

Friends of the

TRALEE  **FENIT**

GREENWAY



Media Pack
December 2011

Who are we ?

Friends of the Tralee to Fenit Greenway is a umbrella community initiative which seeks to promote the completion of the Walkway and Bicycle Path, on the disused rail line which runs from Casement Station, in the heart of Tralee, to Fenit Harbour, on the edge of the Atlantic.

What is a Greenway ?

Greenways can be defined as “open space or natural areas that have a linear form” - Smith and Hellmund, 1993.

More generally a Greenway is a transportation route dedicated to non-motorised transport, mainly walking and cycling, but can also be used for other recreational activities, such as hiking, biking, in-line skating, jogging, running, and strolling. They also provide a means of getting from home, work and school without the use of a car.

Greenways make communities more liveable; improve the economy through tourism and civic improvement; preserve and restore open space; provide opportunities for physical activity to improve fitness and mental health; and enhance property values.

Some Facts:

- ✓ **The Tralee to Fenit Greenway is government approved project, funded through North and East Kerry Development, Kerry County Council. and Failte Ireland.**
- ✓ **The initial funding of €200,000 was awarded to The Spa/Fenit Community Council in mid 2009 for the development of the Spa to Fenit section of the line, Kerry County Council then committed to development of the Spa to Tralee section of the line.**
- ✓ **The plan is to develop a dedicated pedestrian and cycle path along this beautiful route which will emulate similar schemes nationwide and worldwide and provide a wonderful opportunity for all to enjoy its undoubted potential, as both a tourist facility and local amenity**
- ✓ **The benefits of a Greenway to health, environment, tourism, and community are innumerable. Similar projects, such as the 'Great Western Greenway', in Mayo and the 'Great Southern Trail' in Limerick have proven to be a great success in these aspects.**

- ✓ According to **Fáilte Ireland** an estimated **944,000** overseas visitors engage in walking or cycling activities in Ireland each year, resulting in an overseas visitor spend of **€591 million**.
- ✓ A recent **Fáilte Ireland** study into the **economic impact** of the **Newport to Mulranny** section of the **Great-Western Greenway** in **Mayo** reported that the amenity would contribute an estimated **€7.2 million** to the local economy per year. The **Newport to Mulranny** route is just over 3km longer than the **Tralee to Fenit** route.
- ✓ Approximately **10,000** people, almost one-third of the population of **Tralee**, live within **500 meters** of the proposed route.
- ✓ From **Fenit** to the **Spa** the route runs along the northern shore of **Tralee Bay**, an internationally recognised and protected ecosystem, designated as a **Special Protection Area (SPA)** and also on the **Ramsar list for Wetlands of International Importance**.
- ✓ The route would link with the **Spa to Ballyseede** trail which **Tralee Town Council** are currently developing, this would allow a walker or cyclist an unimpeded off-road route from **Fenit** along

Tralee Bay and the River Lee to the alluvial forest at Ballyseede, which is also a vital **Special Protection Area**.

- ✓ Four schools, **C.B.S. Primary, Mercy Mounthawk Secondary, The Spa National and Fenit National** schools reside near the proposed route, with over 2000 student in attendance. The Greenway would create a safe walking and cycling route for students and help alleviate increasing traffic congestion issues.
- ✓ A number of sports facilities are located along the route, these include, **Fenit Samphires, Tralee Dyanamos, Park FC** soccer clubs and **Austin Stacks**, and **Spa/Churchill GAA Clubs**. In addition to this Fenit is the main centre for outdoor leisure activities in the area, popular for swimming, sailing, angling, running and sun bathing.
- ✓ Unlike many other old railways the Tralee to Fenit line has never been officially abandoned, it is still part of the Irish rail network although it is classed as disused.
- ✓ The rail line which is **state owned land** is an historical amenity belonging to the people of Ireland, a fundamental part of our cultural heritage and inheritance.

