

Forward Planning Dept  
Galway county Council  
Aras an Chontae  
Prospect Hill  
Galway  
Ireland



Redacted  
personal  
information  
C10

26<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Planners at Galway County Council

As a frequent visitor to Galway, in fact to Ireland in general, I am writing to make a submission on the County Galway Draft Development plan 2022/28. My interest in making an observation on this plan, despite living in England, comes from my experience of cycling in Ireland and in particular in rural Ireland. Before Covid I would take maybe 3 or 4 holidays a year in Ireland and always look forward to coming back.

My most recent trip was to use the superb Waterford Greenway in the South East, I have in the past used the Great Western Greenway in Mayo. From my own experience in the UK the closed railways converted to greenways are a honeypot for tourism and wonderful for leisure cycling as well as being great local amenities.

I regularly stay with friends in Athenry in county Galway and have followed the debate about the potential to re-open the closed railway from Claremorris to Athenry. I notice that two recent government reports on this idea have effectively ended any notion that the railway will re-open, in truth I find this hardly surprising. I note the draft county plan still talks about the notion of a railway on this route. Have you not read the EY and Jaspers reports on this idea? Also on this issue I have looked at a report from the Railway lobby group West on Track, the "Bradley/West on Track Report", it might be opportune to remind the council planners that a report sponsored and commissioned by a lobby group is not fit for consideration in deciding public policy. It would be akin to Cadburys producing a report saying lots of chocolate is good for you being used to devise health policy. The Bradley/West on Track report should not be part of any public policy considerations, it was not independent and is riddled with bias.

I have cycled from Sligo to Galway more or less following the route of the closed railway and I have to tell you it is dangerous and not a pleasant experience, it will never attract the kind of tourism numbers you will get if the entire route is a greenway along the closed railway route. So let me make this appeal to you, from what I have heard from friends in the area there is huge public support to place a greenway on the closed railway from Athenry to Claremorris that will link in with the Sligo Greenway via the section of closed railway in Mayo from Claremorris to Charlestown. This route in turn could be connected to the Great Western Greenway from say Swinford to Turlough House to join the Turlough House/Castlebar greenway. It would link in with the Dublin Galway Greenway. As planners, can you not see the logic of this idea staring you in the face. It would bring even more tourists into the west of Ireland, Galway, Mayo and Sligo. Imagine what this would do for the Atlantic Economic Corridor. I understand the Sligo greenway is planned to continue all the way through Leitrim to Enniskillen in Fermanagh. Imagine the tourists along the Atlantic Economic Corridor using this route it would be fabulous for East Galway to be part of this initiative. I presume tourism is important to the Galway economy and Atlantic Economic corridor economy?

I guess the other option is to do nothing. To sit by and watch the briars growing on the closed railway in some forlorn belief everything is going to change and a railway closed 40 years ago is going to be re-opened. You can either carry on dreaming about railways that might come back or you can do something useful for the people of East Galway over the next few years and create a greenway on the closed railway from Athenry to Claremorris and encourage your neighboring county councils in Mayo to extend it to Sligo. It is just such a huge opportunity why ignore it so please write this idea into your new county plan.

Sincerely

Dr. Jonathan Wilson, Loughborough, England.

Jon Wilson