by the magenta dashed line in Figure 9-8.

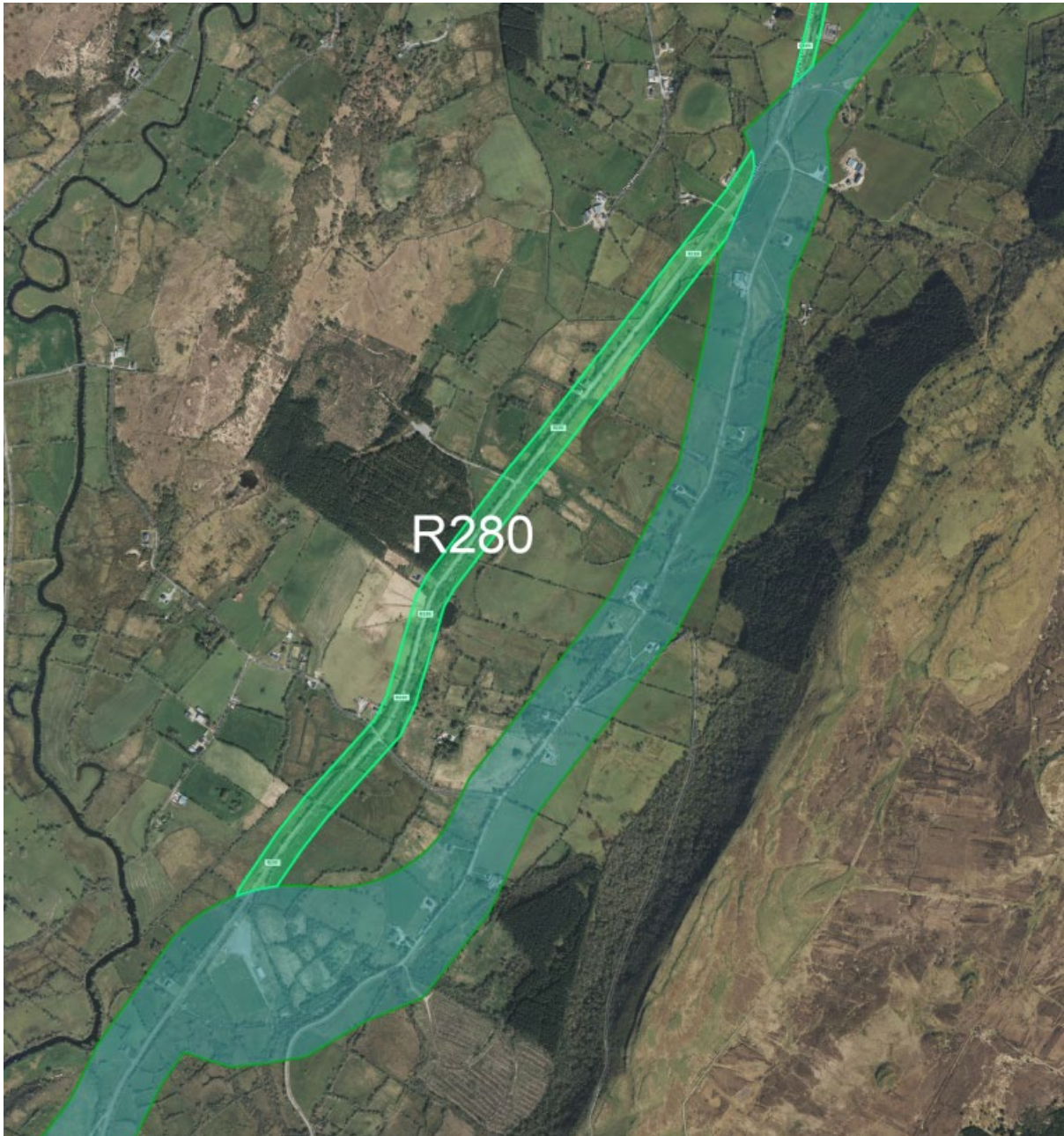


**Figure 9-8 Corridor Update South of Ballintogher**

### 9.6.3 Section 3 Dromahair to Manorhamilton

The Preferred Corridor has been extended along the R280 as shown in Figure 9-9. This update has been made in response to feedback from local councillors and multiple landowners along the existing Manorhamilton to Boggun shared-use facility that the EPC currently follows. This was highlighted under the Key Theme of ‘Route Design’ where concerns with the existing facility were raised noting the following “*The proposal to route the greenway along the existing L62031 is not in keeping with the ethos of greenways which should provide a safe, traffic free, accessible and enjoyable route for cyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. The R280 route has ample space and scope for the project team to successfully deliver a high quality, safe and accessible greenway along the original historic railway line.*”

Both options have been included as part of the Preferred Corridor and will be looked at in further detail in Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).

