



# Extension of Northern Cycling Route to Scragh Bog- Project Particulars

## 1. Overview

### 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this project is to provide an extension to the existing cyclway to link from Cullionmore/Levington to Scragh Bog and to regularise and expand the existing carpark at the entrance to Scragh bog.

Scragh Bog is a national nature reserve of approximately 56 acres (0.23 km<sup>2</sup>). It is considered Ireland's best example of a habitat transitioning from an alkaline fen to an acidic raised bog, one of only a small number still in existence in Europe, and is deemed to be of international importance. A large number of rare flora and insects have been recorded in the reserve.

While the facilities at Scragh bog currently include a 3km walking trail comprising over 1km of raised boardwalk through the bog, the access to this unique amenity is hampered by lack of a safely defined link for cyclists to visit as well as inadequate parking facilities for visitors by car.

In 2016, Westmeath Co. Council engaged a consultant to undertake a feasibility study to investigate the potential development of a cycle route loop from Mullingar to Fore.

The purpose of the cycle loop is to provide a scenic link from Mullingar through the County Westmeath countryside along existing suitable local roads while also utilising possible off road routes.

The cycle loop will also link up tourist attractions and facilities in North Westmeath which includes Lakes, Historical Sites and Scragh Bog.

It is an objective of the proposed project to provide a safe and attractive route for the local communities adjacent to the proposed route while also attracting tourists in the

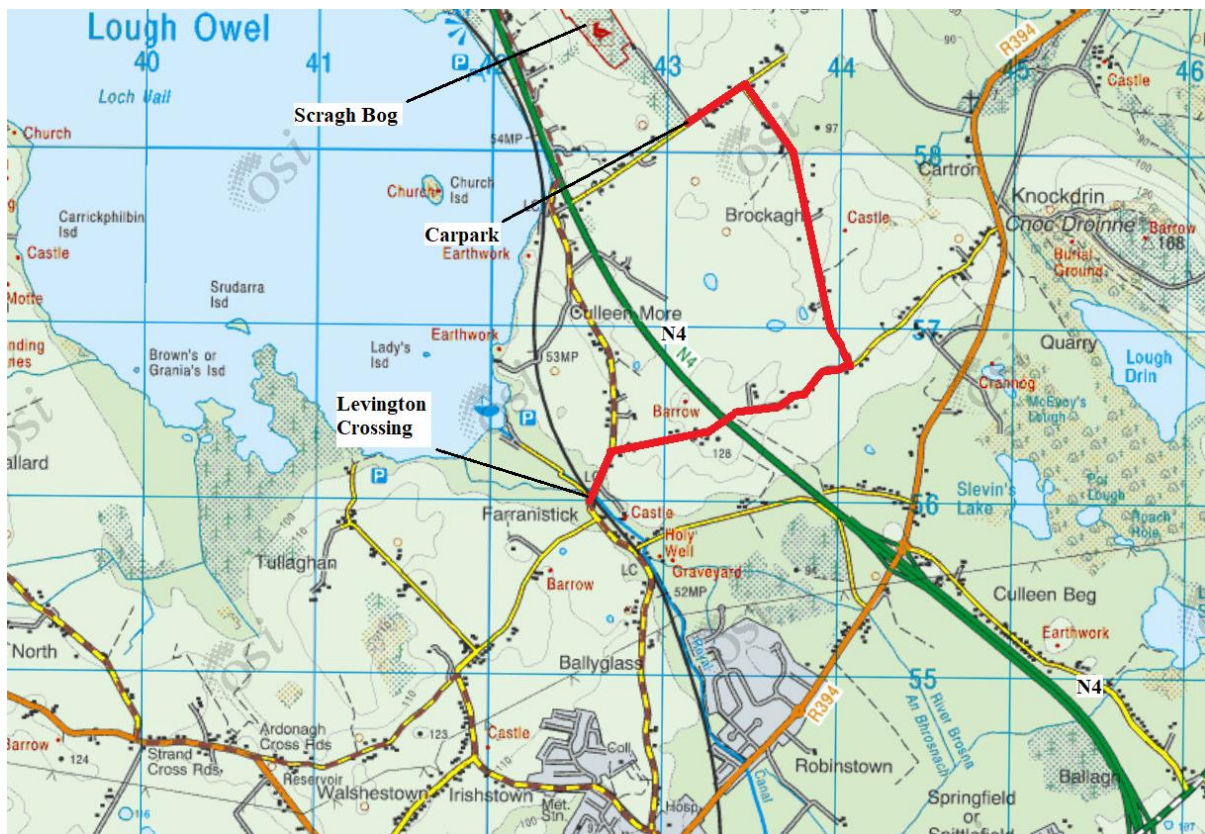
surrounding counties and potentially attract tourists using the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.

