

Part 8 MEMO

To:	Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner
From:	Ian Lacey, Senior Executive Planner
Date:	13 th of April 2026
Subject:	LAA1 2026: Active Travel Scheme for the Cornamaddy to Wash House Turn roundabout (Route F) Athlone.

1. Project Description

Westmeath County Council (WCC) through the Active Travel Team are designing an Active Travel Scheme for the Cornamaddy to Wash House Turn roundabout (Route F) Athlone a project which extends to a length of 2.3km.

The proposed works are likely to comprise the following items:

- Reduced roadway width of 6.0m.
- The provision of a 2.3m wide protected two-way cycle tracks and 2.0m one way cycle tracks.
- The provision of a 1.8m (minimum) wide footpaths.
- New pedestrian crossings.
- Provision of speed control ramps.
- Junction tightening.

Details Received:

The documents provided for the purposes of determination are as follows:

- Draft Planning Report
- Preliminary scheme drawings
- Flood Risk Assessment Report
- Environmental Constraints report
- Draft AA Screening Report
- Draft EIA Screening Report

Overview:

The scheme is located within Athlone town, where it is indicated that approximately 15km of active travel routes are planned. This subject proposal is for Route F 2.3km in length and commences from Cornamaddy Roundabout to Wash House Turn Roundabout (R916). The scheme is located on the eastern side of Athlone and extends from north of the national road N55 to south along the regional road R916. The project has been sub-divided into 4 development segments. The details of the project are presented in Fig 1 and the segments, are shown heading in a southerly direction and include the following:

Segment F1: Cornamaddy Roundabout to Moydrum Road Junction. This segment extends from Cornamaddy Roundabout to Moydrum Road Junction along Bushfield Road (R916), approximately 950m in length.

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Segment F2: Moydrum Road Junction to Altown Garrycastle Roundabout. This segment extends from Moydrum Road Junction to Altown Garrycastle Roundabout along Bushfield Road (R916), approximately 390m in length.

Segment F3: Altown Garrycastle Roundabout to Garrycastle Roundabout. This segment extends from Altown Garrycastle Roundabout to Garrycastle Roundabout along Garrycastle Road (R916), approximately 480m in length.

Segment F4: Garrycastle Roundabout to Wash House Turn Roundabout. This segment extends from Garrycastle Roundabout to Wash House Turn Roundabout along University Road (R916), approximately 360m in length.



Figure 1-3 – Route F Segments

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The proposed scheme is not located within or adjacent to any Natura 2000 sites and as such there will be no direct impacts on any Natura 2000 sites. The nearest European sites are the Crosswood Bog SAC (site code: 002337) is located c. 1.1kmm east of the proposed scheme. Lough Ree SAC (000440) is c1.7km northwest of the proposed scheme and Lough Ree SPA (004064) c1.7km north-west of the proposed scheme.

2. Recommendation

Having reviewed the preliminary documentation associated with the proposed Active Travel Scheme, on lands Cornamaddy Roundabout to Wash House Turn Roundabout (R916), it is considered, based on a preliminary assessment, that a **Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) & Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** are **not** required at this time.

It is therefore recommended that the project proceed to detailed application design in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations (as amended), based on which the Planning Section will issue final determinations.

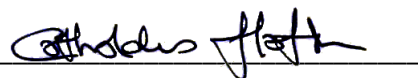
Considerations are set out as per the associate headings hereunder.



Ian Lacey, Senior Executive Planner
Westmeath County Council Planning Section

13/04/2026

Date:



Cathaldu Hartin | Senior Planner
Westmeath County Council
Planning, Transportation and Economic Development

14/04/2026

Date:

3. Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening

Stage 1 Preliminary Examination

3.1 Legislative Context

The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 which transpose into Irish law both the European Union (EU) Directive 2009/147/EC (the Birds Directive) and the Habitats Directive and list habitats and species that are of international conservation importance and require protection. This protection is afforded in part through the designation of areas that represent significant examples of habitats that support populations of listed species within a European context, known as Natura 2000 sites. An area designated for bird species is classed as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and an area designated for other protected species and habitats is classed as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Together, SPAs and SACs form the Natura 2000 network of protected sites.