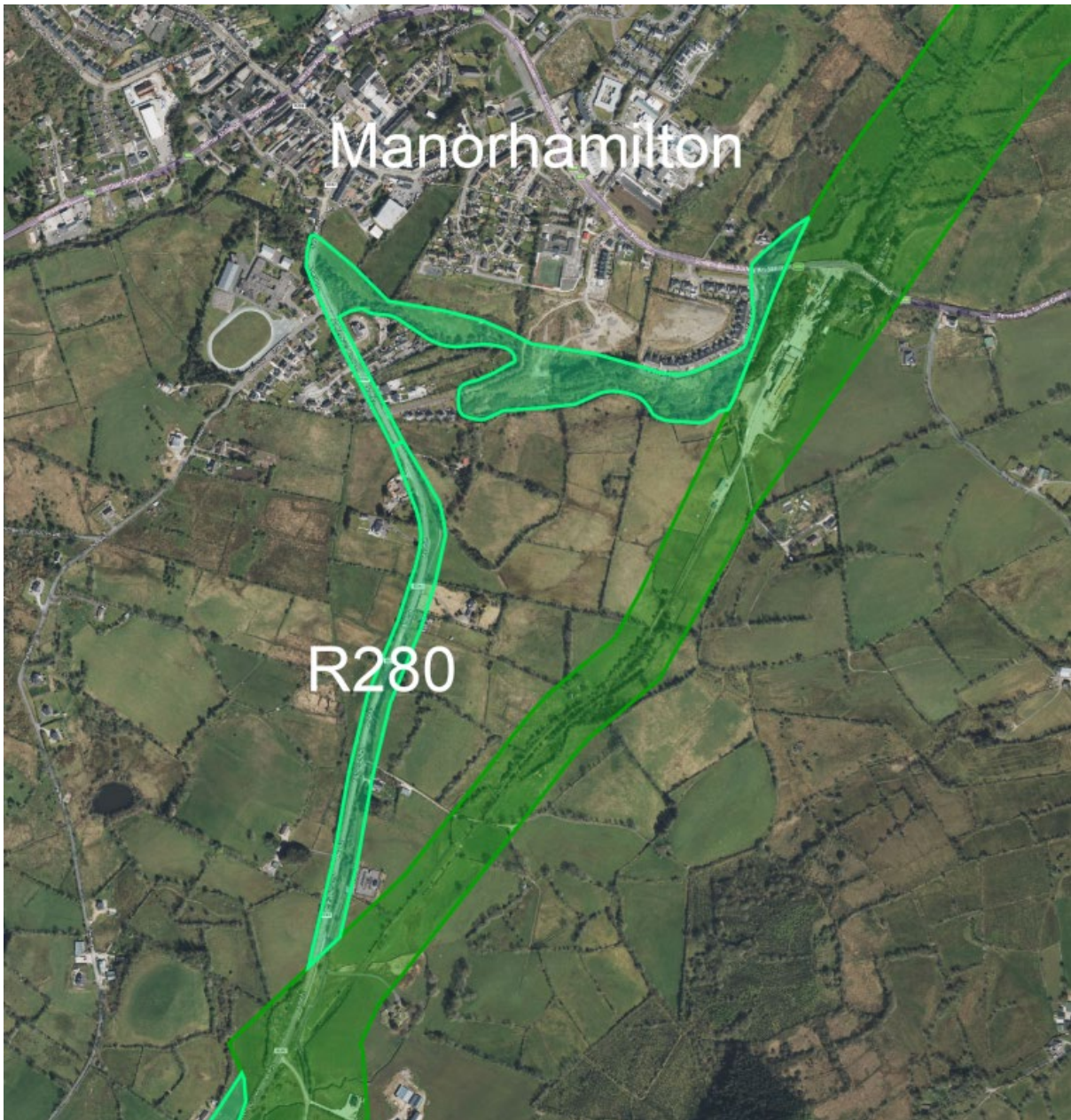


**Figure 9-9 Corridor Update along the R280 South of Manorhamilton**

The Preferred Corridor has been extended into Manorhamilton via the R280 and along the bank of the Owenmore River as shown in Figure 9-10. This was in response to feedback received from Leitrim County Planners who highlighted the following objective from the County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Manorhamilton Settlement Plan) to *“Pursue the development of a green route to include pedestrian and cycle path on lands identified as ‘Open Space’ from Millhill Lawns on the N16 to the Carrick Road (R280). This will be subject to the consideration of the potential impact on the adjoining Owenmore River which forms part of the Lough Gill Special Area of Conservation complex.”*

In addition, there is an existing walking and cycling facility to the east of the R280 which could be utilised and potentially upgraded as part of the project.

