

COUNTY WALKING & CYCLING STRATEGY 2021-2026



MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CONTAE MHUINEACHAIN



WELCOME

Thank you for picking up this document and giving your precious time to reading it. We are all becoming much more aware of how precious resources such as time are.

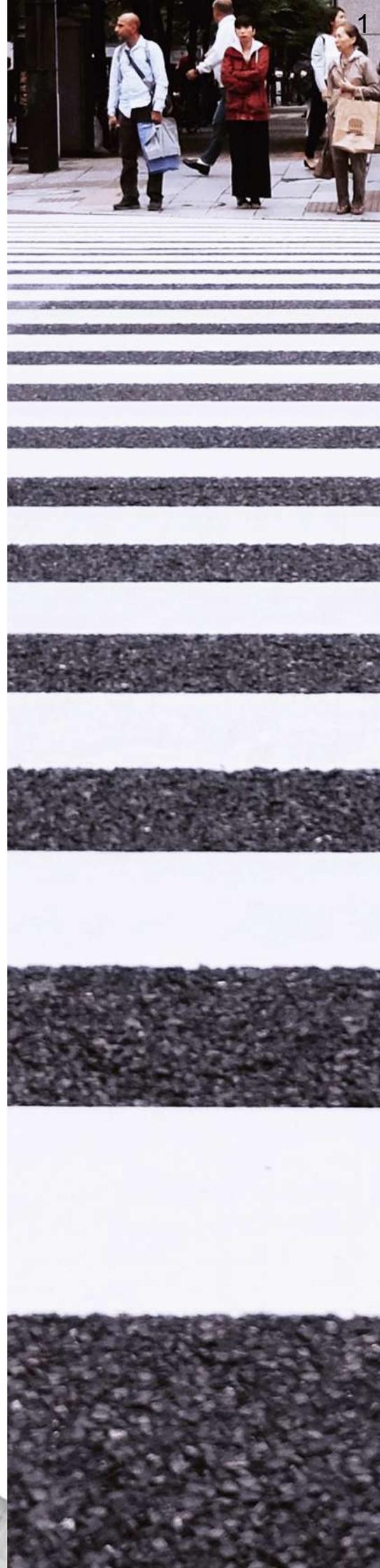
If something positive can be said to have emerged from the Covid pandemic, it might be that it has demonstrated how much can be achieved when we all pull together and make a determined effort to bring about a society-wide change.

An issue has been facing us for some time now, and the time has come to grasp the nettle as a society and make real changes to address it. That issue is sustainable development: we are consuming the resources of the planet at a rate much greater than the rate at which it can replace them. If something does not change soon, a tipping point will be reached beyond which the earth cannot recover.

We all must change the way we consume the earth's resources, and that starts with each individual taking responsibility for our own actions. One of the easiest ways for us all to cut our daily carbon consumption is to change our mode of transportation for some of our shorter journeys. Getting out of the car and walking or cycling instead is also better for us in all sorts of ways, so it's a win-win for us all, and for the planet too.

This Strategy will play an important part in stimulating us as a society to change our habits, as it seeks to create the ideal conditions to foster active travel, and to support people to walk and cycle rather than take the motor car for short journeys. I believe strongly that this is necessary for the future of our planet, but also that our towns and villages will be more pleasant places and the people of Monaghan will be healthier and happier as a result of embracing this Strategy. I therefore recommend it to you and encourage you to take it to heart and adopt Active Travel into your daily life as fully as you can.

CLLR RAYMOND AUGHEY
Chair, Transportation, Community & Rural
Development Strategic Policy Committee



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ADDRESS



Transportation is the second largest cause of CO2 emissions after agriculture. Most journeys are under 2km in length, and could easily be made by bike or foot rather than in a motor vehicle. Changing this one habit could have a huge impact on the rate of climate change, and help to stabilise the extreme weather events which we have been experiencing in recent times.

Monaghan County Council is playing its part in stepping up to the challenge of addressing climate change. We have a robust Climate Change Adaptation Plan in place, and within it is included an Action to put a Walking & Cycling Strategy in place for the county.

I am pleased to see the delivery of this document. In addition to looking at the development of walking and cycling from the perspective of addressing climate change, it considers their role as two of Ireland's most popular leisure activities, and very important activities which support the tourism sector. They therefore are important for both the social and economic future of Co. Monaghan, and it is important not to leave their development to chance.

This Strategy is the first of its kind in the county, and comes at an ideal time. I am delighted to announce that thanks to funding from the National Transport Authority, Monaghan County Council has now set up a dedicated Active Travel Unit, staffed with three engineers and a community engagement officer. They will play a prominent role in implementing this Strategy and I wish them every success in their important work.

EAMONN O SULLIVAN

Chief Executive, Monaghan County Council

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“ACTIVE TRAVEL IS TRAVELLING WITH A PURPOSE USING YOUR OWN ENERGY”

1. INTRODUCTION

Walking and cycling are two of the most popular physical activities across Ireland, and contribute much to the health and wellbeing of the nation. As low impact physical activities, they can be taken up by almost anyone, cost little, and can be engaged in solo or as part of a group. Both activities draw people to the outdoors, often having the side effect of reconnecting them with nature, which brings all kinds of additional benefits to health and wellbeing.

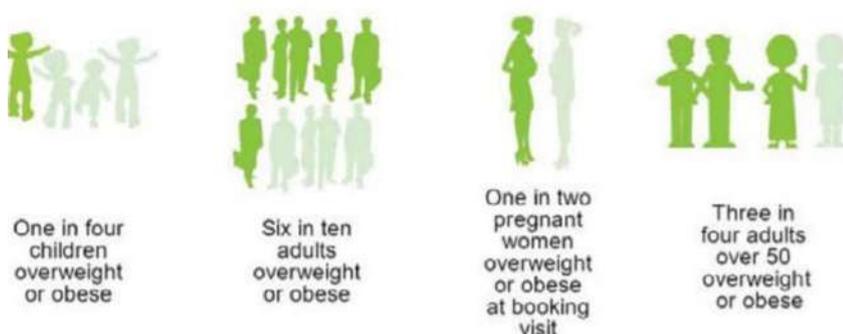
Walking and cycling also have a part to play in helping Ireland to reduce its carbon footprint and address climate change. The largest single cause of journeys in Ireland is commuting to either work or school; in Co. Monaghan, almost 40,000 people commute daily but less than 10% of these walk or cycle, even though 15,000 of them have a journey of less than 15 minutes to make. Persuading some of these to make a modal shift from private motor cars to Active Travel modes would make a big difference to the county's carbon footprint.

Walking and cycling are playing an increasingly important role to our county's economic development, with Tourism Ireland reporting that they are the two most popular activities that overseas tourists engage in whilst in Ireland, and over one quarter of domestic holiday makers engaging in walking and 8% in cycling during their break. As Monaghan is primarily seen as a destination for outdoor activities, walking and cycling amenities are an important part of our product offering.

Ireland, along with many Western countries, is in the grip of an obesity crisis, costing the Exchequer over €1.13 billion every year. A national physical activity plan has been put in place to address the issue, and walking and cycling are seen as key weapons in its arsenal. National campaigns such as 'Get Ireland Walking', 'Operation Transformation', and an Taisce's 'Cycling Ambassadors' programme aimed at promoting cycling amongst girls, as well as walking & cycling events being run by local clubs and Sports Partnerships are supporting newcomers to 'give it a go'.

However, the conditions need to be right; safe, comfortable, accessible amenities need to be provided, and the streets need to be cycle friendly.

This is where the Local Authority can provide leadership and co-ordination, to ensure that the county's resources are maximised. That is the purpose of this Strategy.

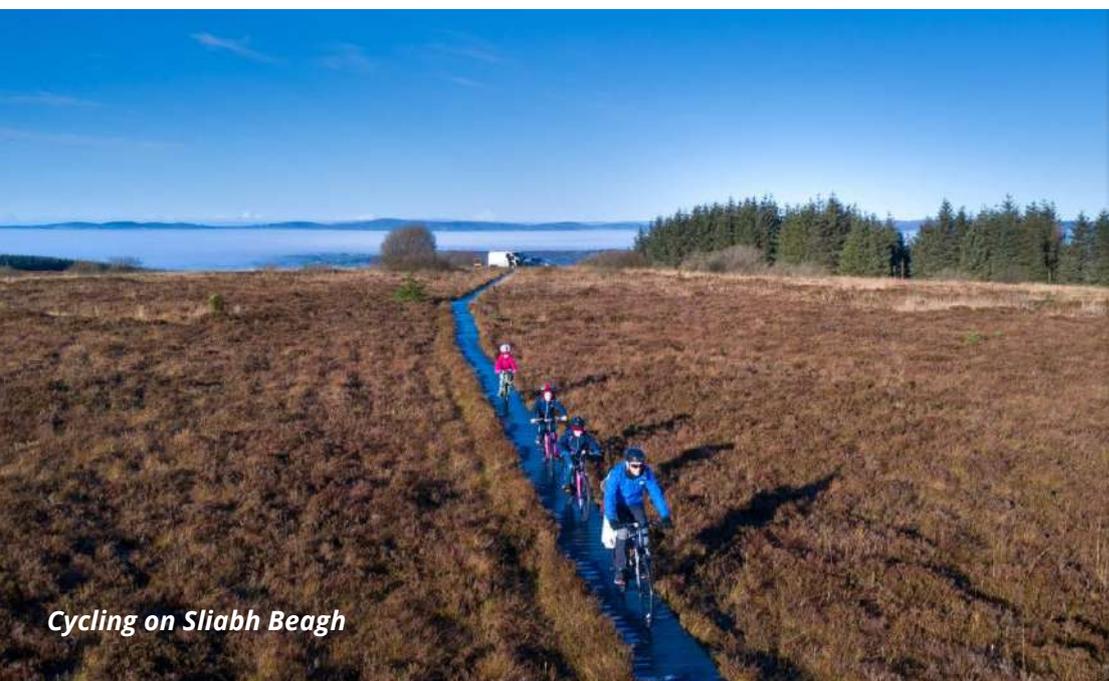


1.1 THE COUNCIL'S ROLE IN WALKING & CYCLING PROVISION

Monaghan County Council is responsible for many areas of activity which contribute to the levels of walking and cycling in the county. These include:

- Road design, construction and maintenance, including footpaths, pedestrian crossings and cyclepaths
- Tourism development
- Road safety
- The development and maintenance of public spaces and amenities, including greenways and parks
- The provision of public lighting, which can have an impact on the number of people using foot and cycle paths after dark
- The promotion of climate adaptation and sustainable development, including active travel
- The promotion of healthy lifestyles and participation in sport through the Healthy Monaghan programme and Monaghan Sports Partnership
- Economic development, including the development of employment zones
- Housing, including the construction of new housing developments and their connectivity to the surrounding environment
- Planning, including Development Management and Forward Planning, place-making, the preparation of Land Use & Transportation Strategies, Local Area Plans and Regeneration Schemes, all of which take movement of traffic by all modes of transportation into account
- Delivery of national policy on accessible services, public sector duty, age friendly county, and migrant integration
- Development of strong communities and supporting the community & voluntary sector

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide the framework into which all present and future projects may be slotted, showing how they connect to a coherent network, and contribute to the overall vision. In this way, the Council will be sure that it is getting the best from its resources at all times, putting the right infrastructure in the right place and contributing to an overall framework, which is all working towards a common aim, i.e. the development of Co. Monaghan as a better place to live, work and visit.



Cycling on Sliabh Beagh

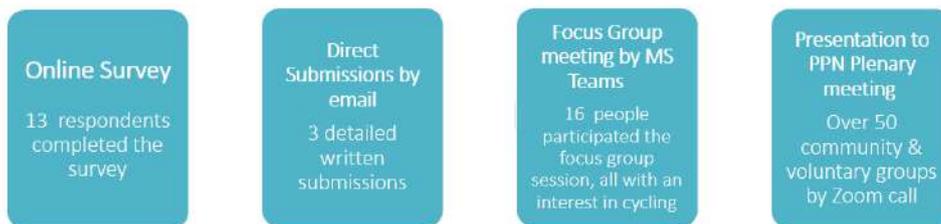
1.2 HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The steps undertaken to arrive at the Draft Strategy are summarised below:



The Draft Strategy was discussed by the Transportation & Community Strategic Policy Committee in March 2021 before entering a two month period of public consultation. The Draft Strategy and the outcome of the public consultation were considered by the Management Team before a final draft of the Strategy was presented to the Transportation, Community & Rural Development SPC for adoption in September 2021.

The Consultation



A summary of the feedback received during the consultation can be found in Appendix III at the end of this document



The Yew Walk in Rossmore Park

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

This document is a high-level, strategic look at how Monaghan County Council proposes to:

- develop walking and cycling infrastructure, and
- promote walking and cycling as activities which support the economic, cultural and social wellbeing of the people of Co Monaghan.

It takes into account Monaghan County Council's role as an important agent of change in driving a number of key national programmes.

Local authorities were first directed to prepare walking & cycling strategies as an action of the National Physical Activity Plan, as a measure to combat Ireland's growing obesity crisis. Since then, walking and cycling have come to form important parts of transportation, climate change and tourism policies and strategies.

The Strategy looks at walking and cycling both as recreational activities and at the crucial role that they play in helping to address Climate Change through the promotion of Active Travel. This Strategy plans for the development of both areas of activity.

The Strategy fits into a number of Council policies and plans, including our Corporate Plan and the County Development Plan, which lays down rules around what can and can't be developed in the county and is a statutory document backed up by a raft of legislation.

The Strategy will help the Council to deliver on a number of our other plans, including our Healthy Monaghan Plan, the Sports Partnership's Strategic Plan, the Age Friendly Strategy and a number of local community plans.

As we roll out the delivery of this Strategy, we will do so in a way which promotes equality and social inclusion. Monaghan County Council is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity and accessibility for all. In line with our statutory obligations under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, we will continue to develop practices that promote the right for everyone to participate in all aspects of life in County Monaghan. All our staff have been trained on how to meet our Public Sector Duty obligations, and will be mindful of these obligations in rolling out the Strategy.

Monaghan Sanctuary Runners



2. THE MAKING OF THE STRATEGY

2.1 POLICY REVIEW

2.1.1 Programmes which influence this Strategy

The current government published their Programme for Government on 29th October 2020. In its Programme, the Government committed to a fundamental change in the nature of transport in Ireland. The Government's commitment to cycling and pedestrian projects has seen a revival of the Dept of Transport's Active Travel programme, and a commitment of 10% of the Transport budget to walking and cycling infrastructure.

For the first time, support is to be given to rural local authorities to participate in active travel infrastructure provision, with design support from the National Transport Authority's regional offices.

In addition, funding is to be given to each local authority so that it can create its own Active Travel Unit with staff dedicated to the roll out of walking and cycling projects on a full time basis. Monaghan Co Co set up our Active Travel Unit in July 2021. It is staffed by an Executive Engineer, two Assistant Engineers and a Community Engagement Officer.

The Programme for government also announced the intention to support children to be able to walk and cycle to school, and this was quickly followed by the announcement of the 'Safe to School' funding initiative which will seek to improve the safety of the roads around schools. The programme will be overseen by An Taisce's Green Schools programme, with the local authorities delivering the works on the ground.

The Programme for Government also recognises the importance of greenways as both active travel corridors and potential drivers of rural development and commits to developing an integrated national greenways strategy. In order to be well placed to participate in the consultation around this important piece of work, we have begun the conversation around what the network of routes through Co. Monaghan should look like as part of this Walking & Cycling Strategy. It is hoped that funding will follow from the Department of Transport and Tourism for routes identified in the national strategy when completed.



Programme for Government

NTA Regional Cycle Design Unit

LA Active Travel Units

Safe to School Funding

Greenways Development

Addressing Ireland's Health Crisis

Ireland is in the grip of a health crisis; high levels of inactivity across all age profiles are contributing to high levels of obesity and heart disease, and all the chronic health conditions that these bring.

Areas of concern in Co. Monaghan include the high rate of male suicides, and the high level of drink driving. Heart disease amongst females is also amongst the highest levels in the country. Walking in particular has a lot to offer in promoting positive mental health, as it can include a social aspect, and can promote a connection with nature - known as the 'green prescription' in addition to releasing feel-good endorphins which come from engaging in physical activity.

The Government launched a National Physical Activity Plan in January 2016, the aim of which is to increase physical activity levels across the whole population. It aims to create a society which facilitates people whether at home at work or at play to lead an active way of life.

Local Authorities are tasked with delivering a number of actions within the Plan, including to develop a walking & cycling strategy, and to ensure that the planning, development and design of towns includes walking and cycling infrastructure as well as recreational amenities which encourage physical activity.

The Healthy Ireland programme is an initiative which aims to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. The Healthy Ireland model is built on collective responsibility and collective action towards better health outcomes. Walking and cycling are important activities within the programme.

Each Local Authority area has developed a local response to the national Healthy Ireland programme. In the Healthy Monaghan Strategic Plan which was published in 2020, the development of active travel initiatives in order to promote walking and cycling in workplaces and schools is listed as an action.

'Get Ireland Walking' is a national initiative that aims to maximise the number of people participating in walking. It's a Sport Ireland initiative which is funded by Healthy Ireland. It supports the development of new groups, and organises challenges to encourage people to get walking. It is one of the programmes you will see featured in the Community Engagement section of our Action Plan.

Monaghan Sports Partnership's Strategic Plan (2019-2023) outlines its objectives regarding the engagement of people in the county in sport and physical activity. This includes supporting increased participation in walking and cycling as cost-effective means of getting active for health improvements and assisting in the development of more places in which people can walk and cycle, not only for health benefits but also as a means of active travel.

Monaghan Sports Partnership organises National Bike Week in Co. Monaghan every year, and also funds cycle skills training in schools as well as providing a range of training and funding supports to the county's walking and cycling clubs. MSP has also run walking festivals, as well as targeted programmes aimed at getting older people, women, migrants etc walking.

The staff of the Sports Partnership have immense expertise built up from interacting with the public and the community sector in the course of delivering their programme of work, and will be a key delivery agent in our community engagement programme.

National Physical Activity Plan

Healthy Ireland

Healthy Monaghan Strategic Plan

Get Ireland Walking

Monaghan Sports Partnership



2.1.2 Walking & Cycling Policy in Ireland

Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all of its people. Project Ireland 2040 seeks to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around the overarching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity. They are listed in the graphic to the right.

