

**OPENING STATEMENT WESTERN RAIL TRAIL CAMPAIGN
25TH JANUARY 2024
JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PETITIONS AND THE OMBUDSMEN**

TITLE SLIDE UP ON THE SCREEN:

BRENDAN QUINN

Cathaoirleach, thank you and the committee for this opportunity to present our views to the Oireachtas.

SLIDE TWO please (Mission statement) When I started this petition I had no idea how it would be received; 27,000 is an astonishing number of people who have signed this petition who in the main are from the West of Ireland or are west of Ireland diaspora. Real people who have expressed a real opinion.

Sligo, Mayo and Galway, are the three counties the closed railway from Collooney county Sligo to Athenry, County Galway runs through. There are three stories to tell, as this effort is the combination of three separate campaigns, The Sligo Greenway Co-op, The East Mayo Greenway campaign and from Galway the Quiet Man greenway campaign.

Three people sitting alongside me will each give an overview on how they see the Greenway benefitting these three counties, Cllr Marie Casserly from Sligo County council, Bernice Brennan from Kiltimagh county Mayo, and former Galway councilor Shaun Cunneiffe from Tuam, county Galway. John Mulligan who has supported this campaign consistently is also here to give an overview for the committee on the arguments about railway, greenway or both.

We recognize there is another part of this debate, a view from some people that the closed railway may actually be re-opened some time in the future. We hold a pragmatic view; What the state holds in this closed railway route is a continuous piece of land in public ownership, the Department of Transport has called it a transport corridor. Placing a greenway on a closed railway route is an international best practice option to protect a route until such time as a railway is possible, and if a railway should ever be re-opened on any part of this route then to incorporate a greenway alongside, which we believe will be a perfectly feasible option.

There is little doubt the economic benefit this idea would bring to the west of Ireland, I call the economic boom from greenways going through rural areas as “greenwaynomics”. It is an amazing phenomenon which we all know about in which rural areas discover new economic prosperity simply because of a greenway going through their village, town or townland.

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE SLIDE THREE (SLIDE SHOWING ROUTE AND THREE GROUP NAMES)

We are here today to ask for our voices to be heard, in particular in Counties Mayo and County Galway. Let me explain why I say this: In 2012 myself and John Mulligan met with deputy Alan Kelly, at the time, a Minister in the Department of Transport when Leo Varadkar was the Minister for Transport. Minister Kelly, told us you are pushing at an open door, he agreed with our idea, however he told us we will need the county councils on board. That was the start of our journey, we needed to get the county councils to adopt the idea and that meant we had to influence changes in the respective county plans

We are still on that journey; we were successful in Sligo, where we finally got the Sligo Greenway idea on the closed railway written into the county plan. Cllr Casserly will tell you about how, with

the support of Sligo county council, the DOT and TII we are now at the advanced stages of planning for the Sligo Greenway project, but for us the good news stops in Sligo.

In Mayo, we needed to influence the council to adopt the idea of a greenway on the closed railway in particular north of Charlestown to Claremorris. Over the past decade, we have met with inexplicable opposition to our idea from Mayo County Council. In 2013 Mayo county council received about 400 submissions on the county plan asking for a greenway on this route but did not adopt the idea. Mayo county council has been aware of the level of public support for a greenway on the route since 2013.

Eight years later, fast forward to 2021, a new county plan was due to cover the period 2022 – 28. This time, along with this petition, Mayo county council received over 1000 submissions on the county plan asking for a greenway on the railway route from Charlestown to Claremorris. The submissions accounted for over 80% of all submissions received on the county plan.

However, of huge significance were submissions from the Landowners Irish Rail and from the Department of Transport which both supported the idea of a greenway running from Charlestown on the Sligo/Mayo border going south to Claremorris.