Both options have been included as part of the Preferred Corridor and will be looked at in further detail in Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).



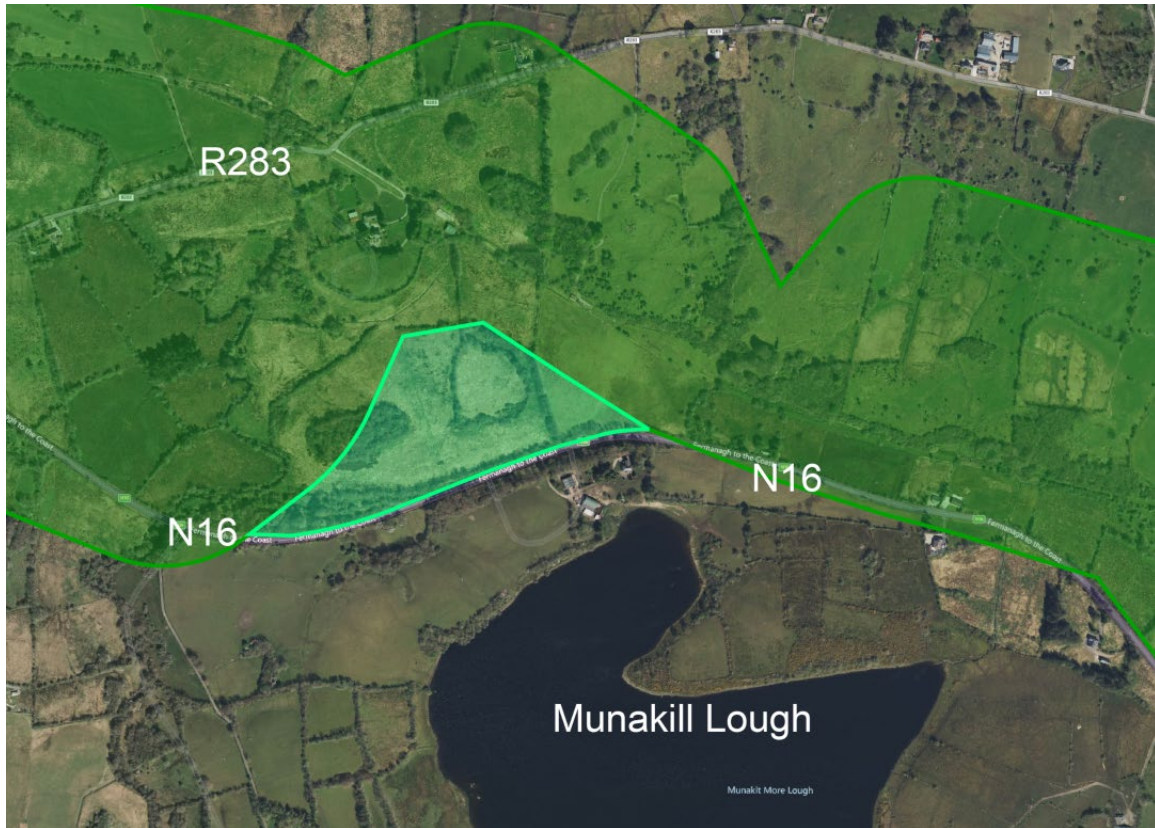
**Figure 9-10 Corridor Update in Manorhamilton**

#### **9.6.4 Section 4 Manorhamilton to Blacklion/Belcoo**

A common theme raised throughout Public Consultation feedback was the possibility to explore route options adjacent to the N16 in an attempt to reduce land segregation. As a result, the Corridor has been extended in four locations to encompass lands adjacent to the N16. These four locations are shown in Figure 9-11 to Figure 9-14 below.



