

Architectural  
Conservation  
Professionals

Clare County Council  
Ennis, County Clare.  
**Feasibility Study of the West Clare Railway  
Line as a Walking and Recreational Route**  
January 2006



Funded by Clare County Council in association with the Heritage Council

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## Executive Summary

Under the County Clare Heritage Plan 2003 – 2007 a target was set to ‘evaluate the potential of the West Clare Railway line as a walking and recreational route and hold a meeting of the stakeholders to evaluate the possibilities’. This feasibility study was commissioned by Clare County Council in association with the Heritage Council to meet this target.

The West Clare Railway line was one of the best-loved narrow gauge railways in Ireland. It opened in 1892 and was closed 69 years later in 1961. The line began in Ennis and continued west through Corofin, Ennistymon, Lahinch, Miltown Malbay, Quilty, Kilmurry, Doonbeg, and Shragh to Moyasta Junction. There was a reversing loop at Moyasta forming a triangle, which enabled trains to run through from Kilrush to Kilkee in both directions. The main line from Ennis to Kilkee was 48 miles (77.2 km) in length and the branch line from Moyasta to Kilrush and Cappa Pier was 5 miles (8.0 km) in length. After closing the line the track was lifted and most of the land was sold off to the adjoining landowners. Some of the land remains in the ownership of Iarnrod Eireann as do the bridges along the route.

The footprint of the line is still in place, as are many of the station houses and associated structures. In recent years the development of houses, caravan parks, cattle yards etc directly on the line of the route combined with the very fragmented ownership has broken up its continuity. However, the heritage of the railway line is now protected under the North Clare Local Area Plan and the West Clare Local Area Plan and a number of the structures are included on the Record of Protected Structures.

This feasibility study carried out a pilot survey of a section of the line from Ennistymon to Quilty to ascertain the condition of the line and any remaining structures, to identify the main challenges/obstacles that would need to be overcome and to see if it was possible to walk this section of the line and ascertain what was visible on the ground. The main challenges identified were:-

1. Bridges including underpasses along the route are in need of repair or bypassing
2. Development on line – housing, stock yards, removal of embankments etc has occurred along the route and presents a challenge to planning the actual walkway
3. Scrub management – where grazing by animals is reduced
4. Fencing and walls – in a number of locations landowners have fenced off sections of the route or put up walls designating boundaries
5. Access through private land – in sections of the line the only access to it is through private land. Negotiation with the landowners will be required
6. Industrial Heritage issues – much of the remaining industrial heritage such as bridges, embankments, level crossings etc. has gone but a significant amount remains in situ. This needs to be identified and recorded and decisions taken on its future management.

In addition to the survey a stakeholder workshop was held in Ennistymon. The main challenges and opportunities identified at the workshop were:

1. It is vital to have the farmers who either now own the line or who adjoin it to be fully on board and supporting the idea
2. The issue of insurance was raised and one potential way to overcome this is to have the route designated as a Way Marked Way /Trail promoted by Clare Co Council
3. The line should not be developed in total but should be developed in sections with a pilot section established first between Ennistymon and Lahinch and linking this to the Burren Walk
4. Funding was another issue that was raised. Funding from grant aid is potentially generous and would not be a hindrance to the development of the walkway
5. The question of Clare Co Council taking on ownership of the remaining land and bridges within Iarnrod Eireann's ownership should be explored
6. Maintenance of the line/walkway was highlighted as a major concern once the initial investment was made
7. A multi purpose walkway that would include cycling and horse riding would cause numerous conflicts of use and may not be feasible, but should be explored as an option
8. The need for local involvement was discussed at length and it was agreed that unless a local group would champion a part of the walkway it would 'fail'.

In summary this report makes the following recommendations:

1. The project should be driven by local community and business stakeholders supported by the various organisations and state agencies who can provide funding through grants and other means. The involvement of local communities is essential and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy experience in USA have consistently shown that outreach to the community prevented or eased opposition to trail building
2. The development of the route is a regional tourism initiative and the leadership shown by Clare County Council should now be followed on swiftly by the formation of a Steering Committee made up of the various business, tourism, farming, local community, health, local and regional authority, and rural resource development agencies/interests
3. The section of line from Lahinch to Ennistymon should be developed as a pilot to demonstrate the potential of the route as a recreational resource and to test its feasibility. We recommend this section for development because it connects Lahinch to Ennistymon, a distance of 4km. There is the additional potential of developing a fine town walkway through the latter and linking this by the trail to a beach walk in Lahinch. The difficulties facing conversion on the pilot section are more intense here, with houses and gardens on the trail, crossing fences, scrub growth, and poorly drained/marshy ground

4. The trail should be hard surfaced and be properly designed to accommodate the movement of walking, running, cycling and should have wheelchair access. Although the workshop point 8 felt that a multi use track could cause conflict this has not proved the case in rail trails in other countries
5. Other active communities along the route should be approached once the pilot section is up and running with a view to developing a number of other sections as loop walks that would eventually link up together
6. Farmers and other landowners are key stakeholders in the project and they should be consulted individually in advance of any formal announcements or formation of committees to develop individual sections of the route
7. The route from the beginning should aim to become part of the Waymarked Ways network and should link up with other routes such as the Burren Way at Lahinch and the Mid Clare Way at Ennis and Ruan
8. Clare County Council should urgently secure agreement on the future of the land remaining in Iarnrod Eireann's ownership. Active consideration should be given to taking this resource into the ownership/management of the County Council as a matter of priority to protect it from further deterioration and encroachment
9. The built heritage of the line particularly the bridges and underpasses are at risk of deteriorating further and becoming a serious health & safety liability. As a matter of priority a programme of works should be put in place to decide on their future which should include an option to retain and maintain, or record and remove, and make safe/replace with a pedestrian bridge or alternative crossing means/route
10. Mr Jackie Whelan's offer of exploring the possibility of having a walking route alongside his proposed new section of track should be actively pursued

The West Clare Railway line has a unique history and significant elements survive to this day. With the right leadership and vision a really unique walking and recreational route is possible, provided it is built around local communities who would take ownership of and responsibility for the project. This would yield benefits in the form of additional recreational facilities for the local communities, healthier lifestyles, additional tourism spend and opportunities.

# Project Brief and Background

Objective 10 of the County Clare Heritage Plan 2003 – 2007 is “to develop new and maintain existing walking routes in County Clare.” The target under this objective is “to evaluate the potential of the West Clare Railway line as a walking route and hold a meeting of the stakeholders to evaluate the possibilities”. The West and North Clare Local Area Plan’s outline the policy context for the West Clare Railway line, see relevant policies ENV12, T5 and REC7.

Architectural Conservation Professionals were commissioned by Clare County Council (supported by the Heritage Council) to undertake a feasibility study of the West Clare Railway Line as a walking and recreational route in June 2005.

## Project Description

This project aims to evaluate the potential of the West Clare Railway line as a walking and/or recreational facility for West Clare from Ennistymon to Quilty.

## Project Outputs

1. Collate and present all existing information, maps, literature, landowner details and general details of the entire line.
2. Contact all relevant stakeholders, local community walking group interests, landowner interests, local and national walking organisations with a remit to promote walking routes in the county. A consultation meeting will be held with the stakeholders of the Railway Line. Issues such as “rights of way” and insurance will be clarified and agreed at this meeting.
3. The pilot study area will under take the following detail:

### **Describing the condition of the line.**

- Identifying any obstructions on the line, boundary walls, fences, buildings, gardens etc.
- Assessing damage to cuttings, bridges, embankments etc.
- Describing present uses of the line i.e. cattle feeding areas, reclamation to pasture etc.
- An evaluation to the efforts required to make the line accessible for recreational purposes.

### **Investigation of the Railway line ownership**

- Names and addresses of landowners and
- Their attitudes to public access and willingness to allow the use of the line as part of a local area loop walk or other recreational purpose.

## **The financial implications of opening the line for recreation**

- Provision of alternative routes, where required
  - Cost and means of remedial work, removal of obstructions, reinstatement works and scrub clearance etc.
  - Construction of stiles, signage, publication and distribution of promotional material etc.
  - Compulsory purchase, if recommended.
4. From the general work programme and from the information gathered in the pilot area, an overall feasibility study for the line will be formulated. The final report should list all the sources of information presented. A programme of action over the next 10 years should be proposed, along with budget costing's.
  5. Ten hard copies of the final report will be produced along with two electronic copies of the final report which is capable of being copied.
  6. At the end of the project the results of the findings will be presented to the public, via an open event and via newspaper and radio media.

### **Project Schedule**

- The timeframe for the project is as follows: -
- The project will commence at the beginning of June 2005. This will involve meeting with Clare County Council to agree the scope and limits of the project and exchange information on the line.
- Initial base line survey and report followed by the SWOT workshop and report will be produced in early August.
- Draft of the Pilot Study and Report will be completed by the 16<sup>th</sup> of September.
- Draft of the Final Report (with provision for later publication of posters and leaflet) will be submitted in September and to be finally agreed by the end of September.

### **Copyright Confidentiality**

The Consultant will be required to assign a copyright of the study to Clare County Council. Copyright for any illustrations or other material used should be cleared by the lead Consultant.

### **Freedom of Information**

Clare County Council operates under the Freedom of Information act, 1997 and all information held by Clare County Council may be subject to requests under this Act.

# Rail to Trails - Background & World Wide Development

## ***North American Experience***

Rail trails are former railway lines that have been converted to paths designed mainly for pedestrian, bicycle, skating, equestrian, cross-country skiing usage. Many of the trails are for multiuse but the essential offering is for pedestrian and cyclists.

It was in the North American countries of Canada and the USA that the extensive and practical conversion of defunct and/or abandoned railway lines to trails really took firm hold. The decades-long decline in rail traffic (passengers and freight) led to the closure initially of a number of short uneconomical lines particularly throughout the 1960's. This abandonment of lines continued into the 1970's and began to include main trunk lines. As rail operations continued to be streamlined the awareness of potential supply for new trails began to increase at local, municipal, state and Federal levels. The first abandoned rail corridor in the United States converted into a recreational trail was the Elroy Sparta State Trail in Wisconsin, (opened in 1965). The following year the Illinois Prairie Path opened. To date some of the longest and most notable rail to trail conversions are the 200 mile KATY Trail in Missouri, the 320 mile Cowboy Trail (Nebraska), the Capital Crescent Trail in Washington D.C. and the interlinked American Discovery Trail covering a distance of 6,356 miles.



**Photograph 1 Glencarbon Trail Illinois (Source: [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org))**

As time passed this organic movement acquired the name “rail trails” and has gradually created organizations world wide to promote its ideas. Currently, there are tens of thousands of miles of “rail trails” in Australia, Canada, Britain, New Zealand, Spain, and the United States. The rapid expansion and potential scope of the movement is checked in



continental Europe by the greater use and popularity of rail transport in mainland Europe supported by long term and extensive investment by national governments most notable the French, and German.