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE SLIDE FOUR (SUBMISSIONS FROM IRISH RAIL AND DOT)

We feel it is very important the committee understand that north of Claremorris there is virtually zero chance of a railway ever being re-opened, because of this known fact, there is simply no rational reason from Mayo county council to oppose the use of the closed railway as a greenway on this part of the route. Next slide please (showing submissions from IR and DOT)

I have mentioned that Irish Rail and the DOT made submissions to Mayo county council. Here are two short quotes from those submissions on the Mayo county plan:

Irish Rail said this in their March 2021 submission on the Mayo county plan to Mayo county council *“support for the development of greenways in locations where the railway does not have a short to medium term viable business case for reintroduction of services. In terms of the Western Rail Corridor, this conditional support is subject to the section north of Claremorris.”*

Department of Transport said this in their March 2021 submission on the Mayo county plan to Mayo county council *“welcome the protection of the Western Rail Corridor as a “Transport Corridor rather than solely as a railway line” and “that consideration could be given at a future time for the construction of a greenway on or beside the alignment of the railway line. This would be particularly welcome from Claremorris to Charlestown.”*

The response from Mayo county council to the one thousand submissions from the general public and the two very clear submissions from the landowner, Irish Rail and Department of Transport that would fund such a greenway project was little short of astonishing.

The county councilors against the advice of the county manager, and in opposition to the views of a thousand public submissions and against the specific recommendations of both the landowner Irish Rail and the Department of Transport took it upon themselves to specifically oppose these ideas and inserted an objective into the Mayo county plan which said:

MTO9 MCC county plan: That the Western Rail Corridor (WRC) is protected and preserved for the delivery of Rail Infrastructure to develop the region and the corridor is completely removed from any feasibility study in relation to any proposed greenway.

This objective in the Mayo county plan went out of its way to block the views of the 27,000 people who signed this petition the thousand submissions on the county plan, and the views of both Irish Rail and the Department of Transport is the main reason we are here today.

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE FIVE (SHOWING NAMES OF GROUPS AGAIN)

At every twist and turn of this debate, Mayo county council have gone out of their way to suppress even the consideration of what we are proposing and in total opposition of the views of the Department of Transport and the landowner, Irish Rail. Mayo county council have built into the county plan a written objective that blocks even a feasibility study, it is almost dictatorial what they have done. That is a huge part of the reason why we are here today, the sheer intransigence of Mayo county council on this matter.

On the Galway section of the line the council response has been an uphill struggle for this campaign, we do have support for our ideas on Galway council we also have opposition, which is fair enough, but at least Galway council didn't stifle democratic debate and the railway route has been part of a feasibility study, so there is some movement in Galway and there is also the issue of the all-island strategic rail review which will be referred to later by my fellow petitioners here today, NEXT SLIDE PLEASE (Showing the map and three campaign group names)

I am now going to hand over to Cllr Marie Casserly to explain what is happening in Sligo.

CLLR MARIE CASSELY (SLIGO COCO)

MC Thank you Brendan and Cathaoirleach, yes I am very pleased to be able to inform the committee that Sligo County Council has listened to the public and took heed of what people were saying in Sligo. Brendan has outlined how the campaign has had to persuade the county councils to come on board. I am pleased to confirm as far as Sligo is concerned, the council is firmly in favour of the Sligo Greenway which will run on the closed railway from Collooney southwards to the Sligo/Mayo border at Charlestown, until such time as a railway might be possible. This part of the route will be known as the Sligo Greenway. However, this is only part of a much bigger project which Sligo county council is working on with the Department of Transport and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

Working with Leitrim county council and Fermanagh county council a cross border project has been agreed to develop a greenway on the closed railway route from Enniskillen to Collooney and to continue on then to Charlestown. This cross border co-operation is part of the legacy of the Good Friday Agreement.

The Department of Transport working with Transport Infrastructure Ireland has already invested over half a million euro in taking the plans for this long distance cross border greenway through the first development stages. Sligo county council is now working closely with these agencies to take the project to the final stages of planning and ultimately construction. The Sligo greenway will be of huge significance to the region, benefitting both Tourism and be a huge local amenity for communities along the route.

It is important for the committee to take note that as far as Sligo is concerned the Sligo section of the Western Rail Trail will happen, it is such a pity the same cannot be said for Mayo.

As a Sligo County Councillor I have made representation to Mayo County Council to consider joining with Sligo to extend the Sligo greenway down through Mayo as far as Claremorris and to allow East Mayo to benefit from the tourism boom this would bring to the region. If the Sligo Greenway could connect through Mayo to the Great Western Greenway, just imagine the benefits this would bring to the region. It would be simply a huge economic benefit for the region and be of huge social benefit to the people in towns such as Charlestown, Swinford, Kiltimagh and Claremorris

I am keeping my comments short, but I ask the committee to take our thoughts to the Departments concerned and ask that the people in Mayo and Galway are listened to, the idea of a greenway along this closed railway is quite simply a no brainer.

