

Case Study

Great Western Greenway, Network, Mayo



The Greenway traverses Ireland's Atlantic coast between Westport town and Achill Island and visits the picturesque villages of Newport and Mulranny (Mallaranny). It passes by some of the West of Ireland's most dramatic mountains and offers magnificent views of Clew Bay and its many islands. In 2011 the **Great Western Greenway** became the Irish winner of the annual European Destination of Excellence Award, establishing it as one of the finest trails in Europe.

The Great Western Greenway walking and cycling trail is Ireland's fastest growing and most sought-after tourism attraction. Running 44km around the Eastern and Northern stretches of Clew Bay in Co Mayo. Famous recreational forests on this route include;

- **Wild Nephin National Park** which is Ireland's 6th National Park
- **Belleek Woods** one of the largest urban woodlands in Europe

<https://www.greenway.ie/>



Trails and Routes



Outdoor Recreation Plan



Strategy for the Future
Development of National
and Regional Greenways

What is the Greenway?



A Greenway is a recreational or pedestrian corridor for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner that enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. These routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities.

Greenway Links Forests to The Irish Outdoor Recreation Plan

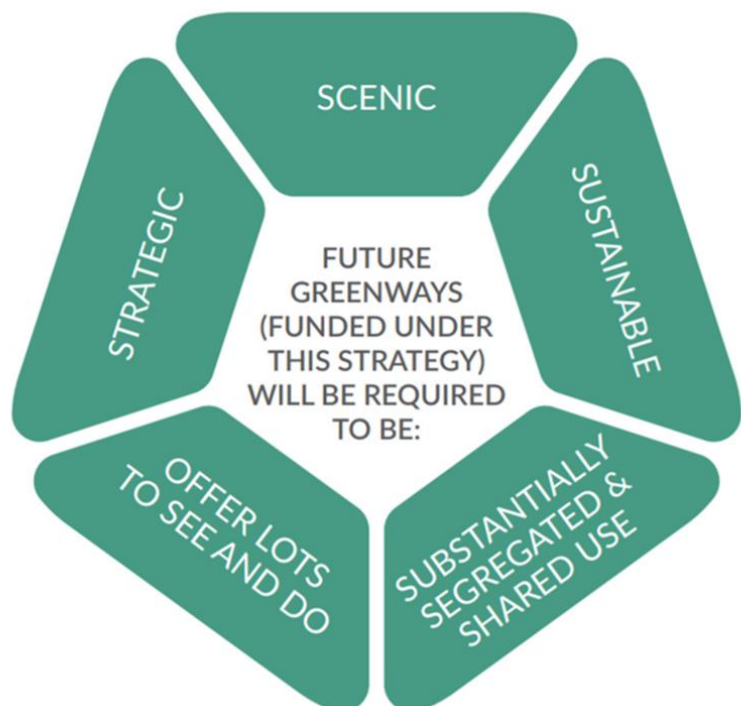


The Outdoor Recreation Plan seeks to achieve a step-change in investment in the provision and maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities and infrastructure. The intention of this Strategy is to provide linkages where possible to potential routes - this could include routes through forests owned privately and by Coillte, land under the ownership of Bord Na Móna or trails through National Parks and Wildlife Service or OPW land.

Greenways Link Key Tourism Destinations that are Eligible for Support and Funding



An example of a potential forest route would be from Clifden to Letterfrack through the Connemara National Park owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Coillte owned land. Another would be route in the Midlands links the Grand Canal Route with cycling routes on Coillte and Bord Na Móna owned lands in County Offaly and with the OPW managed site at Clonmacnoise.



Designed to Enhance the Environment



Greenway is an Important Brand for Tourists



The Greenway has Transformed the Local Economy



The Great Western Greenway welcomes almost 250,000 visitors annually and is designed to include measures to enhance biodiversity as well as provide an important resource for both locals and visitors. It does this by:

- Providing interpretative facilities so visitors can see and learn natural heritage while it is still protected
- Promote a “leave no trace” philosophy for users
- Provide and promote a Code of Conduct for users in each area
- Examines its potential to provide enhancement measures e.g., the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020.

While the **GREENWAY BRAND** is an important attractor for tourists, locals and international businesses it is designed by Sport Ireland Trails and hosted on the Departments Website. There is an opportunity to better promote individual tourism offerings, businesses and experiences e.g., through storytelling, video showcase campaigns. It was identified in the strategy that stakeholders and businesses should reinforce their brand and promotional efforts by aligning with existing brand experiences e.g., Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands...

The transformation of the local economy that has been achieved through the 290,000 users of the Great Western Greenway in County Mayo demonstrates what can be achieved with foresight and ambitious investment for rural communities, tourism businesses, stakeholders and regional development.

The development of a recreation-based industry, stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship in services such as accommodation, cafes and restaurants, bike hire, equipment sales and angling services will help to compensate and reverse the decline in local shops and services experienced in many rural towns and villages.

Source: [Outdoor Recreation Plan](#)

Training Needs Analysis

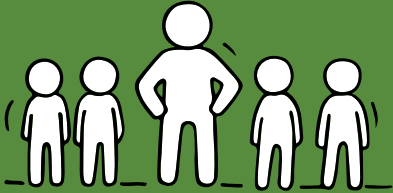


TRAINING NEEDS Enterprises have received training in Food and Drink Experiences and Culture through the new Failte Ireland 'Saviors the Greenway Program' however this is the only training received. There is potential for businesses to receive training that references the 'New Tourist' using VR Forests particularly on;

- How to mitigate environmental impacts on sites, areas, heritage areas and Special Areas of Conservation
- Experience development and provide a variety of 'New Tourist' experiences e.g., environmentally friendly and climate aligned experiences, wellbeing activities, forest bathing, foraging. So, they can provide new well-being and recreational experiences that will enhance and maintain their competitiveness
- How businesses can market themselves better e.g., through technologies, Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality, 3D brand alignment etc.

[See Greenway Strategy for more information](#)

50% of Users are Walkers Addressing Physical Inactivity



Potential to Attract Overseas Market



Forests Provide the Highest Benefits



Greenways Provide Opportunities for the Development of Local Businesses that Can Contribute to Health and Wellbeing!

Greenways provide an excellent opportunity for Irish people to participate in healthy outdoor activities.

Evidence from the Waterford Greenway has shown that **50% of users are walkers**, this is a hugely important element and shows that Greenways can play a vital part in addressing physical inactivity

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport recognizes the benefits that can arise from the further development of Greenways in Ireland, as a tourism product with significant potential to attract overseas visitors, for local communities in terms of economic benefits, and for all users as an amenity for physical activity and a contributor to health and wellbeing.

The health of our population is also a major focus for the Government. For example, the **National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Get Ireland Active**, states

“physical inactivity is a demonstrated clear risk to health and wellbeing in Ireland. Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviors are associated with numerous chronic diseases. With people no longer as physically active as they should be, there are many threats to our health and wellbeing from being inactive. Involvement in physical activities in the outdoors such as forests, beaches, parks and trails is of the highest benefit”.

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Co-funded by
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