Despite their popularity and value, rail trails can take several years to develop and there are several issues to be addressed. Rail trail conversions can be quite complex for a variety of legal, social and economic reasons. Railways in the North American Continent were often built with mixed purchased land, government grants and easements. (The terms of easement often require that the land continue to be used for transportation, or it would revert to the property owner). The land deeds can often be over a hundred years old, land grants might be conditional on land use, easement agreements may have expired, all of which are expensive and difficult issues to resolve particularly in law.

The rights of disused railroad property have generally been poorly enforced, with neighbouring property owners often using the land as their own and believing that the land now belongs to them. Such encroachers often later oppose rail to trail conversion. Local residents may also oppose conversion on the grounds that pedestrian or cycle traffic will lead to vandalism, waste dumping and decline in personal and property security, loss of privacy, or noise that may accompany a trail.



**Photograph 2 Hammond Trail California (Source: [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org))**

However, “many trail opponents find that their fears about the trail do not materialize. Concerns that rail-trails increase crime, lower property values, and introduce liability claims are not supported by actual experience and numerous studies on the subject. Former opponents often become the most ardent trail users and proponents.”<sup>1</sup>

While many rail trails have been built, local opposition has prevented development of many more potential trails. The successful overcoming of opposition from “rails to trails”

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<sup>1</sup> The Rails-to-Conservancy Washington D.C. USA. Report document on opposition to rail-to-trail projects 1998.

depends on the quality of the conversion organization, the quality and sustainability of local community involvement, and committed government support.

In the United States the Rails-To-Trails Conservancy (RTC)<sup>2</sup> organisation promotes at National and State levels the conditions necessary that help to make the trail building possible. RTC is at the forefront of protecting the Federal Transportation Enhancements program, which is the largest source of funding for trail development. The organisation also defends the federal ‘railbanking’ statute in the Congress and the courts, as it deems it one of the essential tools for the preservation of unused railway corridors. At present RTC maintains an interest in 1,359 separate rail trails.

‘Railbanking’ is the practice of preserving railroad rights-of-way by using them as multi-use trails. This satisfies conditions of preserving the corridor should future conditions, such as depletion of oil reserves (“peak oil”), ever promote relaying of tracks.

In the USA the National Trail System Act of 1968 authorized the creation of a national trail system comprising of National Recreation Trails, National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails. While National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails may only be designated by an act of Congress, National Recreation Trails may be designated by the Secretary of Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture to recognise exemplary trails of local and regional significance in response to an application from the trail’s managing agency or organization. Through designation, these trails are recognized as part of America’s national system of trails.

The secretaries are permitted to acquire lands or interest in lands for the National Trails System by written cooperative agreements, through donations, by purchase with donated or appropriated funds, by exchange, and, within limited authority, by condemnation. The Secretaries are directed to cooperate with, and encourage states to administer non-federal trail lands through cooperative agreements with landowners and private organisations for the rights-of-way or through states or local governments acquiring such lands or interests.

As a result of the enormous challenges involved in the care and development of trails a wide variety of agencies and national trail organisations have in recent decades worked to redesign and revitalize the National recreation trails program. This, the National Trails Partnership (NTTP) is an effort by trail advocates to improve opportunities for training for the nationwide trails community. The vision of the partnership is “to ensure the full range of skills, training and resource information is available to trail groups, communities, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies.”

The Railway revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976 encouraged “State and local agencies and private interests to establish appropriate trails using provisions of such programs. Consistent with the purposes of that Act, and in furtherance of the national

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<sup>2</sup> The Washington based Rail-to-Trails Conservancy was founded in 1986 and at present has over a 100,000 members. The organization serves to promote policies that create the conditions that make trail building possible.

policy to preserve established railroad rights-of-way for future reactivation of rail service, to protect rail transportation corridors ...”<sup>3</sup> In 1983, Congress amended the National Trails System Act to create “rail banking” to keep intact the network of rail corridors that had been created in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Congress wished to preserve the corridors for future potential rail use and to allow their interim use as trails. The program has created some of the most spectacular trails in the USA, and besides several trails already established on the ground it has preserved more than 3,500 miles of railway corridor.



**Photograph 3 Mickelson South Dakota - Multi Use. (Source: [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org))**

In Canada the ‘Go for Green’, the Active Living and Environment Program has formulated three priorities for Go for Green’s Rails to Greenways initiatives. These are:-

1. Researching and promoting the social, heritage, economic, health and environmental benefits of preserving Canada’s discontinued trail corridors for trails
2. Distributing useful and up-to-date resource material to local groups involved in trail development in Canada. This includes:
  - a. Canadian legislation pertaining to selling rail corridors, abandonment, acquisition and title
  - b. Maps and the location of Canadian Rails and Trails

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<sup>3</sup> See the National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior *The National Trails System Act* (P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 108-342, October 18, 2004).

To qualify for designation under the *National Trail Systems Act*, a trail (in summary) had to meet all three of the following criteria:

- (A) It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use.
- (B) It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns.
- (C) It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation.

- c. The benefits of Rail/Development – documentation pertaining to the social, recreation, historic, economic and environmental benefits of trails
- d. Trail construction and design – Canadian manuals detailing all aspects of trail construction including design, bridges, tunnels, wildlife inventory, trail support facilities, landscaping, signs and physical maintenance
- e. Feasibility and Management of Trails – including information on overall management, relations with adjacent landowners, fees and promotion of trail.

### 3. Promoting Canadian trails to Canadians and international visitors.

Among the ten most popular physical activities of Canadians are walking (84%), bicycling (44%) and jogging (24%). Walking a common trail activity, is consistently the top ranked activity in research carried out during the past fifteen years.

The Bruce Trail (725km) in Ontario had more than 410,000 visitors over a twelve month period between July 1994 and June 1995. Just over 70% of these users felt that the trail was the primary reason for visiting the area. Over half of all adjacent landowners and three-quarters of actual landowners over which the Bruce Trail traverses, use the trail. A major difference between landowners and adjacent land owners use is that actual landowners tend to view the trail with a sense of stewardship, as it crosses their land (Schutt 1997).<sup>4</sup>

## ***Via Verdes Program in Spain***

There now more than 58 Vías Verdes/Greenways amounting to 1,500 kilometres throughout Spain. The Greenways programme was launched in Spain in 1993 with the aim of developing itineraries for non-motorised transport using disused railway lines. Since its inception the Vías Verdes Programme has evolved through close co-operation between the various public sector bodies (local and regional level), including the railway companies as well as other citizen groups and associations.

The Vías Verdes Programmne began in 1993, when the Ministry for Public Works, Transport and Environment (MOPTMA), together with the two State Railway Companies (AIDF, RENFE Operadora and FEVE) commissioned the Spanish Railway Foundation (F.F.E.) for the elaboration of a National Inventory of disused railway lines. This research permitted contact with around 1,000 local administrative authorities. As a result of the inventory it emerged in 1993 that there were around 7,600 kilometres of abandoned railway lines.

The Vías Verdes Programme is the result of a cooperation agreement between MOPTMA, which committed itself to set aside a sum of 6 million euro per year for Greenways construction, RENFE and FEVE who contributed their abandoned lines, as well as FFE which was given the responsibility for promoting, co-ordinating and

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<sup>4</sup> Go for Green *The Economic Benefits of Trails* Trail Monitor 1, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

informing on the programme nation wide. There was also strong support for the programme from political and media organisations.<sup>5</sup> In June 2001, the National Parliament (Senado) unanimously voted a motion, encouraging the Spanish Government to improve the necessary instruments and laws in order to convert all the disused railway lines throughout the country into Vías Verdes.



**Photograph 4 Via Verdes Trail (Source: [www.viasverdes.com](http://www.viasverdes.com))**

In 2005, twelve years after its launching more than 60 million euros have been invested in converting some 1,500 kilometres of disused railway line into 45 Vías Verdes.

The Programme is as follows. The local and/or regional authorities concerned draw up the “Vía Verde Viability Plan”, with the co-operation (if requested) of the FFE: the ownership status of the land is assessed and a design for the rehabilitation of the railway line into a future Greenway is defined in agreement with local authorities and associations. At this stage, a commitment for the management and maintenance of the Greenway is laid down, either via the local councils, local communities, provincial or regional governments, or through consortia, companies or foundations set up for this specific purpose.

Once the viability is complete, the measures agreed are incorporated into the construction plan, whose undertaking may be financed in one of three different ways, namely: entirely from MIMAM (Ministry for the Environment), co-financed through MIMAM and other regional or local authorities (a formula which continues to gain ground), or via specific finance project adapted to the regional or local conditions.

The Greenways constitute an attractive resource for active and ecological tourism in Spain. Some of the Greenways have already had a favourable effect on the redistribution of large scale tourism. The Carrilet Vía Verde (102 Km, completed in 2000) already receives more than 120,000 per year, half of whom come from other regions, and particularly the Barcelona metropolitan area. The success of the route has been such, that

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<sup>5</sup> The Vía Verdes showed their own Television Series (October –December 2005) comprising eleven (11) thirty minute episodes entitled “Vive La Via”. FFE produced the series which was headed by the noted environmentalist, Luis Miguel Domínguez, who presented each episode. Since its inception the Greeways programme has received very positive coverage from the Spanish Media.

it has encouraged local business people, hotel and restaurant owners to request authorisation to place advertisements for their establishment along the path.<sup>6</sup>

Further, the positive effects of the Greenways on the areas they pass through is not solely limited to the direct tourist sector, but produce other dynamic effects on the local population and economy right from the beginning of restoration/construction. These effects are more significant if depressed rural areas are considered, as in the case of the Sierra Vía Verde (as of writing 36 km already constructed). Here, thanks to the School-Workshop training and employment programmes, groups of 60 unemployed young people from local areas have been employed rehabilitating former stations along the way and installing tourist facilities in them.<sup>7</sup>



**Photograph 5 Via Verdes Trail (Source: [www.viasverdes.com](http://www.viasverdes.com))**

The Spanish Greenways Programme is designed to provide homogenous signs of identity in each and every Vía Verde, which uses an identifying logo and a common denomination: Vía Verde. It is also designed to foster a supportive attitude towards the Greenways which it is realised can only be achieved if proper infrastructure schemes are accompanied by training and information measures.

In 1998, the European Greenways Association was established in Namur with the aim of promoting and informing about anything relating to the creation and maintenance of Greenways on a European level.

## ***Australia / New Zealand Experience***

In Australia there are now Rail-Trails throughout the continent, constructed on old intra and inter state lines. Many are also established on former forestry/logging and mining railway tracks. One of the longest (220 miles) is the Munda-Biddi Trail from Mundaring

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<sup>6</sup> Fundación de los ferrocarriles Espanoles, Department de Vías Verdes, *Vive la Vía*

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. See also Turismo @ Polibea Número 21, Enero 2006 and *Greenways: the Spanish experience. The 'REVER' project*. Spanish Railways Foundation 2004.



to Collie. Although the Old Ghan line (1050 miles, South Australia) is available for walking it is also used by four-wheel drives.