Brendan: Thank you Cllr Casserly I am now going to ask Bernice Brennan a resident of Kiltimagh county Mayo and supporter of the East Mayo Greenway Campaign to give the East Mayo view on this matter,

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE 6— SHOWING THE PARALLEL GREENWAY OPTIONS AND NEXT TO VELORAIL

BERNICE BRENNAN (KILTIMAGH)

BB: Thank you Brendan and Cathaoirleach. I live in Kiltimagh, I work part- time as a teacher. I have three children age 15,12 and 9, all of them go to school in Kiltimagh. I am here for them. They want to see the greenway happen and so do most of their friends and contemporaries.

In East Mayo we have looked at the success of greenways on closed railway lines throughout the country and seen the way they have changed communities bringing economic and social development to rural areas.

You may have heard of this book by John Healy published in the 1980's called "Nobody shouted Stop" it is about the social and economic demise of the West of Ireland. This book mentions the "Black Triangle" of East Mayo, an area that sits between Charlestown, Swinford and Kiltimagh. Thankfully things are not as dark in this area now as described in this book, in the 1980s, but it is still an area crying out for an impetus to create jobs.

A greenway would provide such an impetus, not only in creating jobs, but in revitalising the whole region, boosting local economies, improving the physical, mental and social health of our communities

The closed railway line running north of Claremorris to Charlestown and on to Sligo is simply not going to re-open anytime soon, we all know that; Every report on the Western Rail Corridor has said this, it is not even included in the National All Island Rail Review as a target to re-open this section of the railway line.

With this in mind it is such a pity that Mayo County Council has not supported this project as Sligo county council have. We hope they will ultimately change their mind.

However, what needs to be said is that Mayo County Council have been inconsistent on this issue as they supported the use of the closed railway line in Kiltimagh to use as a Velorail facility for six kilometres.

This effectively means Mayo council have accepted the fact that the closed railway line north of Claremorris, running through Kiltimagh, should be available for leisure purposes, they will allow a Velorail but they are blocking a greenway.

Whilst the Velorail is an interesting idea, it is not a facility that local people use much. It involves renting carts which are pedaled along a short section of the closed railway line which you have to pay for. A greenway would be free to use.

When the Velorail was under consideration under the planning process, there were over 200 submissions on the planning application asking for a greenway to be placed alongside the closed railway being used for the Velorail.

Believe me, I know there is huge support for the East Mayo Greenway in Claremorris, Kiltimagh, Swinford and Charlestown on this closed railway route.

It is not just about tourism for the area, it is about creating an amenity which the local people will use and will be part of the attraction for wanting to live and work in the area.

Brendan mentioned the term “Greenwaynomics” please think about where we are placed on the greenway route we want to see happen.

Imagine how a greenway from Sligo through Mayo and on to Athenry in Galway would bring visitors and tourists into the area, creating jobs for our young people.

Imagine landing at Knock airport renting a bike and cycling along this route

In Kiltimagh where I live, the disused line is very close to the primary school, children would be able to walk, cycle, scooter etc to and from school, a practice which the Government's own "Safe Routes to School" Programme encourages.

A new Greenway would become part of our local infrastructure, linking the communities: an amenity which could provide a safe place for all members of our communities and visitors alike; accessible to ALL, our children, our grandparents, wheelchair users, bikes, buggies, scooters...etc

We are so lucky to have, right on our doorstep, such a potentially life-enhancing space, but sadly, we are not allowed to access it. It is to the detriment of the people, towns and townlands of Claremorris, Swinford, Kiltimagh & Charlestown, as well as those visiting, that this widely-supported opportunity to truly revitalise our local communities is being denied to us without any consideration.

In East Mayo all we want to see is a wasted asset bought back to life. Resurrected and reinvented, we know the East Mayo Greenway will have the power to change lives for the better in our area. We just need to be listened to and the reality of the situation to be recognized. Thank you

BQ: NEXT SLIDE PLEASE 7 (Now Next Future – showing options we have) Thank you Bernice, you know that area and we appreciate you coming along today, the next witness we have today is a former councilor from Galway county council, Shaun Cunniffe a Tuam resident who has been a committed supporter of the idea for a greenway on the closed railway route from Athenry to Tuam and onwards to Mayo for many years; Shaun thanks for coming here today can you now give us the Galway view.

