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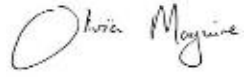
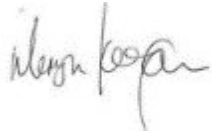
PROJECT: Drumshanbo Narrow Gauge Trail

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
Screening Report.

Prepared by: AONA Environmental Consulting Ltd.

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1 INTRODUCTION

AONA Environmental Consulting Ltd. was commissioned by CST Engineers on behalf of Leitrim County Council to complete an EIA Screening Report, for the proposed Drumshanbo Narrow Gauge Trail in Drumshanbo, Co Leitrim. The Report is prepared in the context of an application under Part VIII of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

The EIA Screening Report has been prepared in accordance with published guidance to assess the potential impacts on the environment due to the proposed project. The purpose of the EIA Screening Report is to determine if EIA is required for the proposed project as set out in the mandatory and discretionary provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended (the Act), and Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended (the Regulations). The requirement for a 'sub-threshold' development to be subject to EIA is determined by the likelihood that the development would result in significant environmental effects which may arise due to the location of the development or the characteristics of the development. The EIA screening exercise outlined below has examined the project with reference to the relevant thresholds and criteria.

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report which assesses the potential of the proposed project to adversely affect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed project site has also been prepared for the proposed project and will be submitted to the competent authority as part of the Part VIII application.

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) assessment which quantifies any potential effects relating to flora/fauna and identifies the measures required to avoid, reduce and mitigate likely significant effects has been prepared for the proposed project and will be submitted in the planning application documents to the competent authority also.

1.1 *Statement of Authority*

This report has been compiled by Olivia Maguire (B.Sc., M.Sc.) who is a Senior Environmental Consultant with AONA Environmental Consulting Ltd. and reviewed by Mervyn Keegan (B.Sc., M.Sc.) who is a Director with AONA Environmental Consulting Ltd.

Olivia has over 17 years of experience in Environmental Consultancy. She has a BSc in Hons Geography and a MSc in Applied Environmental Science from Queens University, Belfast and a BSc in Occupational Health and Safety from Atlantic University, Sligo. Olivia is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment and the Occupational Hygiene Society of Ireland and operates in accordance with their respective codes of professional conduct. Olivia's role involves the delivery of a wide range of environmental and occupational health & safety consultancy services to public and private sector clients in the following areas;

- Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with relevant legislation & guidance
- Appropriate Assessment in accordance with the Habitats Directive.
- Environmental Noise & Air Quality Surveys & Impact Assessment.
- Occupational Health Assessments including noise at work and indoor air quality surveys.

2 PROPOSED PROJECT

2.1 *Description of Proposed Project*

Drumshanbo is designated as a Tier 2B Support Town under the Leitrim County Settlement Hierarchy, with its function recognised as fulfilling "local service and some specialised employment and tourism functions which play an important role in supporting the social, economic and cultural life within their rural communities". This designation, and associated function, reflects the longstanding role Drumshanbo fulfils within the county and wider region in providing for a good level of services, housing provision and employment generating uses to

cater for immediate inhabitants and its wider hinterland with a strong emphasis on tourism development.

It is an objective of Leitrim County Council to under the Leitrim County Development Plan 2023 - 2029, volume ii – settlement plans, Drumshanbo settlement plan to :

DSO 35: Seek to advance through planning and detailed design the development of a greenway (walking/cycling route) along the former narrow gauge rail line and to integrate this infrastructure with other existing/proposed walking routes/footpaths around the town.

The Cavan and Leitrim Railway operated from 1887 to 1959 and was known locally as 'The Narrowgauge'. The proposal is to develop a scenic recreational trail along the route of the Narrow-Gauge Railway which ran from Arigna to Ballinamore and closed in 1959. It is the intention to extend a trail along the route of the Narrow-Gauge Railway from the R207 (Dowra approach Road), across the Church Road and link back to the R208 (Ballinamore approach road). The trail would complete a walking loop of Drumshanbo. Currently the only two roads out of the town that are not connected are the Church Road & the Dowra Road. This route would allow walkers and cyclists to travel a circular route of the town in a series of short walks with different terrain & scenery. They range from the Canal Bank walk to the Convent Wall walk, the Rockwell walk, the Lake Shore walk & the Blueway Boardwalk.

Leitrim County Council proposes a linear trail for walkers and cyclists, of approx. 1km as shown in Figure 2.1. The project will be undertaken in a phased construction. Phase 1 section is depicted in Figures 2.2 and 2.3. Phase 2 section is depicted in Figures 2.4 and 2.5.

Phase 1 is from R207 Dowra Rd to the L3306 Convent Avenue (Church Road) along the old railway line. This will be a 2.57m wide trail with a bituminous macadam finish with low level lighting. The lighting will be on bollards or 4m high columns. Excavation will be required at the start of the route, adjacent to the Dowra Road. The trail will be at a 1 in 12 maximum gradient with the cut section continuing east for c.50 - 60m. Native hedgerow will be planted on the north bank in this cut section. A linear land drain designed in short sections, is proposed for the southern side of the trail to prevent ponding of runoff water. The outfall will be to existing field drainage. The project will also involve the construction of a footpath for c. 40m along the Dowra Road, and provision of a raised controlled Zebra crossing and metal railing.

Phase 2 is the remainder of the trail, east of Convent Road. This section of trail through woodland vegetation and agricultural fields will be a 2.75m trail with a bituminous macadam finish.

The initial section follows the footprint of the old railway line under the old railway bridge and through a wooded ravine, south of the new Cemetery on Convent road. At the end of this ravine, the route will turn 90 degrees and continue west up the incline of a field, south of the existing hedgerow. The proposed route will once more turn 90 degrees and proceed south, west of the existing hedgerow, to meet the regional road R208.

