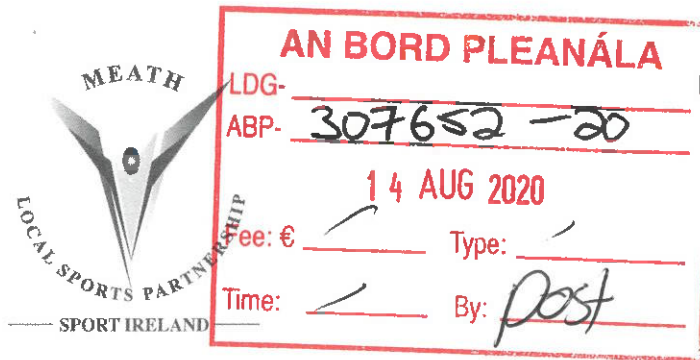


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Re: Letter of support for proposed Boyne Greenway Drogheda to Mornington

To whom it may concern

On behalf of Meath Local Sports Partnership, I am writing to support the development of the proposed Greenway from Drogheda, Co. Louth to Mornington, Co. Meath.

This is an excellent opportunity to develop a new initiative which could transform the rural areas in Meath & Louth, to provide wonderful experiences for visitors and locals, and to contribute to the health of not just the two counties involved but to the entire North East/Cross border regions.

The success of Mayo's 42km Great Western Greenway from Westport to Achill has had a positive domino effect on the development of similar greenways in recent years around Ireland. The Great Eastern Greenway along Carlingford Lough, the Old Rail Trail Greenway from Mullingar to Athlone, and Waterford's new Greenway from Waterford city along the Copper Coast to Dungarvan are all excellent examples of greenways which were developed following on from the success of the Western Greenway. All were inspired by the 80,000 visitors who spent €7 million in the first year of Mayo's Greenway.

The potential for inward investment into the local area as a result of the proposed Boyne Greenway from Drogheda to Mornington would be hugely beneficial not just for local tourism but as mainstream options for regional and national tourists. It will provide a viable option to opening up access to the countryside, stimulating jobs in local areas and encouraging more sustainable travel. The idea that active tourism initiatives can sustain local economies has been proven over recent time, particularly when integrated with ecotourism or sustainable tourism.

Brian Quinn of Fáilte Ireland, speaking in 2018, regards Greenways as transformational in terms of rural development. "They are catalyst projects that have been shown to rejuvenate communities and offer genuine high-value experiences for tourists".

Meath LSP work closely with local communities in Meath delivering walking, cycling, running programmes to all ages and abilities. One of the greatest challenges we face is locating safe open environments in which we can deliver our community-based

programmes. Invariably these challenges aren't just the domain of rural communities but also of urban areas where infrastructure isn't present to support the demand for open public spaces where people can exercise freely. Those challenges are further compounded by our growing health & social issues which have accompanied the growth in population in recent years in Co. Meath. Those challenges and issues are now driving the Healthy Ireland agenda of the local authority in Meath and at Government level Nationally. Obesity is set to rise to levels which will set Ireland apart from other European countries.

Studies worldwide have found positive associations between physical activity and accessibility to recreational facilities, including being in close proximity to local parks. We need to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided to allow people of all ages to safely access local resources and to be physical activity within their local community. This creates lifelong sustained participation in physical activity, increased health benefits which in turn result in a significantly lower health spend.

Meath LSP need to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided to allow people of all ages to safely access walkways, cycle paths and running ways – this proposed Boyne Greenway from Drogheda to Mornington is a welcome addition and will help to increase opportunities for people to become more active more often.

As a country, we have committed through our National Strategies support for the development of the greenway initiatives. We can't "row backwards" on that commitment now. Meath LSP strongly advises for the development of this proposed greenway. The Boyne Greenway from Drogheda to Mornington has the potential to positively transform people, environments and economies.

National Strategies which support the development of the Greenway

The Healthy Ireland Framework, launched in 2013 articulates four central goals for improved health and wellbeing for the nation of Ireland:

- increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
- reduce health inequalities
- protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing
- create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland

The National Physical Activity Plan, launched in 2019, creates increased opportunities for people to be active in ways which fit in to everyday lives and which suits individual needs, circumstances and interests.

It does this by:

- removing the barriers which people face to being active and encouraging people to recognise how to overcome those barriers
- enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation at national, local and community level to encourage physical activity at every level
- encouraging a supportive environment where physical activity becomes normal
- promoting good practice and finding new models of participation which get more people active

The development of Greenways support two specific actions in the NPAP as follows:
36 - Prioritise the planning and development of walking and cycling and general recreational/physical activity infrastructure.

37 - Explore opportunities to maximise physical activity and recreation amenities in the natural environment.

Meath Local Sports Partnership unequivocally supports the development of the proposed Boyne Greenway from Drogheda to Mornington.

Yours sincerely