SHAUN CUNNIFFE

Shaun Cunniffe: Thank you Cathaoirleach and the committee for having us here today. I was a serving councilor on Galway County Council until 2019 and was part of many debates and discussions about the complimentary use of the closed railway alignment from Athenry to Claremorris as a greenway initially and should a business case ever recommend the reinstatement of a railway then use this broad alignment for both.

Bord Failte attended our Tuam Municipal Meetings and requested we develop this greenway and detailed the success of the Great Western Greenway in Mayo in which they had invested.

Barry Kenny from Irish Rail explained that if ever a railway was to be reinstated, all the track, sleepers and foundations (the ballast) would all be replaced with modern rail infrastructure and that there would be very heavy machinery involved so if a greenway was temporarily on

the railway, it could simply be moved to one side of the alignment and fenced off

The campaign for the Galway section of the line to be given the greenway treatment is known as The Quiet Man Greenway campaign, a name which comes from the famous 1950s film which was shot on location using the station at Ballyglunin, known as Castletown in the movie and ranks as one of the most recognizable Rail Stations in American Cinematographic history.

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE 8 (SHOWING THE MARCH FROM TUAM) Being from Tuam, I know there is overwhelming support for the Greenway. The petition we are talking about today has over 9,000 signatures from people based in Galway. In September 2018 over 3,000 people marched in Tuam on a Sunday afternoon to apply pressure on the County Council to support the idea of a feasibility study on the greenway.

The feasibility study funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland was finally published in November 2023. This study looked at the choice of routes that might be available for a greenway from Athenry to Tuam and onto the county border with Mayo at Milltown.

The detailed feasibility study concluded that the preferred option for a greenway in terms of environmental impact, costs and deliverability was to use the closed railway alignment. We know it makes common sense to do this so why won't it happen?

The reason is that there is still a legacy cohort of opinion, contrary to the conclusions of all independent reports, that considers a railway on this route is a possibility.

However, they are now prioritizing rail freight, as the established criteria for the reinstatement of passenger services are simply absent. Demographic data details the extremely low and dispersed population along the route, the presence of a new motorway alongside this alignment and excellent private bus services, these facts negate any case for passenger services.

Despite being unable to supply our greenway group or local media with the name of any company in County Galway that requires rail freight, they are holding fast. Equally that can offer no explanation as to why Galway city with a main line rail and the most numerous and powerful companies employing tens of thousands of staff do not use or seek the use of rail freight. Nor can they name one IDA announcement in the last 10 years anywhere in Ireland that requires rail freight.

In 2023 the new All island strategic rail review was published, and despite the known facts of every independent report that has been published on the Western Rail Corridor we were told that the railway was going to be re-opened at some stage in the future between Athenry and Claremorris apparently for freight only, but with no promises of when this might happen.

Sadly, now there is no promise of a railway happening in the near future and no promise of a greenway happening, we know from the feasibility study that this is the best and only route for a greenway to connect to Mayo, so why wait? The argument to build the greenway now and if a railway is to happen to put a railway with greenway in alongside in the future has never been stronger.

The 42 Km Great Western Greenway in Mayo generated a local economic benefit of 39-million-euro in 2016 creating over 910 new permanent jobs, direct and indirect. This economic impact is eminently possible along the QMG.

Our political system in East Galway needs to explain why we are spurning such vital economic impetus when emigration of our young people is mushrooming. Surely for the sake of our children, survival of our communities, schools, lgfa, gaa and all sporting clubs we can come to a resolution,

after all politics is so often championed as the 'Art of the Possible' and our young people need this Art now.

Thank you

BQ: Thank you Shaun, we all know about the frustrations we have, I am now going to hand over to John Mulligan a long time supporter of this campaign and ask him to do a summary for the committee of where we might all go from here.

JOHN MULLIGAN

Cathaoirleach, members of the committee.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to bring our views to the table. My name is John Mulligan; I am a journalist, author and newspaper columnist in the Region, and like Brendan and others I have been a long term campaigner for sustainable infrastructure in rural Ireland.