The Habitats Directive requires competent authorities to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects that, alone and/or in combination with other plans and projects, would be likely to have significant effects on one or more Natura 2000 sites. The assessment process is divided into a Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment and where required, a full Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

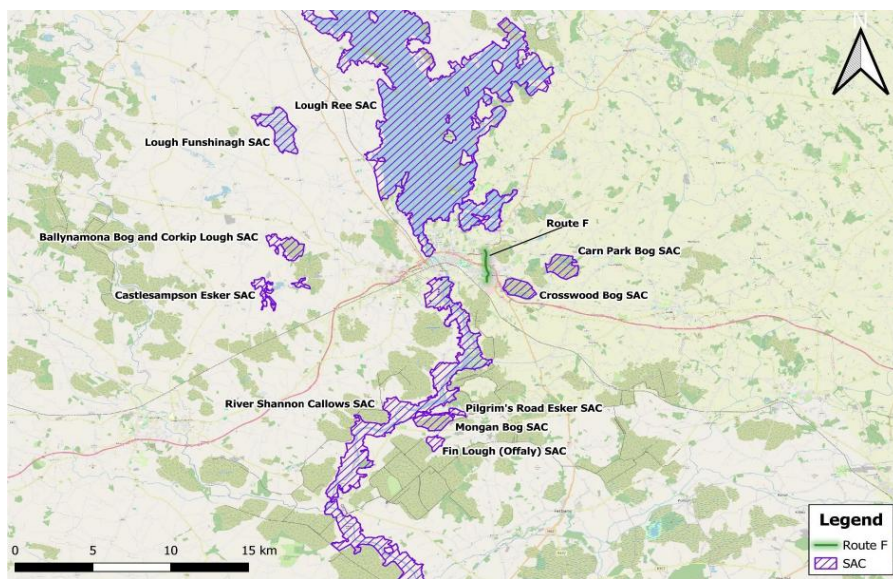
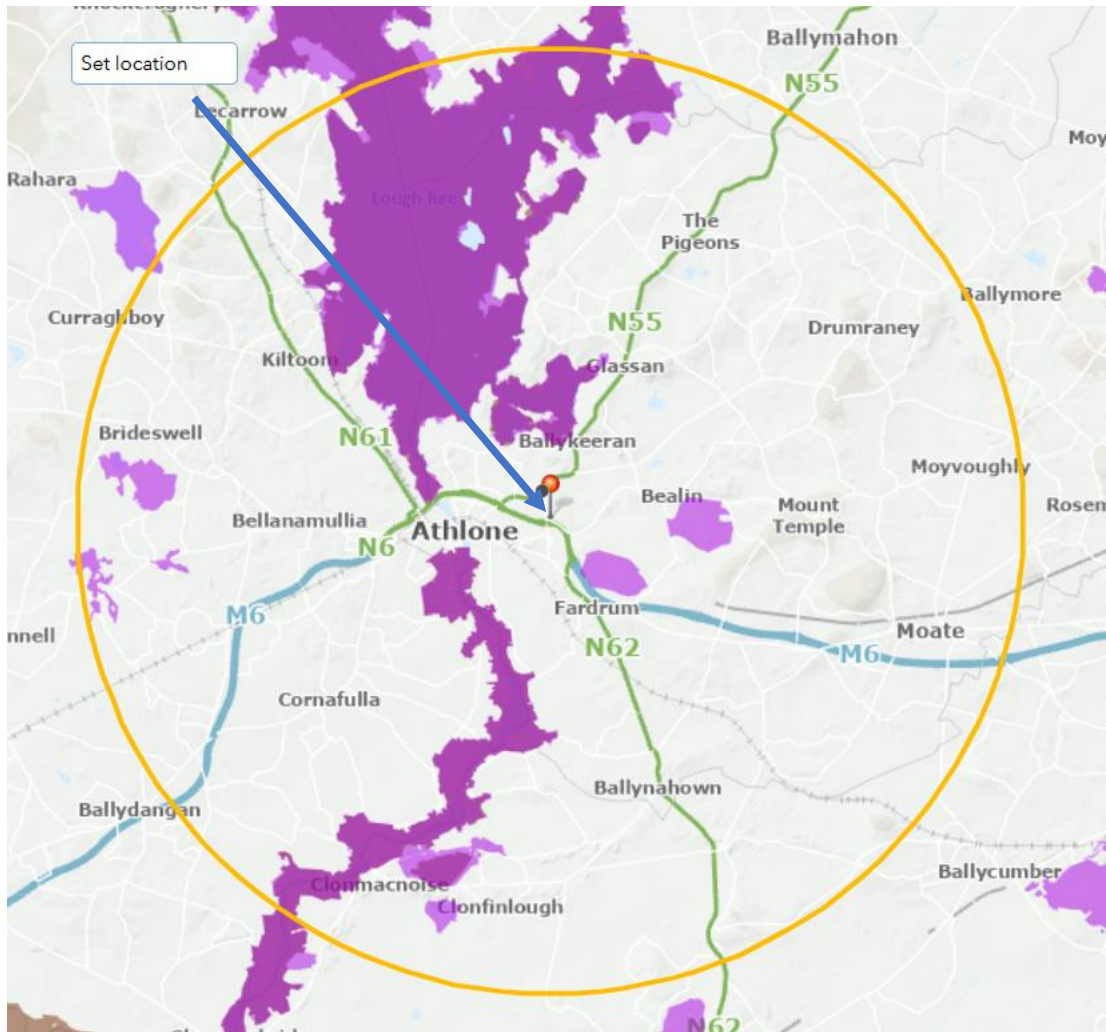
3.2 Natura 2000 Sites

