

Leitrim County Council.



Leitrim County Council
Comhairle Chontae Liatroma



Improvements and modifications to the existing Sheemore Heritage Trail.

Part 8 Briefing Document – October 2021

Introduction and Background to Project.

Sheemore Hill in Kiltoghert, Co. Leitrim which is situated approximately 3km northeast of Leitrim Village contains Sheemore archaeological complex. Significant archaeological monuments include three Neolithic passage tombs, and the site also has a rich cultural heritage. Sheemore known, locally as the hill of the fairies is dotted with fairy trees and tombs on the ascent. Sheemore is the larger mound (Sheebeg being the smaller) and still the best formed. There are three cairns on the summit. Today it is lit up at night by a huge crucifix mounted on its peak.

Sheemore is currently accessed via a narrow local road (L-7402) off the Regional Ballinamore Road (R-209) There is no designated car parking facility adjacent the base of Sheemore Hill and currently cars are left parked on the road edge or at field gates near the trail head which is not ideal. It is proposed to construct a public carpark on the northern side of the L-7402 at Keonbrook Td directly opposite the access point to Sheemore Hill. Sheemore Hill is in private ownership and there is no formal access to Sheemore Hill summit. Currently access to Sheemore Hill is gained by climbing over a large boulder to the side of the field gate.

This Part 8 Planning Application details the improvements and modifications to the existing Sheemore Heritage Trail from Leitrim Village to the access point of Sheemore Hill and will include the development of the Sheemore Carpark Facility at Keonbrook Td, County Leitrim.

The proposed improvements/modifications of the route of the approx. 4.0km walking/cycling Sheemore Heritage Trail will start at the Community Centre car park in Leitrim Village off the local road L-3390 at Tullylannan Td. and will route as follows;

- Exiting the existing Community Centre carpark in Leitrim Village turning left onto the existing local road L-3390 continuing for approx. 0.4km.
- Turning left onto the existing Shannon Erne Waterway Canal Bank Walkway continuing for approx. 1.6km through Tullylannan Td, Killarcan Td, Tirmactiernan Td, and Ballinwing Td past Killarcan Lock No. 16 and Tirmactiernan Lock No. 15.
- Turning right onto the existing local road L-33901 at Ballinwing Td. continuing for approx. 0.3km toward the L-3390.
- Turning left onto the existing local road L-3390 at Ballinwing Td continuing for approx. 0.25km toward the R-209 Ballinamore Rd.
- Crossing the existing Regional Ballinamore Road R-209 at Ballinwing Td turning left onto a newly constructed approx. 0.055km of greenway section at Ballinwing Td.
- Turning right onto the currently disused road/trackway proposed to be improved at Ballinwing Td continuing for approx. 0.65km.
- Turning left onto the existing local road L-7420 at Ballinwing Td continuing for approx. 0.13km.
- Turning right onto the existing local road L-7402 at Ballinwing Td continuing for approx. 0.6km arriving at the proposed modified entrance to Sheemore Hill trail head at Sheemore Td. opposite the new proposed Sheemore Heritage Trail Carpark Facility at Keonbrook Td.

The route of the improved and modified Sheemore Heritage Trail will be traffic free for approx. 2.30km of the total approx. 4.0km length.

Scheme Overview.

Proposed new Greenway Section.

A new greenway section constructed in private lands at Ballinwing Td is proposed east of the R-209 accessing opposite the junction with the L-3390 and routing northeast for approx. 55m. The existing dilapidated natural stone walls on the western side of the proposed greenway will be rebuilt to approx. 1m in height. New stock proof larch timber post & rail fencing 1.2m to 1.4m high will be provided on the eastern side of the trackway. The approx. 2.5m wide greenway will be surfaced with unbound CL804 material on geotextile/terram weed barrier allowing free drainage of surface waters beneath. Approx. 12m length of the southern end of the greenway will be surfaced with bitumen macadam tying into the existing R-209 Ballinamore Road.

Disused Road/Trackway.

The entire approx. 650m length of the disused and overgrown existing road/trackway between the R-209 and the L-7420 at Ballinwing Td will be cleared of overgrowth. The existing dilapidated natural stone walls on both sides of the road/trackway will be rebuilt to approx. 1m in height. New stock proof larch timber post & rail fencing 1.2m to 1.4m high will be provided on either side of the trackway. The approx. 2.5m wide trackway will be surfaced with unbound CL804 material on geotextile/terram weed barrier allowing free drainage of surface waters beneath. Approx. 12m length of the northern end of the trackway will be surfaced with bitumen macadam tying into the existing public roads. Safety signage and gates will be provided at both ends of the trackway. Double galvanized farmyard gates will be installed at the northern end to allow the landowner to access farmlands/farm buildings.