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE SLIDE 9 (Network of routes the Trail would link to)

Having an interest in outdoor tourism, particularly walking tourism, I started to campaign in 2010 for a network of long walking and cycling trails in Ireland, similar to what is enjoyed as a matter of course by people in other countries.

At that time, Ireland had around 70 kilometers of trails, while Germany had 70,000 km of linked trails. Clearly, we were never going to persuade German tourists, the biggest customers in Europe for this product, to visit Ireland and spend a week cycling up and down the Mayo Greenway.

We had some successes. Failte Ireland, initially opposed to such trails, conceded the merit in our case following market sampling in the main European markets. John Martin, then CEO of Waterways Ireland initially rejected a proposal to utilise disused towpaths on river and canal waterways, but following repeated lobbying he saw the potential and became a real champion for such development. The Royal and Grand Canal Way trails gave Ireland an immediate bounce into the market, delivering 270 km of readymade access, all in public ownership.

Alan Kelly, as Brendan mentioned earlier, was an early supporter of the logic of utilizing linear corridors in state ownership to help develop areas in need of investment.

Paschal Donohoe, on being appointed Transport Minister, met with me and immediately saw the potential benefit, and initiated the Dublin-Galway Greenway on the Royal Canal and the closed Mullingar-Athlone railway, with the intention of progressing it further towards Galway. The final section of this project is not yet complete, but it will happen.

Brendan and I identified linear corridors of state owned lands as an early win in advancing our mileage of trails, and we have seen how this strategy has worked in Waterford and Limerick for instance. The Waterford Greenway, mostly utilizing closed railway alignments, attracts more than 250,000 unique visitors annually, as well as providing a leisure and commuting route for thousands of local families.

It brings jobs too; a former derelict cottage on the old line, a mile or so east of Dungarvan, is now the well-regarded 'Railway Kitchen' employing more than thirty people.

We tried for many years to persuade councillors in the west of Ireland to copy the success of these projects. A study carried out in Sligo found a payback on investment on a greenway based on a closed rail line between Collooney and Bellaghy would be as little as five years, yet we have debated this issue for more than a decade, with strong opposition from councillors who believe that a train

on this route is imminent.

It isn't. Every official report over that decade has found no case for a railway. The figures on the Ennis Athenry line are dismal, but lobbyists boost them by adding in commuter numbers on the Athenry/Oranmore/Galway route, part of the existing Dublin-Galway line.

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE 10 (SLIDE OF EXPORTS TRANSMITTED NOT TRANSPORTED)

The experts however refute the feasibility of building a line north of Athenry at This time. Lobbyists have sought to build a freight line, with no stations, but the most recent NWRA report on rail freight into Mayo showed the existing lines to be lightly used and with no requirement for another line.

The lack of ambition shown by councillors, seeking to build an unwanted railway to ship raw materials out of Mayo, is a third-world approach to infrastructure provision. Round sawlog should not be shipped out of the west until it is processed into sawn timber, fuel, and indeed modular houses. Seeking to build a railway to create wealth outside of the west is a negative approach to local governance.

In any case, exports of high value nowadays are increasingly transmitted, not exported. In this digital age, harking back to being a raw materials source for an empire elsewhere is hardly forward thinking.

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE 11 (JIM MEADE QUOTE)

The fact remains that no railway has been built on this route, between Athenry and Collooney, in the last decade, and it is very likely that the situation will remain the same a decade hence. Given the short payback period, and the crying need for local investment in neglected towns, logic dictates we should be building this infrastructure now. Apart from creating wealth now, making the region attractive to remote (and high-paid) workers, and providing safe places for families to exercise, a greenway will halt the creeping land-grab that is happening along the route and that has happened with too many such assets elsewhere. Then if a decision is made to build a railway in ten or twenty years, the asset will have been preserved.