The removal of trees and trimming of any overhanging branches that fall within the working area will be required. Proposed landscaping for the site outlines that native trees and other native vegetation will be planted in order to replace any habitat being removed thereby improving wildlife corridors and limiting potential impacts to the commuting/foraging areas of bat species, birds and mammals. The proposed works are unlikely to cause any significant habitat fragmentation.

Figure 2.3: Cross section through Trail in Phase 1, with Macadam Finish

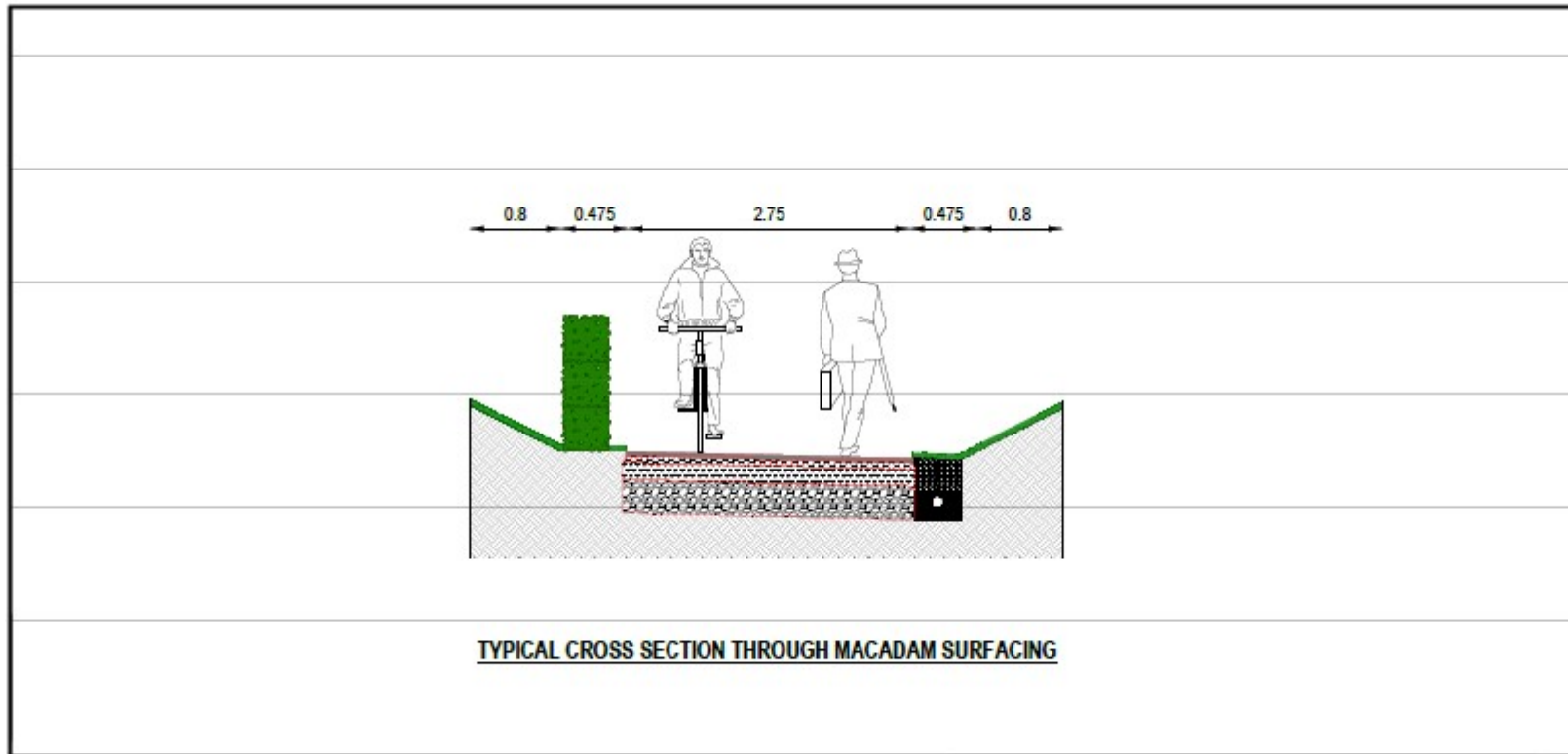


Figure 2.4: Phase 2 - Convent Road to R208

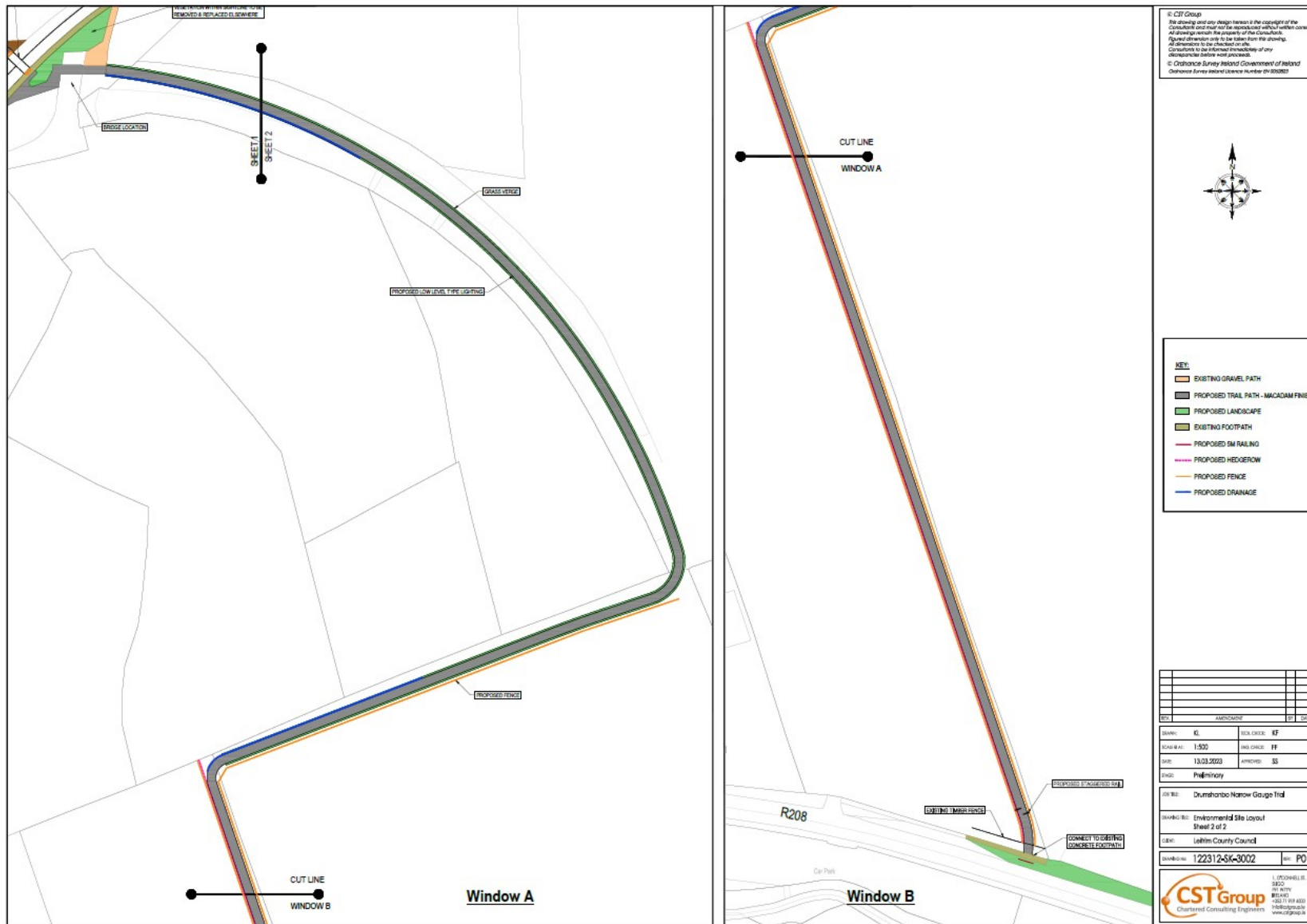
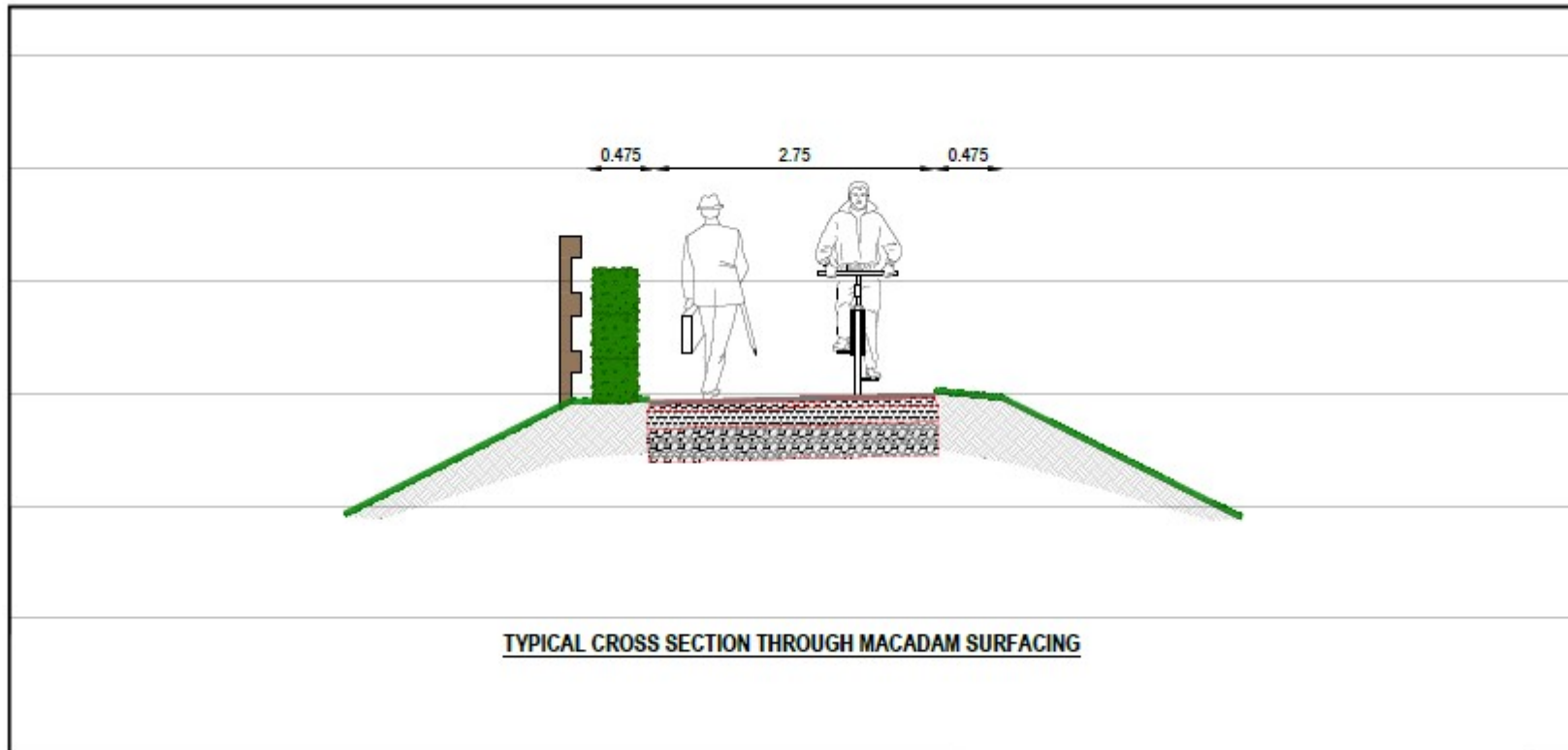