- ✓ **The conversion of the railway into a public amenity for walking and cycling is an objective of all levels of government, it is National Government Policy in the National Transport Plan, to redevelop disused railways like this. The project is specifically outlined in Kerry County Councils County Development Plan as well as Tralee Town Councils Town development plan.**

- ✓ **Thousands of signatures have been received in support of the project as well as support from local business, organizations and community groups .**

- ✓ **Work began on the clearing of the the rail line in preparation for the path in October 2010 . However, because of objectors along the route of the line, this project has been stalled, there are fears that the funding that has been allocated will be lost if the project is not realised soon.**

Quotes:

"The Tralee/Fenit rail line passes my door, but, everyday not a person to see on it. What a shame. Our children need this. Our schools need this. Our communities need this and most of all our tourism needs this. It's time the people stood up and stop allowing Tralee and Fenit to become the Nicosia of Ireland."

**Colm McLoughlin,
St. Brendans Park Residence Assoc.**

"It would not only benefit children who could use the path to cycle to school, but locals and tourists alike could enjoy a walk or cycle to Fenit along a scenic route, one that is quite breath-taking, in fact."

**Joseph Cotter,
St. Brendans Park Residence Assoc.**

"The Tralee Fenit rail line was developed by the State for the economic and social benefit of the communities it touched. It's time has come again."

Tom O'Grady, Tralee

"As a sufferer of Parkinsons Disease I feel that this project will be of enormous benefit to myself and others who are inflicted by this crippling disease.As suggested by my GP,walking is paramount to alleviate the muscular problems associated with the illness and this would be a safe environment to do so."

**Christy Leahy,
Kerry Parkinsons Assoc.**

"I hope this walk and cycle path will start soon because me and my friends like to go on our bikes but sometimes it's too dangerous. I go to

Clounalour C.B.S. and it would be great for me and my sister to be able to cycle to school with our friends."

**Gary Clifford,
Age 11, Connolly Park**

"This is a project that I am very much in favour of and am behind all the way. I attended the large public meeting that was held in Ballyroe Heights Hotel a few years ago and spoke strongly in favour of the project on that occasion. I have also raised the matter in Kerry County Council meetings, where I always showed my support. I welcome the support from the Department for the Tralee to Fenit line, which is important."

**Deputy Brendan Griffin,
TD Kerry South**

"The Westport to Achill cycle and walking route also known as the Great Western greenway has indeed been a great success. [...] With regard to the potential of other disused rail lines for similar projects, Kerry County Council has proposed the development of a cycle route from Tralee to Fenit and the Department has agreed to provide €200,000 for funding for this."

**Deputy Leo Varadkar,
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport**

"My friends and I in Mercy Mounthawk School would like to cycle to school on a safe pathway. It would be good for our health and it would be good for the environment with less cars on the road. We would also use it in the summer holidays a lot, as we are not allowed to cycle on the busy roads."

**S. Kealy,
First Year Student, Mercy Mounthawk.**

"I commend you and your colleagues for the work you have put in on trying to open the Tralee to Fenit rail line for pedestrian / cycle use. I wish you all the best in your continued efforts"

Senator Eamonn Coghlan
Seanad Éireann

"I feel the plan to develop this walkway will add greatly to the beauty of the area and will give local people along with tourist groups, the opportunity to witness first hand the wonderful beauty Tralee and the surrounding areas have to offer.

As Director of The National Folk Theatre of Ireland, I feel it is important to protect and enhance our amazing heritage and landscape, and to show it off to the rest of the world. It is also very important to support any initiative that helps improve and sell our beautiful country to the outside world.

Jonathan Kelliher
Artistic Director, Siamsa Tire

Images:



Artists Impression - Rock Street Entrance



Line Clearance [October 2010] - Clogherbrien

Media:

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KERRY'S EYE 10TH NOVEMBER 2011

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Time to walk the line on Kerry's potential

COLIN LACEY, EDITOR email: clacey@kerryseye.com

IN AN ERA when every possible benefit has to be squeezed from available resources, we're overlooking a resource in Kerry that would be of immense value to our local economy as well as to local communities.