At a meeting of an Oireachtas Transport policy committee here in this building in February 2021, Jim Meade, CEO of Irish Rail, described greenways on closed and disused lines as a 'win-win,' given they preserved the routes in public ownership while the primary use of the asset will always be rail. It is important that this debate is not seen as a rail versus trail debate, but rather a debate on the best use of state owned assets at a point in time, Brendan has told you what Irish Rail told Mayo county council about a greenway north of Claremorris and how they have deliberately stopped this from happening

NEXT SLIDE PLEASE 12 (why waste the asset)

27,000 people in the Region are crying out for this infrastructure. They see the benefits enjoyed in places like Kilmackthomas in Waterford, and they wonder why their Councils (with the honourable exception of an enlightened Sligo), will not draw down the available money and just do it. Then, in the future, if funding is made available for rail, we'll take that too, with a greenway relocated to the edge of the alignment as minor percentage of the cost of the rail project. But the Council needs to listen, and that is where we need your help.

BQ: Thank you John. **NEXT SLIDE PLEASE 13 (27,000 people are asking)**

Thank you Cathaoirleach and Committee members for listening and thank you to my fellow petitioners including those in the gallery for making the trip today.

In conclusion all we are asking for is our message to be taken to the Oireachtas and the Department.

There is a wasted asset sitting idle, we know there are those who want to see the railway re-opened, but we cannot wait another 50 years for what might happen, so this is our message:

If the railway is going to be re-opened from Athenry to Claremorris then get on with it, and at the same time put in a parallel greenway it is perfectly feasible and safe option

If the railway is going on the permanent long finger, and won't happen at best for ten or twenty years, then let's have a greenway now until such time as a railway is possible from Athenry to Tuam and Milltown/Claremorris

North of Claremorris. Mayo county council needs to grasp the nettle as Sligo county council have done. The Department should make it clear to Mayo county council that Claremorris to Charlestown should be greenway with an accommodation made for a greenway parallel to the velorail project at Kiltimagh.

Greenways on closed railways are not rocket science they are a proven winning formula. The Western Rail Trail will bring a tourism economic boom from Collooney to Athenry, and the region as a whole. Let's just get on with it.

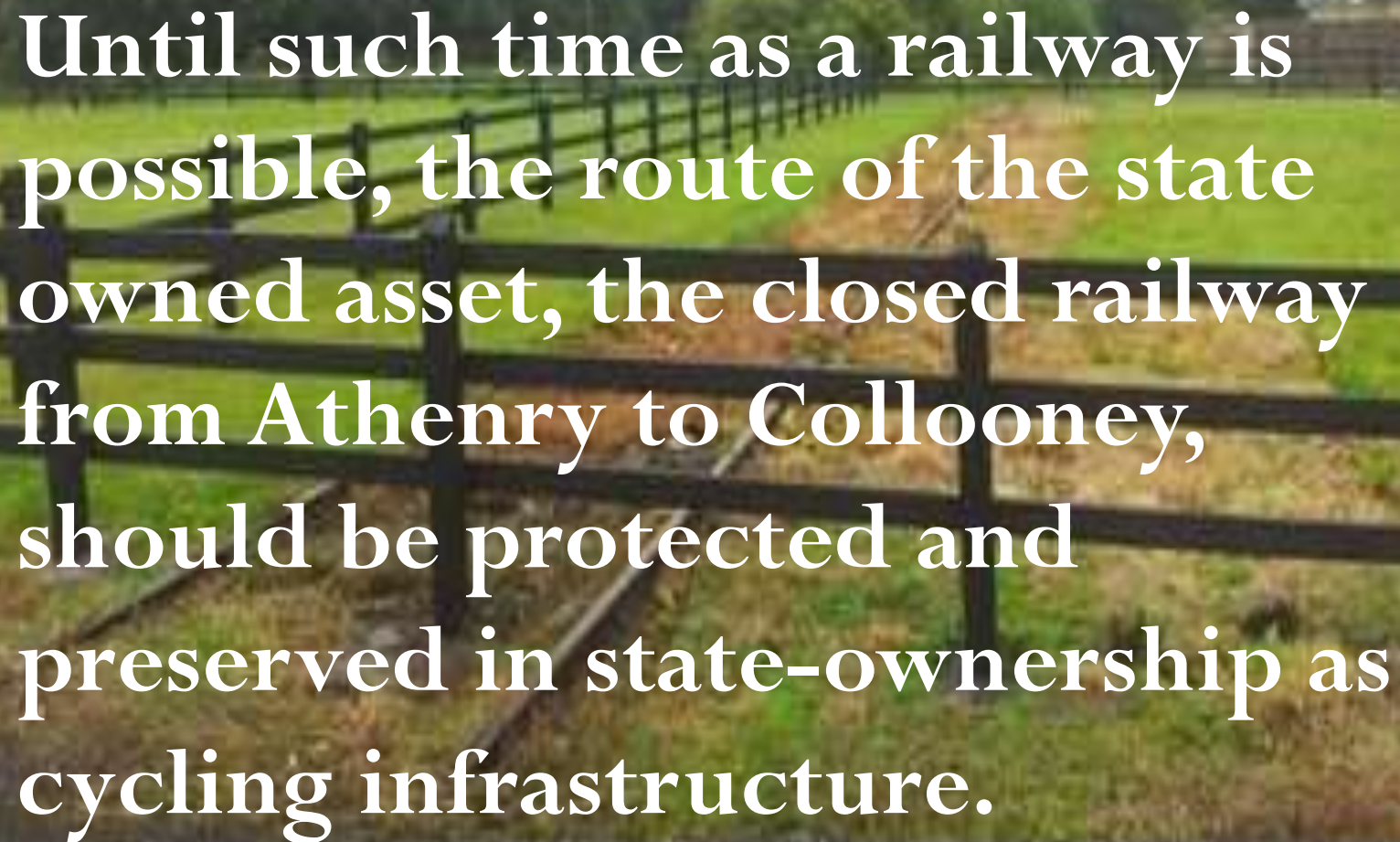
Thank you for listening we would welcome any questions you have.