**Figure 9-11 Corridor Update on N16 - East of Manorhamilton**



**Figure 9-12 Corridor Update on N16 – North of Munakill Lough**



Figure 9-13 Corridor Update on N16 at East Bars

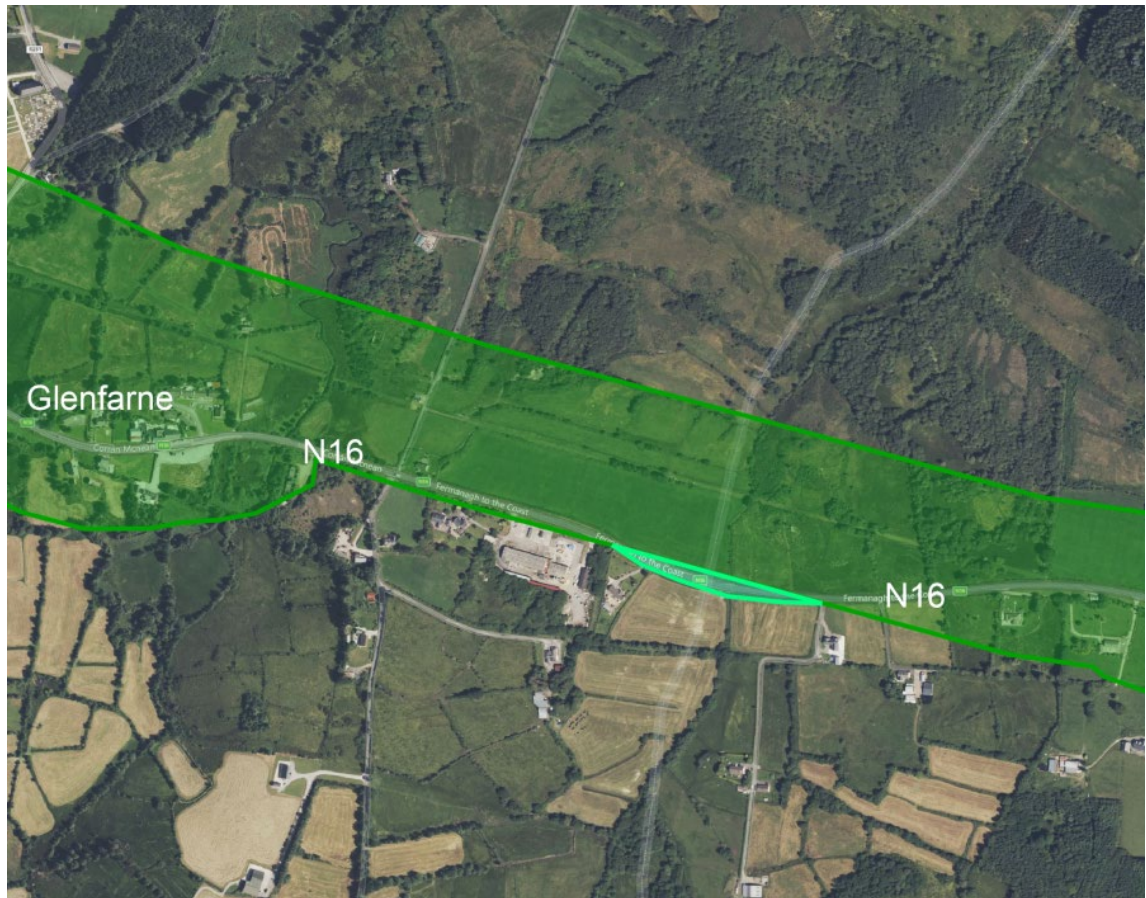
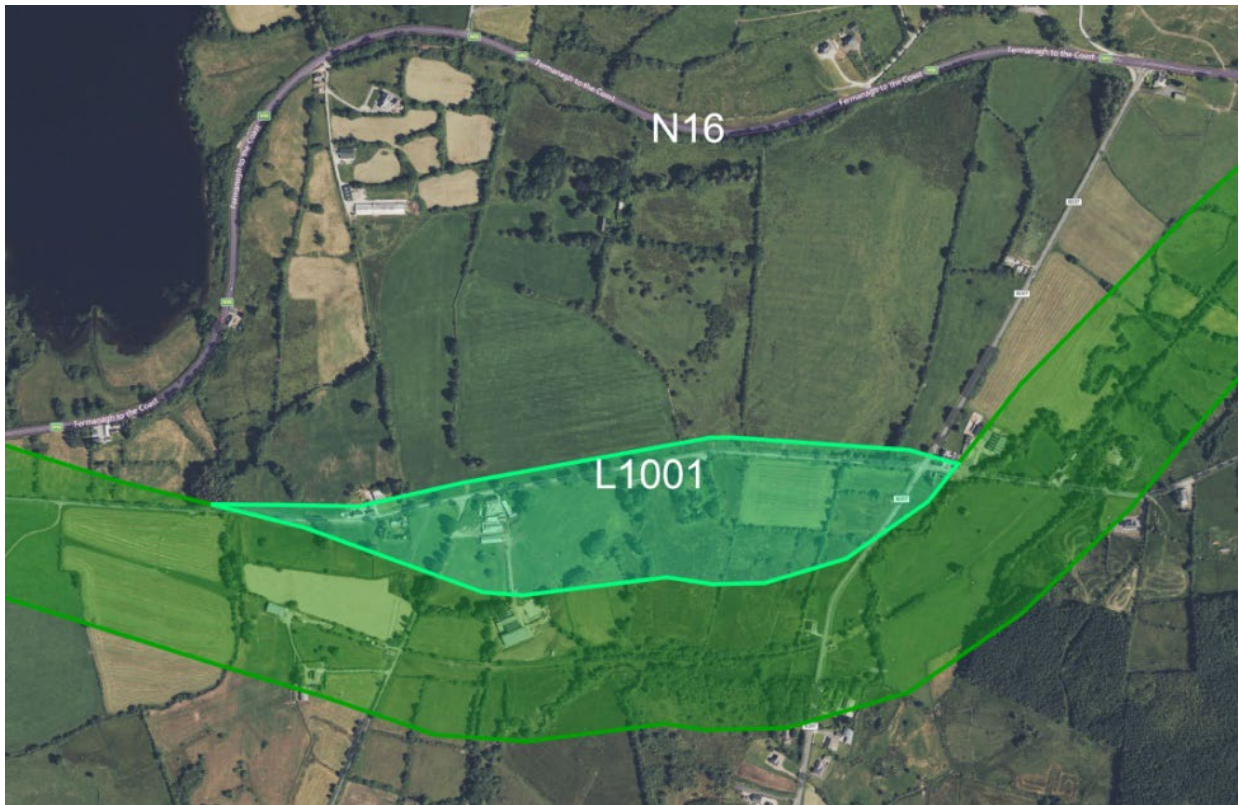