The development of disused railway lines as walking and cycling routes offers a potentially significant range of tourist attractions in the county, as well as facilitating the creation of valuable local amenities.

In the US, all over Britain and throughout Europe, railway walks are popular tourist destinations. Closer to home, the final section of the 42-kilometre Great Western Greenway was launched in Mayo this summer. It links Westport with Achill; a shorter section of the route attracted over 50,000 users in the first six months of this year, and the full Greenway is seen as having massive long-term potential.

As many as 50,000 users in six months - can we afford to ignore that in Kerry, which is criss-crossed by railway lines that are no longer used?

In 2009, Eamonn O Cuiv highlighted the potential of the line from Caherciveen to Farranfore which runs over half of the Ring of Kerry. That's only one project with major potential: high hopes are also held for the Great Southern Trail along the old Limerick-Tralee railway line, which closed in 1977.

Over the past 20 years that particular development has been beset by problems that are typical of the development of former rail lines into walk and cycleways.

The Great Southern Trail has not yet reached its goal of a walkway linking Limerick with Tralee, but persistence and the continued enthusiasm of local volunteers have inched it closer to reality: currently more than 30 kilometres of disused railway line have been developed.

Some of the issues faced by the Great Southern project are mirrored in the Tralee-Fenit walkway, the completion of which is now a matter of urgency. The disused line offers a dedicated 12-and-a-half kilometre path to walkers and cyclists, with views of Tralee Bay and the Slieve Mish mountains, and - best of all - absolutely no traffic. The walkway offers obvious benefits to locals and to tourists, who would have a major amenity to attract them to the area.

Understandably, when the project was initially proposed, it raised some concerns amongst local residents, including legitimate unease regarding loss of privacy and anti-social behaviour. Kerry County Council and proponents of the walkway have worked hard to allay residents' fears over the past number of years and many of the original anxieties have been addressed and soothed, to the great credit of both sides.

But there is a more difficult mountain to climb before the project can ever be opened to the public. Since the railway lines were

lifted, members of the public continued to use the track as a walkway but certain parts of the line are the subject of a dispute over access, and must be cleared before the project advances.

Delicate negotiations are ongoing between Kerry County Council, the community and Iarnród Éireann, which owns the line. But it's difficult to see how any private claims along the line could stand up to legal scrutiny.

If Iarnród Éireann retains ownership of the line, it is high time the semi-state body declared such ownership, and enabled the way to be cleared for a development, backed by Council policy since 2009, and favoured by the community for even longer.

At a time when anything that can boost Kerry's economy is to be welcomed, the Tralee-Fenit project can become a shining example to the rest of the county of what can be achieved with our disused railway lines. But it's time for action to back up the words on the walkway. It's time to walk the line.

Co-incidentally, five minutes after writing this article, news was announced that Transport and Tourism Minister Leo Varadkar had granted funding of €6.6 million for nine outdoor tourism projects across the country.

Clearly, the government believes in the potential of projects like the Tralee-Fenit walkway - seven of the grants related to trails and walkway projects.

Isn't it time we believed in it too?

[Kerrys Eye Editorial 10th Nov. 2011](#)



Members of Friends of Tralee to Fenit Trailway Tom O'Grady, Joe Cotter, Richard O'Mellon, Colin McLoughlin and Mike O'Neill clear the mounds of earth placed on the railway line which impeded their walk to Fenit on Sunday.

Walkers way to Fenit blocked

Continued from page 1

Walkers' way blocked by massive mounds of earth

By DONAL NEWMAN

OVER 200 walkers were blocked from walking the old Tralee-Fenit railway route on Sunday by three huge mounds of earth they believe were placed there to prevent their passage.