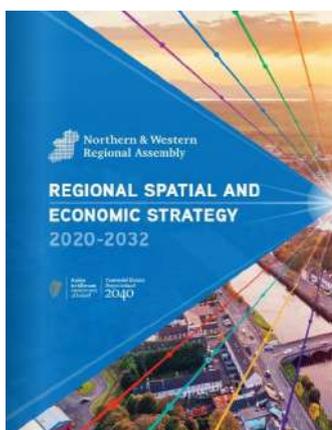
1.	Compact Growth
2.	Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3.	Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
4.	Sustainable Mobility
5.	A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6.	High-Quality International Connectivity
7.	Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8.	Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
9.	Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources
10.	Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

The preparation of this Strategy will make a direct contribution to Outcomes 1, 4, 7, and 8, as well as indirectly contributing to the achievement of outcomes 2, 3 and 5 by supporting the growth of Monaghan's outdoor recreation-based tourism industry.

Co. Monaghan belongs to the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, one of three Assemblies in Ireland. Each Assembly has interpreted Project Ireland 2040's planning framework for their region, producing a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, whose purpose is to take into account the local conditions and factor them into an appropriate response in developing the Strategy. In turn, each Local Authority is obliged to take its respective region's RSES into account when developing local planning strategies.

Monaghan town is identified as a 'Key Town' for growth within the RSES. As such, we are obligated to carry out a Local Transport Plan for the town. The Strategy also supports the development of greenways and networks of walking and cycling routes as tourism amenities as well as necessary active travel infrastructure.

The Strategy heavily supports compact urban development with an emphasis on design which creates accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe places to work, live, shop and engage in community life. It sees the creation of permeable town centres where walking and cycling are given a competitive edge over motorised forms of transport as the future of sustainable place-making, where people live within a short distance of the services and amenities they most frequently use.



This document informs our Planning team's approach to new developments, and is encouraging us to be more innovative in our approach to placemaking, particularly in our town centres.

We are embracing the European concept of the 'fifteen minute city' and are aiming to develop our town infrastructure in such a way as to make most services and amenities reachable by residents within a ten minute walk or cycle.

Project Ireland 2040

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)

County Development Plan 2019 - 2025

Town Regeneration

Every local authority acts as the Planning Authority for their area. As such, we are obligated by law to produce a County Development Plan every six years.

The Plan contains an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Monaghan over the lifetime of the Plan. It must take on board national and regional planning legislation and adapt them to take account of local conditions.

The Monaghan Plan fully supports the development of the Ulster Canal Greenway and the development of more walking and cycling infrastructure for both leisure and active travel purposes. The Plan also gives protection to corridors which may be needed for future cycle infrastructure. The settlement strategy contained within the Plan supports the drive towards more compact urban forms and a reduced dependency on the motor car.

Local authorities are drivers of economic change. One of the ways we do this is to try to create favourable conditions within towns for attracting investment. Often this can be through carrying out regeneration of areas which have fallen into disrepair, providing incentives to stimulate investment supported by a redesign of the associated public spaces. The process often starts with a Regeneration Plan, and finishes with a Scheme which can encompass the acquisition of property and working with landowners to open up their sites and avail of funding supports.

We are committed to the concepts of compact development, permeable town centres and locating services and amenities within ten minutes of where people live. We believe that the re-designation of urban space away from motor vehicles and towards pedestrians and people on bikes will greatly improve the safety and comfort of our urban spaces, making them more pleasant places to be in, and encouraging people to spend more time in the town centres. Good public realm design will play an important part in the process of transforming our town centres, and equally importantly, re-prioritising the space for people instead of traffic will be critical in making these spaces work once more.

A regeneration Plan has been prepared for the Old Cross Square/ Dublin St area of Monaghan town and work is imminent on site. pilot Town Centre Living Initiative is in train in Castleblayney, and two areas of Carrickmacross town centre are the subject of Local Area Action Plans. All of these initiatives will present opportunities for advancing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. More work will follow in the years ahead in other towns and villages as the completion of by-passes and other roads projects enable us to reduce through-traffic in town centres and give priority to people on foot and bikes. Having a Walking & Cycling Strategy will help to inform those plans and ensure that the needs of people on foot and bikes are met in the new streetscapes and urban districts which emerge in our towns and villages in the coming years.



'The bicycles go by in twos and threes' - at Inniskeen Road July Festival

2.1.3 Other Policies which influence this Strategy

The Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets (DMURS) and the National Cycle Manual are the key policy documents which we will be following when we are introducing cycle infrastructure on the roads and streets of Co. Monaghan.

DMURS recommends a shift away from conventional design solutions towards those which prioritise sustainable modes of transport, safeguard vulnerable users and promote a sense of place and promotes an integrated approach to street design. It advocates the following User Priority/Hierarchy when designing an urban route:

1) Pedestrians, 2) Cyclists, 3) Public Transport, 4) Private Motor Vehicles
This is the hierarchy which we will follow in all future schemes.

The stated goal of the National Cycle Manual is to aim to provide for two-abreast cycling in a stress free and safe environment. We will be guided by the manual when deciding the best approach to new schemes.

You can find the Cycle Manual here: www.cyclemanual.ie

Cyclist.ie, the umbrella body of cycle campaigning and advocacy groups in Ireland, published a vision for cycling in rural Ireland in late 2020. The vision features 8 priorities, which focus on accelerating a transition to a cycle-friendly society. They are:

We call on our local and national government to:

1. Create an environment in our cities, towns, villages and rural roads where CYCLISTS ARE EXPECTED AND RESPECTED

2. Create and map a network of useful, CONNECTED CYCLE ROUTES throughout Local Authority Areas

3. Implement BEST PRACTICE DESIGN to ensure routes are safe and comfortable for cyclists of all ages and abilities

4. Prioritise SAFE CYCLE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS and car free zones at school gates

5. LOWER SPEED LIMITS to make our roads and streets safer and more accessible for everyone, and to reduce casualties

6. Ensure clear and timely ACCESS TO FUNDING, by improving capacity at all levels of local and national government

7. COLLABORATE WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS - including cycling and community groups - at all stages of planning and design

8. Provide CYCLE TRAINING for all ages, especially children

From cycling.ie's Vision for Cycling in Ireland published November 2020

Several members of the cyclist.ie group took the time to participate in an online focus group consultation on our Draft Strategy in June 2021, for which we are very grateful. Members pointed out the importance of street design in improving the safety of people on bikes, and that if speed limits in town centres could be reduced to 30kph, it could be possible for people on bikes to safely share space with motor vehicles. They recommended that such initiatives be supported by promotional campaigns aimed at increasing driver awareness of the presence of people on bikes and reminding them that the road is a shared space.

An interesting concept promoted by cyclist.ie is that of 'Rothar Roads', which are rural roads which feature on a designated cycle route. This is supported by a reduced speed limit on these roads and caution signs to alert drivers of the presence of people on bikes. We have included an action around piloting the 'Rothar Road' concept in this Strategy.

Cycle Design Standards

A Vision for Cycling in Ireland

The first National Cycle Policy Framework grew from the Dept of Transport Tourism & Sport's first Smarter Travel policy in 2009.

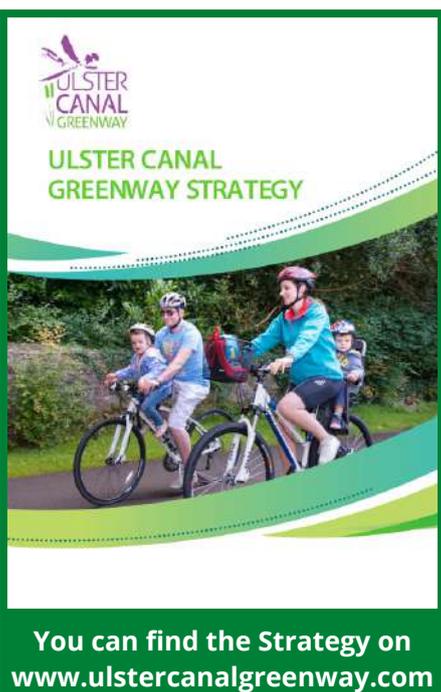
The Framework was a ten-year document which identified the role that each public sector organisation was to play in helping to reach the Dept's objective of reaching 10% of all trips to be made by bike by 2020. Local Authorities were identified as key players in fifteen of the nineteen objectives in the Framework. We have carried forward as many of the objectives as possible from the first Framework into this Strategy. Indeed, some, such as appointing a Cycling Officer, have already been achieved.

A successor Framework is expected from the Dept soon. We will review the new Framework when available and adjust our Action Plan accordingly if necessary.

Following on from an initial scoping study completed in 2010, DTTAS announced in August 2021 that it is preparing a Strategic National Cycle Network. This will be based on the work within each Local Authority to identify priority routes, but will take the work a step further, linking local routes into strategic regional and national routes. A five year Strategy is expected to be presented by Q3 2022.

We will be looking at how our routes fit into the wider regional and national picture, and will be working to ensure that they are included in the proposed national network.

Also in August 2021, the Dept announced their intention to transfer the development of greenways to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) from September 1st 2021, and that a Code of Practice is to be put in place to deal with issues which arise during the development of greenway routes. This will standardise the process to be followed by all entities seeking to develop greenways, and will simplify many matters, such as compensating landowners and designing the consultation process.



Monaghan County Council opened the first section of the former towpath of the Ulster Canal in Monaghan town as a greenway in 2014. Shortly thereafter, we approached Waterways Ireland and our neighbouring Councils to discuss developing a strategic long distance route using the Ulster Canal and some disused railway infrastructure to create a 190km long network of routes linking the main urban centres in central Ulster. The idea was met with enthusiasm and the group has been working together ever since to realise this ambitious project which has the potential to transform both tourism and transport through central Ulster.

National Cycle Policy Framework

Strategic National Cycle Network

Greenways Development Transferred to TII

Ulster Canal Greenway Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan was produced, and an SEA has been carried out on the Plan to look at the potential environmental impact of the route. It is planned to advance the project on a phased basis over the next five to ten years. Some funding has been secured to begin work on a section from Middletown in Co. Armagh to Smithboro in Co. Monaghan. Planning was granted for the section from Monaghan town to the Armagh border in July 2021. Preliminary route investigation work has also commenced on the section from Smithboro to Clones.

Funding has recently been announced for re-watering the section of canal from Lough Erne to Clones. In support of this major initiative, we will pursue funding opportunities to develop improved walking and cycling infrastructure to the surrounding countryside to encourage visitors to explore all that this lovely part of the country has to offer.

The Ulster Canal route features in the Northern Ireland Greenways Strategic Plan, produced in 2016. The Department of Infrastructure NI provided funding to our partner local authorities to scope the sections of the route which lie in Northern Ireland. Work continues on the project, which has the potential to transform the tourism industry in central Ulster.

NI Greenways Strategic Plan



**Map of Priority Greenway Routes, from Northern Ireland Greenways Strategic Plan 2016
Ulster Canal Greenway circled in red**

Primary Schools Cycle of the Greenway during Bike Week



Policies that influence Active Travel

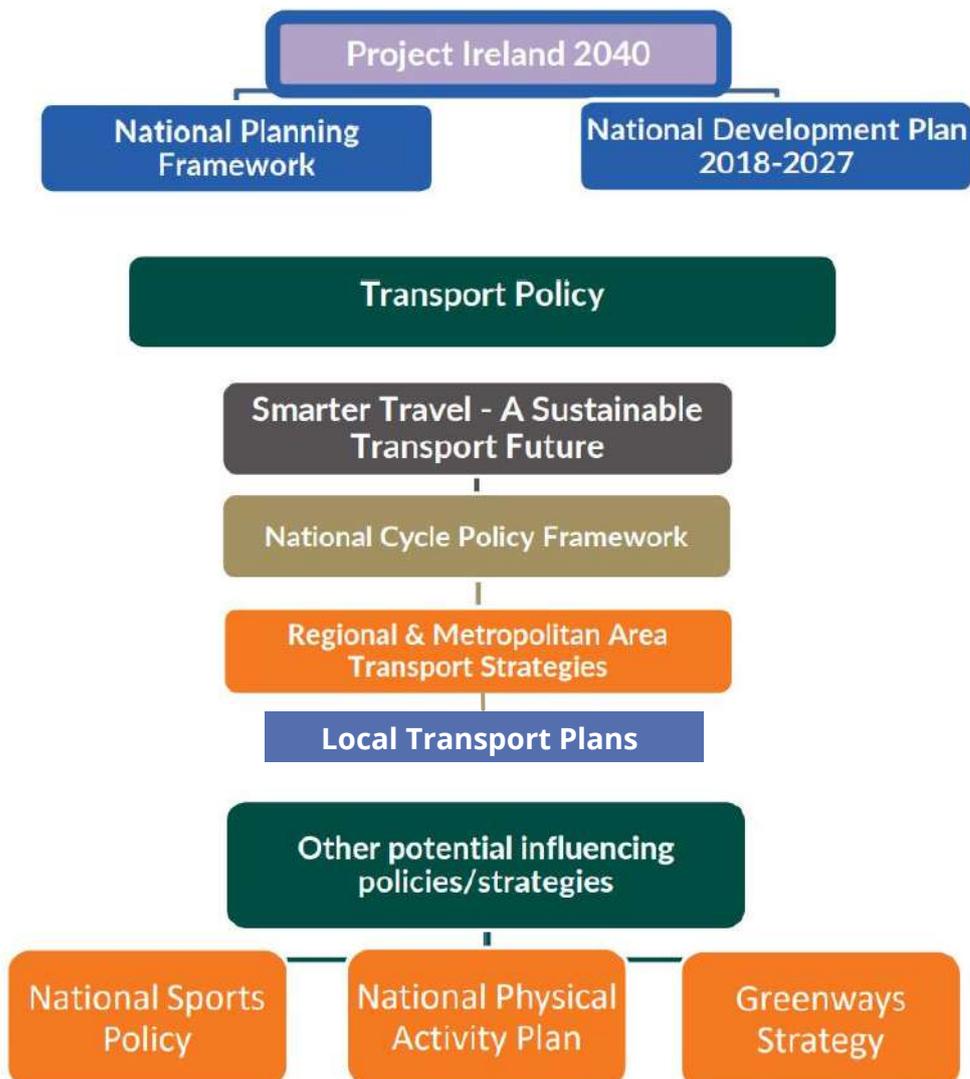
The key policies which influence Active Travel at national level are:

Smarter Travel - A Sustainable Transport Future has been the overarching policy guiding smarter and sustainable transport development in Ireland since 2009. It is currently being reviewed. It aimed to reduce private car use, ensure alternatives to the private car are available and improve fuel efficiency.

A key piece of work which came from Smarter Travel was the publication and implementation of a National Cycle Policy Framework, which was published in 2009. It contained 109 objectives, on which local authorities were involved in the delivery of over 70. It too is currently under review, with a successor Framework expected to be announced in late 2021/ early 2022.

Each of the three Regional Assemblies are required to develop a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy in which a Regional Transport Strategy must be put forward.

Regional policy feeds into local policy through the County Development Plan and the Local Economic & Community Plan.



Monaghan Road Safety Action Plan

On a national level, collisions involving pedestrians account for 1 in 5 fatalities annually. Collisions involving cyclists account for 1 in 25 road deaths annually.

The County Monaghan Road Safety Action Plan is built on the four E's of Road Safety: Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Evaluation. Walking- and cycling- specific actions included in the Plan include:

- assisting schools to carry out 'walkability audits'
- promotions aimed at encouraging the wearing of PPE by vulnerable road users
- distribution of hi viz equipment

Our consultation process and conversations with key stakeholders confirm that safety is the number one priority for people on bikes, and we are making it ours, too.

Monaghan is an Age Friendly County. Our Age Friendly County programme focuses on ensuring Monaghan is a great place in which to grow older. Monaghan Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2024 includes a commitment to making the built environment more age friendly.

To support the work of the Monaghan Age Friendly Strategy, the Walking & Cycling Strategy will:

- Consider the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age-friendly Environments Programme guidelines for the design and development of inclusive and accessible outdoor environments that promote active ageing.
- Ensure walking and cycling infrastructure includes Age Friendly seating at regular intervals along active travel routes.
- Where possible, ensure accessible toilet facilities and adult changing places are provided in larger outdoor recreation areas.

Age Friendly Monaghan



Cycling in Patrick Kavanagh Country

In preparing this Strategy, the Walking & Cycling Strategies for Monaghan Town and Castleblayney which were prepared in 2012 by Kieran Boyle Consulting were taken into consideration, as was the Walking & Cycling Strategy prepared in-house for Carrickmacross in 2019.

The Boyle Strategy for Monaghan town formed the basis of the recommendations for walking and cycling infrastructure in the 2019 Monaghan Land Use & Transportation Strategy.

There have been many new developments in these towns since the initial Walking & Cycling Strategies were prepared. While we believe that the general approach recommended remains valid, there will be new developments which are not provided for in the original documents. In addition, a number of policy areas, particularly around climate change, have developed significantly since these documents were written.

We have decided therefore that it is appropriate to carry out a review of the current town Walking & Cycling Strategies to ensure they are optimised to achieve the objectives of national and regional policies and programmes and to incorporate all recent local development.

Each Local Authority area has a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), which brings together all the actors in local development to agree and then implement a Local Economic & Community Plan for their county. The current LECP has just expired and the formulation of a new Plan will commence shortly. The LECP will look at the economic, social and cultural development of the county and will consider this Strategy as part of its work.

The development of the Ulster Canal Greenway was an action in the outgoing LECP, and it is anticipated that this will be retained as work is continuing on this project. The objectives and actions of our Walking and Cycling Strategy will be submitted for consideration for inclusion in the new LECP.

Existing Town Walking & Cycling Strategies

Local Economic & Community Plan

Well designed walking and cycling infrastructure can be a lifeline for some. In Monaghan town, the Ulster Canal Greenway has given a sense of normality to children with life limiting conditions, enabling them to go walking and cycling with their friends. It has given them some measure of independence and brought a slice of normality to their childhood.

The peaceful, rural nature of the greenway has made it a sensory refuge, enabling people who become anxious to plan a less taxing route and enabling them to get out and about more.



County Monaghan has a unique drumlin landscape, and is an area rich with tourism assets, natural beauty and cultural heritage. Strengthening this offering through product/ experience development, development of festivals and a robust promotional strategy is the focus of Monaghan's Tourism Strategy.

The county's Tourism Strategy recognises that the county's visitor appeal lies mainly in its natural resources, and that outdoor pursuits, in which walking and cycling play a key role, are a very important part of the Monaghan visitor experience.