Carpark Facility.

The proposed carpark will be located to the north of the L-7402 at Keonbrook Td directly opposite the access point to the Sheemore Trail head. The carpark will be approx. 921m² in area accommodating 19 carpark spaces (including 2 disability carpark spaces), six bike racks and an interpretative panel detailing Sheemore's archaeological, cultural and ecological heritage. The carpark will have separate signed entry and exit points. Two entry and exit point overhead height restriction barriers including height restriction signage will be provided thus preventing unauthorised access to the carpark of larger vehicles such as camper vans. The surface of the carpark will be bitumen macadam draining to trapped gullies and a hydrocarbon interceptor (grease, oils, etc.) toward a nearby surface water drain approx. 100m to the northwest. The proposed carpark will be fenced on the north, west, and east sides with stock proof larch timber post & rail fencing 1.2m to 1.4m high. An earth bund will be provided inside the new fence line. The existing stone wall on the south side of the proposed carpark will be retained between the entry and exit points. Directional signage will be installed adjacent the exit point for onward destinations.

Sheemore Hill Access.

A turnstile on an engineered concrete plinth including a pedestrian counter (to measure the number of visitors to this site) is proposed to provide the means of access to the Sheemore Hill Trail Head on the south side of the L-7402 at Sheemore Td.

Signage.

Fingerpost directional signage will be provided at road junctions between; Leitrim Village and Sheemore Hill. Trail posts will be provided at every approx. 500m along the total length of the Sheemore Heritage Trail from Leitrim Village to Sheemore Hill access point. Safety signage will be provided where the trail route meets public roads.

Public Lighting.

No public lighting is proposed as part of this Part 8 Planning Application.

The location and details of the project accompany the Part 8 application drawings.

Land Ownership.

There are 9 individual landowners along the entire route of the proposed Sheemore Heritage Trail and car park. The co-operation of these landowners will be essential to the development of the Sheemore Heritage Trail and the Sheemore Carpark facility.

Agreement with all the affected landowners has been received in principle.

Planning Policy Context.***National Policy.*****Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework:**

The national Planning Framework identifies the development of place making policy priorities including building on the progress made in developing an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways, which will support the diversification of rural and regional economies and promote more sustainable forms of travel and activity-based recreation utilizing canal and former rail and other routes.

National Strategic Outcome 7: Enhanced Amenities and Heritage-Amenities and Heritage:

Smarter Travel: A sustainable Transport Future (2009 - 2020):

The transport policy for Ireland recognises the importance of continued social development and also promotes more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling.

National Cycle Policy (2009 – 2020):

This sets out the national policy for cycling in order to create a stronger cycling culture, a friendlier environment for cycling and improved quality of life. The overarching objective of this national policy framework is that 10% of all trips in Ireland will be made by bike by 2020.

Leitrim County Development Plan 2015 – 2021.

Leitrim County Council has a number of policies and objectives set out in our County Development Plan which supports the proposed development.

Section 3.2 – Tourism Sector:

States: “The Council is fully supportive of all future developments that will contribute positively to the tourism potential of the County, while protecting the heritage and environment of the County, so as to achieve maximum economic and social gain.”

Policy 1 states; “It is the policy of the Council to deliver a County Tourism Strategy which will: - d) Promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism accommodation and facilities, subject to location, design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and other planning considerations.”

Section 4.6.1 – Sustainable Transportation:

This outlines the Council’s commitment to promote more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling which encourages healthier and safer lifestyles, including heritage walks and the protection of public rights of way, which are an important amenity and tourism resource.

Section 4.6.3 – Walking and Cycling:

Policy 46: It is the policy of the council to encourage safe walking and cycling by providing linear parks, footpaths, cycle paths and public lighting in towns and villages.

Objective 29(a): It is an objective of the council to seek opportunities for the development of suitable walking routes, cycle tracks and bridle paths along redundant railway lines and other suitable locations such as; along waterways and historical access routes.