Western Rail Trail Reinvention not Resurrection

Presentation and Meeting with
Joint Committee on Public Petitions and the Ombudsmen
Presented by Brendan Quinn and members of the
Western Rail Trail Campaign

25th January 2024

Western Rail Trail: Our Vision



Until such time as a railway is possible, the route of the state owned asset, the closed railway from Athenry to Collooney, should be protected and preserved in state-ownership as cycling infrastructure.

Western Rail Trail Campaign

- Create a free to use greenway on closed railway from Athenry Co Galway to Collooney Co Sligo until such time as a railway might be possible
- Protect route in public ownership
- Potential for parallel Greenway/Railway if railway is reinstated
- Pivotal links with other routes as part of National Cycle Network
- Huge public support
- Needs endorsement of county councils Sligo, Mayo, Galway



What Irish Rail and the Department of transport said to Mayo CC

Irish Rail said this in their March 2021 submission on the Mayo county plan to Mayo county council *“support for the development of greenways in locations where the railway does not have a short to medium term viable business case for reintroduction of services. In terms of the Western Rail Corridor, this conditional support is subject to the section north of Claremorris.”*

Department of Transport said this in their March 2021 submission on the Mayo county plan to Mayo county council *“welcome the protection of the Western Rail Corridor as a “Transport Corridor rather than solely as a railway line” and “that consideration could be given at a future time for the construction of a greenway on or beside the alignment of the railway line. This would be particularly welcome from Claremorris to Charlestown.”*

Western Rail Trail Campaign

- Create a free to use greenway on closed railway from Athenry Co Galway to Collooney Co Sligo until such time as a railway might be possible
- Protect route in public ownership
- Potential for parallel Greenway/Railway if railway is reinstated
- Pivotal links with other routes as part of National Cycle Network
- Huge public support
- Needs endorsement of county councils Sligo, Mayo, Galway



Greenway/Railway Velorail/Greenway. Greenways get people out bring tourists in, generate jobs in rural job blackspots, We are shouting stop! Put a Greenway on this route in East Mayo



- Cyclists out for a busy day
- Trains running alongside them
- Perfectly safe Perfectly possible, nothing new its done elsewhere
- Even if we get a greenway first — in years to come the train could follow
- It is doable and it could also be done beside the Velorail in Kiltimagh
- **No Problems only Solutions**



Western Rail Trail: Our Vision of what could be



Now:
Dereliction and
encroachment

Next: A Greenway



Later: Maybe



Public opinion: “Nothing about us, without us”

- 27,000 on line petitioners
- 3,000 on the streets September 2018 Tuam
- Thousands of submissions on County and National Development plans
- Social Media 1000 East Mayo & 9000 Quiet Man Greenway members on Facebook, Sligo Mayo Greenway 10k followers
- 1,000+ paid up shareholders of Sligo Greenway Co-op
- 800 submissions to North West Regional Authority asked for Greenway