In New Zealand the most notable conversion is The Otago Central Rail which is now a year round recreational facility, designed for walkers, runners, mountain bikers, and horse riders. It is a public reserve and was developed by the Department of Conservation in Otago with funding support from the Otago Railway Trust. Modelled on Rails to Trails projects in other parts of the world, the trail follows the former Otago Central Branch line from Middlemarch to Clyde. As with many other such lines its railway use waned, and in 1990 this 150 km stretch of the line was closed. The Department of Conservation acquired the line in 1993. Six years and substantial funds were then spent preparing and upgrading the closed railway for its current use, which involved redecking the trails 68 bridges, several over 100 metres in length. All the original sleepers, rails and crushed rock ballast were removed, and users now find a trail similar to a good gravel road. In February 2000 the 150km Rail Trail was opened. The trail has brought economic and social benefit to a number of Maniototo and central Otago towns, through which it passes.

The Otago Central Trail accommodates a range of fitness levels and like many Rail Trails there are no steep hills which make it accessible to people at all ages. An added attraction to the trail is that the visitor has the option of arriving or departing from it via the Taieri Gorge Tourist train. This train travels the Dunedin to Pukerangi (19km south of Middlemarch) section of the Otago Central line several times per week, and to Middlemarch one day a week in the summer months.

## ***United Kingdom Experience***

In England the preservation of the extensive network of pathways, walkways and Greenways is fostered by the Ramblers Association which actively lobbies at all political and administrative levels for access to land for walking paths in England and Wales. The culmination of the organizations effort was the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act in October 2005. This Parliamentary Act completes and implements the 'right to roam' campaign, which has been ongoing for over a century often against virulent opposition. The new rights of access apply to mapped areas of mountain, moor land, and heath land across England and Wales and give the public the legal right to explore away from the beaten track for the first time.

Besides the medieval pathways and pilgrimage ways of England the last fifty years has witnessed a sustained effort to maintain and reopen canal walkways and to convert disused railway lines to trails. One of the most noted Rail-Trails is the Brecon to Cardiff trail (109km/68 miles) which follows along the Taff valley using old railways lines, canals and forestry paths to link the Brecon Beacons National Park and Cardiff Bay along the Taff valley via Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd. Most of the route is a multi-user path also available to cyclists and horse riders. The trail was opened in 1992 as the

culmination of a project led by Groundwork Merthyr & Rhondda Cynon Taff, in partnership with over thirty other organisations.

Sustrans, a national path-building charity has since 1995 has been developing the National Cycle Network much of the network is based on former railways. A section of the former Great Western Railway from Cheddar to Yatton is a well established rail trail, and there are plans to extend the path eastwards from Cheddar to Wells.

## ***Rail-Trails and Recreation***

The growing popularity of outdoor recreation activities, such as cycling, (cycling is by far the most common form of rail-trail recreation), walking, running, combined with the loss of community space, has increased the need for recreational facilities such as rail-trails.

Rail-trails can provide places for cyclists, hikers, walkers, runners, to exercise and experience the many natural and cultural wonders of the nation's urban, suburban and rural environments.

Rail-trails not only serve as independent community amenities, they also enhance existing recreational resources by linking neighbours and schools and parks, waterfronts, recreational centres and other facilities.

There is no doubt about the strong link that exists between exercise and good health. By providing a place for many types of recreational use, rail-trails can greatly help to improve public health. Accessibility, level grades and obstacle-free design make rail trails ideal destinations



## Trail Development in Ireland

The Heritage Council became involved in the REVER project in 1999. Working in Ireland with the National Waymarked Ways Committee, Waterways Ireland, representatives of local authorities, and the Countryside Access and Recreation Network in Northern Ireland, the Heritage Council has sought applications for potential greenway routes. INTERREG II C project called REVER (Réseau Vert Européen) has as its aim, to promote and pilot the development of a transnational network of greenways (multiuser, multiusage routes) across the North West Metropolitan Area of Europe. The Heritage Council<sup>8</sup> defines the Greenways as:

“Shared-use routes for non-motorised users, (walkers, cyclists, roller skaters, horse riders) for pleasure, recreation, tourism and daily journeys in Ireland”

A number of initiatives have been taken to develop them, the longest of which is the Beara Breifne greenway from Castletown Beare to Leitrim. It is recognised that there is a close link between Greenways and heritage interests.

Greenways often follow inland waterways and disused railway lines, or cultural routes such as pilgrimage routes. Greenways can play a valuable role in the creation of ecological networks, and help to preserve important landscape features such as hedgerows, birds, insects, and small mammals can all benefit from such links, while the verges of greenways may provide space where semi-natural vegetation could grow, if managed appropriately.

... “Greenways are an important tool in raising awareness of heritage and offering people access to different aspects of heritage. Indirect benefits to heritage from greenways should not be underestimated either as economical gains to an area generated by a greenway may help to provide funding for the protection and maintenance of heritage sites.”<sup>9</sup>

The Great Southern Trail is based on the former railway line from Tralee to Limerick. The line is still owned by Iarnrod Eireann. The railway line was opened during the period 1867 – 1880 and was closed in 1975. The line was made available to a local group that has been working hard to convert the entire 53 miles (85km) into a long distance trail. Limerick County Council, West Limerick Resources Ltd, the FAS Community Employment Scheme and other agencies provided assistance to the scheme. In spite of the track being in Iarnrod Eireann’s ownership and they were willing to support the trail initiative, local enquiry revealed that the local voluntary co-ordinating initiative group also encountered some local resistance to the implementation of the trail. The development of this rail-trail is a substantial undertaking and a great deal of work remains

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<sup>8</sup>. A declaration towards the development of this Europe-wide green network was launched in Lille in September 2000.

<sup>9</sup> The Heritage Council (Ireland) *Homesite* Greenways

to be done. But it is the quality and dedication of the local voluntary group that has made the affirmation of the vision of the rail-trail possible.

In County Waterford among other tourism projects being undertaken the County Council with the support of local interest groups is developing the disused railway line between Waterford and Dungarven. The trails is to provide a walking and cycling route, complete with picnic spots and viewing areas and the potential for restricted bridle-way use.

Although not a rail-trail another good example of local initiative is the Plassey Way which is a river-side walk from Limerick City to the Plassey Industrial Park and onto O'Brien's Bridge. It is proposed to extend the trail to Killaloe under the Cospoir National Trail Network. This walk is an important amenity value to the local area and will also in time provide a sense of connection to other river walks in and around Limerick City.

## ***Way Marked Ways***

The National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee (NWWAC)<sup>10</sup>, which is part of the Irish Sports Council based in Dublin, works in close association with a community of Trail Development Committees, Local Authorities, Government Agencies, Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships around the country. It is primarily concerned with overseeing the development of the National Waymarked Way programme.

The following organisations are represented on the NWWAC:-

The Heritage Council, The Health Promotion Unit, Dept. of Health & Children, Dept. of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Dept. of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, OSI, Countryside Access & Activity Network, Mountaineering Council of Ireland, Coillte Teo, County Managers Association, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Irish Farmers Association, ICMSA, Shannon Development, Walking Routes Ireland, Bord Failte and the Irish Heart Foundation.

As an organisation it seeks to:

1. Increase awareness and participation levels in recreational walking in Ireland
2. Promote the principles of Sustainable Trail Management (STM) in Ireland and seeks to ensure that all National Waymarked Ways are developed, managed and maintained at an appropriate standard
3. Promote the existing network of Waymarked Ways as quality walking routes
4. Advise on the creation and development of local waymarked trails in Ireland

As an organisation they have a brief to ensure that all 'Waymarked Ways' are developed

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<sup>10</sup> Source: [www.walkireland.ie](http://www.walkireland.ie) – NWWAC web site and email from Cormac MacDonnell, Programme Executive, Irish Sports Council.

and maintained to the highest standards continuously. To achieve this they undertake a number of initiatives including:

1. Preparing guidelines for the development of Waymarked Ways
2. Coordinating a system of independent route inspections
3. Ensure that all routes, within the National Network, are in compliance with public liability insurance specifications
4. Establishing & managing links with European and international organisations.
5. Identifying, supporting and developing opportunities for participation in walking on Waymarked Ways
6. Assisting and advising in the establishment and development of new Waymarked Ways
7. Ensure quality marketing and promotion of the Waymarked Ways.



**Map 1 - Way Marked Ways (Source [www.walkireland.ie](http://www.walkireland.ie))**

Two waymarked ways – Burren Way (21 on map) and the Mid Clare Way (20 on map), come very close to the old West Clare Railway Line route at Lahinch, Ennis and Ruan providing opportunity for linkages in the future.



Map 2 The Burren Way (Source: [www.walkireland.ie](http://www.walkireland.ie))



Map 3 The Mid Clare Way (Source: [www.walkireland.ie](http://www.walkireland.ie))

## ***Influences on Irish Tourism***

World Tourism Organisation data reveal that Ireland's market share has held steady since 2000. The country's share of total visitor arrivals in European countries has remained broadly unchanged at 1.6% over the past five years, while its share of total European tourism has moved up slightly. However as recent records reveal Ireland's tourism, although overall strong, is no longer evenly balanced or distributed and in a brief but striking article on this issue, John G O'Dwyer<sup>11</sup> wrote:

“In 2003, 61% of overseas visitors to Wales participated in hill walking, while UK visitors made 7.3 million trips on which they partook of walking activities. The comparable figure for Ireland was 168,000 participants in hill walking/hiking from the UK and other overseas destinations, representing fewer than 4% of total visitors – and a decline of almost half on the 1993 figure.”

It isn't just in the already well-publicised area of hill walking that overseas numbers are declining. In other rural based activity holidays (equestrian, cycling, angling), the numbers have declined from 408,000 to 212,000 between 1993 and 2003

While overall visitor figures to Ireland have increased steadily over the past twenty years, with the numbers reaching 6.7 million in 2005. It is Dublin that has absorbed over a third of national tourism spend and has seen its total bed nights increase by 41% in the past five years. The capital benefited mostly from this rise due to a shift in European visitor trends towards short-stay-city breaks, and away from long stay holidays.<sup>12</sup>

However, occupancies in other parts of the country have fallen, by 21% in the West and Northwest, and by a staggering 39% in the Shannon region and within these regions tourism is more concentrated directly on Limerick, Galway, and Westport.

Whereas Irish Tourism was once focused on the west today it has become very much urbanised and particularly Dublin based, in contrast Welsh Tourism has committed itself to activity and rural based holidays and as a result:

“..each morning in villages across north Wales you will see streets filled with hill walkers, rock climbers, mountain bikers and other outdoor enthusiasts setting off for a day in the countryside”

A major crisis is looming for tourism in the west, with a clear need for action to redress the increasing east/west divide in tourism income. The West no longer exploits its natural advantage as an ideal location for activity-based holidays. Rural communities must come round – as they clearly have in Wales – to recognising the economic advantage of

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<sup>11</sup> John G O'Dwyer *Sun setting on west's rural tourism industry* The Irish Times Opinion, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Joe Humphrey's *Cities benefit most from rise in tourism* The Irish Times Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2006

allowing responsible access to the countryside for hill walkers, mountain bikers, pony trekkers, anglers, and other activity-seeking visitors”<sup>13</sup>

The longer touring holiday still has its place, but much of the growth has been in short breaks. The modern world has witnessed a huge increase in destinations directly reachable within a few hours by affordable flights. Ireland is well served by regional airports and the Shannon region is easily accessible through Shannon airport, which is served by EasyJet, Ryanair and Aer Lingus.