The blockage signalled what is likely the first obvious protest by organised individuals against council plans to develop the old railway as a major walking and cycling route for the Tralee to

Fenit area.

The earthen mounds appeared on the line in the last fortnight, following the appearance of public notices for Sunday's walk organised by the Friends of Tralee to Fenit Trailway — a group of private residents from Tralee and Fenit who hope to see the council plans realised in the immediate future.

"We were extremely disappointed with the appearance of the earthen mounds but we managed

to get around them all the same," group spokesperson Colin McLoughlin told The Kerryman.

"This could be a fantastic amenity not just for the people of Tralee and Fenit but for tourists as well, especially as the town lacks amenities like this already. Our walk on Sunday was just an opportunity to show people how precious the route and it was very unfortunate to find our way impeded like that."

■ Continued on page 7

The group believe the earth was piled there solely for the purposes of preventing the walk. "It was put there without a thought to stop the walk from taking place. There were two mounds near St Brendan's Park and another we didn't know about until we came across it at Mounthawk.

"We can't understand why people would do this, but obviously if there are objections to the route being developed as an amenity we would love to meet with objectors and reach a solution. But this is not a way of solving it. The proof of the pudding is in other areas, such as Achill and Newcastle West, where old railway lines have been developed and have proved amazingly popular with objectors' fears allayed completely."

Mayor of Tralee Grace O'Donnell is one of three town councillors — along with Sam Locke and Terry O'Brien — who have voiced their support for the plans.

Mayor O'Donnell was present on Sunday. "I can understand the fears of some people, but this is not the way to go. If developed as an amenity the route would actually become a lot safer and brighter. This could be a fantastic amenity for Tralee and Fenit and we would love to talk to everyone who might have concerns over it."

Walk the Line 1 Report - The Kerryman 26thth Oct.. 2011

HUGE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TRALEE RAILWAY WALK PROJECT

'Get this project on track'



WALK THIS WAY! Joe Cotter, Sammy Locke, Mayor Grace O'Donnell and Colin McLoughlin with the large group that walked on the Fenit walkway on Sunday.

WALKING IN THE RAIN: A large group turned up on Sunday to walk the Fenit walkway despite the rainy weather.

Over 200 supporters turned out in bad weather on Sunday last to walk a section of the old Tralee to Fenit railway line, and to show their support for the development of a public walkway and cycleway along the facility.

BY ANNE PULLIN

According to organisers, three sections of the line were cleared before the walk, after being blocked by a large amount of shrubs and rubble up to eight feet high in places.

Kerry County Council, which is managing the project, has approved plans to build a new walkway and cycleway along the former railway corridor connecting Rock Street with the station in Fenit.

However, certain issues still remain to be addressed with the owners of the line, Jarrod Eireann, before the work can continue.

Organisers of Sunday's walk are proposing to construct a walk and cycle-

route from the old Rock Street gates to Mourthawk, and according to organisers it is hoped that work will commence this year.

Joe Cotter of the Walkway Committee said the walk last Sunday was a huge success and that the turnout, particularly in atrocious weather, surpassed all expectations.

SUPPORT

"The support we got shows the huge public support out there for the project," he said.

There were people from all age groups, and people from different communities from Tralee to Fenit who all came out in support of assuming this great project, which will be of huge benefit to the

town." A meeting will be held this week to further the project and the group is planning to seek a meeting with town manager Michael McMahon, town clerk Michael Scannell and Minister Jimmy Deerin.

"We know there are a number of legal issues that have to be sorted out, but we will be urging all the powers that be to get behind this project so that we can commence work on developing this public walkway as quickly as possible," Joe Cotter said.

"This walkway will be a very valuable asset for the entire community."

Funding of €200,000 have been secured from the North and East Kerry Development Association and is earmarked for the project, he said.

"Hopefully all obstacles will be overcome and we can open this valuable asset next year."

Walk the Line 1 Report - The Kerrys Eye 27thth Oct.. 2011

Supporters:

