

Donegal County Council clarify An Bord Pleanála ruling - Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) was always going to be commissioned, says North West Greenway Network

The Communications Officer for the North West Greenway Network has said that the recent An Bord Pleanála judgment, stating that the Bunrana to Derry route required an Environmental Impact Assessment Report, was ‘expected and anticipated’. Ronan Gallagher said that since An Bord Pleanála published the Council’s ‘request for guidance’ in autumn 2019, confusion has surrounded the Bord’s involvement. ‘In November 2019 we initially received several queries from concerned landowners asking why we had sought planning permission for the greenway. In response we issued a statement via our website and informed the Members of the Inishowen Municipal District that the contact with An Bord Pleanála was not for planning permission.’

Gallagher continued: ‘after discussing the project with the National Parks & Wildlife Service, the project team determined that the proposed project could potentially have impacts on the environment and therefore required a full Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). In accordance with the provisions of the Roads Act it was necessary to seek formal direction from An

Bord Pleanála to submit the EIAR.’ Gallagher concluded: ‘the submission of the planning application is now programmed to take place late 2020, but will be preceded by a further extensive round of public consultation in the area.’

The Bunrana to Derry route forms part of an overall INTERREG-funded greenway project that will see three routes developed: Derry to Bunrana and Muff to Derry. Construction in Lifford and Strabane is due to commence early April with construction following in Muff by early summer. On completion, the three routes will comprise 46.5 km of new cross-border greenway.

The multi-million project is part-funded under the EU’s INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. Match-funding has been provided by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTas).

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