A feature of this year’s national tourist promotion is a psychological appeal to make a piece of Ireland your own and there are few better and more diverse attractive regions in the whole of Ireland than West Clare. No industry can afford to be depended on one source, thus it is worth noting that rural tourism is at the moment being driven by the domestic market, and in the west, 64% of bed occupation is generated by domestic travellers.

Ireland can no longer promote itself as a sleepy rural destination. It is a modern dynamic multicultural European country which has a great deal to offer the discerning tourist and it is to the discerning tourist with a disposable income that the tourist industry has in part to orientate itself, while at the same time respecting and welcoming those who still wish to travel on a low budget.

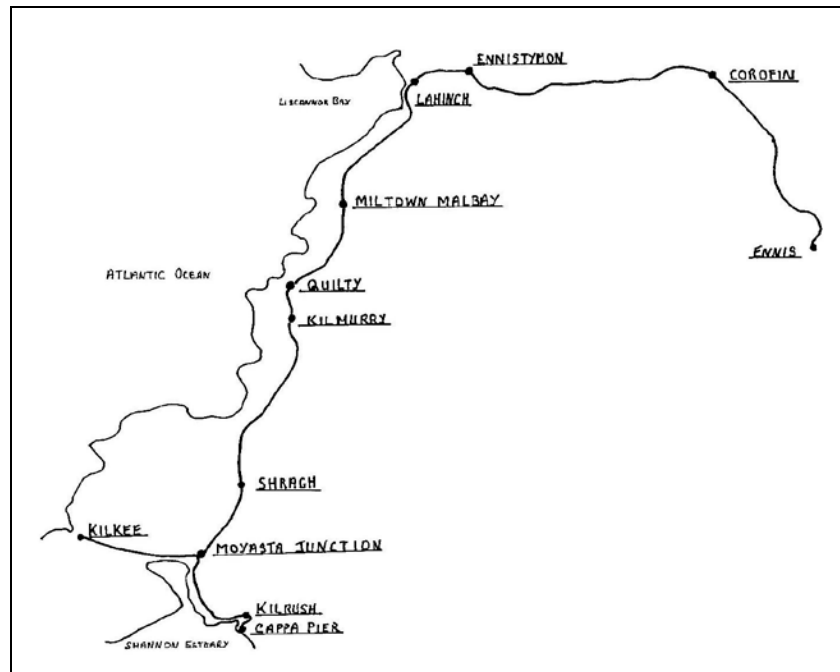
As the country continues to open, change, develop, and re-orientate itself to new directions and towards what is the best of the old, the West Clare Railway line offers an unique opportunity for development to touch many levels not just of local and international tourism but also to offer opportunities to enhance the quality and inter-relatedness of local community life.

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<sup>13</sup> John G O’Dwyer *Sun Setting on west rural tourism industry*

## Background to Study & Brief History

Following the great famine the population of County Clare declined from 240,000 (1841 census) to 125,000 (1891) and it continued to decline right through the 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1961 when the census showed a population of less than 75,000. The economic climate of the mid to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Clare wasn't the most encouraging and despite this a number of railway schemes were promoted in Clare. The first railway line ran from Limerick to Ennis and this was extended some time later to Athenry. However, the railway promoters continued to look at building a line to serve Kilrush and Kilkee.<sup>14</sup>



**Map 4 West Clare Railway (adapted from drawing by David H Smith)**

A number of schemes from the 1860s onwards collapsed for various reasons. A proposal to build a narrow gauge railway from Ennis to Lahinch to Miltown Malbay in the 1870s (this was similar to the eventual line built) collapsed because it was not possible to raise the capital for its construction. However, this proposal set a benchmark for the narrow gauge railway, despite its disadvantages of being slower, and requiring the transfer of goods onto other carriages of standard gauge. A narrow gauge railway was cheaper to construct. A number of other incentives came into play such as the Act of 1883 which allowed railway promoters to approach the Grand Juries (Co Council predecessors) of the districts the railway would serve, and seek approval for a guarantee whereby the payment of interest on the capital to build the railway was guaranteed by the rate payers. This incentive was initially applicable to narrow gauge railways. The West Clare Railway (3 ft gauge line) was a direct result of this legislation. In financial terms it had gone from a very risky venture to a 'sure thing'.

<sup>14</sup> The West Clare Railway: An Irish Railway Pictorial, J Taylor. p 2.

The West Clare Railway as we know it today started out as two separate companies. The West Clare Railway (incorporated in 1884) ran from Ennis to Miltown Malbay. A ceremony to commemorate the start of the project was undertaken in Miltown Malbay by Charles Stuart Parnell in January 1885. This line covered a distance of 27 miles (43.4 km) and opened for business in July 1887. A separate company the South Clare Railway was established in 1884. Work on this line commenced in 1890 and it was opened for business in 1892. The South Clare Railway covered a distance of 26 miles (41.8 km) and connected Miltown Malbay to Kilrush and Kilkee. In reality both companies operated as one<sup>15</sup> and were to become part of the Great Southern Railways which was set up by the Irish Free State in 1925.

With the reorganisation of public transport in 1945 resulting in the formation of Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE) the West Clare Railway came under new management. CIE modernised the railway and dieselised the railway in the early 1950s resulting in the railway being the most modern narrow gauge railway in Ireland<sup>16</sup>. With the growing impact of road transport the line started to lose substantial funds and by 1960 the deficit was in excess of £20,000 per annum. The Board of CIE decided to close the line and the last train ran on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1961.

After the line was track-stripped, the land was divided and sold off to the adjoining local landowners – refer to section on Land Ownership. In the 40 years since this occurred the line has gradually been disappearing from the landscape as a result of natural processes such as the encroachment of scrub, and man made influences such as destruction of the embankments, and the building of dwellings, utility facilities, houses, animal feeding and storage yards etc.. Bridges and other structures such as level crossings, fence posts have been removed or are in a very poor state of repair, drainage systems no longer work from lack of maintenance and the treading of animals. Occasionally even the outline print of the line has become hard to discern as an entity in the landscape.

In the mid 1990s a group of local business men began to explore the possibility of reopening part of the line at Moyasta Junction. The group purchased the old station house and this has begun a revival of the West Clare Railway under the guidance of Mr Jackie Whelan on the southern section of the line.

Although the structure of the line has suffered greatly from the result of neglect and farming usage, the outline containing the railway print with its mnemonic atmosphere, is still strikingly in place, as are many of the station houses and associated structures. The line, if unobstructed offers an extraordinary potential for use as a recreational walking/cycling route in the West Clare Area with the ensuing economic and social benefits that this can bring to both local, and regional communities.

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<sup>15</sup> Outline of Irish Railway History, HC Casserley, p 140.

<sup>16</sup> The West Clare Railway: An Irish Railway Pictorial, J Taylor. p 4.



# County Development Plan and Railway Heritage Protection

The heritage of the railway line is protected under the North Clare Local Area Plan and the West Clare Local Area Plan under the following policies:

## North Clare and West Clare Local Area Plans:

- Policy T6<sup>17</sup> and T5<sup>18</sup>: Rail Network - THE COUNCIL WILL SAFEGUARD THE ROUTE OF THE OLD WEST CLARE RAILWAY AND ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES AND MARSHALLING FACILITIES TO CONSERVE AND PROMOTE IT AS A TRANSPORT CORRIDOR FOR PUBLIC USE EITHER ON FOOT, BICYCLE OR OTHER APPROPRIATE MEANS OF TRANSPORT.
  - (30) The Limerick Planning, Land Use and Transportation Study and the National Spatial Strategy seek to promote the use of rail as a sustainable mode of transportation. The Planning Authority considers it important to safeguard the corridor of the old railway line from development that would interfere with its potential to become an important tourist asset in the future. This could have potential significant benefits to the overall tourist economy of the area and its attraction to people and investors as a recreational and transport facility (see REC7).
- Policy Rec7<sup>19</sup>: Recreational Routes - PROVISION WILL BE MADE TO ACCOMMODATE PROPOSALS FOR OFF-ROAD RECREATIONAL ROUTES. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ON OR ADJACENT TO THE WEST CLARE RAILWAY LINE OR OTHER IDENTIFIED ROUTES WHICH CONFLICT WITH, OR RESTRICT THE RECREATION POTENTIAL OF THE LINE WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED.
  - (25) It is being proposed that the line of the West Clare railway should be safeguarded to allow for its development as a recreational route which has the potential to be developed as part of a long-distance walking route, as well as providing a safe and convenient route for the local community. The comparatively level nature of the line lends itself to its multi-use including cycling and horse-riding and for accessibility for wheelchairs and others with mobility impairment. Research into appropriate surface, access points and management of the route must be part of the overall planning and development of the line as a recreational route.
- Policy Env12<sup>20</sup>: Industrial Archaeology - PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL MATERIALLY AFFECT THE PRESERVATION AND FUTURE USE OF STRUCTURES OF INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN BE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT:

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<sup>17</sup> North Clare Local Area Plan 2005, page 88. Clare County Council

<sup>18</sup> West Clare Local Area Plan 2003, page 106. Clare County Council

<sup>19</sup> North Clare Local Area Plan 2005, page 67. Clare County Council

<sup>20</sup> North Clare Local Area Plan 2005, page 59. Clare County Council

- A. SUCH DEVELOPMENT HAS RESPECT FOR THE CHARACTER, SCALE, DESIGN, AND SETTING OF THE STRUCTURE; AND
- B. ANY EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL VALUES ARE RETAINED.

- (66) North Clare has a wealth of industrial heritage which is evident by the number of structures associated with its rural heritage throughout the Plan area. Structures of industrial archaeology include light-houses, signal towers, Martello Towers, piers, warehouses, mills, life boat houses, weighbridges and structures on the West Clare and Ennis to Athenry Railway.
- (67) The permanent way and structures associated with the West Clare railway are to be protected from development where possible, as the historical significance of the line throughout West Clare is recognised within the Plan, for example the permanent way, embankment, cuttings and structures. The Council are undertaking to preserve, map and provide access to the West Clare railway line exploring opportunities for the development of the former line as a walking route. (Ref REC7)

A number of Railway structures are also protected by inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures<sup>21</sup> in County Clare<sup>22</sup>.