Figure 2.5: Cross section through Trail in Phase 2, with Macadam Finish



2.2 Description of Receiving Environment

2.2.1 Flora and Fauna

A site survey of the proposed project site was undertaken on 23rd April 2023 and 14th May 2023 in which habitats on site were assessed and the suitability of the site to support plants, animals or habitats of note was also considered. Findings of the ecological survey were augmented by desktop research and review of available information. An Ecological Impact assessment (EcIA) and an AA Screening Report to accompany this EIA Screening report as part of planning documentation. These reports should be read in conjunction with this document.

A summary of these reports is as follows:

- The ecological survey did not identify any habitat which corresponds with Annex I habitat. The habitat types identified within the proposed project boundary and immediate surrounding area include: Amenity Grassland (GA2), Flower Beds and Borders (BC4), Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2), Treelines (WL1), Hedgerows (WL2), woodland strips with affinities to Oak-Ash-Hazel Woodland (WN2) and Wet Willow-Alder-Ash Woodland (WN6), Wet Grassland (GS4), Drainage Ditches (FW4), and Buildings and other Artificial Surfaces (BL3).
- No rare or protected plants were recorded in the course of the current survey.
- No sightings of terrestrial mammals were recorded on day of survey. Mammal paths were evident in numerous places along the woodlands, treelines and hedgerows. So it is assumed species likely to occur, include badger (*Meles meles*), Pine martin (*Martes martes*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).
- The birds observed during the ecological surveys are considered to be common within the wider landscape. No species are SCIs of any European site.
- The proposed project route will have an impact on the linear landscape features in the area as some selective felling of trees and tree limbs in Phase 1 and a felling of c.25-30 trees in the woodland in Phase 2 and small sections of hedgerow will be necessary to facilitate the trail construction.
- No dedicated bat survey was carried out as part of this survey. It is imperative a bat survey is undertaken prior to construction works to ascertain bat presence in the trees that require removal. Many of these densely ivy covered trees along the footprint of the old railway line in Phase 2 displayed good bat potential.
- The only Natura 2000 designated site within the potential zone of influence of the site is the Cuilcagh -Anierin Uplands SAC (000584), which is located 4.7km northeast of the proposed project. It is considered that the proposed project does not include any element that has the potential to significantly alter the favourable conservation objectives associated with the species and habitats or interfere with the key relationships that define the structure or function, either alone or in combination with other impacts, of Cuilcagh and Anierin Uplands SAC
- The proposed project will result in localised effects on biodiversity of the project site. Standard mitigation measures with proven effectiveness, based on recognised good practice, have been developed to reduce the effects of all identified impacts and effects. The proposed project will not have any significant negative ecological impacts, assuming mitigation measures are implemented, and the proposed project is undertaken in accordance with the Wildlife Act (1976) as amended.
- Invasive plant species can negatively impact on native habitats and species. There are several invasive species present within the study area including Japanese Knotweed,

Winter Heliotrope and Snowberry. Targeted works should be carried out to remove existing areas of invasive species identified in the course of this survey. Effective biosecurity is essential in any invasive species management plan to avoid unintentional spread and maximise the effectiveness of any measures undertaken.

2.2.2 Hydrology

The proposed project is located within the Upper Shannon Hydrometric Area and Catchment and Yellow [Ballinaglera]_SC_010 Sub-Catchment, the Drumshanbo Stream River Sub-Basin and the Geevagh groundwater catchment. Rivers and streams (those included on the EPA-MAPS database) were reviewed in the vicinity of the proposed project. There are no drains or streams evident within the study area. Drumshanbo Stream is located to the west (45m at closest point) and to the south (30m at closest point) of the proposed project. It has been assigned 'Moderate' WFD Status (2016-2021) and classified as being 'At Risk' of failing to achieve WFD objectives.

Water Framework Directive (WFD) Priority Areas for Action are areas where action will be carried out in the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). The Areas for Action (AFA) were selected based on the priorities in the RBMP, the evidence from the WFD characterisation process, and the expertise, data and knowledge of public body staff with responsibilities for water and the different pressure types. The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) conduct assessment work within the Area for Action. In total, 10 Areas for Action (AFA) within County Leitrim are recommended in the draft 3rd Cycle RBMP. The Drumshanbo Stream_010 water body forms part of the Lough Allan AFA. This watercourse is not designated as a Salmonid River under the Salmonid Regulations (S.I. 293 EC(Quality of Salmonid Waters) Regulations, 1988). The proposed trail does not cross this watercourse at any point and no watercourse was found on the day of survey to connect with this watercourse. Field drainage ditches were observed in the study area.

2.2.2 Geology and Soils

According to GSI online mapping, the underlying soils for the best part of the footprint of the proposed project are shales and sandstones till with cutover peat in the wooded ravine section of Phase 2. The groundwater aquifer is classified as regionally important with groundwater flowing through conduits. Groundwater that readily and quickly receives water (and contaminants) from the land surface is considered to be more vulnerable than groundwater that receives water (and contaminants) more slowly, and consequently in lower quantities. Also, the slower the movement and the longer the pathway, the greater is the potential for attenuation of many contaminants. Groundwater is most at risk where the subsoils are absent or thin and in areas of karstic limestone, where surface streams sink underground at swallow holes. Groundwater vulnerability for the most part is classified as low with very small sections of Phase 1 and at the end of phase 2 being classified as moderate and high.

