



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



19th July 2019

An Bord Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1

**Re Proposed development for provision of a greenway between
Malahide Demense and Newbridge Demense to be known as 'Broadmeadow Way'.**

Reference number: EHIS Reference Number is 0951.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you in relation to the proposed development of the '*Broadmeadow Way*' greenway, the shared footpath and cyclepath of approximately 6km in length which is proposed to run between Malahide Demense and Newbridge Demense. Fingal County Council has indicated that we may make a written submission to An Bord Pleanála on this matter.

I am a medical doctor, working as a Specialist in Public Health Medicine at the Department of Public Health, HSE-East, which covers the Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare region. I lead in the area of health improvement and it is in this role that I writing to you to express my Department's strong support for this proposed development. We support this development for the following reasons:

The development of the proposed greenway would be fully in keeping with the *Healthy Ireland* national policy for improved health and wellbeing 2013-2025¹, primarily as it would facilitate and positively effect increased levels of physical activity in our population. Greenways are important for population health as they function as a recreational or pedestrian corridor for non-motorised journeys that can be used by people of all ages and abilities. These include not only cyclists, but also pedestrians, wheelchair users, children in buggies etc.

Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure and includes activities undertaken while working, playing, carrying out household chores, travelling, and engaging in recreational pursuits. Having adequate levels of physical activity is very important for health and wellbeing.

There is strong evidence that physical inactivity increases the risk of many adverse health conditions, including major non-communicable diseases such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancers and it also shortens life expectancy (see Appendix A below). Of significant public health concern is the fact that many people in Ireland currently do not engage in sufficient levels of regular physical activity and this is a problem across all stages in the lifecourse in our population. Several different national surveys and studies have consistently demonstrated that a high proportion of the population in Ireland, including children and young people, are not reaching the levels of physical activity that are recommended in our National Guidelines.²

Insufficient physical activity is one of the leading risk factors for poor health (both physical and mental) and it is associated with a wide range of chronic diseases. It is a key risk factor for serious diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality and it is estimated to be associated with one million deaths per year in the WHO European Region alone.³

Physical inactivity is estimated ⁴ to be responsible for:

6% of the burden of disease from coronary heart disease	_____
(Europe 5.5%; Ireland 8.8%)	
7% of type 2 diabetes	_____
(Europe 6.8%; Ireland 10.9%)	
10% of breast cancer	_____
(Europe 9.3%; Ireland 15.2%)	
10% of colon cancer	_____
(Europe 9.8%; Ireland 15.7%)	

The estimated gain in life expectancy in Ireland from the elimination of physical inactivity is estimated at 0.75 to 0.99 years⁴ (see appendix A below). It can be seen from the figures quoted above that Ireland compares very unfavourably to the average in Europe in relation to the proportions affected by these health behaviour-related diseases. This highlights Ireland's particular need and urgency in being proactive in promoting healthy behaviours in our population.

From the policy context, the proposed development of this greenway is fully in keeping with current national policy for the built environment in relation to health. The *Healthy Ireland* national policy framework involves a whole of government and whole of society

approach to proactively improve the health and wellbeing of the population. The framework identifies a number of broad inter-sectoral actions, including Action 2.11 which commits to the development of a plan to promote increased physical activity levels.

Action 2.11: *Develop a plan to promote increased physical activity levels across the population, as an exemplar of how Healthy Ireland will work.*

Arising from, and nested within, the *Healthy Ireland* policy approach is the 2016 *Get Ireland Active: National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland*² policy document which includes actions in order to:

“increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland, where everybody will be physically active and where everybody lives, works and plays in a society that facilitates, promotes and supports physical activity and an active way of life with less time spent being sedentary.”

The Physical Activity plan document includes the following statement:

“Promoting the use of the natural and built environment and promoting active transport are the most practical and sustainable ways to increase physical activity as part of everyday routine. The built environment is an important determinant of physical activity behaviour. The way the built environment is designed, planned and built can also act as a barrier to being active and can reinforce sedentary behaviour and car dependence.”

The Physical Activity plan recommendations for Local Authorities include:

Action 32: Develop and promote walking and cycling strategies in each Local Authority area

Action 33: Ensure that the planning, development and design of towns, cities and schools promotes cycling and walking with the aim of delivering a network of cycle routes and footpaths

Action 34: Ensure that the planning, development and design of towns and cities promotes the development of local and regional parks and recreational spaces that encourage physical activity

The national *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways*⁵ reports on the other additional positive impacts of the greenways that have been developed to date in Ireland in terms of social and economic benefits. These other non-health benefits also contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of the population.

