



Leitrim County Council

**Environmental Impact Assessment Screening
Report**

**Aghoo Bridge Pedestrian Underpass, Aghoo,
Ballinamore, Co Leitrim**

April 2024

1. Introduction

This is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening report for the proposed development by Leitrim County Council in partnership with Waterways Ireland of providing a of a new pedestrian road underpass immediately adjacent to the existing Aghoo masonry arch bridge at Aghoo, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim.

The purpose of this report is to screen the proposed development to establish whether the proposed development requires the undertaking of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and as a result if an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is required be prepared. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement and Ecological Impact Assessment Report have been prepared separately by O'Connor Sutton Cronin, Consulting Engineers and inform the preparation of this report.

The EIA requirement is determined as set out in the mandatory and discretionary provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) (the Act) and in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended (the Regulations). Regard must also be had to the Roads Acts having regard to the nature of the proposed development.

Projects listed in Schedule 5, Part 1, of the Regulations, shall be subject to systematic assessment (Article 4(1) of the EIA Directive) as they are deemed as projects that have significant effects on the environment. Others, listed in the Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Regulations, contain threshold levels and for projects that fall below these thresholds. It is the decision of the competent authority (in this case Leitrim County Council) to decide if an EIA (and the associated EIAR) is required or not. If the proposed development cannot be screened out of the need to prepare an EIAR, the proposed development cannot proceed through the Part 8 process and must be submitted to An Bord Pleanála for approval.

Whether a '*sub-threshold development*' should be subject to EIA is determined by the likelihood that the development would result in significant environmental effects. Significant effects may arise due to the nature of the development, its scale or extent and its location in relation to the characteristics of the receiving area, particularly sensitive environments. This report documents the methodology employed to complete the screening exercise, having regard to relevant legislation and guidance documents. It also sets out a clear rationale for each decision of this EIA screening exercise.

The screening process includes an assessment of the details of the proposal with reference to the relevant EIA legislation including the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) and relevant EU Guidance including *Interpretation of definitions of project categories of annex I and II of the EIA Directive*, EU, 2015 and *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening*, EU, 2017.

The EIA screening covers:

- i. Description of the proposed development
- ii. The legislative basis for EIA
- iii. Screening considerations
- iv. Conclusions

2. The Proposed Development

The proposed project is located in the townland of Aghoo, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim. As outlined in the Introduction, Leitrim County Council in partnership with Waterways Ireland proposed to provide a new pedestrian road underpass immediately adjacent to the existing Aghoo masonry arch bridge. It was determined that the proposed pedestrian underpass would constitute a significant amendment to the previously approved Part 8 development, ref. P20/C/05. The previous Part 8 approved the construction of a 390m recreational cycle/pedestrian trail from Aghoo Bridge to Lock 4 including a new bridge underpass at Aghoo Bridge. The approved development was to include the provision of a new unbound pathway, a section rock armour bank stabilisation, signage, road markings, fencing and drainage. The 390m long trail as approved crosses the R204 Regional Road and would require prospective trail users to cross a busy road with poor alignment. However, the Road Safety audit recommended the construction of a grade separated underpass for pedestrians to pass safely beneath the road.

The proposed amendment will involve the development of a new pedestrian road underpass immediately adjacent to the existing Aghoo masonry arch bridge. The new underpass structure will tie-in with existing footpaths connecting either side of the bridge and link to a new trail head at Lock 4, approximately 400m east. The proposed pedestrian underpass along the trail at Aghoo Bridge would significantly enhance the safety of the trail and avoid the need to make an 'at grade' crossing of a Regional Road (R207). The previous approved Part 8 development sought to construct a pedestrian walkway within the arch of the existing bridge. However, this proposal is not being pursued due to safety concerns regarding navigation.



Figure 1: An example of a typical pedestrian road underpass (pre-cast construction).

A site compound will be established to the east of the existing road. To assist in the completion of works, a full road closure will be implemented. General site clearance will be undertaken within red line boundary with 4 trees expected to be removed as shown in Figure 2.1 of the accompanying Appropriate Assessment

Screening Report. Temporary sheet pile will be driven adjacent to the existing masonry arch bridge. The embankment will undergo excavation within the blue line. Piling mat will be laid and levelled at the underside of the culvert along with bored/ continuous flight auger (CFA) concrete piles. Ground beams will be constructed and the precast culvert dropped into position. The connection between the culvert and ground beams will then be grouted. Precast wingwalls will also be dropped into position. Drainage will be installed to the outside walls of the culvert. Backfill (6N) will be installed around the culvert with full road reinstatement over the top of the culvert. The temporary sheet piles will then be removed. A road restraint system will be installed at road level. Landscaping and ancillary works (signage, road lining, fencing) will then be completed with the pedestrian underpass open to the public. No instream works are predicted.