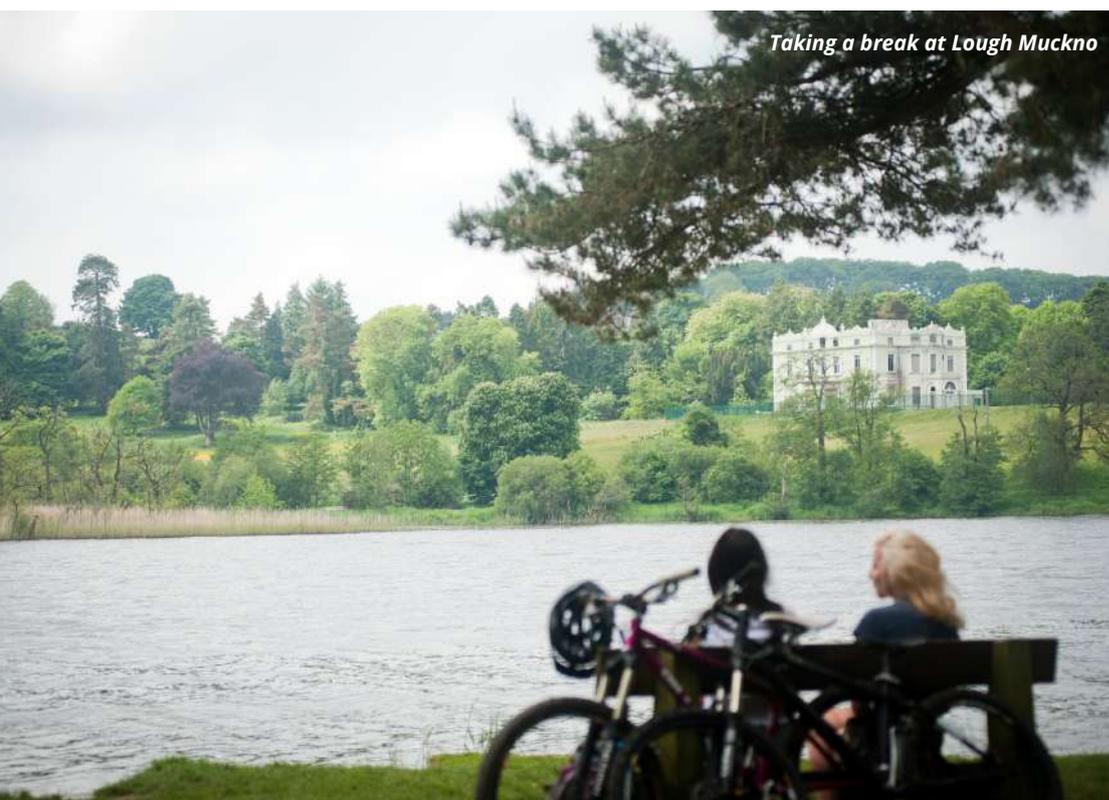
It is therefore very important that the recreational aspect of walking and cycling is not neglected in our work, as it has an important role to play in the furtherance of this very underdeveloped sector, and therefore is critical to the future economic health of the county.

According to Fáilte Ireland, in 2019 46% of domestic holiday makers engaged in walking/ hiking during their break, making it the most popular activity - a full 9% clear of the next most popular activity. (6% engage in cycling). Amongst overseas tourists, walking and cycling are the two most popular activities, with almost 2.4 million visitors engaging in walking/ hiking during 2019, and 361,000 taking to bikes during their visit.

The potential for developing walking and cycling tourism, particularly for improving the infrastructure to support cycling tourism, is something that has been flagged by the tourism industry, and is now being responded to at national level.

Monaghan's rich and varied landscape is ideal for exploration on foot and bike. The distribution pattern of our towns and villages at regular distances throughout the county make for points of interest and regular rest and food points along the routes, and the nooks and crannies which hide the gems of hidden heritage are best revealed by a slower pace of travel.

We plan during the lifetime of this Strategy to advance the development of walking and cycling infrastructure to support the overall development of the county's tourism product.



2.1.4 Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership.

Monaghan County Council is committed to playing our part in working towards the achievement of the SDG's.



The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives adopted in 2019 by the European Commission with the overarching aim of making Europe climate neutral in 2050. The main objective is for the EU to eliminate or offset its greenhouse gas emissions (ie achieve “net zero emissions”) by 2050, in line with global efforts to limit global warming to 1.5-2°C above pre-industrial averages.

In February 2021, the Council of Regions adopted a preliminary roadmap to achieving local action on the Green Deal. Initiatives will focus on three areas, two of which are directly relevant to this Strategy:

- **the greening of urban areas**

which will make our towns and villages more pleasant places for people on foot, and less car-centric spaces

- **the decarbonising of transport**

which will require a huge change not only in the kind of vehicles we use, but also in whether we use vehicles for some journeys at all, or instead opt to use sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling

The Green Deal is supported by a Sustainable & Smart Mobility Strategy and by an Urban Mobility Strategy.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

European Green Deal

You can find out more about the EU Green Deal here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en



Climate Action

The government's Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021 sets out the legal framework for Ireland's transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. Local Authorities have been given a key implementation role, and this Strategy will form an important part of Monaghan County Council's response.

Action 165 of the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019, requires Local Authorities to identify and develop plans for a Decarbonising Zone. In April 2021, Monaghan County Council nominated Monaghan town as the county's decarbonising zone, and began the process of preparing a strategy for achieving the required 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 (a 51% reduction over the decade). As transport emissions are one of the biggest contributors to carbon emissions, promoting Active Travel before taking the car for short journeys around the town will be an important part of the Decarbonisation Strategy.

Each Local Authority has prepared a Climate Action Plan which identifies the local impacts of climate change, and proposes actions to respond to these changes. Monaghan County Council's Climate Action Plan includes actions around active travel, one of which was to produce this Walking & Cycling Strategy to act as a guide in reducing carbon emissions from motor vehicles by achieving a modal shift to walking and cycling for shorter journeys.

These policies cascade one on to the next, from global, to national to local.

At each level, they are backed up by programmes designed to stimulate action.

As the arm of government closest to the citizen, the local authority is seen as a critical component in reaching out to the citizen to ask them to make a change in their habits and behaviours

Walking on Sliabh Beagh



Sliabh Beagh, which has its own Masterplan to direct development, is a very special place. Its blanket bog serves as a carbon sink; it is one of only a few water sources left in Ireland which are still rated as high quality, and it is home to a clutch of protected species, including the curlew, the hen harrier and the marsh fritillary butterfly. It is a precious habitat, and is part of an INTERREG-funded cross border conservation project to restore the peatlands. There are a number of routes in place across the mountain, and further careful development for eco-tourism is planned.

2.2 DATA REVIEW

2.2.1 Demographics

According to Census 2016, there were 61,386 living in Co. Monaghan, an increase of 1.5% over the 2011 figure. The national population increased 3.78% during the same period. Just over 21% of our population were born outside of Ireland; without this inward migration, the county would have experienced a significant loss of population.

The county is located in the North East, and is surrounded on three sides by Northern Ireland. There is no rail service to the county, and the main traffic is taken by the N2, which cuts through the county from north to south. There are 2,454 kilometres of public road in Co. Monaghan of which 108 km is national road. The network of local roads is one of the most dense in Europe. There are a variety of public and private bus services serving the main towns, connecting to the main cities daily. A rural transport service connects the rural areas to the main towns.

County Monaghan is a very rural county, with almost 70% of the population living in rural areas. This poses a challenge to achieve the critical mass necessary to make a service financially viable, when footfall is low.

The county has a higher than the national average number of young people, and also of older people, notably in some isolated rural areas.

Research conducted for the **Healthy Monaghan Strategic Plan** revealed that:

- Over 87% of people in Monaghan consider themselves to be in good health or better
- The county has the lowest level of people in very bad health in Ireland (0.23%)
- in 2017, Monaghan had the highest rate of male suicide in Ireland
- The county has one of the highest in the country for potential years lost (shortened life span) due to alcohol related causes
- 11.75% of the population have a disability
- We have the highest proportion in Ireland of people with a disability who have difficulty attending education or work (35.5%)
- the death rate due to circulatory problems is the 4th highest in Ireland

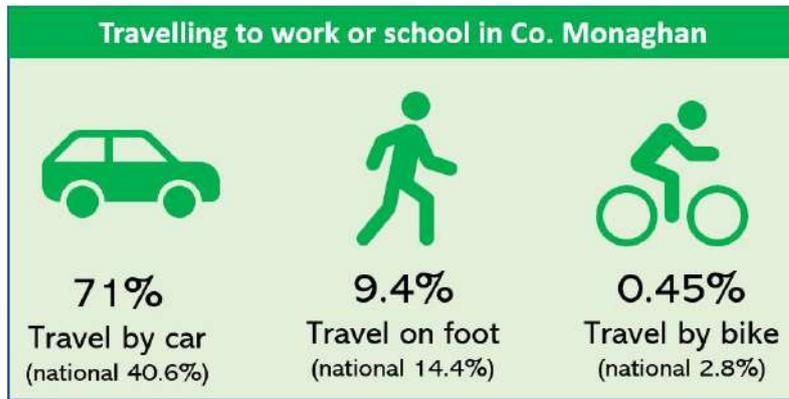
What we took out of the data:

- The county is heavily reliant on its roads and motor transport due to the lack of a rail service in the county. This will make it even more challenging to achieve a modal shift away from the car to walking and cycling and a strong programme of interventions will be needed
- The dispersed settlement pattern poses a challenge to active modes of transport for commuting
- Older and younger people are more likely to have transport needs. How can this Strategy support them?
- Most of the county's population is starting from a baseline of good health and should be able to immediately begin to participate in walking and cycling . Good news!
- Activities which promote mental well being should form an important part of our programme
- We must pay special attention to the accessibility of walking and cycling infrastructure and the programmes and activities we develop, to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from participating
- Programmes aimed at promoting heart health should form part of our Strategy



2.2.2 Commuting in Monaghan

We have examined data collected locally and nationally and considered their implications when preparing our Strategy. We share a few key statistics below:



This higher reliance on the car reflects the rural nature of the county.

The active travel share in the towns is much higher, as seen in the next graphic.

What we took out of the data:

Commuting on foot in all of our five towns is higher than the national average

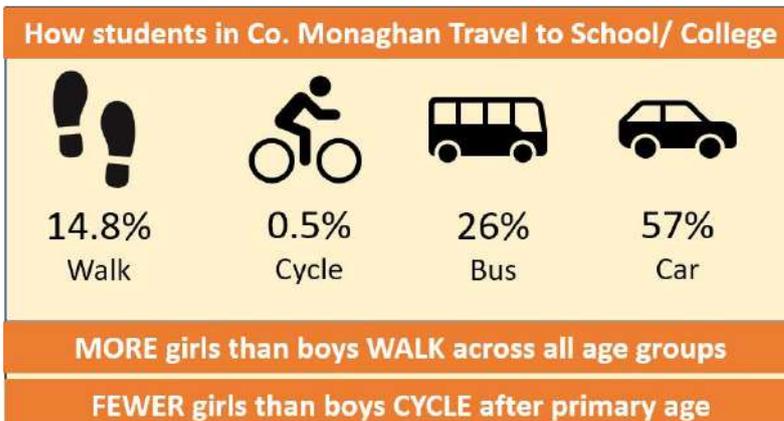
However, travel by bike is significantly lower

This tells us that people are not opposed to the idea of Active Travel - the rate of participation in walking is high - but something is holding them back from cycling

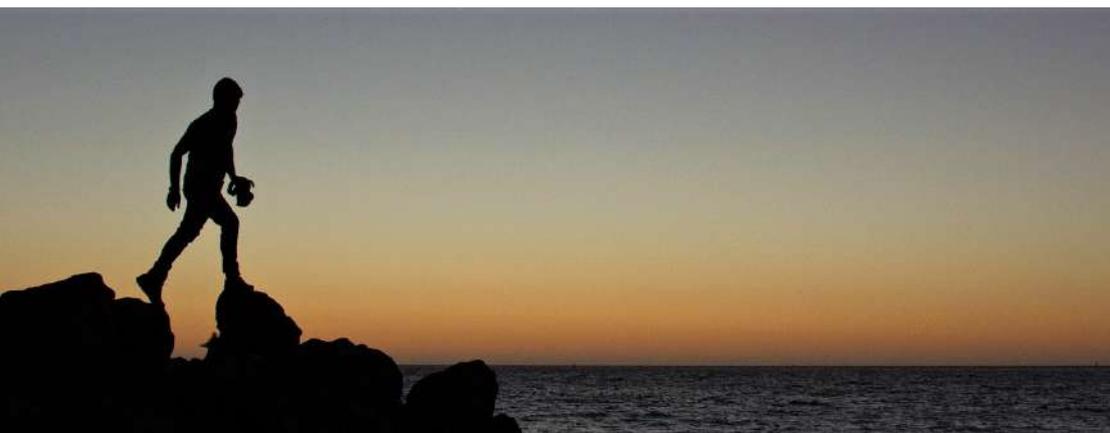
Commuting by Active Travel Mode Broken Down by Town						
	County	Monaghan	Blayney	Clones	Carrick	Ballybay
Total commuters	39,310	4,757	2,079	849	3,158	752
On Foot %	9.4	21.5	20.7	33.5	23.5	26.9
By Bike %	0.5	0.9	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.3

Commuting on Foot is much higher in the towns

Bike usage highest in Monaghan town



We will target our programme at those who are travelling by car to encourage a modal shift to walking and cycling.



41% of commuters in Co. Monaghan



Are making a journey of
less than 15 minutes

This tells us that there is a large group of people who could easily adjust their daily routine to become more active – and feel the benefits – by choosing to commute either on foot or by bike.

While preparing the Walking & Cycling Strategy for Carrickmacross in 2017, data was collected on the attitudes of residents to cycling. The No.1 deterrent to cycling expressed by respondents was the lack of safe cycle infrastructure.

This finding is supported by the "**Bikelife**" survey of attitudes towards cycling in Dublin conducted in 2019 by cycling charity Sustrans. They found that 69% of people said that they would cycle more if safe, segregated cycle lanes were provided.

This seems to be reflected in the cycling rates in our towns. The highest rate of cycling occurs in Monaghan town, which has the most cycling infrastructure of any town currently. It would appear to be a clear case of 'If you build it, they will come'!

Research into the area of cycling promotion increasingly highlights that programmes which contain a mixture of "hard" (i.e. infrastructure) and "soft" (i.e. behavioural change) type measures are more likely to meet with success in achieving modal shift. This is the model we have based our Strategy on.

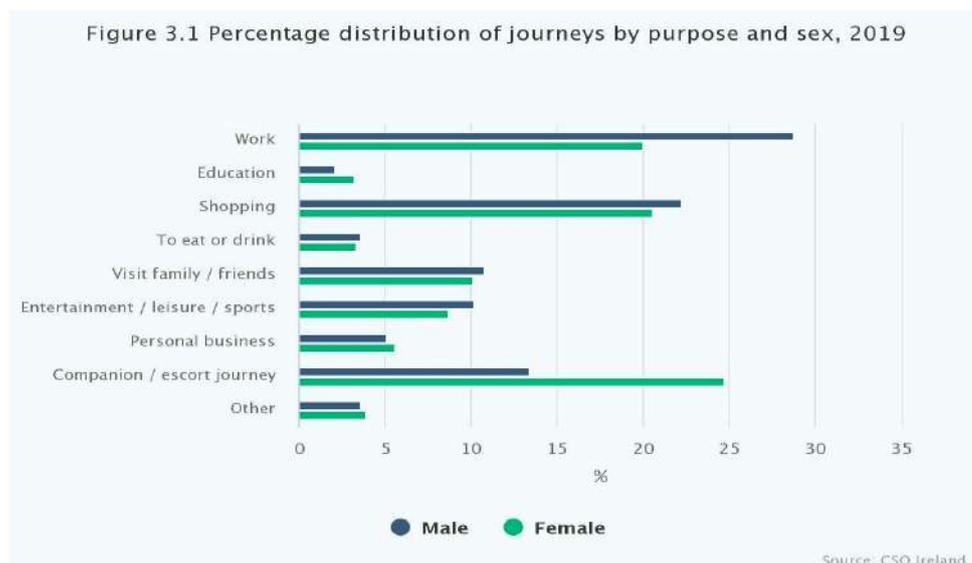
The numbers tell us that there are plenty of commuters going to both school and work who are making a journey of less than 15 minutes and that should should be able to consider making at least some of their journeys on foot or bike.

The research tells us that the lack of safe routes is a major deterrent, and that a combination of infrastructure provision and 'soft' supports will be needed to encourage people to make the change

Braving the bridge at Lough Muckno



2.2.3 Issues Revealed by the Data



Source: National Travel Survey 2019, CSO Ireland

The National Travel Survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office in 2019 made some interesting findings about how and why we travel. For persons over 18, only about a quarter of all journeys made in 2019 nationally were work related. A fifth, or 20% of journeys, were for shopping, with around 10% each being related to visiting people and going out. There are gender differences across the data, most notably that women are far more likely to be accompanying someone on a journey. This fits with the caregiving role that females often assume in the family dynamic.

The National Travel Survey revealed differences between how and why men and women travel:

- Men's journeys are more likely to be work-related, and to involve a single, direct journey from home to place of work & vice versa
- Women's journeys, even when work related, are more likely to take in stops along the way - collecting children, getting something for dinner, dropping letters to post office etc. This is known as 'trip chaining'.

Research by An Taisce's Green Schools programme into the barriers to girls cycling to school revealed that girls feel that they attract unwanted attention when they cycle, which makes them feel uncomfortable.

In September 2020, An Taisce launched an awareness campaign aimed at addressing the unwanted behaviour of males towards female cyclists and to support female cyclists. The campaign includes appointing ambassadors for cycling in schools to support girls to cycle.

We will be supporting the roll out of An Taisce's #andshecycles campaign and Cycling Ambassadors programme in secondary schools to address the drop off in female participation rates in cycling

Not all Journeys are related to Commuting

Not Everyone Makes Journeys the Same Way

Not Everyone is Treated the Same on a Bike

2.2.4 Audit of Walking & Cycling Amenities

Walking & Cycling Trails in Co. Monaghan 2021				
Trail Name	Trail type	Length	Location	Guide/ Map available?
Ballybay Walks	Three looped walks in and around Ballybay	Town Park: 500m	Ballybay, all routes starting in the town park	map only
		Lough Major: 4.2km		map only
		Corbrack Lane: 4.5km		map only
Ballybay Wetlands Trail	Looped walk through the farmland and along the lake shore of the Wetlands Centre	1.2km	Ballybay, just outside the town on the Clones road	no
Carrickmacross Looped trails	5 looped on-road trails around south Monaghan	Trail 1: 4km Trail 2: 9.6km Trail 3: 7.5km Trail 4: 8km Trail 5: 24/32km	All beginning in Carrickmacross	Guide Guide Guide Guide Guide
Carrickmacross Slí	Sli Na Slainte Walking Route	3 km	Carrickmacross Town	Map
Clones Slí	Sli Na Slainte Walking Route	3.3 km	Clones Town	Map
Dartrey Forest Trails	Rough gravelled trails within a commercial forestry	Approx. 10km	Between Rockcorry and Cootehill	map only
Derrygorry/ Favour Royal Forest	Cross border forest which includes the Millennium Forest where a tree was planted for every person alive in Co. Monaghan in the year 2000	1.5km walk to St Patrick's Chair & Well in Favour Royal Forest on NI side of border	North Monaghan	for Favour Royal only
Emy Lough looped walk	Mostly off-road trail along lake shore. Last km is on minor road	4km	Between Emyvale and Glaslough	map only

Co. Monaghan is blessed with beautiful countryside, with a diverse mix of uplands, woodland, wetlands, drumlins and lakes to explore.