Note: European Natura 2000 sites include SACs, cSACs, SPAs and pSPAs, but not NHAs. This Stage 1 screening assessment covers Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the development boundary. Sites situated with 15km of the proposed works, are set out at **Table 1** below. The site synopsis' and details of the conservation objectives of these site are available at: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac> and <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa>

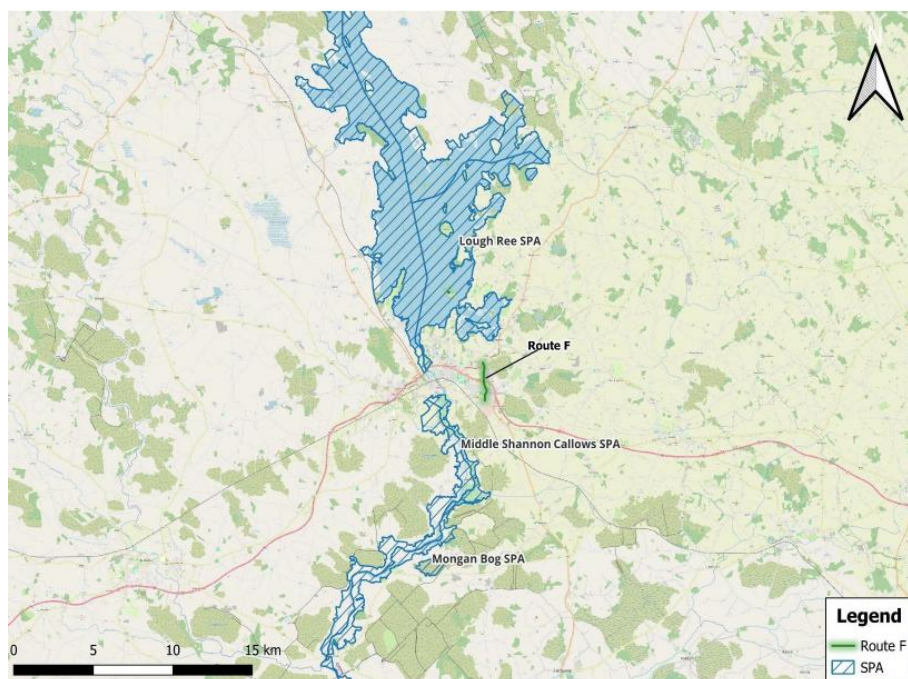
	Site Code	Site Name	Designation Type	Distance From (km) approx.
1.	002337	Crosswood Bog SAC	SAC	1.1km
2.	000440	Lough Ree SAC	SAC	1.7km
3.	004064	Lough Ree SPA	SPA	1.7km
4.	000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	SAC	2.3km
5.	004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	SPA	2.3km
6.	002336	Carn Park Bog SAC	SAC	3.9km
7.	000580	Mongan Bog SAC	SAC	9.8km
8.	004017	Mongan Bog SPA	SPA	9.8km
9.	001776	Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC	SAC	10km
10.	000576	Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC	SAC	10.2km
11.	001625	Castlesampson Esker SAC	SAC	11.5km
12.	000611	Lough Funshinagh SAC	SAC	11.5km
13.	002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkhip Lough SAC	SAC	11.8km

Table 1: Natura 2000 Sites within 15km

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Map 1 – SACs within the zone of influence of the proposed project



Map 2 -- SPAs within the zone of influence of the proposed project

There are 13 (no.) designated Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius (refer Table 1 above). The works proposed are not required for the nature conservation management of these sites. It is noted that the conservation objectives for the SACs and SPA in the vicinity are to maintain or restore favourable conservation condition of habitats and species listed as Special Conservation Interests for which the SPA/SAC has been selected.

A Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) was undertaken by Atkins Réalis Consultants. The AA Screening defines a Zone of Influence (ZoI) for the proposal based on the source-pathway-receptor model having regard to the characteristics of its potential impacts, potential pathways to Natura 2000 sites, and impacts on the sensitivities of ecological features in the receiving environment.

The proposed scheme is not located within or adjacent to any Natura 2000 sites and the report confirms that as such there will be no direct impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.

It is indicated that, during the construction phase, surface water run-off from the proposed scheme site outfalls via the existing road drainage network to the River Shannon. The River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA are c. 725m downstream via the river from the proposed scheme. Taking account of the scale, extent and duration of the proposed construction works and considering the levels of potential contaminants the works could potential generate, impacts which could significantly affect the water quality of the River Shannon will not occur. As such there will be no likely significant effects to any qualifying interest habitats or species sites via this pathway.