Figure 9-14 Corridor Update on N16 - East of Glenfarne

The Preferred Corridor has been updated to include lands adjacent to the L1001 as shown in Figure 9-15. This update was made in response to concerns raised by landowners regarding land severance affecting the operation of the dairy farm located here. It was requested that a route option that follows the L1001 be explored here.



**Figure 9-15 Corridor Update on L1001**

### 9.6.5 Section 5 Blacklion/Belcoo to Enniskillen

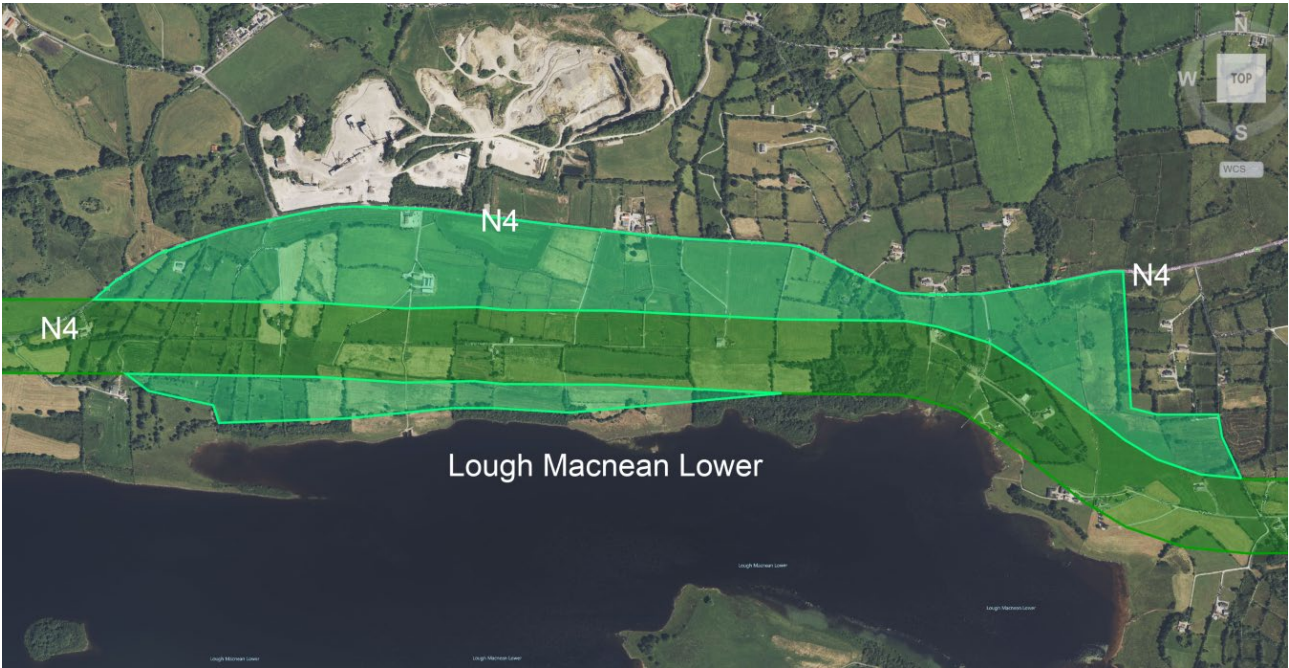
The Preferred Corridor has been updated in Belcoo as shown in Figure 9-16. This link has been included to serve the option of a renewed crossing over the Belcoo River to enable users to have direct access to Belcoo Main Street with local shops, business and amenities.