In 2016/2017 Westmeath Co. Council in conjunction with Waterways Ireland completed the construction of a cycleway Link from Mullingar to Levington/Cullion which ran along the feeder Canal to link up with the Royal Canal Greenway. This was funded through REDZ initiative ( Rural Economic Development Zones)

This proposed project will be a direct extension Northwards of the existing cycleway.

## 1.2 Location

This project is located along Local roads linking from the Level crossing on the old Longford Road (L1773) at Levington Mullingar to the Carpark at the entrance to Scragh bog on the L5708 Ballynagall, Knockdrin Mullingar via the L5706 at Cullionmore.



## **2. Description and Project Elements**

### **2.1 Project Description**

Westmeath County Council (WCC) proposes to carry out works comprising the provision of an extension to the existing cycleway to link from Levington to Scragh Bog and to regularise and expand the existing carpark at the entrance to Scragh bog.

The project can be broken up into 3 distinct elements:

1. Provision of cycle way through Council Lands along the L1773
2. Provision of "Shared Space" signage along the local roads linking to Scragh bog.
3. Upgrade, expansion and resurfacing of existing car park to Scragh bog.

### **2.2 Project Elements**

#### **2.2.1 Provision of cycle way through Council owned lands along L1773**

The first section of the proposed new Cycle way will be a continuation from where the existing cycle way ends on the L1773 on approach to the level crossing gates at Cullion/ Levington. The extended route will continue along the L1773 road to link to a cyclist dismount point at the Level crossing. On the Longford side of the crossing the Cycle way will enter into Council owned lands adjacent to the L1773. From here the new cycle way will traverse through Council Lands for approximately 380 metres Parallel to the L1773.

The existing boundary hedging along the L1773 adjacent to this new section of cycle way will be removed and replaced with a new hedge of mixed native species which will be planted on the inside of the Cycle way.

A new post and tension mesh fence will be installed on the inside of the new cycle way along this section. A 3m wide cycle way will be constructed within these lands complete with Macadamed surface and markings.

Opposite the junction of the L1773 and the L5706 the cycle way will branch off onto local roads from here all the way to Scragh bog.

#### **2.2.2 Provision of signage along the local roads linking to Scragh bog**

Signage will be provided along the local roads 3.6km linking from the junction of the the L1773 and the L5706 to the carpark entrance at Scragh bog via the L5706 and the L5708 to indicate to road users the presence of cyclists and to direct cyclists along the intended cycle route. It is intended that cyclist will share the existing local roads along this section with other road traffic without the provision of a dedicated cycle lane.

### **2.2.3 Upgrade, expansion and resurfacing of existing car park to Scragh bog**

The current car park arrangement at Scragh bog is a stoned area with no regulated parking arrangements. The current Capacity caters for up to a maximum of 10 cars with any additional cars being forced to park along the grass verges on approach.

It is proposed to increase the capacity of this carpark cater for up to 18 cars along with the provision of a bicycle set down area/bike stand.

Initial works will require the removal of a limited number of non native commercial forestry trees on the South western side of the existing parking area. A perimeter post and rail fence will be provided around the new carpark area incorporating pedestrian access point to the Scragh bog Amenity and emergency vehicular access/ forest harvesting access gateway.

The new carpark area will be excavated to formation level and granular fill (100mm down) installed and compacted. A 500mm x 500mm open textured filter drain will be provided along the eastern and western sides of the carpark to deal with carpark surface water run-off. The entire carpark area will be blinded with well compacted Clause 804 stone and then surfaced with Clause 942 SMA to depth of 50mm. Car park lining and appropriate road markings and signage will be installed.

A number of bicycle stands will also be installed in the expanded carpark.



**TYPICAL CYCLEWAYS ALONG FARM LAND.**



**TYPICAL FENCING.**







**TYPICAL STAGGERED GATES**



### **3.0 AA Preliminary Screening Conclusions**

It is considered, given the nature, siting and scale of the proposed works, that a Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment, prepared by a suitably qualified person, was required to assist in determining whether the proposed development, in view of best scientific knowledge, is/is not likely to give rise to a significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on a European

Natura 2000 Site. The Stage 1 Screening Report should consider and detail the likely significant effects of the development works at both construction stage and project completion stage on the Natura 2000 network. This Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment has been carried out and is included as part of this application.

#### **4.0 EIA Preliminary Screening Conclusion**

It has been determined that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.