The western rail trail

Sustainable infrastructure:

A greenway on closed railway will connect the west with the national cycle network

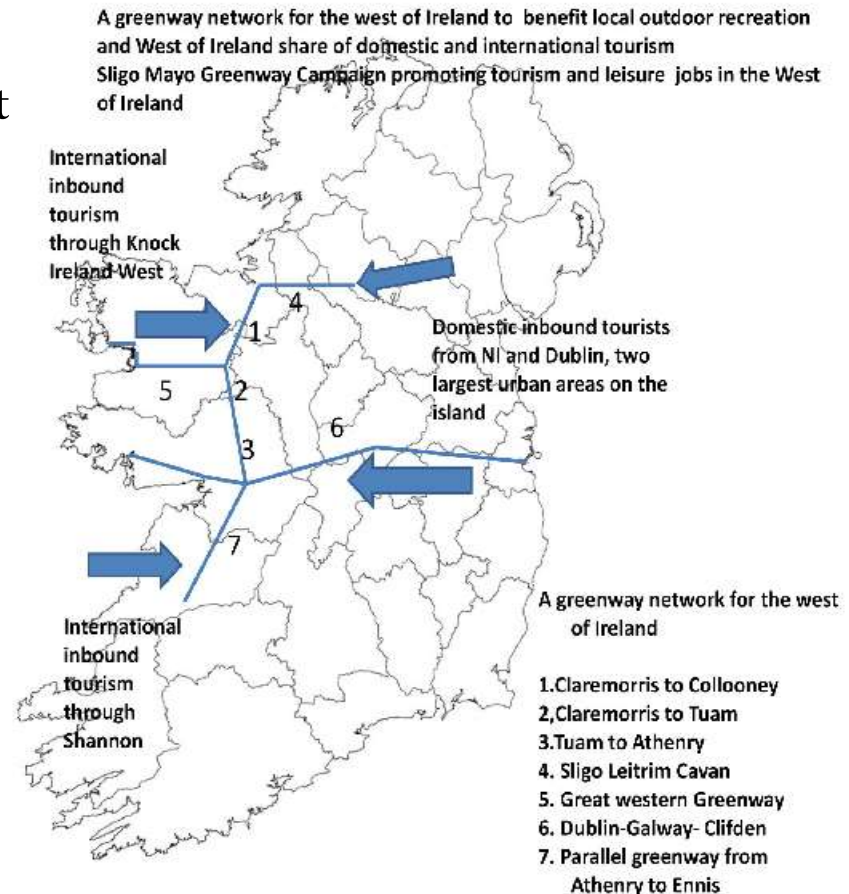
Sligo to Enniskillen connection

East Mayo to Great Western Greenway

East Galway to the Galway- Dublin Greenway

Potential for parallel greenway from Athenry to Limerick alongside existing railway

It's all about building a network and utilizing existing publically owned route of the closed railway with the option of railway / greenway co-existing on route in future.



In the future Exports will be transmitted not transported



- The real freight of the future is data.
- Industrial strength fibre optic cabling connected to the transatlantic dark fibre cabling which makes landfall at Killala could run along greenway route
- Bring the work to the people, not the people to the work

Jim Meade: Ceo Irish Rail

Oireachtas Transport committee meeting on February 17th
2021

“We always support greenways and there is a caveat on any greenway license we have out there that if there is a requirement there from the department..... the greenway is a **win win**. I think for both because it keeps the asset in state ownership, it keeps the asset utilized and then if there is a decision at some time in the future that it has to go back into public transport mode, the licensing arrangement is such that it can do so.”



**Why waste the asset for another ten to twenty years?
Greenway now Railway when it is feasible.
Make the national cycling infrastructure your legacy
The Western Rail Trail should be part of this legacy**

27,000 PEOPLE ARE ASKING

Wasted asset sitting idle

Can't wait another 50 years for promised railway

Open the railway and get on with it or build a greenway and add the railway later

North of Claremorris. Tell Mayo county council the facts and wake up to reality, build the greenway north of Claremorris and do it now!



Thank you for listening