#### **Ennis & Environs Development Plan 2003**

E92 - 20001257 Iron Footbridge, Ennis Railway Station  
E93 - 20001258 Stone Warehouse, Ennis Railway Station  
E94 - 20001259 Iron Water Column, Ennis Railway Station  
E95 - 20001260 Railway Station, Ennis Railway Station  
EI46 - 20008011 Train Sheds, Ennis Railway Station  
EI47 - 20008013 Train Turntable, Ennis Railway Station

#### **County Development Plan 1999 - Variation No.1 (2001)**

RPS 526 - West Clare Railway Bridge, Drumcliffe, Ennis  
RPS 527 - West Clare Railway Bridge, Rineen, Miltown Malbay  
RPS 324 - Moyasta Station Kilrush, West Clare Station & Museum  
RPS 403 - Former Railway Station, Circular Road, Kilkee  
RPS 460 - Station House, Clonbony, Miltown Malbay

#### **Kilrush Development Plan 2001 – 2006**

K30 - The Engine Turntable, Cappagh Pier, Kilrush  
K35 - The Station House, Merchants Quay, Kilrush  
K37 - West Clare Engine House, Merchants Quay, Kilrush

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<sup>21</sup> A “protected structure” is defined as any structure or specified part of a structure, which is included in the Record of Protected Structures.

<sup>22</sup> Courtesy of R UaCróinín, Conservation Officer, Clare County Council.

## Project Team & Liaison

The project team consisted of:

**Project Management and Client Liaison** – David Humphrey's, MAgrSc, PGDipBAdmin(Project Mgmt), DipBldgCons(RICS), MLI, MAPM, MIPM, IHBC

**Desk and Field Research** – Noel Taaffe, Cert Eng

**Pilot Survey** – Noel Taaffe Cert Eng. and Tim O'Malley

**Recreation Research** – Ted McNamara, BA, HDip (NUI)

The project team regularly met with Ms C McGuire Heritage Officer and Mr R UaCróinín Conservation Officer of Clare County Council, to monitor progress, agree items such as the format of surveys, workshop questionnaires etc. These meetings were held at Clare County Council Planning Offices in Ennis. A meeting was also held with Ms Beatrice Kelly of the Heritage Council to finalise the report.

## Pilot Survey

It was agreed to survey the section of line from Ennistymon to Quilty as this would provide a good representative sample of the overall condition of the line and its structures and also the problems likely to arise.

This particular section was chosen because:

- the interest shown by local communities for development of a trail;
- it passes near or though centres of population such as Quilty, Miltown-Malbay, Lahinch and Ennistymon;
- has some of the best and diverse landscape and sea views along the track;
- poses all of the difficulties that need to be overcome along the whole route for rail to trail conversion;
- offers future possibility for linkage with the Burren Way, and eventually should Ireland's National Waymarked Way continue to grow and be developed (with supporting legislation) to connect with other Waymarked Ways, and eventually link either with E2 or E8 of the Long distance walking trails of Europe.<sup>23</sup>

A standard survey format (Appendix A) was agreed with the Client following a number of drafts prior to undertaking the survey. The primary aim of the survey was to record the condition of the line and any structures along the route, in order that an assessment of the main problems to opening up the line would be identified.

The survey sheet was designed to include details of location, a photograph, a condition assessment and other comments. The condition assessment was based on an adapted form of the type proposed by Bernard M Feilden<sup>24</sup>.

A total of 64 individual elements/items were surveyed, photographed and recorded – refer to attached survey sheets (Appendix F) and Drawings 1-7 based on 6" OS Map Base provided by Clare County Council (Appendix G).

As part of the research into the line condition Clare County Council provided access to its aerial photographic survey. The aerial photographs were assessed for their potential of providing additional information on the condition of the complete line. The presence or absence of structures could be easily assessed as could the presence of major obstacles such as recently built houses. It is also possible to identify the route of the line and any road crossings, bridges, presence or absence of vegetation particularly dense scrub. It should also be noted that these aerial photographs form a historic record of the line on the date taken.

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<sup>23</sup> E2 Atlantic – Mediterranean, Galway via Britain to southern France

E8 Atlantic – Dursey Head in West Cork to Istanbul

<sup>24</sup> Conservation of Historic Buildings, B M Feilden, Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd 1994 p. 202

It would not be possible to identify or make an assessment of the following from the photographs because of a lack of resolution:

- Condition assessment of the structures
- Presence or absence of fencing, and other minor obstructions could only be identified from the ground
- The extent and density of scrub on the line would not be possible to evaluate as the resolution of the photographs is not suitable.

However, to fully assess the line it would have to be physically walked and surveyed by a competent person as part of a detailed planning exercise.

## ***Survey Findings***

The pilot survey was undertaken during the end of July 2005 over a period of 5 days. The survey is recorded on individual record sheets (Appendix F) which are located on drawings based on the 6" OS Map Base (Appendix G).

The survey findings are related in a number of sections as follows:

- Ennistymon
  - Summary
    - 2 bridges, wall blocking bridge, housing estate on line
  - Issues
    - Condition of bridges
    - Scrub starting to establish
    - Stiles required
    - Loop route around housing estate required



**Photograph 6 Wall across bridge at Ennistymon**

- Ennistymon to Lahinch
  - Summary
    - Overgrown football pitch on line
    - Fences, stone walls along route
    - Single private houses on route of line
    - Farm stock yards - 2 no. on line
  - Issues
    - thick scrub developing
    - Loops required around private houses



**Photograph 7 Scrub Developing on Line**



**Photograph 8 View of Line to Lahinch**

- Lahinch
  - Summary
    - Private houses on route of line
    - Housing estates located on line
    - Caravan parks located on line
  - Issues
    - No evidence of line route through the town of Lahinch
    - Road access through Lahinch only



**Photograph 9 Embankment partially removed**

- Lahinch to Rineen
  - Summary
    - 3 missing bridges and 2 bridges in place needing repair
    - 2 embankments damaged
    - 1 silage store yard on line
    - Water logged area
    - Over grown area
    - Private housing on route of line
    - Farm yard on line
    - Quarry adjacent to line
  - Issues
    - Bridges in need of repair and by passing
    - Scrub clearance and management required
    - H&S issues along missing sections of embankment
    - Stiles needed over fence lines
    - Bypassing of houses, quarry and farm yard required





**Photograph 10 Bridge removed at Cattle Crossing**

- Rineen to Miltown Malbay
  - Summary
    - Private houses and B&B on line route
    - Farm yard on line route
    - Fences require stiles
    - 4 bridges
    - Overgrown section
    - Illegal dumping along route of line in at least one location
  - Issues
    - Bridges in need of repairs and or by passing
    - Scrub developing along sections of line
    - H&S issues where embankments damaged
    - Fencing and stiles required





**Photograph 11 Stone Bridge in Need of Urgent Repair**

- Miltown Malbay
  - Summary
    - 1 farmyard located on line
    - Rubble on line, fences crossing line
    - Private housing on route of line
    - Scrub developing along line
  - Issues
    - Scrub management required
    - Stiles over fences required
- Miltown Malbay to Quilty
  - Summary
    - 1 missing embankment
    - Private housing on route of line
    - 5 fences/gates on line
    - Overgrown bridge in need of repair or bypassing
    - Scrub developing on line
  - Issues
    - Scrub management required
    - Bridge repairs and or bypassing required
    - Stiles over fences required
- Quilty
  - Summary
    - Private housing built on line
    - Track no longer visible through Quilty
  - Issues
    - Loop required around Quilty by road



**Photograph 12 Housing built on Line**

### **Summary of Main Issues**

1. Bridges including underpasses along the route are in need of repair or bypassing
2. Development on line – housing, stock yards, removal of embankments etc has occurred along the route and presents a challenge to planning the actual walkway as these developments will need to be bypassed and sections of the damaged embankments made safe
3. Scrub management – where access to animal grazing has been difficult scrub has begun to develop. This will eventually completely block the route and needs removal and ongoing management
4. Fencing and walls – in a number of locations landowners have fenced off sections of the route or put up walls designating boundaries. These will have to be provided with stiles and other access means
5. Access through private land – in sections of the line the only access to it is through private land. Negotiations with the landowners will be required
6. Industrial Heritage issues – much of the remaining industrial heritage such as bridges, embankments, level crossings etc has gone but a significant amount of it remains in situ. This needs to be identified and recorded and decisions taken on its future management. These present a unique opportunity as points of interest along the route.

## Budget Costing's and Programme for Developing the Walking Route

The following is a budget costing based on the initial survey of the line from Ennistymon to Lahinch a physical distance of just over two miles (3.2 km). These costing's do not take into consideration any additional costs associated with allowing for disabled access. This would only be possible based on a full detailed survey and design having being carried out. No allowance is made for the provision of litter bins, car parking provision, new pavement surfaces etc.

Detailed discussions were had with Mr Liam O'Mahony of The Great Southern Trail Action Group ([www.southerntrail.net](http://www.southerntrail.net)) who are a non-profit community group working to develop the Limerick to Tralee rail line as a walking route for members of the local communities and visitors to the area. They have opened a number of sections of the line around Listowel, Templeglantine, Newcastle West and Rathkeale as walking routes on the line which is owned by Iarnrod Eireann.

The group have formed a limited company – Great Southern Trail Ltd and are a registered charity. Insurance costs are in the region of €1,400 per year. Development costs for the trail are around €10,000 per km which covers a basic finish including scrub clearing, stiles, repairs to fences, stoning the route – cost will depend on width of trail. This figure would be regarded as the very minimum required. Alternatively if seating and other amenities were required the costs will increase. The figure does not cover planning and design cost and the cost of supervising the contractors. These have been done on a voluntary basis by the group.

Based on these discussions we would recommend the following costing for the pilot section between Lahinch and Ennistymon. Please note a final cost is not possible to determine until a detailed design of the route is made and tender prices are received from contractors. The Great Southern Trail line is still owned by Iarnrod Eireann and does not have the complications of this project in terms of ownership. The negotiation and design of the route in this case will involve additional costs and time.

<b>Budget Costing for Pilot Walkway – Lahinch to Ennistymon</b>	
<b>Description</b>	<b>Budget Costing</b>
Discussions and negotiations with landowners – allow 20 days @ €600.00 per day	€12,000
Legal and other administration – allow €2,000. Setting up legal entity etc.	€2,000
Insurance – allow for 3 years cover at €1500 per year	€4,500
Route Design and Planning – allow 10 days @ €600.00 per day. Allow €1,000 for expenses. Total €7,000	€7,000
Design and production of simple map guide. Allow €3,000	€3,000

Signage - 2 no large signs with route indicated - €2,500 x 2 = €5,000 Finger signs along route – 20 at €250. €5,000 Installation included.	€10,000
Making bridges safe – 2 no. Fencing required. The bridges are not easily accessed and depending on where it is decided to start the route works to these may not be required. It is very likely that the route would begin at the Convent rather than at the bridges. Allow €5,000 to make bridges safe as a provisional sum.	€5,000
Scrub clearance, weed control, resurfacing the trail with stone. Allow €20,000 per km due to deteriorated condition of line. This does not include for supervision of works and assumes significant voluntary labour and input by the local community.	€64,000
Erection of stiles – allow for 5 at €1,000 each	€5,000
Contingency	€10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>€122,500</b>

A budget figure of €30,000 per kilometre should be used for the budgeting of the overall trail. This figure would include for design, planning and development. However, more firm figures would be available after the development of the pilot section. The final costing will be directly linked to the amount of community and voluntary input and the specification of the finished trail. Taking the original length of track to be 85 km approximately. Using a figure of €30,000 per km the overall budget costing would be in the region of €2.5 to €3.0 million. This does not include for repairs to bridges and other fabric. Where an existing bridge is to be bypassed by a new pedestrian bridge of a steel and oak timber structure a sum of €15,000 should be allowed as a minimum per bridge.