2.3 Construction Methodology

The construction phase will be c.12 weeks from commencement and in accordance with low impact principles. Construction will concur with Leitrim County Council appropriate Health and Safety standards and Safety Management Systems. Drawings, provided by CST engineers demonstrates that the design of the project has considered necessary measures and best practice will be put in place to avoid any impacts to the Natura 2000 sites occurring.

A site compound shall be established at the start of Phase 2, in the area of amenity grassland between Convent Road and the cemetery. The compound shall be stripped of vegetation and a stone base laid. This area shall be secured with a silt fence and all construction materials shall be stored in this defined area.

Machinery used in construction will be mostly lightweight excavators and dumpers with a suitable excavator used in cut and fill areas near the Dowra road at the start of Phase 1, and in a section of Phase 2 where the route runs east to west up the incline of the field.

3 RELEVANT EIA LEGISLATION

The EIA Directive, Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27th June 1985 *on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment* is designed to ensure that projects likely to have significant effects on the environment are subject to a comprehensive assessment of environmental effects prior to development consent being given. This Directive was amended by the following Directives: - Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997, Directive 2003/35/EC of 26 May 2003, Directive 2009/31/EC of 23 April 2009, (codified in Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011) and most recently by Directive 2014/52/EU of 16 April 2014.

3.1 National EIA Legislation

EIA provisions in relation to planning permissions are contained in the Part X of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended (hereafter referred to as "the Planning Act"), and in Part 10 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

The 2014 EIA Directive has been transposed into national planning law by the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018), with effect from 1st September 2018^{1 2}, and the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (No.2) Regulations 2018, with effect from 8th October 2018.

3.2 EIA Guidance

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) revised the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment*, in August 2018. These updated Guidelines deal with the new legislative provisions resulting from the 2014 EIA Directive and the 2018 EIA Regulations and how they are to be addressed in practice.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published guidance to respond to the 2014 EIA Directive, including *Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (2022). Since the adoption of the 2014 EIA Directive, the European Commission has also prepared a suite of guidance documents including *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)* (2017).

4 EIA SCREENING

4.1 Methodology

To determine if an EIA is required, the first step is to determine whether the Project is a class set out in Annex I or II of the Directive. These classes have been broadly transposed into Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, with national thresholds included for many of the Annex II classes.

If the project is not subject to a mandatory EIA, EIA may still be required to determine the likelihood of a sub-threshold project having significant effects on the environment. Criteria are included in Annex III of the EIA Directive (transposed into Irish Law in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended) to determine whether a subthreshold development should be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment

¹ A separate commencement date of 1 January 2019 is provided for the enhanced provisions for EIA screening in advance of making a planning application (Sections 176A to 176C)

² Hereafter referred to as the 2018 EIA Regulations.

4.2 Mandatory EIA Thresholds

Section 172 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, provides the legislative basis for mandatory EIA. It states:

"An environmental impact assessment shall be carried out by a planning authority or the Board, as the case may be, in respect of an application for consent for proposed development where either:

(a) the proposed development would be of a class specified in –

(i) Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, and either – I. such development would exceed any relevant quantity, area or other limit specified in that Part, or II. no quantity, area or other limit is specified in that Part in respect of the development concerned, or

(ii) Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and either – I. such development would exceed any relevant quantity, area or other limit specified in that Part, or II. no quantity, area or other limit is specified in that Part in respect of the development concerned, or

(b) (i) the proposed development would be of a class specified in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 but does not exceed the relevant quantity, area or other limit specified in that Part, and (ii) the planning authority or the Board, as the case may be, determines that the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment."

Further to the above, Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001, as amended sets out a number of classes and scales of development that require EIA. There is no class set out under Part 1 of Schedule 5 in relation to the provision of a walking trail. Under Part 2 of Schedule 5, in relation to Infrastructure projects, Class 10(b)(iv) of Part 2 refers to urban developments as follows:

10. Infrastructure projects

(a)

(b) (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a Business District, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area, and 20 hectares elsewhere. (In this paragraph "business district" means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)

The proposed project is not located within a business district, "a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use", nor is it classed under "other parts of a built-up area" and is therefore classed as "elsewhere". The size of the proposed site is approximately 0.5 hectares, substantially less than the applicable threshold of 20 hectares, therefore a **mandatory EIA is not required**.

Class 15 should also be noted as this is applicable to "any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development, but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7.

Recognising the requirement to apply a 'wide scope' it is considered the proposed project could be considered to broadly fall under the project meaning of Part 2 Class 10 (b) (iv) Urban Development. An EIA Screening determination is required for sub-threshold development under this class as per the 2001 Regulations (as amended) and a screening assessment is provided in Section 5 of this report.

4.2 Sub-Threshold Screening

To determine whether the project described in Section 2 above should be subject to an EIA, the following assessment is completed on the basis of the Criteria in Schedule 7 of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended* and utilising the Screening Checklist provided in the *'Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)'* (EC, 2017).

Under Schedule 7A of the Regulations, as amended, the following information is to be provided by the applicant or development for the purpose of screening sub-threshold development for Environmental Impact Assessment:

1. A description of the proposed development, including in particular:
 - i. A description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works, and
 - ii. A description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.
2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.
3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from:
 - i. the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and
 - ii. the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.
4. The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7 as detailed in Table 1.

The assessment of the likelihood of significant environmental effects requires professional judgment. The DoEHLG Guidance Document '*Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development*' states that it is not intended that special studies or technical evaluations will be necessary for the purpose of making a decision. In this context, this screening exercise has relied on available information.

In addition to the above reference criteria, a further screening exercise was completed to assess the most significant potential impacts and Table 2 presents the sections that would be covered in any EIA as specified in the Directive and includes the aspects of the environment with the potential to be significantly affected by the project.