Between the local authority, Coillte and local community groups, a wide range of amenities are available which provide something for everyone, from the tourist seeking memorable vistas, to the health-conscious but time-poor mother looking to squeeze in a twenty minute walk during her lunch break.

Thanks to funding initiatives such as the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) and LEADER, more high quality amenities are coming on line in the county every year.

One of the Actions in our Strategy is to map the existing amenities and identify the gaps, so that we can prioritise these areas in future work programmes.



Walking & Cycling Trails in Co. Monaghan 2021

Trail Name	Trail type	Length	Location	Guide/ Map available?
The Hilly Way	On-road signed cycling route taking scenic back roads from Cabra Castle in Kingscourt to Carrickmacross	8.7km route	South Co Monaghan	no
Kingfisher Trail	480km On Road Cycling route through Fermanagh & Leitrim, part Monaghan	35 km loop in Co. Monaghan	Clones, Newbliss, Scotshouse	Guide to full route, map of Monaghan loop
Knockatallon looped Walks	Four looped walks on mixed surfaces across Bragan mountain	The Tra Walk 10km	North Co Monaghan, using Sliabh Beagh Hotel in Knockatallon as the trailhead	guide
		The Rock Walk 6.5km		guide
		The Bragan Walk 7km		guide
		The Esh Walk 9km or shorter 3.5km loop		guide
Monaghan to Emyvale cycle lane alongside N2	segregated cycle lane running alongside N2. Final few hundred metres to Coolshannagh roundabout and into Emyvale village for completion by end 2021	9.4km	Junction of N2 and Armagh Road at Coolshannagh roundabout to Emyvale village	no
Monaghan Slí	Sli Na Slainte Walking Route	2.5 km	Monaghan Town	map
Monaghan Way - temporarily closed & under review	Mixed surface, off and on-road way-marked walking/ hiking route	56.5 km	Clontibret to Inniskeen via Castleblaney	no

Many of the amenities in the county were either initiated or are managed by community groups.

A growing number of community groups such as GAA clubs and community centres are developing walking tracks to provide safe off-road walking facilities for their communities, and many communities get involved in hosting events during Bike Week, or in running walking or running events.

The role that the voluntary sector plays in both providing amenities and stimulating activity is immense, and they will be one of the key drivers of change in our Strategy.

Community groups will have our full support in their work.

Also at the centre of our Strategy will be our schools, with whom we will work very closely, under the guidance of the Green Schools programme.



Ulster Canal Greenway

You can download **maps and guides** for most of these routes on www.gomonaghan.ie

Walking & Cycling Trails in Co. Monaghan 2021

Trail Name	Trail type	Length	Location	Guide/ Map available?
Muckno Park	A network of walking trails around Black Island, White Island, and the former golf course are available	5.8km of trails	Castleblayney	map only
Rossmore Park Trails	Gravelled walking trails within a forest park	Castle trail: 3km Lake trail: 8km Wheelchair friendly trail: 2km Family Cycle trail: 2.5km Loop of forest: 8km	On the edge of Monaghan Town	map only map only map only map only map only
Senator Billy Fox Memorial Park	Short looped trails within a wooded park	2km	Bawn	map only
Sliabh Beagh cross border Cycle Trails		Two of the routes have significant sections in Co Monaghan: McKenna trail: nearly all of the 60km Shane Bearnagh Trail: approx. 60% of the 60km		Guide
McKenna trail: 60km Shane Bearnagh Trail: 60km Finn trail: 29km Teighes Hill trail: 34km Carraig na Brattogh trail: 31km	On-road cross border cycling routes, Monaghan, Tyrone, Fermanagh		North Co Monaghan	
Sliabh Beagh Way	Linear walking trail on minor roads, track and moorland across Bragan mountain	Approx. 1/3 of the route is in Monaghan	North Co Monaghan	Guide
65km cross border walking trail from Aughnacloy to Lisnaskea				
Ulster Canal Cycle Trail	On-road cross border cycle trail from Maghery on Lough Neagh to Clones via Glaslough and Monaghan	79.9km about 50% of which is in Co Monaghan	Follows the path of the canal as closely as possible by road	Guide
Ulster Canal Greenway	Off-road walking and cycling route	4.2 km. Plans well advanced to develop additional sections. Check www.ulstercanalgreenway.com for latest news	Phase I open in Monaghan town, from Armagh Road at Coolshannagh roundabout to Threemilehouse Road	Guide

Guides and Maps available for download on www.gomonaghan.ie



Cycling in Lough Muckno Park

In addition to trails, over 15 sports facilities and community centres have constructed walking tracks to facilitate walking for fitness, and more plan to do so. There are also three athletics tracks in the county; in Carrickmacross, Clones and Monaghan town's Beech Hill College.

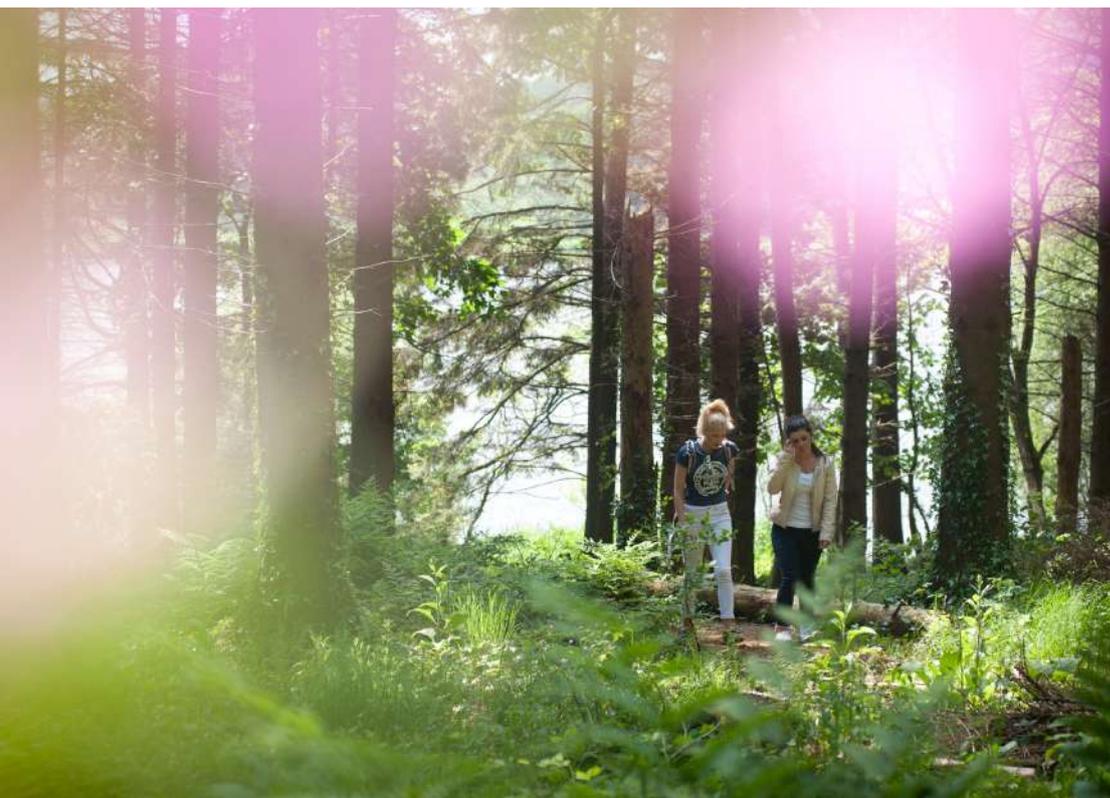
The following trails are in development by Monaghan County Council at the time of going to print:

Trails in Development Summer 2021			
Name of Trail	Description	Stage of Development	Who's leading the project
Ulster Canal Greenway Phase II	Monaghan town to Middletown, spur along by-pass from Coolshannagh to Dublin Rd	Planning granted July 2021.	Waterways Ireland, Monaghan County Council
Ulster Canal Greenway Phase III	Monaghan town to Smithborough	Preferred route identified, Ecological studies complete, Detailed Design underway, preparing planning application	Waterways Ireland, Monaghan County Council
Ulster Canal Greenway Phase IV	Smithborough to Clones	Scoping study complete, ecological studies underway	Monaghan County Council, Ballybay Clones MD
Border Kingdoms Greenway	Carrickmacross to Inniskeen to Dundalk following the old GNR railway line	Scoping study completed 2019	Monaghan County Council, Carrickmacross MD
Castleblayney to Clones Greenway	Trail via Ballybay following the old GNR railway line	Scoping study underway 2021	Monaghan County Council, Ballybay Clones MD
Ballinode to Scotstown	trail following the road connecting the two villages to the amenities of Kilmore training grounds and Hollywood Lake	Terms of reference being developed for the Scoping Study	Monaghan County Council, Roads Dept, Monaghan MD

It is intended to review the list of trails to be developed during the preparation of the County Cycle Network Strategy which the NTA proposes to develop in early 2022. This will identify strategic routes and how they will connect with regional and national routes. It will also look at local routes and examine the gaps in local infrastructure and how these can best be addressed.

We expect a number of routes to emerge from this work, and plan to develop a list of priority routes and trails from that Strategy.

It is therefore premature to feature a list of future trails at this time.



2.2.5 Current Level of Walking & Cycling Activity

The popularity of walking and cycling as recreational activities is on the increase in the county. This is very positive news, as it will give the Active Travel team a core group of people to engage with to act as ambassadors for commuting using active travel modes.

Cycling Clubs include:

- Emyvale Cycling Club
- Killylough Cycling Club
- Muckno Cycling Club
- Carrickmacross Cycling Club
- Four County Cycling Club

Walking/ Running Clubs include:

- Knockatallon Ramblers
- Toome TCG Walking Group
- Farney Ramblers
- Clones Walkers
- Rockcorry Walking Group
- Sole Sisters women's walking group, Monaghan town
- Over 55's walking club Monaghan town (linked to U3A group)
- Monaghan Joggernuts
- Monaghan Town Runners
- Monaghan Sanctuary Runners
- Glaslough Harriers Athletics Club
- Carrickmacross Athletics Club
- Phoenix Athletics Club, Monaghan town
- Monaghan Park Run
- Castleblayney Park Run

Annual events and Festivals include:

- U3A's walking festival in Monaghan town in February
- Boots 'n' Bogs festival on Sliabh Beagh in March
- National Bike Week in September - a week-long series of events funded by the Dept of Transport
- Monaghan Phoenix Marathon Festival takes place in September, providing two marathons, a half marathon and a 5k race
- Emyvale CC's Grand Prix road race in May attracts 250 cyclists
- Tour of Monaghan organised by Emyvale CC in Sept attracts approx 150 cyclists of all levels
- Killylough Sportive organised by Killylough CC in August features 50km and 100km courses

Green Schools

There are 65 primary and 12 secondary schools in Co. Monaghan. 34 (52%) primary schools and 3 (25%) secondary schools are either working on or have completed their Transport green flag, which is the 4th flag in the Green Schools programme. As part of the process, 11 of the primary schools completed walkability audits of the environs around their schools, and as a result, works are now pending in a number of these locations thanks to the Safe to School Scheme.

Bikeweek with Carrick Cycle Club



During the Covid Pandemic, the Healthy Monaghan programme and Monaghan Sports Partnership rolled out a number of initiatives aimed at supporting people to stay active and mind their mental wellbeing during the lockdown.

Walking and cycling came into their own, with challenges such as 'Malin to Mizen' and events such as nature walks proving to be amongst the most popular ever run by the Partnership.

The Footfall Counters on the Ulster Canal Greenway in Monaghan town showed that traffic on the greenway trebled during the first lockdown period, and 18 months into the crisis still ran at double the pre-Covid figures.

Walking and cycling are enjoying an all-time high in Co. Monaghan.

We aim to ensure that this continues.

COW (Cycle on Wednesday) Day at St. Tiarnach's NS in Clones



2.3 SWOT

In considering how best to develop the walking and cycling infrastructure of Co. Monaghan, and how best to encourage the people of Monaghan to walk and cycle more, we have looked at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and built strategies for how to best respond to their effects into our Action Plan.

Strengths	Strategies for maximising	Weaknesses	Strategies for Mitigating
Recreational Development:		Recreational Development:	
Responsive community sector	Support the community sector in their drive to develop recreational walking & cycling routes: provide engineering advice, help with land acquisition, advise on route quality and branding, advise on bringing route to Trails Ireland standard & registration	Only 1 off-road walking trail, 1 on-road cycling trail and 1 greenway trail currently featured on Sport Ireland's walking trails website (must be inspected & given a grading in order to be featured), so the county is not being promoted at national level as a destination for walking and cycling	Get existing trails up to standard required and submit for inspection
Even dispersal pattern of urban centres & points of interest gives the adventurer something to do every few km, and never too far to travel without a rest or a bit to eat	Develop routes linking the villages and towns	Connectivity to the more remote trails is poor	Work on 'how to get there'. Link to rural transport routes. Develop on-road routes from nearest bus station
Many Council staff have built up expertise in trails development over the past 10 years	Create an inter-departmental team, so that all staff with expertise in trails development may lend their expertise to new projects going forward	No focus on recreational trails development within the Council	Recreational Trails Development Officer role to be created
Development of Active Travel:		Development of Active Travel:	
Huge amount of international and national policy behind the push to achieve a greater level of Active Travel, backed by government commitment	Act on government initiatives to derive maximum returns to the county	Low level of on-road cycle infrastructure in the towns presently - starting from a very low base, where safe routes has been indicated to be a key priority for those considering switching to commuting by bike	Development of connected routes must be prioritised through town centres before any hope of creating a modal shift can be entertained
20% of DTTAS budget for Transport is ringfenced for walking and cycling infrastructure	Maintain a list of routes developed to design stage so that we are ready to submit applications when funding announcements are made	Driver lack of awareness, leading to unsafe environment for people on bikes and on foot	Use dramatic changes to road layouts to force drivers to notice that there is something different going on, and to look around them more
Ulster Canal Greenway section already open through Monaghan town, with most schools, residential areas, large employers and the town centre all close to the the route	A community engagement programme can commence immediately in Monaghan town built around the Greenway. Focus on constructing on-road cycle lanes from the Greenway outwards to achieve connectivity to residential, commercial and employment areas, also schools and key amenities eg leisure centre	The dispersed pattern of the population of the county, with 70% of people living outside urban areas, coupled with the absence of a rail alternative to the private motor car, has led to a strong dependence on the car, and the creation of a 'car culture'. This mindset is deepset in county.	Work with the local transport initiative to provide a public transport alternative to the car for rural dwellers for some journeys, with initiatives within the towns to accommodate active travellers who need shopping delivered, items stored for a few hours, etc.
Attitudes & Behaviours towards walking & cycling:		Attitudes & Behaviours towards walking & cycling:	
National campaigns have helped to improve attitudes towards incorporating exercise into everyday routine	Link our Community Engagement Programme to national campaigns	Fewer women/ girls are cycling than men, at all ages after primary school	Set a target for raising the number of females on bikes. Engage with An Taisce's #andshecycles campaign and school cycling ambassadors programme
The number of people using the Greenway doubled during the Covid Lockdown, showing a correlation between health and wellbeing and walking and cycling	Build a strong Health & Wellbeing message into our promotional programmes		



Members of the Transportation & Community Development SPC and Emyvale Cycling Club turn out to help Cathaoirleach Colm Carthy and Director of Services Patricia Monaghan mark the allocation of over €500,000 in Active Travel funding to Co. Monaghan by DTTAS for 2021 as the first tranche of a multi annual programme of investment by the Dept in walking and cycling infrastructure in rural local authorities.

Opportunities	Strategies for Maximising	Threats	Strategies for Minimising
Recreational Development:		Recreational Development:	
Availability of funding through Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme, Greenways support, CLAR and others	Develop a network of routes, bring to design stage so they're ready to submit when funding calls are announced	Lack of focus within the Council on recreational trails development	Make recreational trails development an official role in the Council. The Rec Trails Officer will work with MD's and Tourism Officer as well as sit on the Walking & Cycling Interdept Ctee so they feed into the work of the Active Travel Unit
Development by TII of new National Cycle Network Strategy in 2022	Identify our long distance routes and how they fit into regional routes, to feed into NCN Strategy	Maintenance of trails	A maintenance plan to be put in place for each trail
Development of Active Travel:		Development of Active Travel:	
Extension by Dept of funding to rural LA's for Active Travel programmes & staffing of Active Travel Units	Ensure Unit is in place as quickly as possible	Poor quality projects put forward each year which do little beyond replace the infrastructure which is already there	Municipal Districts are challenged to stretch themselves in terms of the quality of project they submit
Town regeneration Schemes: numerous schemes are ongoing around the county to prepare public realm plans for various villages or parts of towns, and to then seek funding to bring these to life	Ensure the Active Travel Unit reviews all schemes to ensure that walking & cycling infrastructure are given adequate consideration	Failure to tackle the most challenging issues, such as making town centres safer and more welcoming to people on bikes	Adopt an innovative approach, look for alternatives to segregated cycle lanes where road width doesn't allow: reduced speed limits, narrow road width etc
Attitudes & Behaviours towards walking & cycling:		Attitudes & Behaviours towards walking & cycling:	
The Covid Lockdown has brought many new people to walking & cycling	build initiatives to keep those who are walking/ cycling going. Use them to model the behaviours we wish others to emulate. Build a promotional campaign around their stories	Resistance to the introduction of cycle lanes in towns, which may involve some slowing of traffic, loss of car parking space and other perceived inconveniences for car users, retailers and other stakeholders	Thorough consultation at an early stage to ensure buy-in and design out potential problems. Use of temporary schemes before making changes permanent

Our Strategy aims to develop the recreational side of walking and cycling, as well as the active travel side. This is because the two are complimentary, and often cross over. For example, encouraging more people to walk and cycle initially for their health and wellbeing can be the first step for many in introducing some active travel journeys into their weekly routine.

