



Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil: WFD-C2-374

Údar: Waterford City & County Council

Stádas: Submitted

Submission: Recreational Trails and Outdoor Recreation

Comhairliúchán:

Draft Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022 - 2028

Chapter 10: Landscape, Coast/ Marine and Blue Green Infrastructure

Caibidil: Volume 1 » Part 3: City and County Policy Objectives » Chapter 10: Landscape, Coast/ Marine and Blue Gre...

To whom it may concern,

Please find below a submission on the Waterford City & County Draft Development Plan 2022 with regard to outdoor recreation and recreational trails. Suggested areas for edits/amendments in red font.

10.3.2 Water based outdoor recreation and Blueways

Waterford has the benefit of two navigable rivers –the Blackwater and Suir and an extensive coastline with estuaries, bays, coves and beaches that provide a strong basis for activity based tourism such as sailing, kayaking, angling and surfing. Blueways are approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on and closely linked with waterways, where providers facilitate access to activities and experiences. Blueway development at a national level is coordinated by the Blueway Ireland Steering Group. As an activity tourism and outdoor recreation product Blueways facilitate healthier lifestyles, social interaction and economic development. The experience is enriched by promoting it within the context of local heritage and culture.

Waterford has the benefit of two navigable rivers –the Blackwater and Suir and an extensive coastline with estuaries, bays, coves and beaches that provide a strong basis for activity based tourism such as sailing, kayaking, angling and surfing. Whilst areas such as Ardmore, Dungarvan, Tramore and Dunmore East are well established in the waterway leisure industry there is potential for development of water based outdoor recreation and Blueway related activity in other locations as deemed appropriate and identified through further assessment. Proposals for new Greenways and Blueways should have regard to the corridor and route selection process and mitigation referred to in Chapter 5 Transport and Mobility.

Greenways & Blueways Policy Objectives

BGI 06

Enhancing Waterford Greenway

To support the ongoing development and enhancement of the existing Waterford Greenway.

BGI 07

Greenway Network

To support the development of a regional Greenway network with Waterford City as its hub, linking Waterford City with South Kilkenny, New Ross and Rosslare. The feasibility of the development of the following Greenway projects will be progressed:

- Waterford City to Tramore
- Dungarvan to Mallow in collaboration with Cork County Council
- Waterford Greenway to Suir Blueway link
- Further spurs or links that will safely link communities, amenities and attractions to Waterford Greenway including the Comeragh Mountains and the Copper Coast UNESCO Geopark.

BGI 08

Cycle Network

To support the maintenance, upgrade, development and promotion of Waterford's Cycling Trail network and EuroVelo 1-Atlantic Coast Route.

BGI 09

Developing our Blueways and water based outdoor recreation opportunities

To support the sustainable environmental and economic development of Blueways and water based outdoor recreation opportunities on Waterford's waterway corridors and coastline including the development of water based sport activities, improvement of quays and slipways and enhanced interpretation and safety **that do not cause landscape or environmental degradation and avoid adverse impacts on ecological integrity including the Natura 2000 Network and built heritage.**

It is great to have our recreational walking trails listed so prominently within the plan ***BUT*** the list should be removed altogether from the issue of public rights of way. This has the potential to cause confusion particularly those who allow walkers access across their lands on a permissive access basis. So I would ask that we separate our recreational trails and any published list of Rights of Way.

Also I would ask that the full and final list of recreational walks and cycles is included in the final Co. Development plan along with maps if possible? PDF's of these maps are already in existence.

Comeragh Mountains and broader trail development issues

The structure and layout of the following section may need to be looked at. Most of the content is absolutely fine but the introductory paragraph refers to the Comeragh Mountains and uplands, however the list of objectives from BG10 to BG17 could apply to any area e.g. coastal, river-bank, woodland trails and recreational amenities:

10.5 Comeragh Mountains

The Comeragh Mountains from the Nire Valley in the west to Coumshingaun in the east is a very popular area attracting visitors and walkers to County Waterford. The Council recognises the tourism value of this area for local communities and acknowledges the area is actively farmed, in private ownership and with high wildlife value subject to habitat protection and scenic landscape designations. All these uses bring forces for change and require to be managed with recognition and consideration of all uses and values for the overall socio-economic, landscape and environmental benefit of the area. Appropriate recreational and tourism developments in the Comeragh Mountain Area which will enhance the economic prospects of the area will be considered, **subject to appropriate environmental assessment and development management standards to ensure protection of the unique character of the area. Amenity Management Policy Objective**

BGI 10

Trail Development

We will work in collaboration with state bodies, development agencies, landowners and local communities to support the maintenance and promotion of existing trails and outdoor recreational amenities. We will examine the sustainable environmental and economic development potential of additional trails and outdoor recreational amenities and associated infrastructure whilst ensuring adherence to best practise and relevant guidance from Sport Ireland Outdoors. **Derived proposals will ensure no adverse impacts on ecological integrity including the Natura 2000 Network.**

BGI 11**Trail Support Facilities**

To develop comprehensive plans for all proposed recreational trails that incorporate planning and design of sustainable trails and supporting infrastructure such as trailheads, car parking and other ancillary infrastructure in consultation with local communities **to ensure no adverse impact on local land use, the ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 Network and the environment.**

BGI 12**Integrated Management of our Uplands**

We will commission an integrated management plan and management structure addressing recreation, conservation, landscape and socio-economic development issues in Waterford's uplands.

BGI 13**Community Engagement and Sustainable Amenities**

We will support communities and ensure recreational trails and outdoor recreational amenities and associated facilities are developed in sympathy with the natural environment and do not pose adverse impacts on habitats, species, the ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 Network and landscape amenity or affect ecosystem services including flood risk and climate change impacts such as coastal erosion. In doing so ensuring to realise the positive impacts of development of outdoor recreational amenities and trails including health & well being, social, cultural,

economic and tourism benefits as well as enhanced community resilience.

BGI 14**Rural/ Trails Strategy**

We will also support the objectives of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy or any update thereof. To develop a Rural Development Strategy and a Recreational Trails and Outdoor Recreation Strategy, with involvement of key stakeholders in the development of each. We will also support the objective of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy or any update thereof.

BGI 15**Managing our Amenity Assets**

To actively monitor and maintain trail and outdoor recreational amenity management standards and carry out interventions including trail surface repairs, diversion and access management where required.

BGI 16**Visitor and Habitat Management**

Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the Plan shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.

BGI 17**Increases in Visitor Numbers to Semi-Natural Areas**

Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including **ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.**

Other comments and observations from Trails Officer:**1. Off Road Cycling and Mountain Biking**

We firmly believe that there should be an objective within the plan with regard to Mountain Biking/Off Road Cycling:

To investigate further the feasibility of the development of off road cycling and mountain bike amenities and supporting infrastructure with the appropriate stakeholders, communities, user groups, state agencies, land owners/land managers etc.

1. Environmental assessments: As a suggestion

would a very strong initial statement with regard to environmental assessments, Natura 2000, conservation objectives etc. be preferable to the line at the end of each action regarding same? I have highlighted some above in **green font**?

1. Identifying specific future trail/outdoor recreation development projects?

Should future potential trail projects be identified by route, location etc OR

OR

Suggested alternative to identifying specific locations, trails and landowners:

Incorporate into objective BGI14 that: The public consultation and stakeholder engagement process as part of the development of an Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Waterford will identify routes and locations for priority trail and outdoor recreation projects.

Documents Attached: Níl