Section 4.9.7 Archaeological Heritage: “Archaeology is the scientific study of past societies, their cultures and their relationship with the environment through an examination of the material remains of our predecessors. All remains and objects and any other traces of humankind from past times are considered elements of the archaeological heritage. The archaeological heritage is a resource, which can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of the past. The archaeological heritage is therefore of great cultural and scientific importance” (DoECLG website).

Objective 92: It is an objective of the Council to promote the County’s archaeological heritage as a tourism resource, in partnership with key tourism organisations.

Section 4.9.9 - Industrial Archaeology and Canals:

States: “The Council is aware of the cultural importance of the County’s industrial heritage and in particular of the canal and waterway systems that traverse the County. Canals, lough gates and associated structures are fine examples of 19th century industrial engineering, which have mellowed over time to form an intrinsic part of the County’s landscape. The importance of protecting these structures is all the greater given the increased importance of the canal and navigation network as a tourism and recreational resource.”

Policy 107: It is the policy of the Council to protect and enhance public accessibility to the County’s industrial heritage.

Accompanying Reports.

Jennings O’ Donovan & Partners Ltd Consulting Engineers have been appointed to undertake the Environmental Feasibility Study Report, Ecological and Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report and Archaeological Assessment Report of, the proposed greenway, the proposed carpark facility & appropriate signage and turnstile access at Sheemore.

Environmental Feasibility Study Report.

An Environmental Feasibility Study Report (No. 6491_508 -AA Screening. Dated: Sept. 2021) has been prepared as part of this Part 8 Planning Application as required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. The report concluded that, overall, no significant impacts are expected to in terms of socio-economic, hydrology or hydrogeology, flora and fauna, landscape and visual, odour, noise or cultural heritage.

Ecological and Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

Ecological and Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (No. 6491_504 AA Screening Report. Dated: Sept. 2021) has been prepared as part of this Part 8 Planning Application as required under Article 6(3) of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) The Ecological and Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concluded that there are not likely to be significant effects on any European Site as a result of the proposed visitor car park and Greenway at Sheemore, Co. Leitrim.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report (No. 6491_503 EIA Screening Report. Dated: October 2021) has been prepared as part of this Part 8 Planning Application. This EIA Screening exercise was undertaken to determine if EIA is required for the proposed development as set out in the mandatory and discretionary provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) (the

Act) and in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended (the Regulations). Certain projects, listed in Schedule 5 of the regulations, due to their potential for significant environmental effects, require mandatory EIA. Others, also listed in the Schedule 5 of the regulations, contain threshold levels and for projects that fall below these thresholds it is the decision of the competent authority to decide if an EIA (and the associated Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is required.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Schedule 7 & 7A of The Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (As Amended) and with published guidance to document the outcome of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening process in respect of the project proposals.

Where developments are under the relevant EIA threshold, planning authorities are required under Article 103 of the 2001 Regulations, as amended, to request an EIA where it considers the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. In these cases, the significant effects of the project are assessed relative to the criteria contained in Schedule 7 of the regulations, principally:

- The projects characteristics
- Sensitivity of the project location, and
- Characterisation of potential impacts.

The principal requirement of this report is to assist the competent authority in forming an opinion as to whether or not the project proposal should be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Further to the above, this proposed development has also been screened for EIA under the Roads Act 1993 (as amended) and the Roads Regulations, 1994

Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Consulting Engineers have determined that an EIA is not considered to be required for the proposed development as it falls well under the threshold criteria that apply in terms of projects outlined in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations. The proposed development is not likely to result in significant effects on the environment under Schedule 7 or 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Archaeological Assessment Report.

An Archaeological Assessment Report (Dated: Sept. 2021) has been prepared as part of this Part 8 Planning Application as required under; The European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (1997), The National Monuments Act (1930 to 2004) and The Architectural Heritage & Historic Properties Act 1999.

The report concludes that the proposed development will not impact on any architectural structures nor will the proposed development directly impact on any upstanding archaeological monuments. The report states that the proposed development will have a positive impact on recreation and tourism and will facilitate an appreciation for the history, archaeology and folklore of the area.

Drawings.