Similarly, developing cycling infrastructure along busy commuter routes will also benefit recreational users and make the area more attractive for cycling tourism.

It is therefore important to give both both recreational development and active travel development attention going forward.

While the recent establishment of an Active Travel Unit within the Council will give much needed focus to the momentum behind the active travel-related actions contained in this Strategy, it is very important that the recreation-related actions are not neglected. Work must continue on greenways and long distance off-road trails, and on upgrading trails so that they can obtain grading with Trails Ireland and feature in national promotions.



Her Outdoors Week Cycle on Sliabh Beagh organised by Monaghan Sports Partnership July 2021

2.4 CONSULTATION

We really wanted to make this Strategy the best it could be, so we spent a lot of time thinking about all the issues, and spoke to a lot of people along the way.

We also produced a very detailed draft document which went into the rationale behind our strategy, so that the people we consulted with could be certain whether we had considered the various angles.

We received a lot of very valuable feedback during the consultation on the Draft Strategy, and have incorporated much of the content into the final Actions. You can find a summary of the submissions we received during the development of this Strategy in the Appendices.

In the consultation, respondents had a wide range of reasons for wanting to see more walking and cycling amenities, encompassing everything from climate change to improved health to tourism. They agreed that all of these need to be reflected in the Final Strategy.

Those who responded were very knowledgeable and passionate. They included professionals in the field of cycle infrastructure design and town planning, community development volunteers, cycling advocates, and members of cycling clubs.

Overall, we received very encouraging feedback from the public on our work so far. This gives us a degree of comfort that the public will support our work and provides encouragement to the Council to be brave in our approach moving forward. We asked respondents where they thought we should focus our efforts in order to make the biggest impact on walking and cycling numbers.

People were very clear in their responses:

- safety is the number one priority for both walkers and people on bikes.
- It has to be more convenient to walk or cycle than to take the car in order to incentivise people to switch their preferred mode of transport.
- Raising awareness that there are pedestrians and people on bikes on the road would help to make it more safe, as would reducing the amount of space allocated to vehicles, as narrower carriageways have the effect of slowing traffic down, making it safer for more vulnerable road users to share the space.

These key areas of activity support one another.

Where People Said we Should Focus

 <p>SAFETY: If people don't feel safe, they won't use the infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - well designed routes - training to increase user confidence - motorist awareness - fines etc so cycle lanes and footpaths are clear of obstructions - reduced speed limits - a 'people on foot and bikes first' culture - protection from high-speed traffic 	 <p>CONVENIENCE: Being on foot or bike should get you around town faster than by car</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bike parking should be closer than car parking - Local businesses should be incentivised to facilitate you to shop on foot or bike - Local employers should be actively encouraging staff to avail of the Bike to Work Scheme benefits 	 <p>MORE % OF STREET FOR PEOPLE ON FOOT & BIKE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduction of speed in town centres to create a 'shared space' - higher on-street car parking charges to encourage off-street parking - <i>"the centre of towns need to be designed and considered as places and not as movement corridors"</i> 	 <p>AWARENESS RAISING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cycling role models for women – 'if you can't see it, you can't be it' - driver awareness – share the road campaigns & signage - rules of the road training for children and young people - health benefits awareness raising through Healthy Monaghan programme - climate change awareness raising
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2.5 CHALLENGES

The consultation identified a number of challenges to the development of walking & cycling activity and infrastructure in Co. Monaghan. We have summarised them below, along with the most popular approach proposed by respondent for each challenge:

 <p>ORGANISATIONAL Many Depts of Council play a role but no one with overall responsibility</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active Travel Unit with dedicated staff - Inter-Departmental steering group to ensure all aspects, from planning to climate change, continue to feed into the work 	 <p>LOW LEVEL OF CYCLING LANES Towns & villages currently make little provision for cycling</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Cycle Network Plan to identify where people live and where they need to go to – these will become priority cycle routes 	 <p>TOWN DESIGN ISSUES Narrow streets, lots of cars, not much room for people</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sea change in attitude towards prioritising cars is needed - Public Realm Plans to redesign the public spaces - Make town centres more permeable so its quicker to get around on foot/bike than car 	 <p>TRAFFIC VOLUMES Some regional and national routes still passing through our towns</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility Plans to identify how to keep traffic moving - Commuter car parks on edge of town to encourage workers to park and continue into town on foot/ bike
 <p>ACCESS & INSURANCE For some recreational trails, public access to private lands is an issue, as is insuring the route</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with National Trails Office to reach NTO standards, so trail can be recognised and insured under NTO policy 	 <p>WAYFINDING Finding your way around town on foot can be difficult due to lack of signage for key amenities</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wayfinding project included as an action under the Strategy 	 <p>CYCLE PARKING Where you park your bike should be more convenient to the shop than where you would park your car</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A comprehensive programme of cycle parking infrastructure is included as an Action in the Strategy 	 <p>DRIVER BEHAVIOUR Drivers are less aware of cyclists in Monaghan than in the cities. They are also less respectful of cycle lanes</p> <p>SOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A publicity campaign aimed at raising driver awareness is included in the Strategy - Enforcement through fines for parking on cycle lanes

Recent research conducted in Ireland highlights the positive response to improvements in pedestrian infrastructure in terms of the numbers of those likely to choose walking as a means of transport



3. THE STRATEGY

3.1 OUR VISION

This is how we would like Co. Monaghan to be in five to ten years' time:

"Monaghan is a county which is safe and welcoming to walkers and people on bikes. It is easy to get around by foot or bike, and the number of people of all ages choosing to walk and cycle as part of an active lifestyle is above the national average and continues to grow.

There is a good range of walking and cycling amenities, and the county enjoys a positive reputation amongst the walking and cycling community for modern, well designed, connected and maintained amenities and infrastructure.

The positive culture in the county around walking and cycling, coupled with the high quality of infrastructure provided, adds to the high quality of life enjoyed by the people of Co. Monaghan."

3.2 OUR MISSION

1: To develop safe and appealing walking & cycling infrastructure in Co. Monaghan

2: To create an environment in which people will find it easy and attractive to walk and cycle, both recreationally, and for everyday journeys.

The above mission will contribute to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Goal of making Co. Monaghan a better place to live, work and visit.

Our Vision sees the county developing as a destination for walking and cycling tourism, more local amenities being available to facilitate walking for health, and a network of connected walking and cycling routes developing to facilitate people to travel on foot or bike for more of their local journeys.

It also envisages an increased awareness of vulnerable road users and a change in motorists' behaviour towards people on bikes especially, making them feel safer and creating a positive culture around walking and cycling.

It will require a range of actions tackling the needs of the walking and cycling community from many angles to achieve our goal and bring our vision to life.

However, we believe that with the Council's leadership and this Strategy to guide the way, much can be achieved, and we are looking forward to working with the stakeholders identified in the Action Plan so that we can make Co. Monaghan a great place to be on foot or bike by 2026.



We will achieve our mission by:

- Focusing on children and young people and aiming to make a significant increase in the proportion of students walking & cycling to school. By the end of the term of this Strategy, we intend to have developed Safe Routes to School for every urban primary and secondary school in the county.
- Re-imagining our towns and villages as places primarily for people to live and enjoy, through following DMURS' hierarchy of design for transport modes in designing street layouts. This will give priority to people on foot and bikes, and will seek to make town centres more permeable, creating short cuts which will make it more convenient to get around by bike or on foot.
- Identifying and developing a network of routes which link where people live to where they want to go, and sourcing the funding required to bring these into being.
- Addressing people's safety concerns regarding walking and cycling by focusing on safety when designing routes, and delivering a range of measures aimed at raising awareness of motorists of the presence of vulnerable road users and changing behaviour so that the roads are safe for all to share.
- Recognising the value of walking and cycling to the local economy, and supporting the development of recreational infrastructure designed to appeal to visitors.
- Recognising the contribution that walking and cycling make to the physical and mental well being of people of all ages and abilities, and promoting walking and cycling as activities which offer great personal benefit as well as benefiting the environment through reduced carbon emissions.
- Supporting people to make changes to their everyday routines to incorporate walking and cycling for some of the shorter journeys they make, thus promoting active travel and contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions.
- Supporting local communities to develop amenities which facilitate recreational walking and cycling, particularly amenities which have the potential to bring visitors to the county.
- Encouraging and supporting women and girls to cycle more.
- Nurturing linkages with our neighbouring local authorities and with the appropriate national bodies so that regional routes through Monaghan can be progressed.
- Ensuring the Council has the appropriate level of skills and resources to drive the work forward.
- Building relationships with national and international Active Travel advocates so that we may benefit from best practice.

We will liaise with a range of stakeholders to help us to deliver on our Mission, including:

- An Taisce's Green Schools programme
- National Transport Authority
- Cycling Ireland
- Tourism Ireland
- Local Employers
- The Retail Sector
- Community Groups
- An Garda Síochána
- Local Schools
- Walking & Cycling Clubs

The Council's new Active Travel Unit will oversee the delivery of this Strategy, bringing together the various stakeholders periodically to facilitate the sharing of information and ideas.



3.3 STRATEGIC THEMES

We have organised the Strategy under five broad themes:

Theme 1: Governance & Resources: creating the internal conditions necessary to ensure successful delivery of the Strategy

Monaghan County Council plans to create a positive culture within the Council to support the development of Active Travel and to promote walking and cycling in general. We will create an Active Travel Unit, whose function will be to co-ordinate the work of the various Departments, identify the priorities, prepare plans and drive the projects forward.

They will be advised in their work by a cross-departmental steering group, which will consist of staff involved in the many programmes and departments which will have a part to play in implementing the Actions contained in this Strategy, from Climate Change to Community Development. This will make it simple to report on progress and discuss any blockages which may occur on projects from time to time.

Finally, a Walking & Cycling Forum will be established. This will consist of advocates for walking and cycling from outside the local authority, and will give them a mechanism for engaging with the Council on issues around walking and cycling. The Active Travel Unit will manage the Forum, using it as additional expertise when designing new schemes and programmes, and keeping it informed on the progress of implementing the Strategy.

Theme 2: Plan for a Sustainable Future: the role of walking and cycling in reducing carbon emissions, and the need for good town planning to facilitate this transition to more sustainable transport modes.

We are facing many challenges in modern Ireland, not least of which is adapting to climate change by making big changes to how we live. Monaghan County Council is playing its part by looking at how we get around, and how we use our towns. Using mobility planning and transport modelling, and looking at how people wish to experience the open spaces of their towns, we are re-imagining town centres away from spaces which are dominated by the needs of motor vehicles to look more at the needs of those who live in the towns and wish to experience the streets as places to be. The concept of the 'Ten Minute Town', where most amenities and services are within a ten minute walk or cycle from where the citizen lives, will be explored increasingly during the lifetime of this Strategy.

Theme 3: Removing the barriers to walking and cycling: Make walking and cycling easy and safe options

In general, this involves giving more priority to the needs of cyclists and walkers and making it safer for people on foot and on bikes. The goal is to make it more convenient to get around town on foot or by bike than by car and to ensure that people feel safe while doing so. This will involve a range of actions from signposting and cycle parking to opening up pedestrian short cuts.

The issue of road safety was shown as a concern for many which was preventing them from giving cycling a go, so we have included some actions around road safety promotion in here. Research shows that a lack of driver awareness of pedestrians and people on bikes contributes to many accidents every year. If Monaghan is to become a safe place to walk and cycle, drivers must become more conscious that they are sharing the road with more vulnerable road users. We know from both local and national behaviour surveys that people will not cycle if they do not feel safe, so motorists will have their part to play if numbers of people on bikes are to increase on the county's roads.

Theme 4: Embed walking & cycling into everyday life in Co. Monaghan

Here, the focus is on promoting walking and cycling at all levels and for all purposes. The research indicates that there is a high cross-over between walking and cycling for recreational purposes and for active travel, with many who commute by active travel means first starting to walk or cycle occasionally for health or fitness before progressing to incorporating it into their everyday routine.

We want Monaghan to become a destination of choice for people who wish to walk or cycle during their holiday, and we are working on some key high quality projects which will make significant inroads into establishing our reputation in that regard, notably the Ulster Canal Greenway, Patrick Kavanagh Country and the Sliabh Beagh eco-tourism project.

We are working on the premise that 'if you can't see it, you can't be it'. It is difficult to imagine yourself engaging in an activity if there are no role models out there for you to emulate. So we must create those role models, and must ensure that everywhere you look in Co. Monaghan, you will see people just like you walking and cycling and making journeys on foot or bike like it is the most natural thing in the world.

An integrated package of both infrastructure and behavioural change measures is widely acknowledged as being most likely to achieve modal shift. Our approach is based on a dual strategy of introducing infrastructure and encouraging behavioural change through community engagement. We hope that the combined effect of our many interventions will manage to create a 'sensory flooding' effect in the local citizenship, which we anticipate will lead to an unconscious change in first attitude (where people will start to think of cycling as something maybe they might do, too) and eventually behaviour.

Theme 5: Continue to innovate and collaborate

Other countries are further ahead in their thinking on active travel and urban mobility than Ireland, so we must network at an international level to learn from best practice and advance at a more rapid pace. Europe is continuing to develop policy in the area of sustainable mobility, and we will extract the best from emerging programmes and policies and put them to work in Monaghan.

We will continue our existing partnerships at regional and national level to ensure that the infrastructure developed within the county is linked into wider national and cross border networks, giving us opportunities of scale and offering the potential to become a destination for walking & cycling tourism.

An Ex-Post Evaluation of the pilot Smarter Travel Areas in 2018 noted that “an integrated package of both infrastructure and behavioural change measures is most likely to achieve modal shift”

3.4 ACTION PLAN

The following Actions provide a starting point for the Council's future activity regarding the development of walking and cycling infrastructure and the promotion of walking and cycling activity in the county.

This is a rolling document, and we expect that as the work continues, more detailed actions will emerge for specific towns and villages, and within specific areas of activity such as Tourism.

The drive for implementing the Strategy will come from the Active Travel Unit, which is a key deliverable of the Strategy. A detailed Cycle Network Strategy will be developed in early 2022 which will identify the key on- and off-road routes to be developed during the lifetime of this Strategy and beyond. That document will feed into a National Cycle Network Strategy which is to be delivered by end 2022.

As part of that work, each route will be mapped and uploaded onto the Council's GIS system, where they will be colour-coded by route status (eg. pre-development, detailed design complete, planning in place, funding secured, tender awarded, works started, route open). This will enable us to build up a visual picture of how the network is developing, and identify gaps in the network which need to be addressed.

Progress in delivering the actions of the Strategy will be monitored by an Interdepartmental Steering Committee which is to be set up as Action 1.4.

Walking through the bog cotton on Sliabh Beagh



No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Theme 1: Governance & Resources				
1.1	Secure resources for, and set up an Active Travel Unit within the Council	Funding via NTA, Transportation Directorate to deliver the Unit	Resources secured by end Q1 2021; Staff recruited by end 2021	Active Travel Unit in place by end 2021
1.2	Re-profile the post of Cycling Officer from a part time position within the Community Dept to a full-time post within the Active Travel Unit	Transportation & Community Directorate	When new AT Unit is in position	Dedicated resource for the development & promotion of cycling in place
1.3	Appoint a Rural Recreation Officer to drive the development of recreational infrastructure	Economic Development Dept, to work with Tourism Development Officer & MD's	Rural Rec Officer funding by end 2022, officer in post by mid 2023	Existing recreational trails being brought up to National Trails Office standard, new trails in development and being advanced through pre-development, all trails being monitored and maintained to a high standard
1.4	Establish a Walking & Cycling Inter-Departmental Team, to comprise of staff who are involved in the various programmes and initiatives which contribute to the delivery of this Strategy	AT Unit	by end Q1 2022	Terms of reference agreed End Q1 2022. Annual meetings held & updates on action progress produced
1.5	Establish a Walking & Cycling Forum, to enable external stakeholders to engage with the LA and have regular input into the work	AT Unit, with support from Community Development Dept	by end Q1 2022	An active Forum in place, with Forum actively engaging with the Council on walking & cycling matters. Representative of the walking and cycling clubs, education sector, environmental groups, tourism providers and other stakeholders.
1.6	Explore the options for maintaining the trails & source budget for same	AT Unit	by Q3 2022	The integrity of trails protected, a high quality maintained, and all National Trails Office inspections passed, providing insurance on route and coverage in national features etc
1.7	Prepare funding applications to facilitate access to the resources needed to advance listed projects to their next development stage	AT Unit, with support from Community Development Dept and Tourism Development Officer	Constant review	Resources accessed to enable projects to be moved on to the next stage of development
1.8	Put measures in place which will enable us to monitor the level of walking and cycling activity around the county	AT Unit	Baseline survey conducted end 2021, footfall counters installed on trails, traffic counts carried out quarterly, cycle parking counts carried out quarterly	An observed increase in the level of walking and cycling activity. Targets: 10% increase in recreational walking 10% increase in cycling 20% increase in commuting by all Active Travel modes 20% increase in female cyclists over the lifetime of the Strategy



Bike Week at Teach na nDaoine Family Resource Centre

No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Theme 2: Plan for a Sustainable Future				
Objective 1: Organise the work				
2.1	Produce a County Cycle Network Strategy to identify the key infrastructure routes to be developed	NTA, with input from AT Unit	2022	Cycle Network Strategy for Monaghan in place by end 2022, and fed into the National Cycle Network
2.2	Develop annual workplan of projects from the County Cycle Network Strategy & seek resources to progress projects through design to delivery stage	AT Unit, with support from Roads and MD's	annually	A 'pipeline' of projects in place, with projects of various scales and at various stages of pre-development, so that there is a continuous through-put of projects maturing and reaching the 'shovel ready' stage of development
2.3	Feed into the preparation of a Transport Mobility Plan for Monaghan town	AT Unit	2022	Synergies created between the work of the Active Travel Unit and the wider remit of Roads and transport planning
2.4	Review existing town regeneration schemes to ensure they are maximised for active travel gains	Planning/ Economic Dev, supported by ATU	2022, 2023	Regeneration schemes reviewed
2.5	Put a maintenance plan in place to ensure all developed infrastructure is maintained to a high standard and not allowed to fall into disrepair	AT Unit, Rural Rec Officer, MD's	by end 2022	All trails and infrastructure maintained to a high standard, all national accreditation retained
Objective 2: Ensure walking & cycling development exists in a strong policy context within the Council				
2.6	Provide access to quality training and networking opportunities for Council staff on walking & cycling policy and on Active Travel	AT Unit	Online presentation made to staff on this Strategy Q 4 2021	All staff to be familiar with this Strategy by end 2021
2.7	Embrace the '10 Minute Town' concept and seek to follow the principle of hyper-proximity in the development of liveable, walking communities, where people can access most of their daily needs within a 10-minute walk/ cycle	Planning Section	review of County Development Plan	'Ten Minute Town' concept adopted as policy in Co. Development Plan
2.8	Integrate active travel planning into a wider 'place making' approach to town centre regeneration, building on the principles of 'People and Place'	Planning & Economic Development Units	Constant review	Town centres which are highly permeable, feature attractive spaces where people wish to spend time, and which are connected by quality W&C infrastructure
2.9	Use trial layouts and temporary measures to seek innovative solutions to making difficult street layouts more walking and cycling friendly	AT Unit, MD's	As indicated by the Town Network Plans	Solutions to difficult town layouts found & implemented, increased public buy-in to potentially controversial schemes
2.10	Ensure the objectives of the Walking & Cycling Strategy are reflected in other key Council Strategies and Plans going forward	AT Unit	As Plans are prepared	Future policies and plans of the Council take the Walking & Cycling Strategy into consideration
2.11	Review and update the town walking & cycling strategies for Monaghan, Castleblayney and Carrickmacross, and the age friendly walkability audits for all five towns.	AT Unit, MD's	Before the development of the County Cycle Network Strategy	Key needs of each town identified and fed into the County Cycle Network Strategy, the Safe Routes to School programme, and other initiatives being developed by the ATU