Table 1: Project Screening against Schedule 7 Criteria

Screening Questions	Commentary of potential significance
<p>1 Characteristics of the project.</p> <p>The characteristics of projects must be considered, with particular regard to:</p>	<p>There is no likelihood of significant environmental effects arising from the proposed project having regard to the characteristics of the project, as set out below:</p>
<p>(a) the size and design of the whole of the proposed development,</p>	<p>The project is not significant in terms of design or size. The proposed project will be approximately 0.5 hectares. The works are intended to follow in part the footprint of the old railway line and along field boundaries, hence land take is minor. The Ecological Impact Assessment undertaken as part of the project brief indicated that the proposed project would result in the loss/alteration of habitats of Local Importance (Higher Value) which include, treelines, hedgerows, semi natural woodland (WN2, WN6) and wet grassland and Local Importance (Lower Value) which include amenity grassland, dry meadows and grassy verges and flowerbeds, (BC4).</p> <p>Removal of vegetation should not significantly impact on linear landscape features. The design of the project has allowed for the retention of these features and the proposed landscaping for the site outlines that native trees and other native vegetation will be planted in order to replace any habitat being removed thereby improving wildlife corridors.</p>
<p>(b) cumulation with other existing development and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment,</p>	<p>Information on the site and the area of the proposed project was studied prior to the completion of this statement.</p> <p>Having regard to the scale of the permitted developments in the vicinity, the accompanying Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Assessment noted that there will be no likely significant effects to any European Site during the construction or operations phases of the proposed project. Therefore, there will be no in-combination effects with local planning applications.</p> <p>A review of planning applications within 500 metres of the site for the past 5 years, using Leitrim County Council planning portal, indicates that there are no significant development proposals within the vicinity of the site that could act in cumulation with the project. In addition, the small-scale nature and operation of the proposed project is unlikely give rise to any significant cumulative environmental effects.</p> <p>It is acknowledged, Leitrim County Council are in the process of a Part 8 planning application, seeking permission to develop a facility centre for water sports at Acres Lake in Drumshanbo as well as a 70 space car park and a pedestrian cross on the R207. It is reasonable to assume that</p>

	<p>this application and any future development applications will be subject to the relevant assessments and if approved would incorporate conditions requiring protection of the environment during the construction and operational phase.</p>
(c) the nature of any associated demolition works,	<p>The project will not involve the demolition of any existing structures other than excavation and associated removal of soil and vegetation. The existing topsoil and vegetation will be removed by excavation prior to the laying of the new substrates and drainage. Excavated soil will be removed and temporarily stored on site and subsequently reused onsite in the construction of the trail.</p>
(d) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity	<p>Natural resources will be used in terms of surfacing of the trail as necessary and will use a variety of surface dressings. Excavated soil will be removed and temporarily stored on site and subsequently reused onsite in the construction of the trail. All disturbed lands will be fully reinstated following completion of the construction works.</p> <p>No resources will be taken from any Natura 2000 site and there are no resource requirements that will impact upon any designated sites. An ecological survey was carried along the proposed route on 23rd April 2023 and 14th May 2023 to inform the Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), in which habitats on site were assessed and the suitability of the site to support plants, animals or habitats of note was also considered.</p> <p>The AA concluded that the proposed project does not include any element that has the potential to significantly alter the favourable conservation objectives associated with the species and habitats or interfere with the key relationships that define the structure or function, either alone or in combination with other impacts on Cuilcagh - Anierin SAC or any European Site.</p> <p>The EcIA concluded that the proposed project will result in localised effects on biodiversity of the project site. Standard mitigation measures with proven effectiveness, based on recognised good practice, have been developed to reduce the effects of all identified impacts and effects. The proposed project will not have any significant negative ecological impacts, assuming mitigation measures are implemented, and the proposed project is undertaken in accordance with the Wildlife Act (1976) as amended.</p> <p>In conclusion, it is anticipated that throughout construction and operation of the trail would not result in the use of large amounts of natural resources to the extent that would have a significant impact on the environment.</p>

(e) the production of waste,	<p>Any wastes from the construction process will either be reused within the scheme or recycled/disposed of at an authorized waste facility. The proposed project will not result in the generation of waste during the operational phase.</p> <p>On this basis the waste generation will not be of a level of significance that would require EIA. There is no likelihood of significant environmental effects arises.</p>
(f) pollution and nuisances,	<p>The construction phase presents the greatest risk of pollution to water resources, and disturbance/damage to flora and fauna. Potential sources of water pollution to both surface and groundwater include fuel, lubricants, suspended solids and asphalt. Silt-laden surface runoff could arise during construction during vegetation stripping and resurfacing. The input of such runoff may have the potential to negatively affect water quality within Drumshanbo stream , located to the west (45m at closest point) and to the south (30m at closest point) of the proposed project.</p> <p>Potential pollution to water resources from operation include increased surface run off containing suspended solids associated with increased cycling or pedestrian traffic. However this is not predicted to represent a risk to surface water quality due to its proposed use as a cycling and walking route, both of which are not predicted to have the potential to generate polluting water emissions .</p> <p>However, best practice in design, construction and operation will be implemented and adherence to best practice Construction and Environmental Management during the construction phase will ensure that development will not result in pollution of groundwater or surface water.</p> <p>In addition, noise disturbance during construction may impact on bird and bat species. Construction works have the potential for noise disturbance due to increased vehicle movements associated with delivery of materials, excavations and construction activity. However, any such disturbance will be temporary, localised and controlled and mitigated by standard construction best practice and normal day-time working hours and will not lead to long term residual impacts.</p> <p>Proposed lighting will adhere to the best practice lighting standards provided in the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) guidance document Guidance Note 08/18 – Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK (2018). Leitrim County Council will consider the minimisation of artificial light pollution as much as possible in the lighting design of this new development.</p>

