

## Submission on the National Planning Framework Document

Below is an extract from page 133 of the draft National Planning Framework Document

### **Accessibility to the North-West**

Upgraded access to the North-West border area, utilising existing routes (N2/N14/A5).

Upgrade northern sections of the N4 route and sections of the N3/M3 national primary route.

Progressive development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor from Galway northwards by completion of the M17/M18, upgrading sections of the N17 northwards, where required and upgrading the N15/N13 link.

The development of a good seamless road link from Letterkenny to Cork would be of immense value to developing the Atlantic Economic Corridor, and the above ideas are to be applauded.

One other form of connectivity which would be of great benefit to the Atlantic Economic Corridor would be to build a greenway from Limerick to Enniskillen along the route of the closed railway from Athenry to Collooney and following the route of the closed railway from Collooney to Enniskillen which has been abandoned.

The closed railway from Athenry to Collooney, described as the ‘western rail corridor’, is a valuable state owned asset. The route was excluded from European TEN-T plans approved in 2013. There are no current plans to reopen the railway. The route should be utilised as a greenway and to facilitate industrial broadband cabling and natural gas distribution for food processing. Developing the route as a Greenway now, until such time as railway might be possible, would be of huge economic benefit for the Atlantic Economic Corridor, without jeopardising the construction of a railway on some or all of the route in the future.

In addition with the co-operation of Irish Rail a parallel greenway along the route of the railway reopened in 2011 from Athenry to Ennis to connect with the Great Southern Trail would create a greenway route that would be of immense value to the tourism industry along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

The other two ideas are to use the route for “industrial strength” fibre optic data cabling and as a natural gas pipeline route using the Corrib field gas for reasons which are obvious in terms of economic development. The gas pipeline idea would be of immense value to the food processing industry, creating a technology corridor has obvious benefits and the route as a greenway will create jobs in the hospitality industry. These are the kind of big idea the national planning framework should be coming up with! Take a look at the attached “thought leadership” document I published on this several years ago.

I believe this idea if incorporated and written into the National Development Plan would be of immense value to developing an Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Brendan Quinn


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# Economic Madness! (Or why a greenway on the Western Rail corridor is actually economic sense!)

## Thought leadership from Sligo Mayo Greenway

In a recent statement on Galway bay FM a Galway Councillor, Michael Connolly said it would be "economic madness" not to pursue the railway option for the Western Rail Corridor. Councillor Connolly was reacting to calls by business people in Sligo who want to see a greenway on the route, on a recent RTE Ear to the Ground broadcast and reported in local media

Sligo Mayo Greenway campaign has suggested this route, and the route of other greenways should be used as **new economic corridors** – not just for transporting tired hungry tourists – but also information using the routes for fibre optic cabling. A picture tells a 1000 words.

	<p>The photo advertising HSBC bank was taken in Dublin Airport last September. It says a lot about the economic future of industry and about the infrastructure needed for places like the west of Ireland. Imagine sending a chunk of data by rail from Kiltimagh to New York. But imagine if a guest house in Kiltimagh could entertain paying guests on the Sligo Mayo Greenway and a software house in Kiltimagh had enough fibre optic band width to host cloud computing solutions for global customers.</p> <p><b>Economic madness?? We think not</b></p>
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The idea for a greenway along the route of what remains of the Western Rail Corridor is based on sound economic sense; coupled with the idea of using the greenway as an opportunity to route fibre optic cabling to create new jobs in the west.

The tourism and leisure industry benefits of greenways are already well proven, but the added benefit of a new fibre optic cabling infrastructure for remote parts of Ireland are massive. **This is the kind of economic madness Sligo Mayo Greenway propose.**

The greenway idea is about re-invention and re-thinking. Just because a railway ran along the route nearly 40 years ago, why can't we "reinvent". Think how reinvention of 19<sup>th</sup> century infrastructure has worked all over the world. Docklands transformed. City centre wholesale markets, like fruit and veg markets now busy shopping malls and magnets for tourists. Adding the fibre optic cabling to the greenway routes is about reinvention and rethinking - and fulfilling the ability of people to create jobs in Galway, Mayo, Sligo and Roscommon and not Sydney. In Tourism and in the IT sector.

**Some people just don't get it. Hopefully we do. Sligo Mayo Greenway. 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

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