No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Theme 3: Remove the barriers to walking & cycling in Co. Monaghan				
Objective 1: Make it easy to choose walking and cycling as a mode of transportation				
3.1	Introduce measures to make town centres more pedestrian and cycle-friendly:		Annual works to be agreed with the MD's & Active Travel Unit	Active travel modes given more priority in town centres, more people walking and cycling. Journey times in town centres to be reduced for pedestrians & cyclists in comparison to vehicular traffic. Cycle parking on every street. Fewer HGV's in town centre, leading to a more welcoming, less intimidating environment for people on foot and on bikes
	Provide pedestrian/ cycling shortcuts to increase the permeability of our town centres	ATU, Economic Development, MD's	As regeneration schemes are rolled out	
	Provide frequent and conveniently placed cycle parking around town centres	ATU, MD's	As public realm schemes are rolled out	
	Reduce speed limit in town centres from 50kpm to 30kph to enable people on bikes to safely share the road with vehicular traffic	Roads, ATU, MD's	Make a submission to the Review of Speed Limits to be completed by Roads Q2 2022	
	Seek to reduce the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles in town centres	ATU, MD's	Reduction of HGV's in town centres: Monaghan town: 2022, Carrickmacross: 2022, Castleblayney: 2024, Clones: 2025	
3.2	Provide dedicated, protected cycle lanes connecting residential areas to town centres and key destinations such as workplaces and public amenities	AT Unit, supported by Roads, MD's	Annual workplans to be developed from the county cycle network plan	The routes between the largest residential areas and the busiest amenities, commercial areas and employment centres to have safe walking & cycling routes. The number of people living and working in these areas who are engaging in active travel to increase
3.3	Develop safe routes to Public Transport hubs, and work with PT providers to provide cycle storage facilities at hubs	AT Unit, with support from Roads, MD's and in partnership with Public Transport providers	Over the lifetime of the Strategy	Good connectivity for walkers and cyclists at bus stations
3.4	Develop a Signage Strategy for the walking & cycling network, to include: Orientation signage at arrival points in towns, wayfinding signage to key amenities, and warning signage to alert motorists of the presence of vulnerable road users	AT Unit, with support from Municipal districts	by end 2023	signs rolled out on routes as they are developed. Consistency in appearance leading to clarity of meaning and high brand recognition, helping to embed a culture of walking and cycling in the county
3.5	Engage with local business to develop incentives and supports to encourage those who choose to do business by Active Travel modes, eg free home delivery for purchases	Active Travel Unit	Ongoing	Increasing numbers of people shopping and doing business in town on foot or by bike
3.6	Develop Car Parks at edge of our towns to encourage people to park outside of town and walk/ cycle or car share onwards. Provide cycle lockers in car parks	ATU & Municipal Districts, Ulster Canal Greenway project	2 commuter car parks delivered in Monaghan by end 2024, 1 each in CMX, Blayney by end 2025	People who work in town choosing to park at the edge of town and complete their journey on foot or by bike. People who are commuting out of town making the first part of their journey on foot or bike instead of leaving a car parked up all day



No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Objective 2: Make walking and cycling safe for all				
3.7	Apply best practice from DMURS, National Cycle Manual and Safer Routes to School Design Guide to create safer, calmer, more attractive routes	Roads, ATU, Planning & Economic Development, Town Teams, Municipal Districts	as new schemes are being designed	Increase in pedestrians and cyclists saying they feel safe, comfortable and welcome using the streets and roads
3.8	Seek to develop connectivity to every community centre and sports facility	ATU, MD's, Community Sector	as communities engage with the LA regarding their local needs	
3.9	Take personal safety into account when designing walking and cycling infrastructure, and design in features such as CCTV, passive oversight and lighting to provide an enhanced feeling of safety for users	Route designers, supported by An Garda Síochána	as new routes are being designed	high level of satisfaction amongst people using routes, particularly women
3.10	Complete 'Safe Routes to School' programmes with every urban school	AT Unit, supported by Road Safety Officer	During the lifetime of the Strategy	All urban primary and secondary schools to have 'safe routes' in place by the end of the Strategy
3.11	Provide warning signage to motorists along roads frequently used by walkers/cyclists	Municipal Districts, supported by Road Safety Awareness Officer	routes near large rural-based businesses assessed 2022, Rural schools reviewed by end 2024	Increase in pedestrians and cyclists saying they feel safe, comfortable and welcome using rural roads
3.12	Deliver the pedestrian and cycling elements of the Council's Road Safety Plan	Road Safety Officer	New Road Safety Plan due in 2021	Road Safety Plan targets achieved
3.13	Explore options for incorporating foot and cycle paths into the winter maintenance programme	ATU, MD's	by end Q1 2022	Routes safe to use in icy conditions



An autumn walk in Dartrey forest

No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Theme 4: Embed walking & cycling into everyday life in Co. Monaghan				
Objective 1: Pursue the development of recreational walking & cycling infrastructure				
4.1	Support the development of off-road trails	Rural Recreation Officer, supported by Tourism Development Officer & MD's	annual list of active projects to be maintained	Local communities supported to develop routes up to National Trails Office standard. Maintenance plan in place for each trail. Signage and trail guide in place for each trail. Trails linked into county cycle network where appropriate
4.2	Support communities and clubs to develop walking and cycling amenities	Community Development Dept, Rural Recreation Officer	annual meeting between Rural Rec Officer and Community Grants team to review projects in development and identify possible sources of funding	5 new local walking tracks and cycling amenities delivered by community groups and cycling clubs, with Council support, over the lifetime of this Strategy
4.3	Further develop our flagship projects, as identified in the County Cycle Network Strategy	Municipal Districts, supported by Tourism Development Officer & Rural Recreation Officer	Cycle Network Strategy due by mid 2022. List of flagship projects to be agreed by end 2022	Monaghan routes featured on National Cycle Network map. Co Monaghan emerging as a destination of note for walking and cycling
4.4	Develop walking and cycling facilities to and within amenity areas; e.g. Lough Muckno, Rossmore Park	Tourism Development & Rural Recreation Officer, supported by MD's & Coillte	Cycling trails in Rossmore by end 2021, trails in Muckno complete by end 2022	An enhanced recreational trail offering in the county, an increasing breadth of amenities on offer
4.5	Pilot the 'Rothar Road' concept on a network of rural roads, to create an on-road cycle link between Sliabh Beagh and the towns of Clones, Monaghan	Rural Recreation Officer, supported by MD's & Tourism Development Officer	Routes operational by end of lifetime of this Strategy (2025)	2 safe on-road rural routes created connecting the nearest bus station and this exciting new Eco-Tourism destination. Increased number of cyclists holidaying in the county
4.6	Develop an Outdoor Activity Hub at Knockatallon, to facilitate walkers and cyclists and other visitors to the Sliabh Beagh eco-destination	Rural Recreation Officer, supported by Tourism Development Officer & MD's	Walks upgraded by end 2022. Air de Service facilities by end 2024. Cycle hire by end 2021	The level of walking and cycling activity on Sliabh Beagh to increase dramatically by end 2025
4.7	Re-develop the Monaghan Way, to include more of the GNR railway track, and provide some local looped options, as well as extend the route from Clontibret to meet the Ulster Canal Greenway as it heads to the border with Armagh	Rural Recreation Officer, supported by Tourism Development Officer & MD's	Castleblayney to Inniskeen re-opened by end 2022, 3 local loops developed by end 2023, Castleblayney to link with Ulster Canal Greenway developed by end 2025	Monaghan Way re-opened, with improvements to the route. Extension to meet Greenway near border with Armagh, enabling the walker to travel onward to Monaghan town
4.8	Support the development of walking and cycling festivals	Sports Partnership, supported by Tourism Development & Community Development	One new annual weekend walking festival and one new cycling festival to be well bedded in by end of the Plan	Co. Monaghan becoming established as a destination of quality for walking and cycling breaks
4.9	Support the development of 'High Nellie' themed bike tours of Kavanagh Country	Tourism Development Officer, supported by MD	Fleet of bikes for hire to be managed through the Kavanagh Centre, by end 2021	An enhanced 1930's rural Ireland experience, transporting the visitor back to the roads immortalised by the poet: 'The bicycles go by in twos and threes...'
4.10	Digitise all recreational trails and provide all routes and guides on one convenient county app	Council IS Dept, Tourism Dev Officer, Rural Recreation Officer	By end 2022	Visitors able to access information on trails quickly and easily. En-route navigation available for all trails



No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Objective 2: Win people over to walking and cycling through surrounding them with it and making it seem less 'for other people'				
4.11	Develop and implement a community engagement plan, to incorporate a range of activities and interventions aimed at getting more people walking and cycling more often, particularly for commuting journeys	Active Travel Unit, supported by Community Development unit & Sports Partnership, Town Teams	Starting 2022, when Active Travel Unit staff are in place	An increase in the no. of Active Travel commuters in next Census, an increase in the number of participants year on year in events such as Bike Week
4.12	Develop and deliver a targeted Age Friendly walking & cycling engagement campaign	Social Inclusion Officer, supported by MD's	by end 2022	Updated walkability audits available for all 5 towns, new age friendly walking and cycling initiatives and events. More older people walking and cycling
4.13	Support the provision of cycle skills training in schools	Monaghan Sports Partnership	Annual workplan by MSP	10 schools/ 100 children trained annually
4.14	Continue to participate in National Bike Week	Monaghan Sports Partnership	Annually	An increase from year to year in the number of participants in events held during Bike Week
4.15	Support businesses and schools to devise Active Travel Plans & participate in national active travel initiatives	Active Travel Unit, Road Safety Officer	2021-5	Plans in place for 12 secondary schools, 30 national schools, 1 3rd level campus, 5 key business campuses by the end of the Strategy's term
4.16	Work with social economy projects (eg men's sheds) to develop circular economy project refurbishing old bikes and making available to low income families	Social Inclusion Officer, supported by Migrant Integration Officer	by end 2025	50 bikes refurbished by end 2025 and distributed to families in need. Priority given to those who can demonstrate a need for transport to school or work
4.17	Support Tidy Towns groups to embrace walking & cycling measures as part of the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management category in the National Tidy Towns competition	Community Engagement Officer, supported by Community Development Officer and Environmental Awareness Officer	active travel to be a theme at least once a year at Tidy Towns Network events	Innovative walking and cycling projects springing up all around the county, driven by the community. An increase in marks for SWARM category for participants in National Tidy Towns competition
4.18	Participate in EU Mobility Week	Community Engagement Officer	Every September	Car Free Day held in at least one town annually. One permanent measure introduced annually
4.19	Support walking and cycling clubs to provide: taster sessions for new members, particularly older people and women, Cycling programmes, training and events, particularly aimed at working with minorities, and at assisting casual cyclists to become more regular participants	Monaghan Sports Partnership	5 x taster sessions, 2 programmes with 40 participants held	More people walking and cycling more often
4.20	Support the roll out of An Taisce's #andshcycles programme aimed at encouraging more girls to cycle	Monaghan Sports Partnership, with support from Social Inclusion unit	during the school year	a narrowing of the gap between the number of female and male cyclists in Census 2026 data
4.21	Roll out a Smart Cycle initiative within the Council, to include using E-bikes for staff use and provision of cycle lockers.	Community Engagement Officer	end Q3 2021	Carbon savings made by Council, helping us to achieve targets for energy reduction set by CARO
4.22	Investigate the feasibility of introducing a Bike Sharing scheme in Monaghan town	Monaghan MD, supported by Community Engagement Officer	findings presented to the MD for consideration by end 2023	Possible public bike scheme operating in Monaghan town in the future



Cycle lanes which are fully segregated from vehicular traffic are shown to be preferred by cyclists, who feel safer

No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Objective 3: Promote the Work				
4.23	Revive the "GoMonaghan - Active Travel County/ Town" brand with a view to using it to front the new active travel promotional campaign	Community Engagement Officer	by end 2021	GoMonaghan brand recognised in attitudinal survey by mid-term review of Strategy
4.24	County Council staff to act as cycling ambassadors by utilising branded bikes as often as possible	All staff	year round	Staff a constant presence in the towns going about their business by bike and leading by example
4.25	Promote the Bike to Work scheme - tax breaks for purchasing bikes	Community Engagement Officer, supported by HR	annual campaign to coincide with European Mobility Week	20% of Council staff to have availed of the scheme by the end of the Strategy period. 10 of the county's largest employers to have signed up to the scheme by the end of the Strategy term
4.26	Promote national walking and cycling initiatives	Community Engagement Officer	as campaigns roll out	Leverage gained from piggy-backing on the national promotion associated with these campaigns, enabling us to achieve a deeper 'reach' with our message
4.27	Promote the walking and cycling actions in the Healthy Monaghan programme and the Sports Partnership's Strategic Plan	Healthy Monaghan, Monaghan Sports Partnership	as campaigns roll out	More people walking and cycling for health and fitness -an increase in participants in 'Operation Transformation' events, Park Runs, Mental Health walks etc
4.28	Promote Cycling Ireland's 'Share the Road' ethos to all road users to encourage a more positive culture towards pedestrians and cyclists by motorists	Community Engagement Officer & Road Safety Officer	constantly, with special emphasis during Road Safety Week	Fewer road rage incidents reported. Cyclists feeling safer



No.	Action	Who will deliver the Action?	When ?	What will success look like?
Theme 5: Network, form partnerships and continue to innovate				
5.1	Build strong relationships with NTA and within Regional Road Design Offices	AT Unit, supported by Roads team	constantly	Regular meetings held, strong record of funding being awarded to Monaghan County Council and being drawn down on time and in full
5.2	Link with key cycling advocates in Ireland Dutch Cycling Embassy cyclist.ie Cycling Ireland ELTIS - the EU's urban mobility observatory	Community Engagement Officer	monthly check-ins	active and continuous communication with cycling advocates, leading to valuable input into development of new schemes and programmes
5.3	Participate in EU Mobility Awards & network with other participants	Active Travel Unit	by end of the term of this Strategy	Successfully participated in the EU Mobility awards with a project
5.4	Capture best practice examples and record learning so that we can continue to improve and innovate moving forward	Active Travel Unit	Annually	MCC recognised as one of the most innovative small local authorities in EU
5.5	Keep up to date with national, European and international policy on active travel, greenways development and related areas	Active Travel Unit	as new policies & strategies are released	Monaghan Co Co up to date with EU policy and programmes, and using this knowledge to benefit the county
5.6	Continue to work with our colleagues across the border to develop the Ulster Canal Greenway and the Sliabh Beagh region	Roads Directorate, Economic Dev/ Tourism/ Rural Recreation Officer	quarterly meetings to keep projects moving forward	Strong alliances in place, active projects in development/ being delivered
5.7	Retain regular dialogue with Bord Fáilte, Dept of Community & Rural Affairs etc regarding funding opportunities available to advance recreational infrastructure projects	Senior staff, Tourism Development Officer, Community Dept	quarterly briefings to ensure our team is fully briefed of the latest developments	Funding opportunities identified & successful applications made
5.8	Maintain active communication with the general public, so that their understanding of the 'why' behind the introduction of new initiatives is high and their buy-in is secured	Community Engagement Officer	regular updates to GoMonaghan website and social media, features in local press	A positive disposition towards the introduction of new walking and cycling initiatives by the public, a 'let's give it a try' attitude, rather than a 'not near me' attitude



Cycle skills training at St. Comghalls NS

3.5 Comments on the Actions

We are pleased to announce that funding has been secured from the National Transport Authority to cover the salary costs of the staff for the new Active Travel Unit.

The team will consist of a Senior Executive Engineer, two Assistant Engineers and a Community Engagement Officer

From 2021 onwards, the National Transport Authority's Active Travel infrastructure funding programme is being extended to include smaller, rural local authorities like Monaghan.

This means that we will have access to a source of annual funding for active travel infrastructure projects, and will be able to prepare and progress annual workplans of walking and cycling infrastructure improvements.

Responsibility for doing so will rest with the new Active Travel Unit

Not feeling safe is the No.1 concern given by women when it comes to reasons why they don't walk or cycle

We will work to ensure our infrastructure is well lit, has passive oversight and is designed so that there are as few places as possible for people to feel trapped

We will also support An Taisce's #andshecycles programme which aims to address the negative attention that young girls have reported receiving from males whilst cycling

Monaghan County Council is a proponent of equality in all its aspects, and will take positive steps to address the concerns of women and girls regarding their safety in our community, so that they may feel safe to walk and cycle and enjoy the amenities provided without concern for their safety.



An Taisce have been working for many years with schools to devise safe routes for students to walk and cycle to school and to improve the safety of the immediate school environs.

In March 2021, the Dept of Transport announced funding to support this work via a new 'Safe to School' scheme.

Schools make an application to the scheme. If selected, An Taisce works with the local authority and the regional design office of the National Transport Authority to design a scheme of work for the area around the school. The local authority then carries out the scheme.

Two schemes, one of which will benefit three schools, have been approved in Co. Monaghan for 2021. We hope that by the end of the term of this Strategy, all primary school age children in Co. Monaghan will have the option to walk or cycle to school, and that there will be safe routes to every urban primary and second level school in the county.

The development of the Sliabh Beagh area in North Monaghan as an outdoor recreation destination of excellence is being promoted by Monaghan County Council, and a Masterplan for the area was launched in 2019.

The area already features a number of walking and cycling routes and more work is planned.