	In terms of dust nuisance, standard construction dust mitigation measures will be integrated into the construction phase, and it is considered that any impact would be short-term and not significant.
(g) 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,	<p>The risk of major accidents is not considered to be significant subject to best construction practices being followed through the construction phase. This will include proper site management, maintenance and operation of all machinery and works associated with the construction phase and on site safety and training.</p> <p>The potential natural disasters that may occur are limited to flooding and fire. The sites are not located within a Flood Zone and no mapped indicative fluvial, pluvial, coastal or groundwater flood zones have been recorded within or adjacent to the boundary of the proposed project.</p>
(h) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).	There is limited potential for negative effects on human health during the construction phase as a result of potential emissions to air of dust, or potential emissions to land and water of hydrocarbons. Measures inherent in the design and best construction site practices will prevent any risk of pollution running off the site. To reduce the potential for health and safety risks, the project developer would require that all contractors prepare a site-specific health and safety plan before initiating construction activities. The plan would inform those on site of the measures to take in the event of an emergency and would be maintained for the duration of the construction phase.
<p>2 Location of Project</p> <p>The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, with particular regard to:</p>	In consideration of the location of the project, there are no anticipated significant environmental effects arising with regards to:
(a) the existing and approved land use,	<p>None of the habitats within the project site boundary correspond to habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The linear areas of woodland, tree lines, hedgerows and wet grassland, recorded were assigned Local Importance (Higher Value), given habitats with high biodiversity in a local context, that maintain links and provide ecological corridors between features of higher ecological value. The remaining terrestrial habitats, including roads, amenity grassland, dry meadows and grassy verges, and flower beds and borders, which were assigned Local Importance (Lower Value).</p> <p>From a land use planning perspective, the proposed trail can be integrated into the receiving environment without any significant effects.</p>

<p>(b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,</p>	<p>The project is not likely to have a significant impact on the relative abundance, availability, quality, or regenerative capacity of natural resources. The works are relatively minor in nature, utilising an old railway line in part and agricultural grassland. The project will include the removal of some trees, hedgerow and existing grass and soil. Removal of vegetation should not significantly impact on linear landscape features. The design of the project has allowed for the retention of these features and the proposed landscaping for the site outlines that native trees and other native vegetation will be planted in order to replace any habitat being removed thereby improving wildlife corridors limiting potential impacts to the commuting/foraging areas of bat species, birds and mammals.</p> <p>No ecological designations directly affect the site. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared in respect to areas classified or protected under birds and habitat legislation. This assessment has determined that the proposed project will not adversely impact on these natural resources.</p>
<p>(c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:</p>	
<p>(i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;</p>	<p>The proposal is not of such a location or scale that it would impact upon the absorption capacity of this feature.</p>
<p>(ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;</p>	<p>The proposal is not of such a location or scale that it would impact upon the absorption capacity of this feature.</p>
<p>(iii) mountain and forest areas;</p>	<p>The proposal is not of such a location or scale that it would impact upon the absorption capacity of this feature.</p>
<p>(iv) nature reserves and parks;</p>	<p>The proposal is not of such a location or scale that it would impact upon the absorption capacity of this feature.</p>
<p>(v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and;</p>	<p>No ecological designations directly affect the site. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared in respect to areas classified or protected under birds and habitat legislation. This assessment has determined that no adverse effect on the integrity of any European sites during development and operation of the proposed project is anticipated alone or in-combination with any other plans or projects.</p>
<p>(vi) areas in which there has already been a</p>	<p>The construction operations should be carried out in such a manner so as to preclude any</p>

failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;	pollution event that may affect the water quality of the Drumshanbo Stream. Reference should be made to the Eastern Regional Fisheries Board (now part of Inland Fisheries Ireland) <i>Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites</i> (Murphy, 2004) for relevant actions to take to protect water quality, or other best practice guidance for the protection of water quality for the construction industry.
(vii) densely populated areas;	The project will involve short-term construction work in an urban fringe area and will not impact on densely populated areas. The provision of improved recreational facilities will have a positive impact on the local population. Given the size and scale of the project there is not likely to be any significant impact on road users as a result of the proposed project. The additional increase in traffic as a result of the project will be minimal and will not impact upon the absorption capacity of this feature.
(viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance	There are no protected structures located within the proposed project site. No landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance are listed within or adjoining this proposed project and no impacts are identified. The proposed project is not considered likely to directly impact on archaeological sites or protected structures although careful consideration will be required to balance pedestrian and cycling safety and protected structures such as the bridge at the start of phase 2 off ? road, to avoid overuse of heavy signage and result in visual clutter.
3. Types and characteristics of potential impacts	The magnitude and spatial extent of impacts associated with the proposed project are considered insignificant.
(a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The proposed project will involve the development of a walking and cycling trail, approximately 1km in length, and with a footprint area of c.0.5 hectares. It is likely that the impact of the project will extend beyond the project footprint area during construction (particularly on the road network it traverses).
(b) the nature of the impact,	The nature of impacts during construction will be temporary in that on site construction work, noise, dust and traffic, will have a temporary effect on existing on-site uses and surrounding uses. The project when complete will result in a positive long-term effect through the provision of improved recreational facilities.
(c) the transboundary nature of the impact	The project will not result in transboundary impacts.
(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact	As set out above, impacts arising during construction will be temporary and managed through best practice construction guidelines with respect of excavation, soil removal, dust, traffic and

	lighting. Waste generated during the construction process will be controlled through measures adopted in a waste management plan.
(e) the probability of the impact	Should approval be given, the project will most likely proceed. Temporary environmental impacts will occur. These are easily addressed through appropriate construction site best practice measures. No significant impacts are expected to occur.
(f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	Regarding the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of impacts, it should be noted that no significant impacts are anticipated with respect to construction or operation of the trail. Impacts associated with construction are expected to last approximately 12 weeks from commencement, during standard and regularised construction hours of operation. Impacts associated with operation, such as lighting will be managed in accordance with best industry practice during construction.
(g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development, the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment	There are no anticipated cumulative impacts arising from the proposed project in combination with existing or approved projects.
(h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact	With respect to the possibility of effectively reducing the impact the design of the project has been optimised to ensure that environmental impacts are minimised as much as possible. These impacts are not considered significant and do not result in a requirement for EIA.