Ongoing maintenance is an issue that will need to be planned for. In the case of the Great Southern Trail route weed killing is done annually and scrub clearance as and when required. It is an ongoing costing that needs to be allowed for. NWWAC recommend an annual maintenance cost of between €40 and €60 per kilometre. This figure would appear low and needs to be tested in the pilot section.

A note of caution with regards route planning and design must be included here. This is due to the complexity of the ownership of land and the potential need to bypass whole sections of the line etc. The amount of time and effort required negotiating with farmers and other landowners should not be underestimated and we would recommend that this effort by community groups be taken into account in budgeting and agreeing matching funds with grant agencies such as the County Council, Heritage Council, Shannon Development, Rural Resource Development, etc.

### **Programme for Development of Recreational Route**

Year	Description
2006	Form steering group Plan and open pilot section of route from Lahinch to Ennistymon Explore option with J Whelan on Kilkee/Kilrush section
2007	Begin discussions with other communities along the route - Ennis to Corofin - Lahinch to Miltown Malbay Negotiate connection to the Burren Way
2008	Open 2 additional sections of route Continue discussions with other communities - Corofin to Ennistymon - Miltown Malbay to Quilty
2009 - 15	Open remaining sections to complete route

## Land Ownership

As part of the study land ownership identification was undertaken. This was facilitated by Iarnrod Eireann staff at Connolly station in Dublin where their records of sales were made available. This information including the names of the purchasers of the land has been plotted onto an OS base map provided by Clare County Council. The original marked up copies have been provided to Clare County Council under a separate cover. It is recognised that in some cases due to the passage of time, ownership would have been transferred to descendants of the original purchasers or sold on. As the trail is developed the exact owners can be traced by referring to the original owner details and this can be checked as required with the land registry. Questions that arise concerning the ownership of a rail corridor must be resolved before a trail conversion can move forward.

After its closure the railwayline was sold off during the 1960's to adjoining landowners for a nominal sum. Search of the records at the railway offices reveal that the land was distributed into approximately 336 different holdings, varying in length size of between 20 metres and 800 metres with the average line-length of holding between 100-150 metres. Less than 10% of the line is now owned by C.I.E.s successor Iarnrod Eireann. The fragmentation of the ownership is a significant barrier to be overcome and should not be underestimated. International experience and experience in West Limerick has shown that where the land has remained in the ownership of the railway company there are still problems of encroachment and objections by adjoining land owners. In this case the land has been sold off for nearly 40 years and this will present a significant problem requiring lengthy negotiations with both legal owners and illegal occupiers.

It is very important that land owners, particularly individual farmers and their local organisations such as the IFA representative are consulted at the very earliest stage of developing a section of the line, with a view to gaining their support and goodwill as happened in Moyasta when the line and station was being reopened. This should happen informally before any public announcements, planning of the route etc. This process of discussion and negotiation would be best coming from a member of the local community rather than from an official of an organisation such as the County Council.

## Workshop

The proposed workshop was to be the forum for discussing and assessing the views and attitudes of the various stakeholders. This was organised for the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2005 to take account of the summer holidays and the venue was set for the Ennistymon Community Hall.

The format for the programme was agreed following a proposed programme – refer to appendix H. A questionnaire was devised to be given out on the night – refer Appendix D. This questionnaire took the form of part A to be filled in by all attendees and part B was to be filled in by walkers only.

The workshop was promoted by writing to over 70 individual stakeholders – Appendix B, inviting them to the workshop – Appendix C. The letter was drafted by ACP<sup>25</sup> and sent out on Clare County Council headed paper. The workshop was also promoted on local radio and newspapers – Appendix E, in the days running up to the workshop.

A PowerPoint presentation was given by David Humphreys on the night as an introduction to the workshop. Refer to Appendix I for slides content.

The planned format for the evening was as follows:

- Opening presentation by Clare Co Council – Ms C McGuire Heritage Officer
- Presentation of Pilot study to date – Mr D Humphreys
- Break into discussion groups – 30 minutes
- Report back to main group
- Summing up
- Questionnaire to be filled in also

However, due to the relatively small number attending – (refer to Appendix J for list of attendees), the format for the evening was adjusted and the discussion groups were changed to an open forum. The main points raised at the meeting were as follows:

1. Access to the line is a major issue and it is vital to have the farmers who either now own the line or who adjoin it to be fully on board and supporting the idea.
2. The issue of insurance was raised and one potential way to overcome this is to have the route designated as a NWWAC or a Way Marked Trail promoted by Clare Co. Council. In this instance an indemnity can be given through Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd. Further details of insurance can be obtained from Nation Way Marked Ways Advisory Committee<sup>26</sup>
3. The line should not be developed in total but should be developed in sections with a pilot section established first.

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<sup>25</sup> Architectural Conservation Professionals

<sup>26</sup> NWWAC 21 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2. 01 2407700.

4. A possibility for this would be a pilot section being developed between Lahinch and Ennistymon and linking this into the Burren Walk. This would give a local loop walk which would take about 2 hours.
5. Funding was another issue that was raised. Ms C McGuire outlined the various sources of funds available including a scheme for 50% grant aid which will finish up in 2006. Additional grant aid could be gotten from Clare Co Council under its Conservation Grant scheme. It would appear that funding from grant aid is potentially generous and would not be a hindrance to the development of the walkway.
6. The question was asked whether it would be possible for Clare Co Council to take on ownership of the remaining land within CIE's ownership and also the bridges. This will need to be investigated.
7. Maintenance of the line/ walkway was highlighted as a major concern once the initial investment was made.
8. It was also suggested that the walkway would be multi purpose and would include cycling and horse riding. The meeting felt that this would cause numerous conflicts of use and this should be planned for in the pilot section.
9. The need for local involvement was discussed at length and it was agreed that unless a local group would champion a walkway then it would fail because it would have to have local commitment from the start. This has been borne out also by both national and international experience.

The meeting concluded and agreed that a pilot section of the line between Lahinch and Ennistymon should be developed first and that the next step would be to hold an informal meeting of both community leaders and business interests to tease out a way forward. It was also pointed out that before anything is done, informal discussions are entered into with the landowners as it is vital to have their input from the very start.

## ***Analysis of Questionnaires***

Five questionnaires were completed and returned. It is important to bear in mind that this survey does not give a representative result with statistical significance, due to the very small numbers of respondents. However, it does give some important indicators of where people are coming from in terms of attitudes, expectations, difficulties to be faced, opportunities to be exploited and other relevant issues.

The following is a summary of the various answers given to the questions asked.

### **Questionnaire – Part A**

Question 1 – Contact details. Completed

Question 2 - Are you a member of an organised group ... 3 replied Yes, 2 replied No

Question 3 –



Description	Tick
Walker	2
Landowner	0
Representative of Interest Group	2
Government Organisation	0
Non- Government Organisation	1
Tourism Sector	1
Walking Group representative	0

Question 4 - What is your current understanding of this project [using the West Clare Railway Line as a walking and recreational route] ?

- Excellent
- Has potential for development
- Very expensive and 'pie in the sky' if one thinks you will get farmers on board
- Maximise potential for walking / recreation

Question 5 – Opportunities and Benefits

- Useful for events,
- Walkway for residents on route
- People of all ages can enjoy
- May be used all year
- Encourage people to stay in the area
- Give more choice to local and visitors to participate in the area.
- Would act as an attraction to visitors passing through from Connemara to Kerry
- Help people to respect the environment
- Local employment
- Revitalise and enhance the area
- Keep people at home to work the farms
- Create more tourism

Question 6 – Threats and difficulties

- Permission from farmers
- Costs of maintenance
- Managing the litter problem
- Condition of structures along the route

Question 7 – Ways of overcoming the threats to the viability of the project

- Speak to landowners and locals in the areas involved
- Form a charitable organisation or public company for part or all of the route
- Up keep funded by Co Council
- Spend lots of money

#### Question 8 – Any other comments

- Very important to speak to the landowners
- Reopen the line to improve public transport links in West Clare
- There is a need to have further meetings to make a more definite start and address issues such as
  - Status of Group to oversee the project
  - Linking with other communities such as Ennistymon to Quilty

#### **Questionnaire – Part B – Walkers Only**

No part Bs were completed.

The answers and comments in the questionnaire very much support the issues raised at the workshop.

The main findings of both the workshop and the questionnaires are:

- A Pilot Project should be put in place from Lahinch to Ennistymon to test the viability of the project and to act as a casestudy for other communities along the line
- The Pilot Project should link into an existing walkway such as the Burren Way
- The Pilot Project should be a loop route that will have potential for local usage as well as tourism
- Local community and business interest is essential to lead and drive the initiative
- Support funding through the form of grants from the various agencies are readily available – e.g. Sfadco, RRD, Clare County Council, Heritage Council, etc.
- The earliest possible involvement of the landowners is essential – this should be even done before any formal committee is put in place
- Judging on the level of promotion and the resulting attendance, interest in the project could possibly be very low and this will need to be taken into consideration when promoting the Pilot Project. This may indicate a high level of scepticism about the project at local level, which will have to be overcome by strong commitment and leadership during all stages of the development but particularly at the development of the pilot section
- The most immediate barrier is to get local community involvement and commitment.

## Structures along the Route

The pilot survey covering the line from Ennistymon to Quilty identified and made an assessment of the condition of the individual structures along the route. Mr Risteard UaCróinín of Clare County Council made available a list of structures along the complete route – see below. Ownership of the bridges along the route remains with Iarnrod Éireann. However, in correspondence from CIE Group Property Management in April 2003 reference is made to the fact that there is correspondence with Clare County Council going back many years with a view to transferring the bridges. It would appear that the matter was never finalised. As the bridges form a major part of the line infrastructure it would be vital that Iarnrod Éireann are involved from the earliest stages of discussions as they are a significant property owner albeit possibly a reluctant one.

