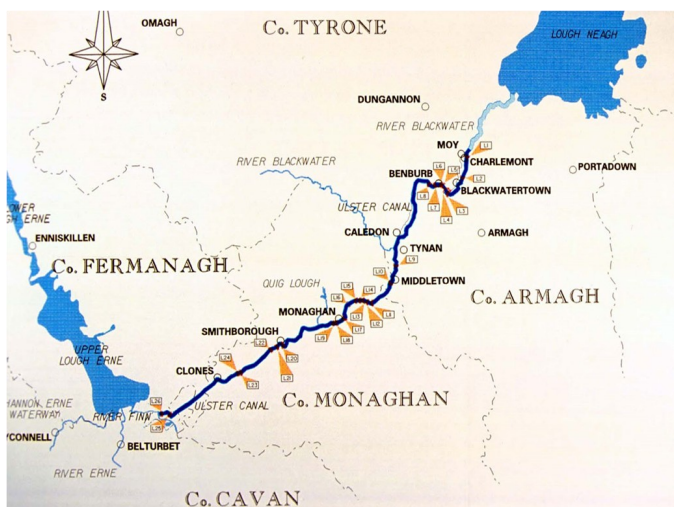




Background

The Ulster Canal was opened in 1842 and ran for 74km (46 miles) through Fermanagh, Monaghan and Armagh on its way east from the River Finn and Erne System to the River Blackwater and Lough Neagh. Canal boats had to pass through 26 locks along its length. With the passage of time this waterway became commercially unviable and it eventually closed in 1931.

Ministers at the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) agreed proposals in June 2015 to facilitate the development of a Greenway along the route/linear corridor of the Ulster Canal from Castle Saunderson, Co Cavan to Charlemont, Co Armagh. The NSMC also agreed Waterways Ireland should undertake the role of lead partner on this project with the support of the relevant Councils and other stakeholders along the route.



The proposed Greenway will bring abandoned sections of the Ulster Canal towpath back into public use

The plan will bring disused sections of the canal towpath back into public use, creating a fantastic amenity for the people of the mid-Ulster region. The vision is that in addition to providing a quality sustainable transportation corridor and leisure facility for local people, the greenway network will attract visitors to this underdeveloped tourist region. This will ensure that tourism plays a bigger role in driving sustainable economic development in the region. Full details of the strategy are available on the project website www.ulstercanalgreenway.com.

Phase 1; Monaghan Town Greenway is open for business!



In 2013 a 4km section of greenway was opened along the line of the Ulster Canal through Monaghan Town – this project was funded by Smarter Travel and has been hugely successful. By 2015 user numbers had topped 100,000.

As well as supporting local commuters in Monaghan Town, the existing greenway is regularly used for events and activities including walking festivals, fun runs, charity events and the annual 'Darkness into Light' event. It is clear there is an appetite for off-road recreational walking and cycling facilities, and further development of the Ulster Canal Greenway has become a priority for the mid-border region.

The Ulster Canal Greenway creates a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists to travel across Monaghan town and to access the town centre.



Phase 2; Funding Secured & Project is underway

Following the success of the Monaghan Town Greenway, a Partnership was formed to apply for funding under 'Axis 3; Sustainable Transport' of the European Union's INTERREG VA programme. After 18 months of scoping, planning and project development, funding of €4.95 million was awarded to Phase 2 of the Ulster Canal Greenway in December 2016.

The project is supported by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Match funding has been provided by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department for Infrastructure. This cross-border project will be led by Waterways Ireland in partnership with Monaghan County Council, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council and East Border Region.

The project will involve extending the existing 4km Monaghan Town greenway from east to Middletown in Co. Armagh and west to Smithborough in Co. Monaghan. A spur along the route of the Monaghan Town Bypass will connect the east side of Monaghan Town with the greenway. When Phase 2 is completed, the total Ulster Canal Greenway length will be 26km. The new section of greenway is expected to be operational in 2020.



Phase 2; Project Objectives



This project is funded under the Sustainable Transport Measure of the INTERREG VA programme. A key objective in delivering the 22km Greenway is to actively promote commuter behavioural change through a targeted community engagement programme. As construction commences the project will support local schools and employers to actively encourage their students and workers to make a move from vehicular modes of transport to more environmentally friendly and sustainable travel choices such as walking and cycling. The project has a target to contribute to the creation of a 4.5% modal shift from cars to walking/cycling by cross-border commuters by 2023.