Table 2 Potential Impacts by EIA Topic

EIA Topic	Potential Impact
Population and Human Health	<p>The potential impacts of the construction phase on human beings are not considered to be significant. During construction, there is the potential for temporary minor impacts related to traffic inconvenience, dust and noise to occur. However, the works will be short-term in duration (12 weeks). Standard best practice construction methodologies will limit disturbance to people in the area.</p> <p>Positive long term impact on completion associated with increased accessibility of the area for walkers and cyclists.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report that accompanies the planning application demonstrates that the proposed project will not impact on identified European Designated Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed project either alone, or in combination with, other plans or projects.</p> <p>Temporary impacts associated with construction and longer term operational impacts will be reduced through measures inherent in the trail design, recommended mitigation measures implemented and good practice in construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive species recorded, so risk of spreading of same is a key issue. Biosecurity measures are recommended before construction. Subject to full adherence to same this impact is avoided. • Removal or clearance of vegetation including several trees and overhanging vegetation in Phase 1 and 25-30 trees, patches of scrub, overhanging vegetation and hedgerow in Phase 2 presents a risk to nesting birds and bat use. A bat survey will be undertaken prior to construction works and within the appropriate season (May 2023). If bats are present, mitigation measures will be proportionate to the impact and may require timing of operations. • The construction phase represents the greatest potential risk to water quality. Measures inherent in the trail design, recommended mitigation measures implemented and good practice in construction will reduce this risk.
Land, Soil	<p>Permanent and minor negative impact related to works phase, particularly in relation to areas requiring excavation and fill works. Significant amounts of fill are not anticipated; for the most part it is surface dressing only</p>
Water	<p>It is proposed that there shall be no net change in flood storage volume in the proposed project area. FRAM mapping shows that the site of the proposed project is not at risk of flooding.</p> <p>Good construction site practices will be in place to prevent any risk of pollution, e.g. from silt laden waters, hydrocarbons and cement based products, running off the site. With best practice incorporated into the design and the construction works methodology, the potential for significant run-off of pollutants is either eliminated or greatly reduced, and no significant residual impacts on water are anticipated. Where necessary, surface water run-off from the proposed project shall be attenuated on-site if required.</p>

Air Quality and Climate	Localised impacts arising from machinery such as mini diggers or excavators. Emissions during works phase will be minimized through best practice. Traffic emissions are not considered likely to be significantly increased and objective is to reduce non authorised traffic access and increase pedestrian and cycling use with accompanying local positive impacts.
Noise and Vibration	Noise during the construction phase may result in occasional elevated noise levels. However, noise and vibration during works phase will be minimised through best practice. Traffic noise and vibration are not considered likely to be significantly increased as a result.
Material Assets: Built Environment	No significant alteration of landscape character is anticipated.
Material Assets: Land	<p>A construction project may affect material assets if it involves any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of land; • Loss of land used by the community; • Demolition of private property; • Revaluation of or change in the development potential of adjoining lands / properties. <p>The proposed project does not require the demolition of any buildings nor the acquisition or permanent interference with lands used by the community. No significant impact is envisaged.</p>
Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage	None identified.
Landscape or visual impacts	No significant alteration of landscape character.
Resource and Waste Management	Possible effects include the re-use / recycle / disposal of excavated material as well as other waste generated on site i.e. construction waste. Any effects will be mitigated by the implementation of best practice in construction and operational waste management procedures. No significant impact is envisaged.
Interactions	<p>Although there will be interaction between the environmental topics, particularly between human beings and landscape, noise and vibration and air quality and climate, the small scale and nature of these interactions will not result in significant environmental impacts.</p> <p>The supporting AA Screening assessment for this project has shown there will be no likely significant effects to any European Site during the construction or operations phases of the trail. Therefore, there are no in-combination impacts envisaged.</p>

5 CONCLUSION

The proposed project is of a development type prescribed in Annex II of the European Union 'EIA Directive' but does not meet the relevant threshold criteria set for its equivalent prescribed class under Schedule 5 Part 2 (12)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. The development is thus a 'sub-threshold' development. Accordingly, the proposed project has been assessed on that basis and in accordance with the screening criteria set out in Annex III of the European Union 'EIA Directive' and its equivalent in Schedule 7 to the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (SI No 600 of 2001).

This Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report has determined that the characteristics of the proposed project are considered not significant due to the scale and nature of the proposed project, the characteristics and sensitivities of the receiving environment and design and standard proven construction measures that will be implemented as part of the construction and operational phase of the proposed project.

The project works will be short-term, and the temporary impacts associated with the construction phase can be managed and appropriate control measures can be incorporated into the construction plan to ensure that the works do not have significant adverse effects on the environment.

With proposed mitigation measures in place, it is not anticipated that the construction or operational phases of the proposed project, whether considered on its own, or in-combination with surrounding projects or plans, will give rise to likely significant environmental effects.

Having considered the proposed project in the context of the criteria set out in Annex III of the European Union Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, AONA Environmental Consulting Ltd. is of the professional opinion that the proposed trail at Drumshanbo is unlikely to result in significant adverse impact on the environment and it is determined that **EIAR is not required in respect of this proposed project.**

However Leitrim County Council as the competent authority shall make the determination based on the above.