Landmarks	Condition
Ennis Station	Still in use as main station for the area today
Curra vorrin Crossing	
Clonroad Bridge	Good Condition, Viewable from Clonroad
River Fergus	
Shaughnessy's Bridge	Good Condition, Crossing Tulla Road
Lifford Bridge	
Drumcliffe Bridge	Good condition, much of embankment running alongside bungalow. Bridge removed.
Erinagh Bridge	
Ballygriffey Bridge	
Ruan Station	Dwelling house Some original features
Dromcavan Bridge	No remains
Corofin Station	Dwelling House Platform Still visible
Willbrook Station	Dwelling House No reminder of station remaining
Roxton Bridge	
Wilbrook Bridge	
Craggounbouy Bridge	
Square Bridge	Still in original Condition, Embankment remains
Russa Bridge	Blocked up. Running under road
Cullenagh Bridge	Good Condition, Embankment remains on one side
Ennistymon Station	Nothing remains
Inagh Bridge	Good condition, Visible from road
Town Bridge	Good condition, Embankment remains on one side
Madigans/Grahams Bridge	
Lehinch Station	No remains part of housing estate

Coffeys Bridge	No remains
Majors Bridge	Only abutments of bridge remain
Crag Bridge	Good condition, Covered with ivy, Crosses Lahinch/Miltown Malbay
Hanrahans/Moy Bridge	Only sides of bridge remain
Miltown Malbay Station	Awning remains. Still recognisable as Station House
Quilty Station	Dwelling House, Platform remains
Kingsbridge	Still in original condition to rear of caravan park
Corney Sullivans Shanadrum	Original condition. Crossing road. Embankment remains
Kilmurry Station	Dwelling House
Annagheragh Station	No remains
Craggaknock Station	Dwelling House
Skivileen Bridge	Still remains, part of embankment visible
Doonbeg Station	Dwelling House
Mountrivers Bridge	Fair condition crossing river visible from road bridge
Moyasta Junction	Restored to original state, track laid and engines run during summer months. Tourist attraction
Moyasta (Red) Bridge	Good condition, visible from road. Plans to extend line at Moyasta to run across bridge in near future
Blackweir Station	Dwelling House, Largely extended Platform still visible
Blackweir Bridge	Inaccessible track line
Kilkee Station	Good condition Much original features remain such as awning etc
Barrys Railway Cottage	At old level crossing. Boarded up
Brews Bridge	Bridge gone but fine remainder of bridge supports left
Kilrush Railway Cottage	Renovated with stone finish circa 1882
Kilrush Station	Office for tractor garage, much the same
Cappa Pier	Not much remains only turntable markings on ground

In 1990 a book entitled 'In the Tracks of the West Clare Railway'<sup>27</sup> by Mr Edmund Lenihan<sup>28</sup> was published. This is an invaluable historical record of the route. Mr Lenihan web site describes the book as:

*In the Tracks of the West Clare Railway is at once a history of a famous railway, the last of the Irish narrow-gauge lines; a tourist's guide to a relatively little-known part of Clare; a record of a walking journey along what remains of the line from Ennis to Kilkee / Kilrush and a tribute to the people an county of Clare*<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Mercier Press, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> Personal communication with author.

<sup>29</sup> Source: [www.eddielenihan.ennis.ie/b9.htm](http://www.eddielenihan.ennis.ie/b9.htm)

It is based on Mr Lenihans journey whilst walking the complete route of the line in the 1980's. In more recent reprints the record on the structures has been updated by Mr Lenihan. Unfortunately the book is now out of print.

## Conclusions

The following are the conclusions we have drawn from the study taking into consideration the results of the workshop, the survey of the pilot section of the line, and discussions with various stakeholders:

1. The line of the route is no longer in single ownership and / or management
2. The fabric of the line has deteriorated significantly due to a lack of maintenance since the 1960's. This includes bridges, underpasses, embankments, crossings etc.
3. The heritage of the railway line is protected under the North Clare Local Area Plan and the West Clare Local Area Plan. A total of fourteen structures are also included on the Record of Protected Structures. This however, will not prevent further deterioration of the structures/fabric due to a lack of ongoing maintenance
4. A significant amount of the original fabric exists in spite of developments such as houses, farm facilities etc. on the line and the lack of development control up to recent times
5. A significant part of the line remains in the ownership of Iarnrod Eireann which has no interest in the redevelopment of the line
6. Many of the road bridges remain in the ownership of Iarnrod Eireann which would prefer to transfer ownership to Clare County Council
7. The original route is still more or less possible to locate on the ground
8. Over the years the lack of development control on the line has resulted in significant parts of the line being built on or completely removed, as in the case of Lahinch
9. There would appear to be a lack of interest on the part of many potential stakeholders to the possibilities of reusing the old railway route as a recreational facility in the form of a walking route
10. The farmer/land owners are key stakeholders in this project and need to be involved at the very earliest stages due to the sensitivity of access onto farming land and other private property
11. The issue of insurance is a very important one and needs to be addressed
12. The National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee has produced a very practical and very usefull guide for the development of way marked ways. This also includes advice on dealing with the issue of insurance
13. The Great Southern Train Ltd group in West Limerick have a number of sections of the railway line opened as walking routes
14. A significant amount of local community and business support will need to be generated to ensure local ownership of the initiative to ensure its long term sustainability
15. The complete development of the route in a single phase using substantial funds from outside the communities would result in a major long term maintenance commitment that communities would not be able to sustain
16. A phased development of the route built around local communities who 'buy into' the initiative has a greater chance of being viable in the long term. These localised sections would form a type of network of local walks that could

- eventually be linked up into a walk covering the original route of the railway and this would be linked into other national walkways such as the Burren Way
17. The development of the route is a recreational/tourism issue that requires both local and regional action. The local action needs to be community driven, which should be supported at a regional level by the appropriate agencies
  18. There is a desire on the part of some members of the community to reopen the line as a railway route
  19. However, the foresight, vision and commitment of Mr J Whelan and others in reopening part of the rail line in Moyasta shows what is possible when local business and community interests are focused and work in partnership to achieve a goal
  20. There is ample evidence internationally that trails not only enable people to live more actively in a healthier environment, but also that trails most often economically benefit both adjacent landowners and local business communities. Although the West Clare line is now in a poor dysfunctional state it is not beyond the point of an effective restoration as a top class rail trail. Tracks in poorer condition of fragmentation and disrepair have been successfully restored in North America and Continental Europe
  21. Fears (such as vandalism, illegal waste dumping, lack of privacy, decrease in property value, security) that some people harbour with regards to trails have conclusively proven to be unfounded, particularly so, if the trail is well designed and maintained and there is local consultation and involvement
  22. The population of Ireland is now beginning to approach the levels of 1840. Should the economy continue to prosper, the demographics will continue to change and this expanding diverse population will increasingly need green space amenities. Greenways are one of the most effective avenues for providing leisure and recreational facilities
  23. Leisure walking continues to grow across Europe<sup>30</sup>, North America, Austral-Asia and whereas Ireland for various reasons has slipped as an attractive walking destination, nonetheless this setback can be overcome with the effective development and marketing of high grade international standard walk ways suitable for short, mid and long distance walking. Tourism needs linked diversity, and the West Clare Way offers the possibility of adding to the attraction of Clare as a tourist destination, and as a beneficial recreation social and economic resource for the local population.

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<sup>30</sup> The European Ramblers' Association (ERA) now comprising organisations from 26 European States was founded in Germany in 1969 and now has over 5 million individual members.

## Recommendations

Taking into consideration the brief for this study, the work undertaken and the conclusions reached, the following recommendations are made with a view to increasing the possibility of the line being reused for recreational purposes.

1. The project should be driven by local community and business stakeholders supported by the various organisations and state agencies who can provide funding through grants and other means. The involvement of local communities is essential and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy experience in USA have consistently shown that outreach to the community prevented or eased opposition to trail building
2. The development of the route is a regional tourism initiative and the leadership shown by Clare County Council should now be followed on swiftly by the formation of a Steering Committee made up of the various business, tourism, farming, local community, health, local and regional authority, and rural resource development agencies/interests
3. The section of line from Lahinch to Ennistymon should be developed as a pilot to demonstrate the potential of the route as a recreational resource and to test its feasibility. We recommend this section for development because it connects Lahinch to Ennistymon, a distance of 4km. There is the additional potential of developing a fine town walkway through the latter and linking this by the trail to a beach walk in Lahinch. The difficulties facing conversion on the pilot section are more intense here, with houses and gardens on the trail, crossing fences, scrub growth, and poorly drained/marshy ground
4. The trail should be hard surfaced and be properly designed to accommodate the movement of walking, running, cycling and should have wheelchair access. Although the workshop point 8 felt that a multi use track could cause conflict this has not proved the case in rail trails in other countries
5. Other active communities along the route should be approached once the pilot section is up and running with a view to developing a number of other sections as loop walks that would eventually link up together
6. Farmers and other landowners are key stakeholders in the project and they should be consulted individually in advance of any formal announcements or formation of committees to develop individual sections of the route
7. The route from the beginning should aim to become part of the Waymarked Ways network and should link up with other routes such as the Burren Way at Lahinch and the Mid Clare Way at Ennis and Ruan



8. Clare County Council should urgently secure agreement on the future of the land remaining in Iarnrod Eireann's ownership. Active consideration should be given to taking this resource into the ownership/management of the County Council as a matter of priority to protect it from further deterioration and encroachment
9. The built heritage of the line particularly the bridges and underpasses are at risk of deteriorating further and becoming a serious health & safety liability. As a matter of priority a programme of works should be put in place to decide on their future which should include an option to retain and maintain, or record and remove and make safe/replace with a pedestrian bridge or alternative crossing means/route
10. Mr Jackie Whelan's offer of exploring the possibility of having a walking route alongside his proposed new section of track should be actively pursued.

# Appendices

## Appendix A – Survey Data Sheet

# Architectural Conservation Professionals

## West Clare Railway Pilot Study – Survey Report

Reg No

Photograph:-



### Map Information

Map Type	
6" Map Sheet	
Site	

### Location

Name	
Townland	
County	

### Type

Original Type	
In use as	

### Date Built

Condition (tick one only)

Dangerous	
Poor	
Fair	
Good	

**Dangerous** – Serious health and safety issue. Immediate work required to be carried out for the safety of the fabric and users/public.  
**Poor** – Health and safety issue. Urgent work required to prevent active deterioration of fabric, and safety of users/public.  
**Fair** – Necessary work needed. Could still open for walking trail. Work could be carried out at a later stage.  
**Good** – There is no necessary work needed. Desirable work maybe carried out for aesthetic reasons or adaptive use.  
**Excellent** – There is no work needed but item should be kept under observation.

Excellent	
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### Composition


### For Office Use Only:

Surveyed by:-	Checked by:-
Date of Survey:-	Reference No:-

## ***Appendix B – List of Stakeholders Invited to Workshop***

Odran O'Looney, O'Looneys, Moy House, Lahinch, Co.Clare. 086-2493444

Maurice Harvey, ICMSA, Monanagh, Ennistymon, Co.Clare. 065-7071145.

Beatrice Kelly, Heritage Council, Kilkenny. 056-7770777. Email: [beatrice@heritagecouncil.com](mailto:beatrice@heritagecouncil.com)

Gerard Kennedy, LEADER, Rural Resource Development, Shannon Town, Shannon, Co.Clare. 061-361144.

Stacia Moroney, Mid/East Clare way, Tulla business Park, Tulla, Co.Clare. 065-6835912.

Ger O'Brien, Roads Section, Clare County Council. 087-6349429.

Flan Quiligan, Shannon Development, Shannon Town Centre, Shannon, Co.Clare. 061-361555.

Jim Martin, Dunsallagh East, Miltown Malbay, Co.Clare. 065-7085939.

Patricia Dempsey, Seafield, Quilty, Co.Clare. 065-7087254.

Robert Crosbie, Ennistymon Community Group, The Square, Ennistymon, Co.Clare. 087-2266845.

