

October 1st, 2021

Senior Executive Officer,
Planning Department,
Carlow County Council,
Athy Road,
Carlow.

Submission to the Draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Bobby Quinn, feel very strongly that the development of the Blueway is critical to the future development of County Carlow. I hereby outline the cross sectoral benefits associated with the development of the Blueway in Carlow. They include health, education, conservation, tourism and business.

In recent years, there has been growing focus on fitness and exercise as essential elements in public health, and this has been intensified by the current pandemic. The provision of the Blueway through County Carlow will provide our people with a pleasant, safe facility for essential, regular exercise. Tracks such as these are flat and are suited to all – not just walkers and cyclists but the infirm, persons with disabilities and wheelchair users.

Initiatives such as the Bike to Work Scheme and Healthy Ireland have been coupled with considerable investment in public amenities such as cycle tracks, canal walks and park facilities across the country. A number of very popular cycle tracks have resulted in increased engagement in regular exercise. As they grow and connect with each other, the Blueway is Carlow's opportunity to be part of this national project.

The development of the Blueway would open up the natural environment to people of all ages. The Blueway would provide safe access to nature. On the proposed Blueway, both flora and fauna can be observed and enjoyed on land and water while respecting biodiversity and its ecologically valuable features. It would provide valuable learning opportunities for colleges, schools, clubs and families.

Holidays based around cycling, walking and other outdoor activities have become very popular in recent years. These holidays are healthy and sensitive to the environment, and must be encouraged in counties such as Carlow. The Blueway is a central and essential component in this regard.

The resultant economic benefits are many and substantial. The Blueway would provide welcome energy to the tourism sector in the county. It would enable and support the development and growth of existing and new businesses such as guest houses, cafes, restaurants, bars, craft shops, bicycle rental shops and retail stores. These family businesses are the lifeblood to the economy locally and nationally, providing employment, investment and services.

Current demographic trends show a considerable movement of people away from the cities and larger urban areas. There are many reasons for this, mainly lifestyle and economics. Carlow has much to offer prospective homebuyers, and every opportunity to increase its attractiveness must be seized. A natural amenity such as the Blueway is probably the biggest of such opportunities in recent years. It would make our county most attractive to residents, prospective residents and visitors, young and old alike.

As Carlow people, we must strive to build the county's profile nationally and internationally as a place to live in, a place to enjoy leisure time and a vibrant place in which to do business. The Blueway would not be an intrusion or a threat on nature but rather a resource that would enhance our natural environment. In an era of heightened awareness of both environmental issues and the socio-economic value of recreation and tourism, the Development Plan must be cognisant of the opportunity to develop the Blueway and include the necessary policies for its delivery.

Yours faithfully,



Bobby Quinn