In addition, the Department of Environment is the landowner of a foul water treatment works with part access to the A4 highway in this location which could minimise impacts on private landowners. This link may also avoid the need for the Greenway to navigate crossing the busy Lattone Road and residential properties in and around MacNean Park.



**Figure 9-16 Corridor Update in Belcoo**

North of Lough MacNean Lower, the Preferred Corridor has been widened as shown in Figure 9-17. The majority of land south of the A4 to the shore of Lough MacNean is farmed, much with livestock. Several landowners have raised concerns about the impact the Greenway may have on their farming operations and have asked that consideration be given to developing options for the Greenway beyond the historic rail land, including adjacent to the A4. Extending the corridor here gives scope to enable detailed conversations to go ahead with these landowners to assess what Route Options may be possible in this area. In addition, this wider area gives greater opportunity to consider natural boundaries of land, hedge lines and dwellings.



**Figure 9-17 Corridor Update North of Lough MacNean Lower**

The Preferred Corridor has been extended adjacent to the Old Florence Court Station House as shown in Figure 9-17. The Station House and platform are privately occupied, and concerns have been raised about how the Greenway would interact with these properties. It was highlighted that there is an existing ancient path that skirts in between privately owned land, historic cutover bog and natural boundaries. The Preferred Corridor now encompasses this path.



**Figure 9-18 Corridor Update Southeast of Letterbreen**

## **9.7 Preferred Corridor**

Following the updates outlined in Section 9.6, the final Phase 2 ‘Preferred Corridor’ is presented in Figure 9-19 to Figure 9-22. These are also provided in Appendix X.