John Quinlivan, Shannon Development, Gort Road, Ennis, Co.Clare. 065-6820166.

Donal DeBarra, Kildimo, Miltown Malbay, Co.Clare. 065-7084156.

Pat Hayes, Maghera, Caher, Co.Clare.

Joseph Carey, 3 Thomond Villas, Clarecastle, Co.Clare.

Greg Duff, 26 Gleann na Smol, Shannon, Co.Clare.

Bill Chambers, Kilmacduane, Cooraclare, Kilrush, Co.Clare.

Tony O'Brien, Cross Roads, Killaloe, Co.Clare.

Michael Davern, Burren IFA, Kilcorney, Kilfenora, Co.Clare.

Patricia Dillon, Doonbeg Community Development Ltd, Doonbeg, Clare.

Martin Shanahan, Tromora Development Association, Tromora West, Quilty.

Paddy Cooney, Quilty Action Group, Quilty Tavern, Quilty.

John Williams, Kilkee Tourism Ltd, C/O Kilkee Tourist Office, Kilkee.

Viv Rooney, Radio Corca Baiscinn, The Community Centre, Circular Road, Kilkee.

Martina Troy, Kilrush Tidy Towns, Town Hall, Kilrush.

Ann Naughton, Kilkee Tidy Towns Committee, Courthouse, Kilkee.

Fidelma O'Kelly, Kilrush Amenity Trust Ltd, C/O Vandeleur Walled Garden, Kilrush.

Mary Farren, EIRI Corca Baiscinn Ltd, Circular Road, Kilkee. Kathleen Blake, Doonbeg Ladies Group, Post Office, Doonbeg.

Martin Reddan, Ballymakea Community Development, Ballymakea, Quilty.

Marion McMahon, Kilrush Chamber of Commerce, Fashion Gallery, Moore Street, Kilrush.

Maura Egan, Reaching Out, Doonbeg.

Margaret Harte, Kilkee Womens Group, Dunlickey Road, Kilkee.

Carherine O'Shea, Moyasta Development Association, Moyasta, Kilrush.

Connie Kileen, Doonbeg Business & Marketing, Main St., Doonbeg.

Roisin James, Kilrush resource Group, Day Hospital, Cooraclare Road, Kilrush,

Pauline Dunleavy, Kilrush Art Group, Cappagh, Kilrush.

Caroline Egan, Leon Committee, Seafield, Quilty.

Stephen Murrihy, seafield Commanage Association, Seafield, Quilty.

Claire Haugh, Marian Estate Residents Association, 21 Marian Estate, Kilkee.

Anne McDonagh, Crinniu na mBan, Moyasta, Kilrush.

Jackie Furlong, Community Arts & Crafts, Railway Road, Kilkee.

Tom Byrne, Kilkee Civic Trust, West End, Kilkee.

Michael O'Keeffe, Ballybeg Road Residents, Ballybeg, Ennis.

Maureen Keane, Secretary, Ballyea Development Association, Newhall, Ennis.

James Spellissy, Clare Environmental Alliance, Cappahard House, Tulla Road, Ennis.

Jimmy Cronin, Secretary, Clonroad/Francis St Residents Association, Archdale, Clonroad, Ennis.

Tony Booth, Disabled People of Clare, Unit 11 Clonroad Business Park, Ennis.

Noel Clune, Congress Information & Opportunity Centre, Springfield House, Harmony Row, Ennis.

Francis Q'Halloran, Gortomain Guild ICA, 30 Shannon Park, Lifford, Ennis.

Patrick Garrihy, Cloncool, Ennistymon.

Joe Arklns MCC, Ruan.

Maureen Garrihy, Beenvore, Miltown Malbay,

Margaret Healy, Caruclough, Ennistymon.

John J Fahy, Carhuduff, Lahinch.

Martin J O'Malley, Ennistymon Recreation and Leisure Centre, Ennistymon Leisure Centre, Ennistymon.

Breda Considine, Chairperson, Dysert O'Dea Development Association, Corofin.

Patricia Stackpoole, Chairperson, Ennistymon ICA, Glann, Ennistymon,

John Garrahy, Secetary, Ennistymon renewal Company Ltd, Gurraune, Ennistymon

Michael Nagle, Ennistymon Renewal Group, Bank Place, Ennistymon,

Noreen Keane, Secretary, Kilnamona ICA, Caherbanna, Fountain, Ennis.

Mary McCormac, President, Lahinch ICA, Lackamore, Lahinch.

Bridget Nagle, Ennistymon Tidy Towns, Environmental Group, Church St., Ennistymon,

Michael McDonagh, Chairman, Miltown Malbay Development Association, C/O Development Office, The Square, Miltown Malbay.

Kathleen Downes, Secretary, Miltown Malbay ICA, The Cresent, Miltown Malbay.

Tommy White, Leader in Charge, Moy Youth Club, Moy, Lahinch.

The Chairperson, Project Ennistymon Ltd, The Square, Ennistymon,

R UaCróinín, Ruan-Dysert Resource Group, Dysert O'Dea, Corofin,

Peggy Fitzgerald, Leader in Charge, Miltown Malbay Youth Club, 22 Ballard Road, Miltown Malbay.

Anne Clune, Old Kilfarboy Society, Kidimo, Miltown Malbay.

Agnes McNulty, Secretary, Ruan Tidy Village Group, Dromore, Ruan.

## ***Appendix C – Letter to Stakeholders inviting them to Workshop***

The following letter was sent out on Clare County Council headed paper.

Dear sir/madam

Invitation to Workshop on potential of the West Clare Railway as a Walking Route

Clare County Council in association with the Heritage Council would like to invite you to a workshop to be held in Ennistymon Community Centre on Thursday the 15th of September at 7:30 pm.

Under objective 10 of Clare County Councils HERITAGE PLAN 2003-2007, the West Clare railway line will be evaluated as a potential walking route. Consultants have been appointed to undertake a feasibility study and this workshop is your opportunity to have an input into the outcome of this study.

Architectural Conservation Professionals have undertaken a pilot survey of the route from Ennistymon to Quilty and the results of their research will be presented on the night. It is planned that a number of discussion groups will be facilitated on the night to address key issues such as advantages/disadvantages, maintenance and services along the route.

For any further enquiries contact Clare County Council at 065-6821616

Yours truly

Congella McGuire  
**Heritage Officer**



## Appendix D – Questionnaire for Workshop

### Questionnaire – Part A

Can everyone please fill in Part A, and if you are a Walker  
Could you fill in Part B also.

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you a member of an organised group who would have an interest in this project? Yes No (Please circle response)

If Yes please give details:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your specific interest in the walkway [please tick box as appropriate and fill in details] ?

Description	Tick		Name/Details
Walker		Name of Group	
Landowner		Details	
Representative of Interest Group		Name of Group	
Government Organisation		Name of Organisation	
Non- Government Organisation		Name of Organisation	
Tourism Sector		Details	
Walking Group representative		Name of Group	

4. What is your current understanding of this project [using the West Clare Railway Line as a walking and recreational route] ?

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5. Please list six or more opportunities/benefits that you see that this proposed walkway will provide:

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6. Please list specific threats/difficulties that you envisage would threaten the success of this walkway:

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7. Suggest ways of overcoming these threats to the viability of the project:

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8. Please add any other comments/advice you feel should be drawn to our attention:

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Thank you for your time.

If you are a Walker we would appreciate it if you would answer the additional questions overleaf in Part B.

## Questionnaire – Part B – Walkers Only

A. What walking group are you involved in?

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B. How long is the Group established?

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C. How did the group get started?

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D. How many are in the Group?

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E. How often would the Group go walking?

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F. What walking routes are the Group most associated with, if any?

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G. Was the Group ever involved in setting up a walking route? (if Yes give Details):

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H. If Yes to G. above, what were the main difficulties encountered when setting up the walking route:

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I. What would the Groups opinion be on reusing the West Clare Railway Line as a walking and recreational route?

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J. Would the Group use the above route if it was established? (please give reasons)

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## ***Appendix E – Advert placed in Local Newspapers and Announced on Local Radio***

A workshop on the feasibility of using the West Clare Railway Line as a potential walking route will be held by Clare County Council in Ennistymon Community Centre on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September at 7:30 pm. All are welcome.

## ***Appendix F – Survey Sheets***

A total of 64 survey data sheets were completed along the section of line surveyed. Refer to files on accompanying CD. The locations of the items surveyed are numbered 1 – 64 on a series of 7 drawings marked up on a 6” O.S. base. Refer to Appendix G.

## ***Appendix G – Drawings 1 – 7***

The drawings are numbered 1 to 7 with the County sheet number shown in brackets after the drawing number e.g. Drawings No:- 7 (38).

Refer to separate sheets



## **Appendix H – Workshop Programme**

### **Draft Proposal for Workshop (29<sup>th</sup> June)**

ACP propose that the workshop take the following format:

- Opening presentation by Clare Co Council – 15 minutes
- Presentation by ACP covering - 15 minutes
  - Progress to date on the project, including findings from the research and line survey
  - Case study of Taff trail or similar
- Break into Workshop groups – to discuss and come back to the meeting with a strategy for a way forward
  - Potential workshops
    - advantages and difficulties
    - Landownership
    - Insurance and public liability act
    - Maintenance and services along the way
  - The workshops would run for about 30 minutes and then we would swap over the groups for another 30 minutes. They would be chaired by DH, NT, DC and C McG.
- A Final Summing Up Session

### **Final Agreed Format for Workshop (19<sup>th</sup> July 2005)**

At the previous meeting a draft format for the workshop was agreed. This has now been amended to the following format:

- The date for the workshop has been moved to take account of the summer holidays – the new date is Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> of September at 19.30 hrs at a venue to be decided. The venue would preferably be a local community facility such as a hall. DH is looking into the possibility of using the hall in Ennistymon.
- Opening presentation by Clare Co Council – 15 minutes
- Presentation by ACP covering - 15 minutes
  - Progress to date on the project, including findings from the research and line survey. Information on insurance and other issues to be provided
  - Case study of Taff trail in Wales or similar
- Break into Workshop groups – to discuss and come back to the meeting with a strategy for a way forward
  - Potential workshops
    - advantages and difficulties
    - Landownership
    - Linkages to other walks
    - Maintenance and services along the way
  - The workshops would run for about 30 minutes and the chairman of each would report back to the group. They would be chaired by DH, NT, DC and C McG.
- A Final Summing Up Session

## ***Appendix I – Workshop Powerpoint Presentation***

Refer to following 8 sheets and attached PowerPoint File



















## ***Appendix J – List of attendees at Workshop***

David Humphreys – Architectural Conservation Professionals

Risteard Ua Cróinín – Clare Co Council Conservation Officer

Congella McGuire – Clare Co Council Heritage Officer

Odran O’Looney, - Lahinch

Maurice Harvey, Inagh

Patricia Dempsey, Quilty

Flan Quilligan, Shannon Development

Jim Martin, Miltown Malbay

Martin Shanahan, Quilty

Robert Crosbie, Ennistymon

Richard Gair, Moyasta

Jackie Whelan, WCR Moyasta

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