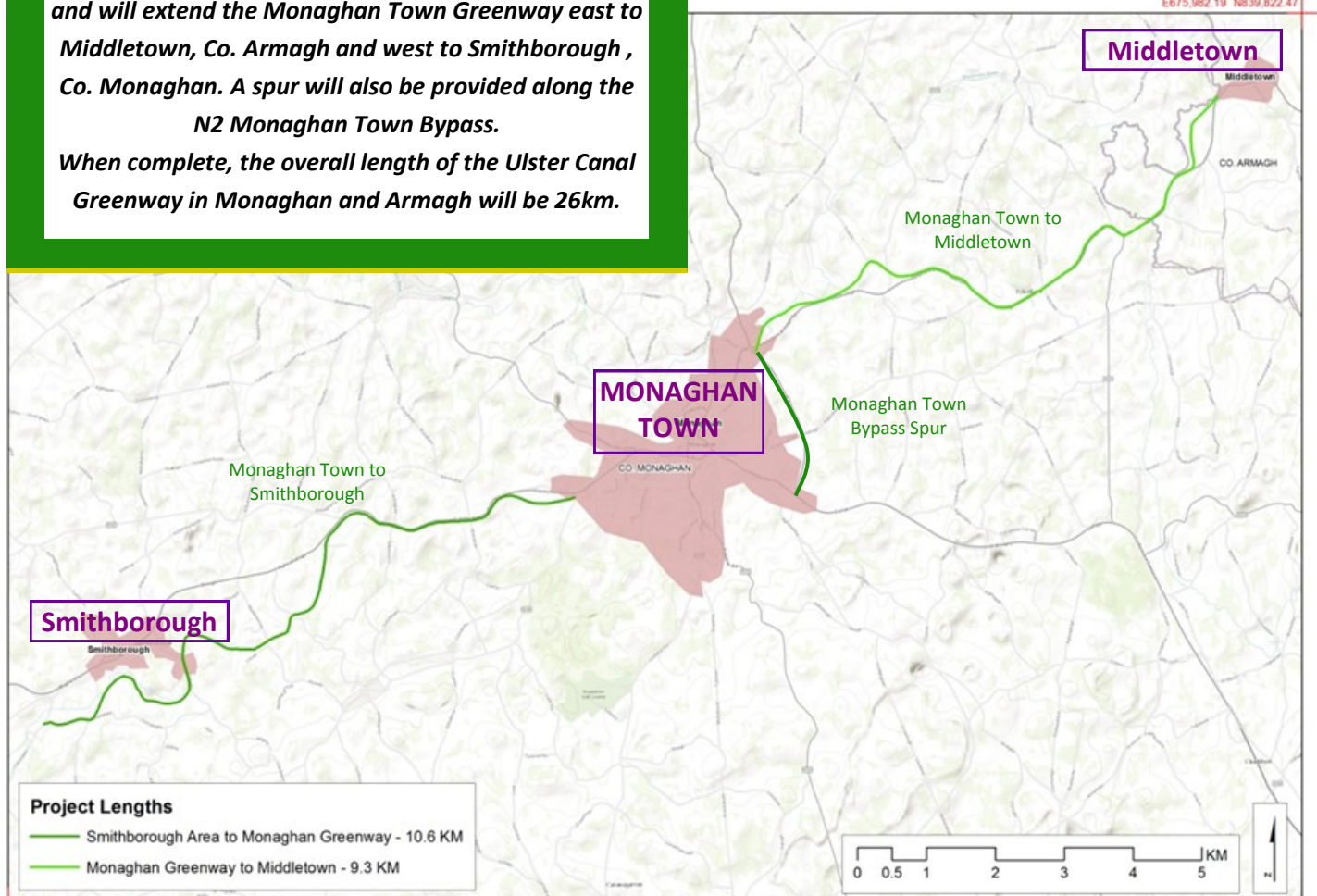
Delivering this modal shift target would reduce the amount of CO₂ emissions from private cars by 10.25 tonnes annually, reduce congestion, not to mention delivering health benefits to all those who make the move to walking and cycling.

Protecting the unique biodiversity and natural and built heritage of the disused Ulster Canal corridor is a key priority. A biodiversity committee will be established to oversee and ensure the impact of the proposed greenway is minimised and wherever possible measures will be implemented to enhance the biodiversity of the route.



Phase 2; Route

Phase 2 of the Ulster Canal Greenway is 22km long and will extend the Monaghan Town Greenway east to Middletown, Co. Armagh and west to Smithborough, Co. Monaghan. A spur will also be provided along the N2 Monaghan Town Bypass. When complete, the overall length of the Ulster Canal Greenway in Monaghan and Armagh will be 26km.



Phase 2; Project Team

Waterways Ireland is the lead partner to the project. Joe Gillespie, Regional Manager heads up the Waterways Ireland team, supported by Head of Strategy and Policy Caroline McCarroll and Senior Design Engineer Joe McMahon. Monaghan County Council is represented by Director of Services Paul Clifford and Carol Lambe of the Community and Enterprise Section. Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council's Community and Economic Development Manager Godfrey McCartney has been involved throughout the funding application process and Kirsty Pinkerton and Ciaran Coleman will support the project through the implementation stage.

East Border Region has almost 30 years' experience of working on a cross-border basis. Their role is clearly defined in the partnership, with responsibility for the financial and non-financial management of the project to ensure full compliance with INTERREG VA rules and procedures. The East Border region team is being led by Dette Hughes.

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), whose role is to manage cross-border European Union Structural Funds programmes in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and parts of Western Scotland, will be managing the INTERREG VA funding.



Special EU Programmes Body
Foras Um Chláir Speisialta An AE
Boord O Owre Ocht UE Projects

Monaghan County Council has been tasked with delivery of the project and has appointed the project staff. Róisín Moore (Nic An Iarla) is the Project Manager for Phase 2 and Gráinne McAviney is the Financial Administrator. Both Róisín and Gráinne can be contacted at the project Office based in Monaghan County Council — 00 353 (0) 47 73785.



Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council



Phase 2; Next Steps

Delivery of the greenway is a 4-year project. A design team is to be appointed in mid 2017 to progress the project through the design, planning and land acquisition process. As part of the process consultation will take place with stakeholders and landowners along the route—we expect this will happen from Autumn 2017.

An environmental team, archaeologists and historians, surveyors and road safety experts will also be employed at various stages of the project.



During the lifetime of the Phase 2 Project regular updates will be issued about to keep stakeholders and the public up to date.

As the project progresses a community engagement programme will also commence—the aim is to raise awareness of the greenway and to encourage workers and students to use the greenway as an alternative means of commuting to work and school, ensuring the modal shift targets of the project are met.

Further information and regular updates about the project can be found on the website www.ulstercanalgreenway.com