The AA Screening report identifies that construction activities are occurring within the urban areas of Athlone town and are of relatively short duration. Given the works location in respect to the nearest Natura 2000 sites there will be no disturbance or displacement of any qualifying interest species

accommodated within any Natura 2000 sites. The scheme site does not proffer any habitats that could be used by qualifying interest species otters or waterbirds. There is potential for qualifying interest species otter and waterbirds to utilise the River Shannon adjacent to the scheme site, however, the river channel is largely screened from the scheme site and construction near the river is of very short duration. As such there will be no significant disturbance to ex-situ otters or waterbirds. The usage of the cycle scheme will not result in an increase in noise levels or light levels and as such there will be no effects on any qualifying interest species when the cycle scheme is operational.

Having considered the potential sources and potential pathways for significant effects and evaluated the project characteristics taking account of the processes involved and the distance of separation from European sites, it is considered that there is no likelihood of potential significant effects occurring to the Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests or the Conservation Objectives of any designated European Site as a result of the implementation of the proposed development.

3.3 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

Notwithstanding the minor nature and scale of this development, consisting of alterations to 2.3km length of the existing road network to provide cycle tracks, it should be noted that any project/plan with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another. The site of the proposed development is located in an area for which planning policy is set out under the current Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

This route is part of the larger Athlone Active Travel Schemes Bundle scheme with six entirely urban routes planned for Athlone Town. None of the identified routes have any direct connectivity to any Natura 2000 site. Usage of the six cycle routes will not affect any SAC or SPA.

Further, when considered in combination with other developments which have been granted planning permission in the general area, it is not considered that the proposed development will have any cumulative impacts upon any of the designated sites.

It is considered that having regard to the siting of the proposed development from the SPAs and SACs (illustrated at **Map 1 and Map 2** above), that the proposal would not give rise to any significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any nearby Natura 2000 sites having regard to the nature of the proposed development and separation distances involved to adjoining Natura 2000 sites.

3.4 AA Preliminary Screening Conclusions

It is considered that the proposed development is not foreseen to have any likelihood of significant effects on any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects and therefore any potential for significant effects on any European site as a result of the proposed development can be ruled out.

It is considered that the proposed development does not require Stage Two Appropriate Assessment, and a Natura Impact Statement is not required, in this instance.

4. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening

4.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Determination

A detailed description of the proposed development has been provided in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening report prepared by Atkins Réalis on behalf of Westmeath County Council – Active Travel team, with drawings and supplementary reports provided.

Having regard to EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (the EIA Directive), the guidance contained in: “Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Development” (published by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2003); “Environmental Impact - Assessment of Projects - Guidance on Screening” (published by the European Commission in 2017); “Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment” (published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in 2018); and on the basis of the objective information provided in the “Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report” (the Screening Report) prepared by Atkins Réalis, Westmeath County Council as the Competent Authority has determined that the proposed development individually, and in combination with other plans and projects, does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Following a preliminary examination, a screening report was prepared in line with Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

It is considered that the EIA Screening has been carried out giving full consideration to the EIA Directive and in particular to Annex I, II and III of that Directive, which set out requirements for mandatory and sub-threshold EIA.

As the proposed development is sub-threshold, it has, therefore, been assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the criteria for determining whether or not a development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment as outlined within Annex III of the EIA Directive.

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development which is below the thresholds set out in Class 10(b)(iv) (Infrastructure Projects) and Class 15 (Demolition Works) of Part 2 of Schedule 5, the criteria in Schedule 7, the information provided in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and the following:

- The overall size, length and design of the project;
- Cumulative impacts with other existing and/or proposed projects;
- The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- The production of waste;

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- Pollution and nuisance;
- The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge; and
- The risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).

The EIA Screening identified the following key findings which were summarised as follows;

- Due to the limited nature of the works, it is considered that there will be no significant cumulative impacts with other developments in the general area.
- Limited noise, vibration and dust emissions may be generated during construction; however, this is anticipated to be minimal in effect and will cause no significant impacts.
- There will be no significant impact on biodiversity, groundwater, surface water or traffic; and,
- There will be no significant impacts on recorded monuments or historic features.

4.2 EIA Preliminary Screening Conclusion

It is considered that the EIA Screening report provides a reasonable description and assessment of the types and characteristics of the potential impacts of the proposed development in respect of each heading and that the environmental effects arising from the proposed project will generally be localised and minor in nature.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to significant environmental impacts and does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment Report to be prepared or an Environmental Impact Assessment to be conducted.