The following Part 8 drawings shall be submitted as part of the application;

- SH-001 - Site Location Map.
- SH-001.1 - Site Location Map Discovery Series.
- SH-002 - Car Park Layout.
- SH-003 - Proposed Upgrade. CH2560-CH3205.
- SH-004.0 - Layout Overview.
- SH-004.1 - Site Layout Plan. (Sheet 1 of 3)
- SH-004.2 - Site Layout Plan. (Sheet 2 of 3)
- SH-004.3 - Site Layout Plan. (Sheet 3 of 3)
- SH-005.1 - Disused roadway tie in proposed works. (Sheet 1 of 2)
- SH-005.2 - Disused roadway tie in proposed works. (Sheet 2 of 2)
- SH-006 - Typical turnstyle detail.

Site Photos.

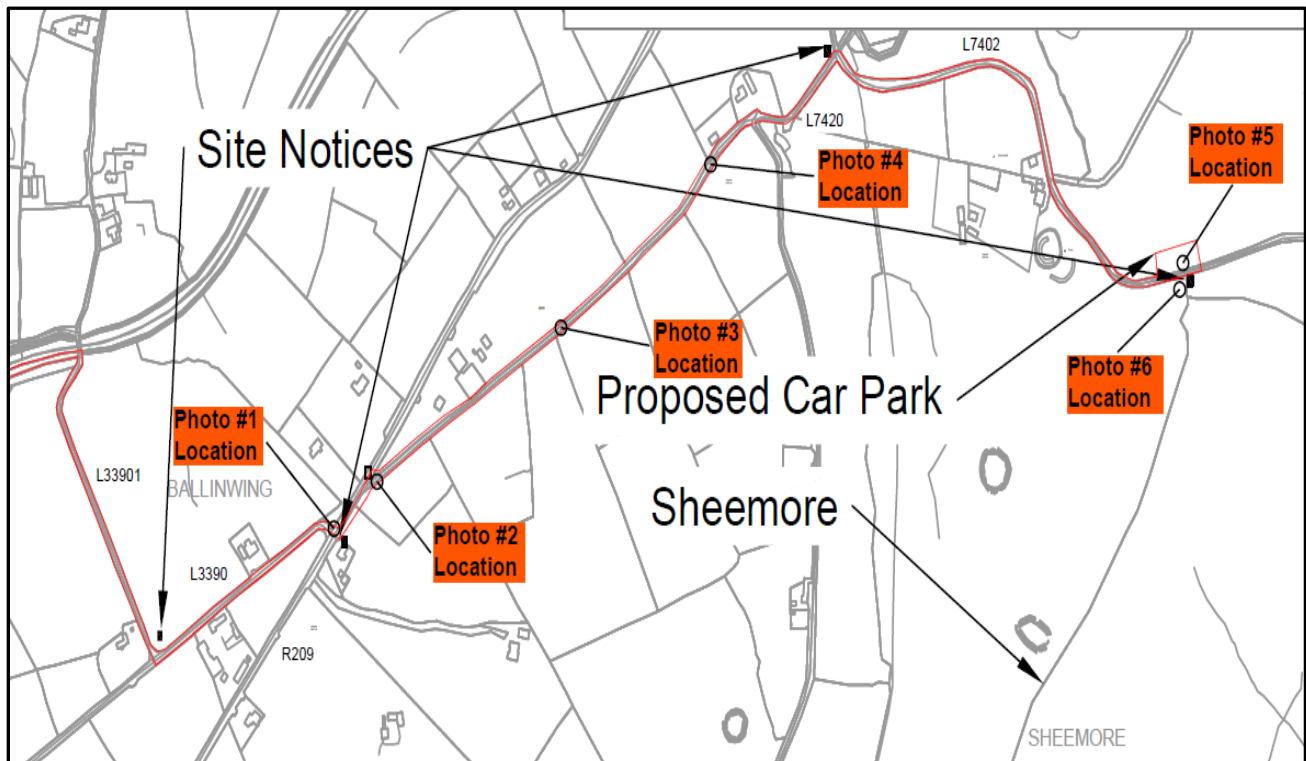




Photo #1: Location of proposed new 55m greenway section east of the R-209.



Photo #2: Typical condition of the existing disused road/trackway as seen from the southern end.



Photo #3: Typical condition of the existing disused road/trackway as seen from the midpoint.



Photo #4: Typical condition of the existing disused road/trackway as seen from the northern end.



Photo #5: Location of the proposed Sheemore Carpark on the northern side of the L-7402.



Photo #6: Location of the proposed turnstile access point to Sheemore Hill.



Typical example of a walking/cycling trail marker post.



Typical example of start/end of walking/cycling trails adjacent public roads.



Typical example of fingerpost directional sign