Figure 9-19 Stage 3 Preferred Corridor – Carraroe to Dromahair

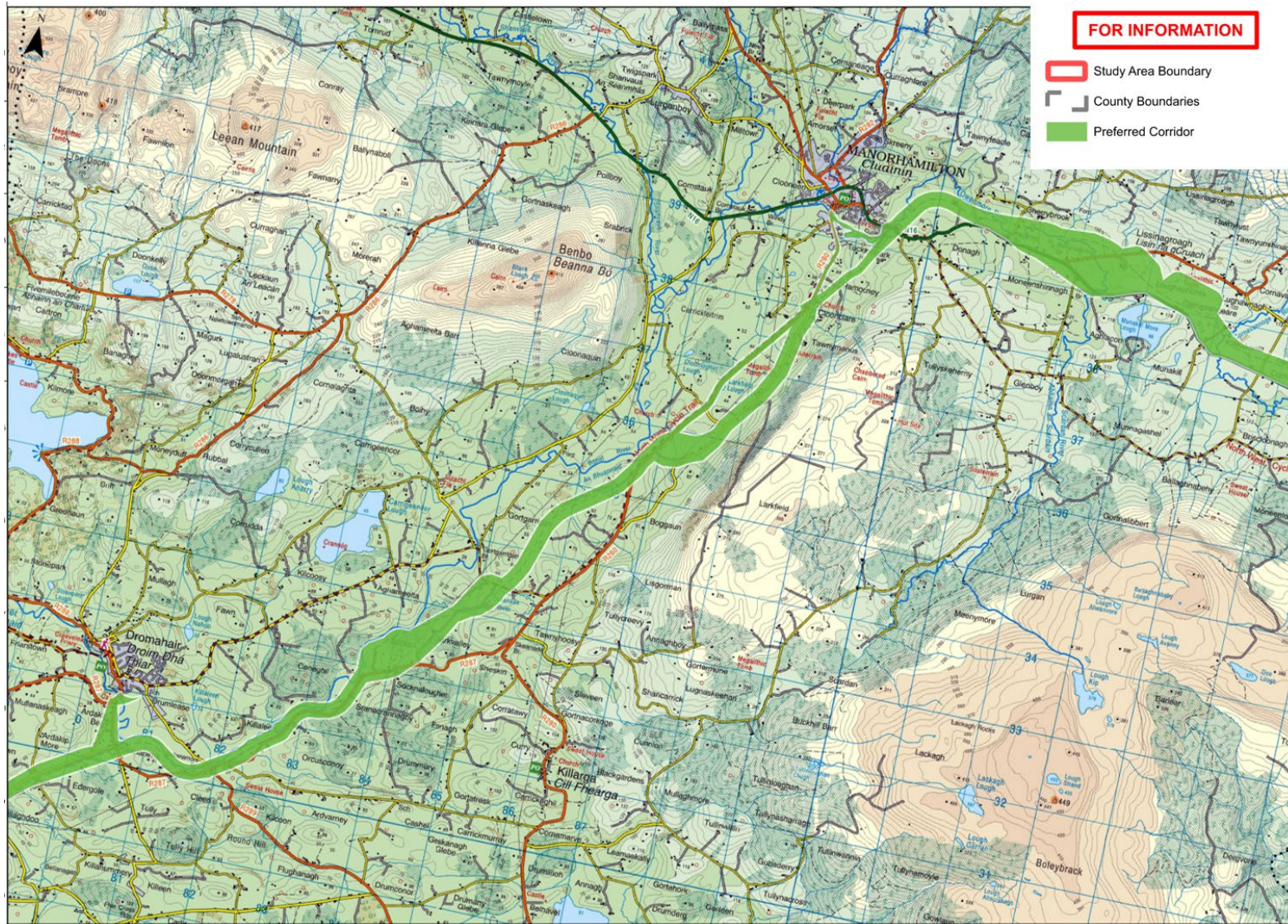


Figure 9-20 Stage 3 Preferred Corridor - Dromahair to East Bars

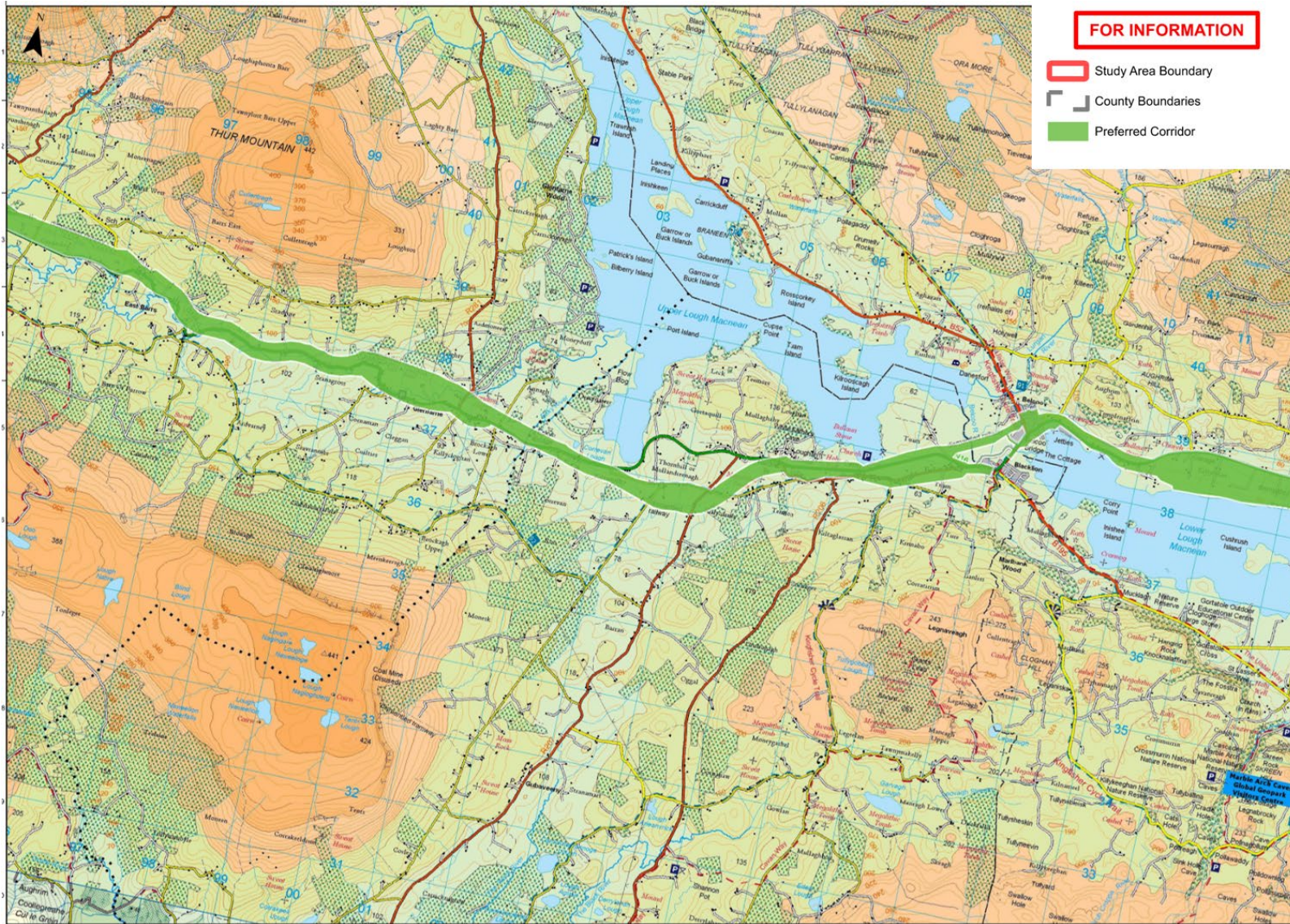


Figure 9-21 Stage 3 Preferred Corridor - East Barrs to Blacklion / Belcoo

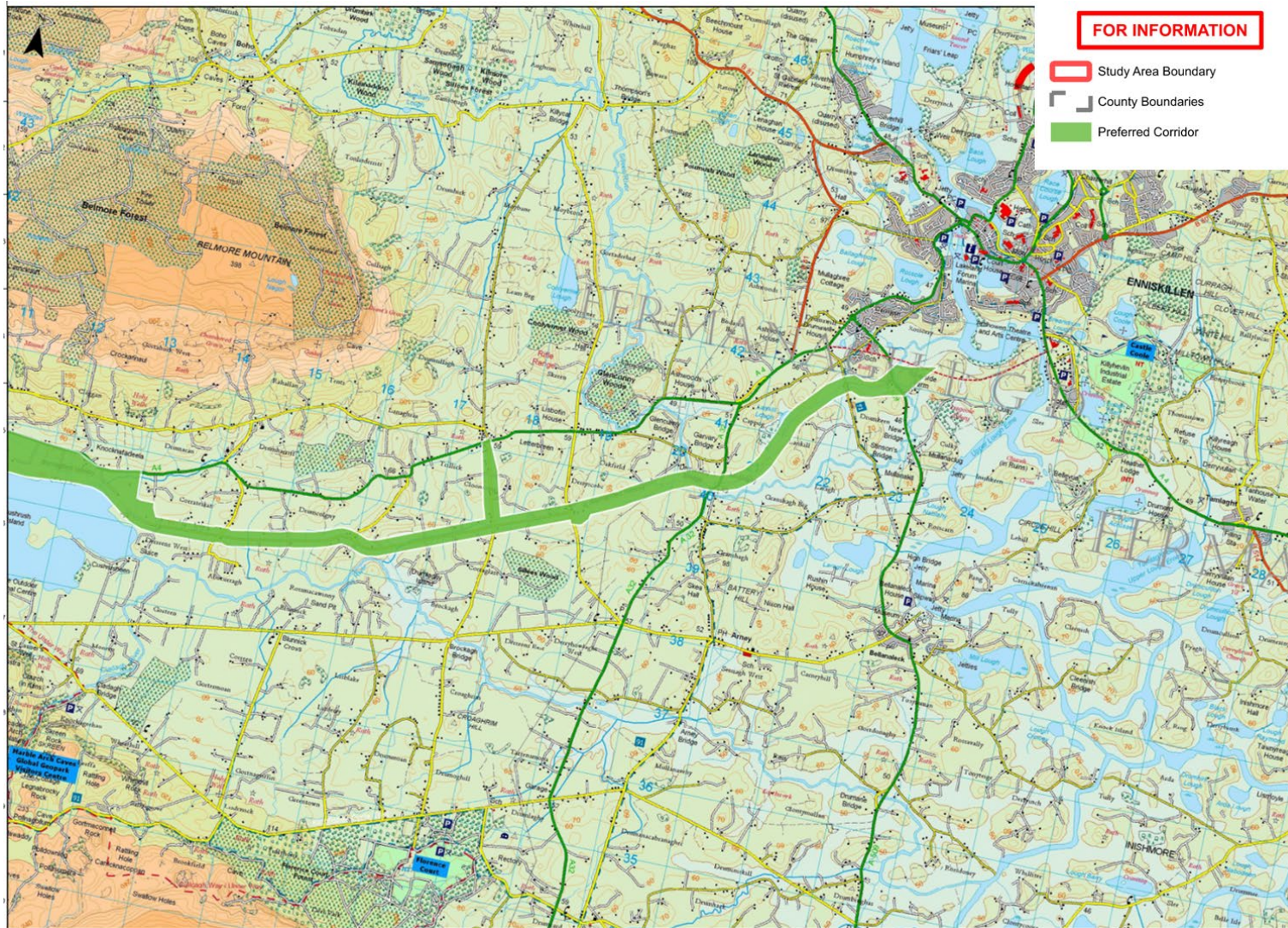


Figure 9-22 Stage 3 Preferred Corridor - Blacklion / Belcoo to Enniskillen

## **9.8 Recommendation that the Preferred Option Should Form the Basis of Phases 3**

It is recommended that the Preferred Corridor shown in Figure 9-19 to Figure 9-22 (and included in Appendix X), is taken forward to form the basis of TII PMG Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation).

Through consultation with affected landowners this will allow an optimised option to be designed and developed during TII PMG Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation) and where possible and practicable, avoid, reduce, and/or mitigate any significant impacts of the project on landowners and the receiving environment.