Connectivity to this remote uplands region from the nearest towns of Monaghan and Clones is the next step and is included as an Action in the Strategy (Action 4.5)

An outdoor activities hub is also planned at Knockatallon which will provide parking for camper vans and shower facilities and will serve as the starting point for exploring the many trails across the mountain (Action 4.6)



Cycling across the blanket bog on Sliabh Beagh

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The new Active Travel Unit will be key in the implementation of this Strategy. The engineering team will prepare design schemes, submit them for funding and oversee their delivery. The community engagement officer will design programmes and initiatives aimed at increasing the amount of people walking and cycling, and will build partnerships which help to further this aim. The development of recreational infrastructure will be led by the Tourism team and Municipal Districts.

A key aspect of successfully delivering the Strategy will be achieving synergies across the projects, which will require communication between the stakeholders. For this, we have created an Inter-Departmental Committee, which will comprise the key Council staff which are involved in the delivery of the various facets of the Strategy, including:

Title	Department
Representative	Roads
Co-Ordinator, Climate Change Adaptation Committee	Environment
Road Safety Officer	Roads
Tourism Officer	Economic Development
Rural Recreation Officer	Community Development
Planning/ Regeneration	Economic Development
Town Teams	Municipal Districts
Ulster Canal Greenway Project Officer	Roads
Healthy Monaghan Co-Ordinator	Community Development
Sports Partnership Co-Ordinator	Community Development
Social Inclusion Officer	Community Development
Representatives from each of the three Municipal Districts	Ballybay Clones MD, Monaghan MD, Castleblayney Carrickmacross MD
Active Travel Unit Team	Roads

The Inter-Departmental Committee will review progress on this Strategy annually, making adjustments to take account of progress where necessary.

The Strategy contains two broad types of action:

- Direct action, e.g. delivery of an infrastructural project
- Activity designed to promote action in others, e.g. road safety promotion

The Council plays a key role in influencing people to change behaviour in a range of ways, and it is this change of behaviour which delivers the contribution towards smarter travel, road safety improvements etc.

As ever, the range of our ambitions will be tempered by the availability of resources. It is hoped that with the emphasis on climate change adaptation and active travel at European and international level, the government's current commitment to funding for projects which have a strong emphasis on promoting modal shift and encouraging active travel will continue. It is our intention to advance our ideas and plans so that the county is well placed to take advantage of any funding opportunities which may arise over the lifetime of this Strategy.



In addition to devising local solutions, we will be linking into existing national programmes and facilitating their uptake in Co. Monaghan.

Cycling initiatives include:

- **BikeWeek:** this week-long promotion campaign, aims to get people of all ages out on their bikes through a range of events run over the week, which happens in September
- **Bike to Work Scheme:** in operation since 2009, this Exchequer-backed tax incentive scheme allows employers to purchase bikes and related safety equipment for employees, up to a value of €1,000.
- **CycleRight:** established in 2017, this is the national cycle training standard. The new standard is being rolled out through training programmes in primary schools
- **Green Schools Travel:** the Green Schools Travel Flag is the 4th module in An Taisce's sustainable education programme.
- **Safety campaigns:** the Road Safety Authority runs a number of advertising campaigns in relation to the promotion of cyclists' safety, such as the "Cycle Smart, Cycle Safe" campaign and a recent TV-led campaign in relation to motorists keeping a safe distance from cyclists while overtaking.
- **Smarter Travel Workplaces:** this programme looks to promote smarter and sustainable travel within large work campuses
- **Smarter Travel Campus:** This programme engages with third level institutions
- **#andshecycles:** a new campaign by An Taisce aimed to address the deficit in the number of female cyclists by supporting women and girls to cycle more.

Walking initiatives include:

- **Get Ireland Walking:** A campaign linked to the National Physical Activity Plan and run by Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland, with local input from the Sports Partnerships.



#andshecycles



MONITORING & 5. EVALUATION

A Strategy is meaningless unless you can see if it is working! In the case of our Walking & Cycling Strategy, success would mean:

- More km of cycle lanes in our towns and villages
- An increased % of street space given over to pedestrians and cyclists above vehicular traffic
- More walking trails, maintained in good condition
- More people using the recreational trails in Co. Monaghan
- More people walking and cycling in our towns
- More people commuting by foot and bike

We have set the following Targets by which to measure our progress:

- Walking and Cycling in Co. Monaghan to be higher than the national average for commuter trips by Census 2031
- An observed increase in the level of walking and cycling activity.
 - Targets:
 - 10% increase in recreational walking & cycling
 - 20% increase in commuting by all Active Travel modes
 - The % of women cycling to have increased by 20% by Census 2026
- All secondary schools and urban primary schools to have Active Travel Plans in place and to have safe routes to school infrastructure in place by the end of the lifetime of this Strategy
- The county's 10 largest employment campuses to have rolled out Active Travel programmes by end 2025
- Current levels of public satisfaction with Walking and Cycling to improve by 20%

We will measure these by:

- Installing pedestrian and cycle counters on Council-managed trails
- Carrying out periodic traffic counts in the towns
- Carrying out periodic cycle parking counts at schools and cycle shelters
- Conducting an attitudinal survey every five years, to track the change in public sentiment towards walking and cycling, and the Council's performance.
- Studying the CSO data from Census 2022 and



The Inter-Departmental Steering Committee will review progress on the Strategy as part of their terms of reference.

There will be three key pieces of work in our Monitoring Plan:

Year 1: We will establish the levels of walking and cycling in the county in 2021 and the attitudes and behaviours of Monaghan people towards walking and cycling, so that we can use this data as a baseline to measure the success of our initiatives over subsequent years.

Year 3: We will carry out a mid term review of the Strategy, to ascertain if it is still relevant, and to make any necessary adjustments to the Actions for the remaining term.

Year 5: At the end of the term of the Strategy, in order to learn from our work and prepare for the successor to the Strategy, we shall again review our work. A second study into the levels of cycling and walking and the attitudes of people towards walking and cycling will tell us if our promotional campaign is beginning to have the desired effect, and where tweaks may need to be made going forward.

Footfall counters installed along the routes and quarterly occupancy counts of cycle parking will provide local data. CSO transport surveys and Census 2022 data will also be utilised.

Finally, once the five years are complete, we shall evaluate our processes, policies and practices and make recommendations as to how we can continue to improve as an organisation, nurture innovation and ensure that the people of Monaghan continue to enjoy the high quality of public service they expect and deserve.

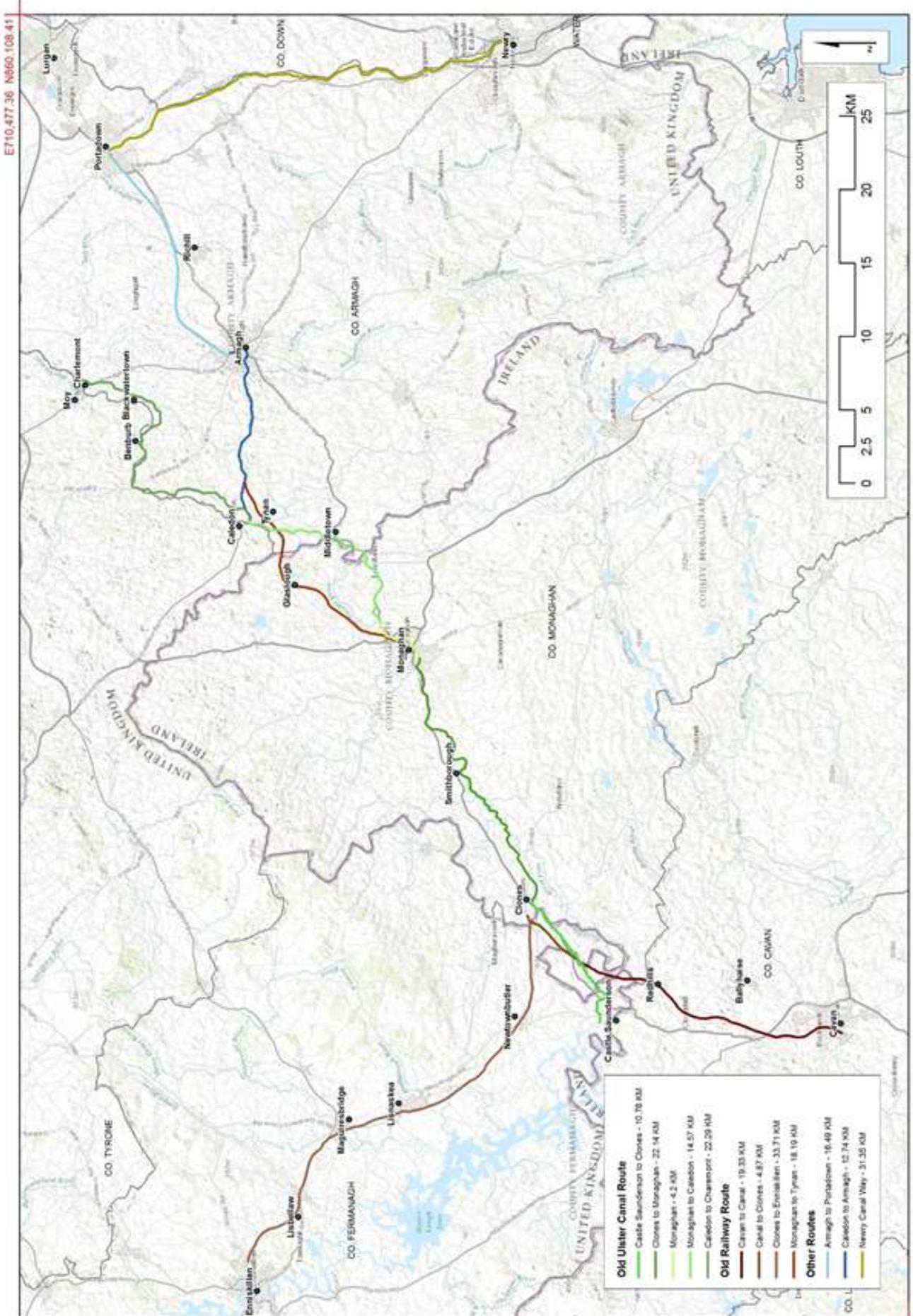
We hope that you will join us on this journey, and that all the people of Co. Monaghan will benefit from our work.



APPENDICES



ULSTER CANAL GREENWAY MAP



II The Design Guides & Key Principles we will be applying in implementing this Strategy*

DMURS

Application

DMURS is the principal road design document for all roads and streets within the 60km/h urban speed limit zone.

Presentations from the DMURS authors are available for download. The presentation on practical implications is particularly useful.

<https://www.dmurs.ie/workshops-and-presentations>

WHAT STREETS WILL LOOK LIKE ...

Permeable Neighbourhoods

Maximise walking and cycling connections within a neighbourhood and consider restrictions on the movement of private vehicles (filtered permeability). The NTA Permeability Best Practice Guide provides additional guidance.¹



Image: DMURS, Figure 3.27

More pedestrian crossings

Controlled crossings can be zebra or signalised pedestrian/Toucan crossings. Uncontrolled crossings include less formal types such as courtesy crossings. Designers should be guided by pedestrian demands, safety and vehicle flows.



Moreland Street, London
(Image: Google Street View)

Narrower carriageways with lower speeds

Reduce traffic lane widths and reallocate the space to footpaths and cycle tracks. Research from the UK has found that narrow carriageways are one of the most effective design measures that calm traffic.²

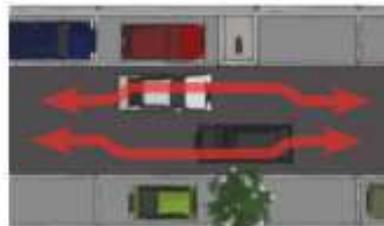


Image: DMURS, Figure 4.4

Pedestrian and cycle-friendly junctions

Consider: pedestrian crossings on all arms; omitting left-turn slip lanes; omitting staggered crossings; tighter corner radii; shorter cycle times at traffic signals; and single lane, cycle-friendly roundabouts.

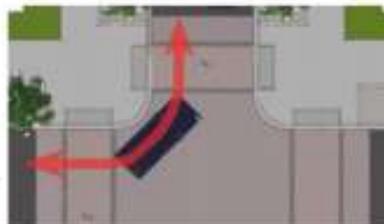


Image: DMURS, Figure 4.4

Some level of car congestion has to be accepted

It is acknowledged that in the absence of demand management, a certain level of car congestion is inevitable; however, it is government policy to implement measures to reduce private car usage and provide for modal shift to sustainable travel.

Protected cycle tracks where possible

To minimise the width of vehicular carriageways from kerb to kerb, preference should be given to the implementation of cycle tracks over those design solutions where cyclists and vehicles are at grade.



Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

Place making with planting and street furniture

Trees and planting can greatly enhance an urban environment by creating visual interest and giving character to a public space; planting areas can be used as part of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) system. Seating can add to the sense of place and encourage activity; giving people opportunities to rest or meet and chat.



Killeagh, Co. Cork (Image: Google Street View)

*The explanations in Appendix II are taken from the "Safe Routes to School Design Guide", published in September 2021

DMURS advocates a simple hierarchy of design, starting with the pedestrian and cyclist, and then public transport, and lastly private cars when designing street layouts

Integrated Street Design

'Integrated approaches incorporate elements of urban design and landscaping that instinctively alter behaviour, thus reducing the necessity for more conventional measures (such as physical barriers and the road geometry) alone to manage behaviour. The attraction of this approach is that it creates a new dynamic and a 'win-win' scenario where:

- Street networks are simpler in structure (more legible) with higher levels of connectivity (more permeable) thus reducing travels distances.
- Higher quality street environments attract pedestrians and cyclists, promoting the use of more sustainable forms of transport.
- Self-regulating streets manage driver behaviour and calm traffic, promoting safer streets.
- Streets and junctions are more compact, providing better value for money.'

(DMURS, Section 2.2)

MOVING FROM THIS ...



TO THIS ...



'The creation of walkable, cycleable and public transport orientated communities require that designers re-examine the way streets are designed in order to meet the needs of all users.' (DMURS Chapter 2)

National Cycle Manual

Application

All designers should be familiar with the National Cycle Manual (www.cyclemanual.ie) and the tools and checklists provided within the manual. The manual embraces the Principles of Sustainable Safety as this will offer a safe traffic environment for all road users including cyclists. It offers guidance on integrating the bike in the design of urban areas. The "cycling offer" within urban areas must be improved to encourage more people to cycle, including those who are risk-averse. The goal is now to "raise the bar" and to aim to provide for two-abreast cycling in a stress free and safe environment.

SOME BASICS OF CYCLING DESIGN



Main Street, Dundrum, Dublin

Segregated facilities are most likely to encourage new cyclists on main roads. Segregated facilities are required over certain speeds and volumes.



Benildus Avenue, Kilmacud, Dublin

One-way cycle facilities either side of the road are generally better than two-way facilities as they are easier to access and less problematic at junctions and side roads.



Glounthaune, Co. Cork

Shared pedestrian and cycle paths should be 4m wide and lit.



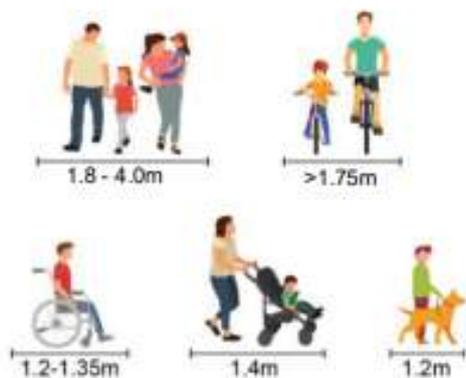
Balbutcher Lane, Ballymun, Dublin

Provide for cyclists at junctions.

A presentation from the National Cycle Manual author on the basics of cycling design is available for download. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJ4xQwHW8jY>

Safe Routes to School Design Guide

This Guide interprets the previous two documents for the school environment, taking the special circumstances surrounding schools into account, such as:



Space

School children will often be accompanied by an adult, and perhaps siblings, on the journey to school. Often children will be holding hands with a parent or scooting/cycling side by side. Wider footpaths and cycle tracks can allow children to develop their abilities and independence by giving them the space to be at a safe distance from their parents.



A Healthy Environment

Children are more susceptible than adults to the adverse effects of air pollution as their lungs are not fully developed and they are generally closer than adults to vehicle exhaust due to their height. Children often have to pass queuing traffic on the route to school or idling cars at the school gate. Potential solutions could include implementation of No Idling Zones¹; Clean Air Zones; and effective planting for mitigating impacts on air quality.



Visibility

Children can be less visible to drivers than adults, particularly in urban areas where street furniture and barriers can obscure intervisibility. Designers should take account of the heights of children when considering pedestrian crossings and landscaping features.



Social Interaction and Play

Streets that are inviting to people walking and cycling, encourage interactions and social connections with children, adults, and their environments, fostering a sense of community. Places to pause and stay provide children and caregivers, as well as older adults, who may walk slower and tire easier, with necessary space to rest. Streets also provide opportunities to bring learning and unstructured play into children's everyday lives, whether walking along, stopping at some greenery or seating or waiting at a bus stop.² Potential solutions could include play areas; seating; and interactive art.

III SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON DRAFT STRATEGY

From	Method of engagement	Issue	Action required within Strategy
Public Representative	Transportation SPC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please include GAA clubs in the plan - Please liaise with Mid Ulster Council to look at developing Derrygorry Forest Park - Consider installing cycle lane when resurfacing the North Road later this year 	<p>Development of walking tracks included in plan</p> <p>Individual sites not identified in Strategy – premature before preparation of County Cycle Network Strategy in 2022</p> <p>Premature as mobility plan for town required first. No action req'd</p>
Public Representative	Transportation SPC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved data on greenway usage. Current graph is confusing - Update on progress on development of the phases of Ulster Canal regional greenway - Proposal to lower town centre speed limits needs to go to the Speed Limit committee for approval - More signage needed to warn motorists to reduce speed and that they are sharing the road - Move the data section of the document to the back - Public transport links are very important. highlighted the park and ride initiative especially for Carrickmacross - a shelter be installed at the bus stop in Annyalla - it is noted the Monaghan way is referred to as closed in the report and this should be addressed. - no mention of how we should “share the road” in the report and suggested it should be a component of the report. - the report states we should enhance existing residential development by creating pedestrian cycling shortcuts through estates etc. Appealed for a degree of sensitivity around this 	<p>Graph removed</p> <p>Not relevant to Strategy.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Included in Strategy</p> <p>Considered. Data section reduced instead</p> <p>Connectivity to public transport is an action in the Strategy</p> <p>Part of the connectivity with public transport</p> <p>Included as an action in the Strategy</p> <p>Share the Road campaign is a promotional campaign and is an action in the Strategy</p> <p>Noted</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - puddling and lack of drainage on the Greenway - the use of 804 is providing limited result and the puddling will put people off walking. 	Noted
Member of staff	Transportation SPC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Cycle Design Framework has been produced by TII and will guide MCC in its work - Not possible to use hard shoulders on national roads to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians – TII won't permit it. - as part of the N2 Major projects Ardee to Castleblayney and Clontibret to the Border cycling provisions will be included in the design process. 	<p>To be referred to in the Strategy</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>To be referred to in the Strategy</p>
Public Representative	Transportation SPC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have we contacted the schools regarding their requirements for cycle shelters? - Connectivity NB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Greenway at St Davnets where there are currently no footpaths for pedestrians should be included in our Active Travel plan to connect pedestrian access on the route. o no provision was made at the bridge on Coolshannagh Road o the road to Tyholland to from Monaghan Town there are many cyclists commuting to work <p>Sliabh Beagh be included in the plan as part of a bigger picture maybe with a view to providing a cycling loop</p> <p>An Taisce have suggested a cycling route be designed from Monaghan Town out to Sliabh Beagh</p>	<p>Due to Covid, schools engagement in consultation process has been low. Engagement Officer is provided for in the new AT Unit</p> <p>These will be identified and addressed as part of the Cycle Network Plan process</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Included in the Strategy as an action</p>

From	Method of engagement	Issue	Action required within Strategy
Public Representative	Submission by email	Monaghan Way should be upgraded - brought through Concra Wood golf course & Muckno lands	Upgrade of MW is included in Strategy. Exact route to be determined through studies and consultation with landowners
		Cycle links between upgraded N2 and towns of CMX and Blayney	Use of cycle path on upgraded N2 is included. Cycle Network Plan will look at where links with local amenities, towns etc are needed
		Promotion of walks on Mullyash & upgrade of car park with picnic area & signage	The appointment of a Rural Recreation Officer is an action in the Strategy. They could seek to take this suggestion forward. Until then, it is not appropriate to put new projects into the Strategy without the resources to follow through on them
Public Representative	Submission by email	Greenway from Blayney to Keady	Not appropriate to commit to new routes until Cycle Network Strategy is completed in 2022
		Review Blayney Walking & Cycling Strategy 2012 to take in the many new housing developments in the Bree area since then	A review & update of the Blayney Strategy is planned
		Comprehensive road safety campaign in schools to equip children to walk and cycle safely	Included in Strategy
		Council needs to be front and centre with promoting a modal shift	Included in Strategy
		County-wide bike hire scheme, where bikes can be dropped off at various points around the county	May present a business opportunity for the private sector
		Council needs to have projects ready to go, so as to be able to take advantage of funding opportunities	Included in Strategy
An Taisce Green Schools Travel Officer	Submission by email	Need for a contact point within the LA to forward walkability audits to for actioning	That will be the new Active Travel Unit
		Priority to be given to work identified by schools in walkability audits	May not always be possible or appropriate. Priority is determined by the National Transport Authority
		The roll out of #andshecycles campaign is led by An Taisce Green Schools. Any Sports Partnership activities should be communicated back to ATGS	Change the suggested Lead on this Action to An Taisce
		New Safe Routes to School programme launched in March 2021. Funding available to carry out schemes near schools	Update the text
		School Streets/ School Zones funding aims to reduce congestion around school gates	Update the text
Community Group	Submission by email	Leave room in the Strategy for emerging projects to develop	Noted
		Castleblayney to Ballybay Greenway – feasibility study underway by MD	Projects will not be named individually in the Strategy
		Develop coachman's walk/ Lough Major in Ballybay, and connect wetlands centre to Ballybay town	Projects will not be named individually in the Strategy
		Communities will benefit greatly from the provision of new walking/cycling facilities. There is scope to create opportunities for the 'Community Sector' to assist with the delivery of local infrastructure, thereby increasing local buy in, support and commitment to the projects. For example, Community Groups could secure other funding sources to develop such projects(e.g. Leader, MCC community grants etc), they could act as intermediaries in securing access to lands, assist with maintenance of trails (litterpicks, painting fences etc... these activities could be built into Tidy Towns Groups 3 year plans), add value by delivering community initiatives and projects (e.g. biodiversity projects, men's sheds adding benches, etc) or by championing the use of new and existing infrastructure (events and activities). Could the role of community be strengthened in some of the objectives	A clear action to support communities added to the Strategy
Cycling Club member	Online Focus Group Session	don't lay chippings on the smooth tar surfaces.....there have been some lovely newly laid tarred surfaces and then shortly afterwards they are ruined with chippings laid over	noted
		the tar with a new sticky layer of tar laid. it makes the roads bumpy bumpy	
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	Create a network of rural 'rothar roads' with reduced speed limits, with signage, where cyclists are expected	The concept will be piloted – added as an action
All participants	Online Focus Group Session	Agreement that if traffic speed is reduced to 30kph, it would negate the need for a segregated cycle lane. Cyclists will feel safe enough to share the road with traffic	Approach in towns to follow this line
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	20% of commuters in Monaghan town are on foot.	Noted

Cycling Club member	Online Focus Group Session	Enforcement of the law would help cyclists – keeping cycle lanes free Safety is the NO.1 issue for cyclists Split-off lanes at junctions are a big help to groups of cyclists	Noted
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	Mapping is very important - good signage needed - map the Emyvale to Monaghan cycle path - wayfinding signage to help walkers find key amenities within towns	Importance of signage noted. Actions will reflect this
Cycling Club member	Online Focus Group Session	More signage on roads to remind motorists to observe the 1.5m minimum distance from cyclists when overtaking	Importance of signage noted. Actions will reflect this
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	The quality of the Monaghan to Emyvale cycle path is questionable - narrow in places	Solutions can be found, e.g. plant a screen/ barrier to make the lane a more pleasant cycling
		- stones & debris from road being kicked in onto it	experience and to prevent debris from reaching the path
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	Allocation of more road space to cycling – reduce 2 lanes down to 1 where possible to facilitate a cycle lane Connectivity of the towns to the surrounding villages Make Park Lane one way to facilitate access to the greenway for the schools	Will be addressed by Monaghan town mobility plan & update of town w&c plans Will be addressed by Cycle Network Plan Will be addressed by Monaghan town mobility plan & update of town w&c plan
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	Direct links between sports grounds and each town/ village	Included under action on connectivity to key community infrastructure
Cycling club member	Online Focus Group Session	Restricting parking to one side of the street only would make it possible to introduce cycle lanes in CMX	To be considered during preparation of town mobility plans & update of town W&C plans
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	Council should aim to develop interactive mapping There are 4 or 5 cycling hubs in NI. It would be good to see some developed down in Rol, ideal for a forest park	Will be included as part of the contract for development of Cycle Network Plan There's an outdoor activity hub being developed in Knockatallon to facilitate access for walkers and cyclists to Sliabh Beagh. We refer to it in the Strategy
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	Important not to rely on commuting data alone, as you will miss a lot of trips that women do. Look at sex-aggregated data	noted
Cycling advocate	Online Focus Group Session	In seeking to bring in changes to town centre streetscapes, begin engagement with business community asap A multi-disciplinary team is invaluable – landscape architect can make cycle infrastructure more attractive Use 'Sports Cyclists are Guests' signage to remind faster cyclists that they must share greenways etc with other users	Noted Noted Introduce on greenway if required
ICBAN	Web Survey	Reference the Eurovelo routes Good to see SDG's clearly represented 2 priorities: campaign with schools/ communities, Safe cycle lanes	The two Eurovelo routes which pass through Ireland go nowhere near Co Monaghan
Tidy Towns Group	Web Survey	Include Emyvale to Monaghan Cycle Lane on the maps Link it to Rossmore	Noted
Cycling Advocate	Web Survey	After provision is provided for cycle and walking then the roadway should be where deemed necessary allocated the space. The pedestrian is at the top of the importance as is healthy streets. roadway for vehicles needs to find its appropriate place. 2 Priorities: 30km zones, reappropriating space for pedestrians and cyclists "the centre of towns need to be designed and considered as places and not as movement corridors."	An explanation of the DMURS hierarchy of road users in design to be added in the Appendices
Community Group	Web Survey	All primary school children should be able to walk or cycle to school children cannot walk/cycle to Knockconan NS or to St. Mellans. There should be a connection also from St. Mellans to Knockconan NS. There should be a safe route connecting Emyvale to their GAA Field and to Emy Lough. 2 Priorities: Safer roads/routes, more awareness to walking/cycling. The cycle/walkway from Monaghan to Emyvale is great, more lighting along the route would make it safer during the winter and it would encourage people to use it more during the winter months. People need encouragement to get out and walk/cycle, there needs to be more signs, schools need to do more, community groups need to do more. People are lazy and look for excuses. As an active person and parent, our current infrastructure hindering our active ability to live healthy. Let Monaghan lead the way into a healthier more active county and way of living.	Not possible for those travelling by bus. But the point is well made. Working on safe routes to schools will be a key action in the Strategy Barriers to walking/ cycling such as personal security concerns, e.g. unlit paths have been considered and an action inserted into the Strategy

anonymous	Web Survey	Improvement of pavements and zero tolerance for currently generalised parking on pavements. provide clear car parking markings, and appoint traffic wardens to ensure the pedestrian/cycling space is made visible and protected. 2 Priorities: Improve existing pedestrian areas (these can be used by cyclists) and create new ones. Ensure walkers' and cyclists' comfort and safety.	Laws and traffic wardens are in place.
Environmental advocate	Web Survey	I think the vision goals and objectives are noble. it's very skewed by a recreational as opposed to transportation context. We need to be talking about modal shift. The increase in walking and cycling share will need to be driven by a decrease in journeys by other modes 2 Priorities: Provide stands for parking, Filtered permeability in town centres New Action: Consideration of road space allocation (% of width) as a metric in Monaghan's towns over the implementation period of the plan	Both are covered in the Strategy road space allocation as a % of total road width is a metric for measuring the progress of the Strategy
Anonymous	Web Survey	https://www.getirelandwalking.ie/resources/publications/ Cycling Ireland have a full time Women in Sport officer - that can help overcome the gender issue. Also Women on Wheels programme ran by Cycling Ulster pre-Covid, Emyvale CC participated. AXA Community Bike Rides could be included as a way of getting people involved. Similar to park run, need to make cycling as accessible as possible https://www.axacommunitybikerides.com/ Make cycling a more attractive prospect and community to become involved in and from there cycling will naturally develop as a more frequently used transport option. Off road, BMX tracks etc are also a great way of introducing children to cycling and building their confidence and skills. 2 Priorities: Introductory programmes with clubs and social groups - open days etc. especially post pandemic - lots have taken up cycling/walking and will be eager to continue. Funding - support for clubs and groups of any kind, lots of hard working volunteers already in place in many clubs New Action: A dedicated staff member (even part time) as it seems to be too many different departments involved.	An action around linking with national supports and promotional campaigns is included in the Strategy. We don't feel it's appropriate to name individual campaigns, as some are commercially motivated Covered Community Engagement Officer now in place in dedicated AT Unit
Anonymous	Web Survey	One other challenge is to put more focus on off road cycling facilities, to cater for young children and young teenagers, also young Girls and Females in general need to have the opportunity to experience cycling with confidence and trust, this can only be achieved with an organised Cycling club in a controlled environment. More focus on fun and skills 2 Priorities: 1. Safety for all vulnerable road users' needs to be your number one priority, making walkers and cyclists feel safe is key to making this a success. 2. Fun for all, young people are our future, if you have a facilities for them that allows them to grow challenge themselves then the adults will follow.	The Strategy allows for the emergence of a growing range of amenities Safety has an objective all to itself in the Strategy
Cycling Club member	Web Survey	I feel that the unsuccessful cycle lane between Monaghan town and Emyvale is rarely used and spending an additional €250,000 on upgrades is not going to change this fact. it is too close to the main road to be in anyway safe or comfortable due to noise. I also feel that the token effort to put a bike track in Rossmore is, well. to put it frankly, not worth doing in its current proposal. I suggest a route to Glaslough I think you need to have points of interest along any route, i.e. stops along route with swings/ slides and an attractive destination for a family day out. the fear of litigation of creating a bike track in Rossmore needs to be addressed. If one could only see the numbers using Gosford, especially from Monaghan, it is disappointing if we don't aim to achieve something similar. 2 Priorities: Access to a "fun" bike track within 5 kms of Monaghan town in Rossmore Park. Build something that is a destination at the end of the Greenway that will have kids and parents smiling and laughing coming off it and looking forward to their next day. There is nothing like this in the North East. Gosford has 3 full time businesses paying rates in it. if Emyvale CC are going to be named on every headline let some committee members sit in on the meetings to give our opinions and guidance. Have you seen what the teenagers built on the Cootehill side of Rossmore by themselves without any outside help?	Noted Future routes are not identified in the Strategy, as there is a key piece of work to come in 2022 – the Cycle Network Plan, which will go a long way to identifying where the routes need to be Visitor numbers to Rossmore are reaching saturation point. Adding many more amenities may lead to overcrowding and a negative visitor experience. Perhaps an alternative location could be found. Outdoor activity hub being developed in Knockatallon

		Tarmac 'family cycle path' not suitable for children because of hill New Actions: Family Cycle route to Glaslough Mountain bike amenity in Rossmore	
Cycling Club member	Web Survey	Need w&c infrastructure on these roads in Mon town: - Ballybay Road - Tydavnet/ Ballinode - Cootehill Road 2 Priorities: Making the people of Monaghan more aware of how much they can cycle into and around town, and more cycling / walking friendly in the town centre and the streets in it, can be hairy at times. If people feel safe they will use the greenways and walkways more	To be looked at as part of review of town W&C plan Awareness campaign is an action Making town centres more w&c centred is an action Feeling safe is a priority across the Strategy
Cycling Advocate	Web Survey	You need to reduce street parking but substitute with trees, benches, pedestrian buildouts, and above all put parking for bicycles in the most attractive town centre locations. Increase on street parking charges compared to off street, reduce number of on-street parking spaces Reduce the speed limit to 30 in urban areas and narrow the road width to make it physically impossible to build up speed. Segregation of modes can have the reverse effect and speed up traffic You have highlighted Gender as a key issue and you are correct. This is very good to see. The key here will be to engage with community groups. You should be brave and put in a % figure to increase female cycling in Monaghan. If you follow the Sustrans route from Glaslough through to Rossmore park you will see there are quiet country roads in which the route goes. Also it is possible to access Rossmore park via Mullaghmat via the sustrans path and ulster canal greenway. The NTA has recently published walkability audit tools. I think you could carry out one with community groups and get raw data that way. You have the strava data and the commuting data which is part of the equation. Please please do not rely on it entirely as this is mostly sports activity for strava and	Making town centres more w&c centred is an action Noted as a possible way to encourage cars off street parking Adopted as the main strategy in town centres pre-advicd from mobility plans etc A target of 20% set for increasing female cyclists This route is already included in the strategy Noted



A High Nelly refurbishment workshop in Inniskeen

IV Why Cycle?

Health benefits

- Cycling at least 20 miles a week reduces your risk of heart disease by 50%.
- Want to look ten years younger? Then cycle regularly. If you cycle on a daily basis, you'll be as fit as a person ten years your junior.
- A 2000 survey by the commuters in Copenhagen, Denmark concluded that people who commute by bicycle are so healthy that they're 39% less likely to die (of any cause) than those who don't ride bicycles.
- On a bicycle you can have your cake and eat it. A moderate half-hour each-way commute will burn eight calories a minute, which is the equivalent of 11kg of fat in a year.

Environmental benefits

- When riding a bicycle, you consume only half of the amount of oxygen a motor vehicle requires during a trip of the same distance. Not only that, but you don't expel any pollutants, either!
- Driving 4km less a day reduces driving by 1460km a year
- Bicycles use 2% as much energy as cars per passenger-kilometre
- On a bicycle you can travel up to 1037kms on the energy equivalent of a single litre of petrol
- You can fit between 12 and 20 bicycles in a single car parking space.

It saves time

- On a bicycle, you can travel three times faster than you can walk, for the same amount of energy.
- When time travel is measured from door to door for trips up to 5km on congested roads, bicycles are generally faster than any other mode of transport. People do not factor in walking to or from the car or bus stop.

Benefits to the economy

- Calculating all internal and external benefits of cycling together and adding the turnover of related industries, the European Cycling Federation estimates cycling to be worth well above € 200 bn annually to the economy of the EU or more than €400 for every person that lives in the EU. By far the biggest single chunk is on the health side; we could achieve over € 110 bn annually in savings if we all cycled more!

v Why Walk?

The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland recommend that adults, aged 18-64, should aim to be physically active for 'at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week)'. Moderate activity is activity that causes you to be warm or slightly sweating while remaining comfortable, increases your breathing and heart rate, while still being able to hold a conversation.

A daily walk can reduce the risk of stroke in both men and women, reduce the days spent in a hospital each year and can even lower your risk of death by up to 39 percent (when compared with no leisure-time physical activity).

The act of walking is also a proven mood booster. Walking in nature, specifically, was found to reduce ruminating over negative experiences, which increases activity in the brain associated with negative emotions and raises risk of depression. A 10-minute walk may be just as good as a 45-minute workout when it comes to relieving the symptoms of anxiety and boosting mood.

Walking not only improves your mood, but can boost your productivity. A Stanford University study found that walking increased creative output by an average of 60%. Walking has also been shown to improve memory and prevent the deterioration of brain tissue as we age.

Walking counteracts the effects of weight-promoting genes. Harvard researchers looked at 32 obesity-promoting genes in over 12,000 people to determine how much these genes actually contribute to body weight. They discovered that, among the study participants who walked briskly for about an hour a day, the effects of those genes were cut in half.

It helps tame a sweet tooth. A pair of studies from the University of Exeter found that a 15-minute walk can curb cravings for chocolate and even reduce the amount of chocolate you eat in stressful situations. And the latest research confirms that walking can reduce cravings and intake of a variety of sugary snacks.

It reduces the risk of developing breast cancer. Researchers already know that any kind of physical activity blunts the risk of breast cancer. But an American Cancer Society study that zeroed in on walking found that women who walked seven or more hours a week had a 14% lower risk of breast cancer than those who walked three hours or fewer per week.

Walking boosts immune function. It can help protect you during cold and flu season. A study of over 1,000 men and women found that those who walked at least 20 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week, had 43% fewer sick days than those who exercised once a week or less. And if they did get sick, it was for a shorter duration, and their symptoms were milder.

Is it any wonder that doctors call walking 'the closest thing we have to a wonder drug'?

**ADOPTED BY MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 2021**