Being physically active is one of the most important behaviours that people of all ages can take to improve their health and wellbeing. The proposed development of this greenway will facilitate, support and encourage physical activity in our population and its development would be fully in line with national policy under the *Healthy Ireland* framework. We strongly recommend that planners carefully consider these factors in their review process.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Yours sincerely,



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REFERENCES

1. Government of Ireland. *Healthy Ireland: A framework for improved health and wellbeing 2013-2025* Dublin: Government Publications; 2013 Available at: <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/HealthyIrelandBrochureWA2.pdf>
2. Government of Ireland. *Get Ireland Active: The National Physical Activity Plan* Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2016 Available at: <https://www.getirelandactive.ie/Professionals/National-PA-Plan.pdf>
3. World Health Organization. *Physical activity - Fact sheet N°385*. Updated January 2015. Available at: www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs385/en/.
4. Lee IM, et al. Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *The Lancet*. 2012; 380: 219-29. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)61031-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)61031-9/fulltext)
5. Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport, *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways*, July 2018 available at: <http://www.dttas.ie/sites/default/files/publications/tourism/english/strategy-future-development-national-and-regional-greenways/greenways-strategy.pdf>

Appendix A

The figures below are from the publication by Lee IM, et al. *Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy*, published in *The Lancet*. 2012; 380: 219-29. (reference No. 5 above)

Panel 1: Health benefits of physical activity in adults^{3,5}

Strong evidence of reduced rates of:

- All-cause mortality
- Coronary heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Metabolic syndrome
- Type 2 diabetes
- Breast cancer
- Colon cancer
- Depression
- Falling

Strong evidence of:

- Increased cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
- Healthier body mass and composition
- Improved bone health
- Increased functional health
- Improved cognitive function

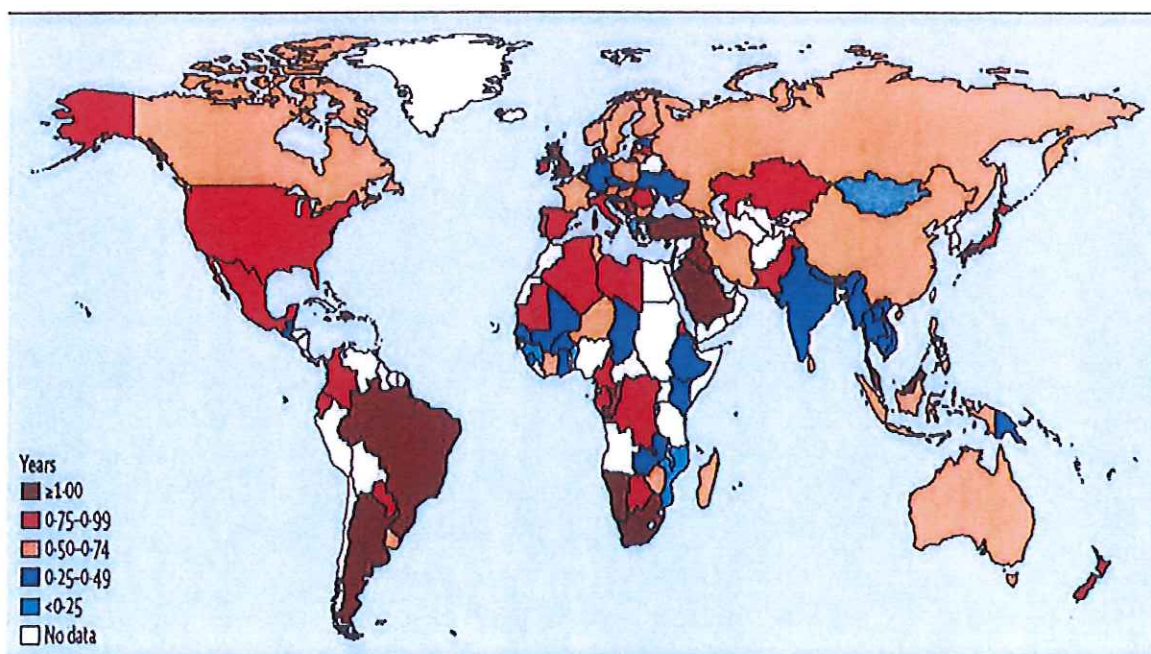


Figure: Estimated gains in life expectancy worldwide with elimination of physical inactivity