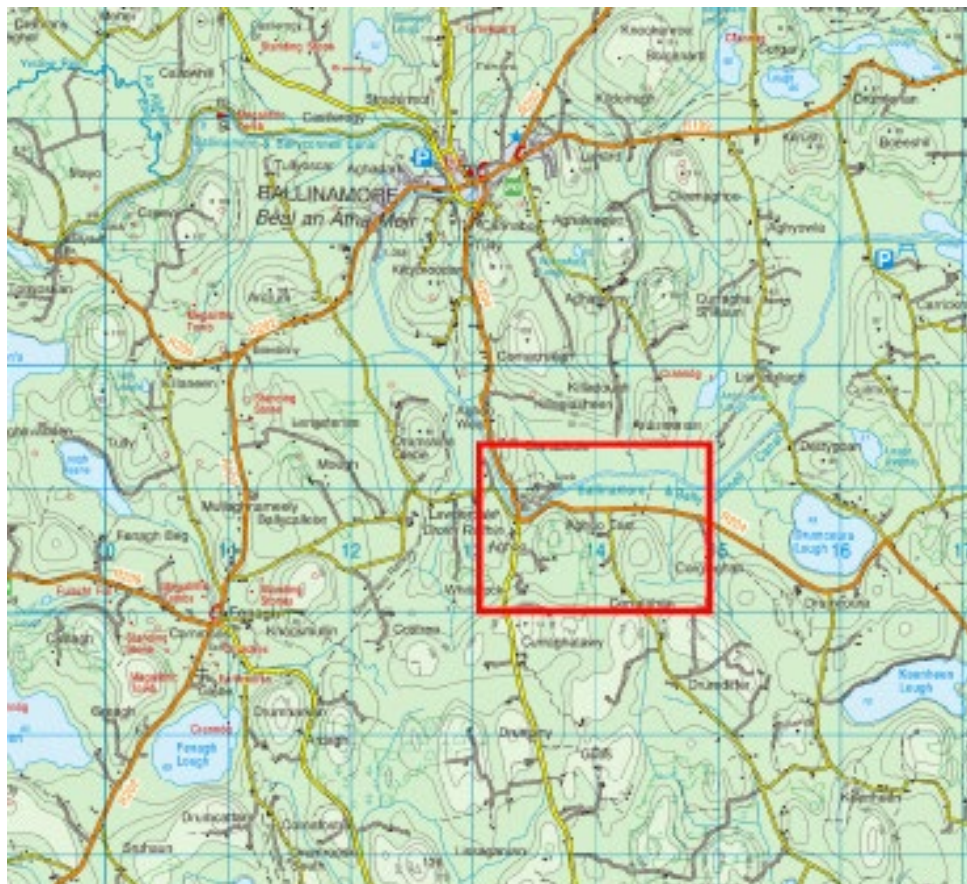


Figure 2: Site Location Map

3. Legislative Basis for EIA

Directive 2011/92/EU was enacted as a means to assess the effects of projects on the environment, and to properly ensure that any potential significant effects are assessed before a project proceeds.

Annex I of Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU defines mandatory projects that require an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Annex II lists projects which do not necessarily have significant effects but can be subject to case by case analysis or thresholds to be determined by member states. Section 172 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides the legislative basis for mandatory EIA. It states the following:

"An environmental impact assessment shall be carried out by a planning authority or the Board, as the case may be, in respect of an application for consent for:

- (a) Proposed development of a class specified in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 which exceeds a quantity, area or other limit specified in that Schedule, and*
- (b) Proposed development of a class specified in Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specific in that Schedule but which the planning authority or the Board determines would be likely to have significant effects on the environment"*

Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended outlines the legislative requirements for deciding whether a project needs a mandatory EIA. Projects that automatically require an EIA included in Annex 1 are listed in Part 1 of Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. Projects that are assessed either on a case-by-case examination or on the basis of set mandatory thresholds are defined under Annex II of the Directive, and these are transposed in Irish legislation in Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

SI 279/2019 (s.5, amending section 50 of the Roads Act, 1993), 1) (b) to (d) of S.I. 279/2019 require that any road development or road improvement project which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, including projects located on ecologically protected sites, shall be subject to EIA.

4. Screening Considerations

Class of Development

In the first instance, it is necessary to determine whether the project is of a type (or 'class') that requires the preparation of an EIAR. This project does not correspond to any of the prescribed types listed in Annex I or in Annex II.

Article 92 of the Regulations of 2001, as amended define: '*sub-threshold development*' as:

development of a type set out in Part 2 of Schedule 5 which does not equal or exceed, as the case may be, a quantity, area or other limit specified in that Schedule in respect of the relevant class of development.

Annex III of the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU, as amended) as transposed into Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, sets out criteria for review of sub-threshold projects to determine if they should be subject to EIA. These criteria include characteristics, location and potential impacts.

The nature of the pedestrian underpass is not considered to be of such a scale located outside of any designated site to be likely to have significant effects on the environment, within the meaning of the EIA Directive.

As the project does not correspond to any project type in the Roads or Planning and Development legislation, as listed above, it is not considered to be 'sub-threshold development'. On this basis, it can be seen that it is not required to review the proposal against the Schedule 7 criteria and it does not need to be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment.

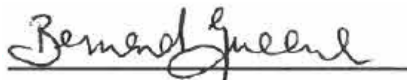
5. Conclusion

The proposed Aghoo Bridge pedestrian underpass does not correspond to any project type in the relevant legislation. It can be considered not to comprise 'sub-threshold development' and it can be 'screened out' for Environmental Impact Assessment purposes on this basis. The screening has followed the relevant legislation and has had regard to the relevant guidance.

It is also noted that a separate Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has concluded that the proposed project is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects on any designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This evaluation was made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated. Consequently, a Stage Two AA (NIS) is not required.

In addition, an Ecological Impact Assessment of the proposed development was undertaken separately by competent professionals and have all informed this assessment.

It is considered that the proposed Aghoo Bridge pedestrian underpass project does not need to be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment and no Environmental Impact Assessment Report is required for it.



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