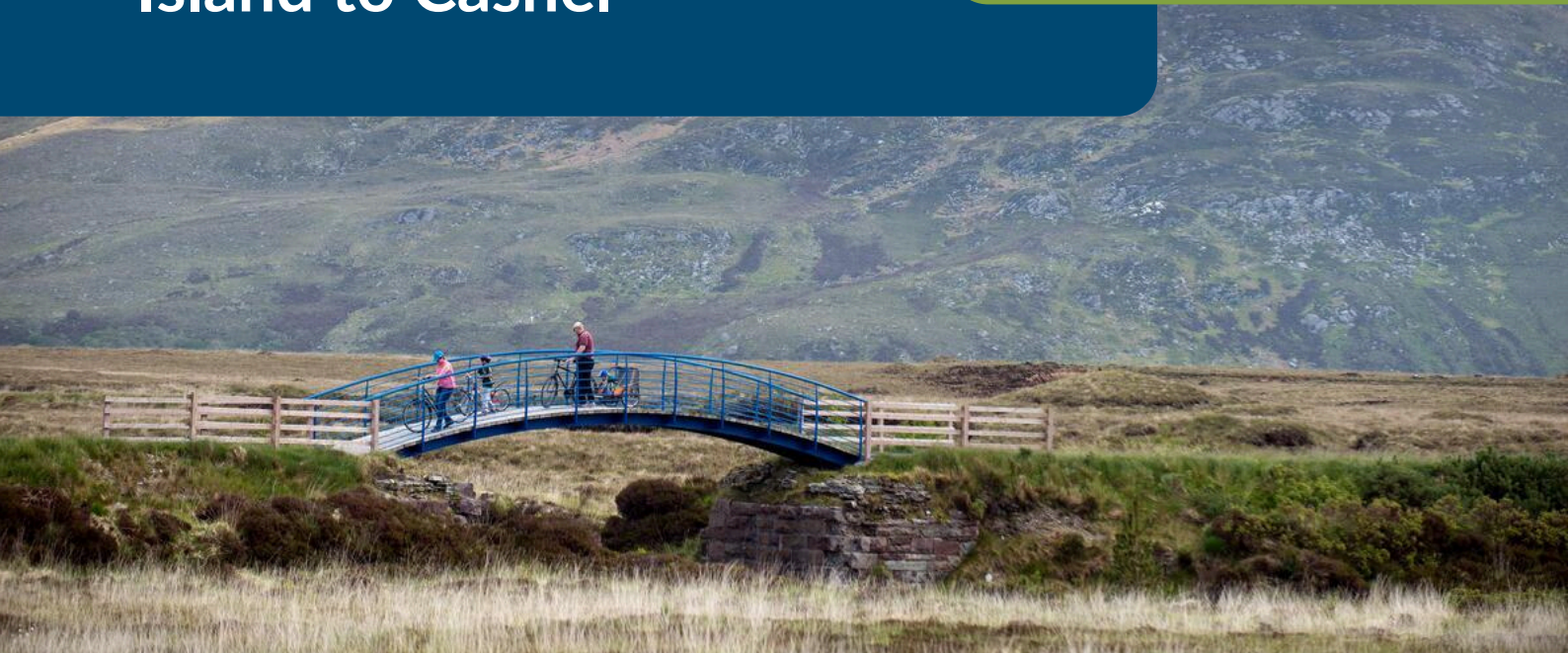


# Great Western Greenway Extension from Achill Island to Cashel

Environment



## Overview

The extension of the Great Western Greenway to Achill Island and Cashel represents a leading example of sustainable outdoor recreation planning. By repurposing existing peat access roads, the project minimises environmental disturbance while enhancing connectivity across Mayo's natural landscapes. A standout feature is Ireland's widest boardwalk, designed to span untouched bogland with minimal impact, demonstrating a strong commitment to habitat conservation and biodiversity protection. Sustainability is embedded throughout the development, from solar-powered compactor bins and e-bike charging points to public furniture crafted from repurposed wind turbine blades. These innovations reflect circular economy principles and reduce overall waste. The Greenway also promotes low-carbon lifestyles by encouraging walking and cycling, offering safe, off-road routes that make nature accessible to people of all ages and abilities while safeguarding sensitive ecosystems. By opening new links to areas such as Wild Nephin National Park and the Achill Gaeltacht, the extension supports year-round eco-tourism and disperses visitor activity to lesser-known cultural and natural sites. This strengthens local economies without compromising environmental integrity. Through its integration of recreation, conservation and community wellbeing, the project provides a model for how outdoor infrastructure can protect landscapes while enriching community life for future generations.

## Objective

The initiative aimed to extend the Great Western Greenway in a way that protects sensitive habitats while improving access to nature. By reusing low-use peat roads, the project sought to minimise ecological disruption, promote biodiversity, and support low-carbon travel through walking and cycling. It also aimed to strengthen rural communities by connecting them with safe, accessible routes, supporting local businesses, and encouraging sustainable, year-round eco-tourism.



**Location:**  
Mayo



**Project Lead:**  
Mayo County Council



**Cost:**  
€5 Million

Tags:  
Walking trails, Cycle trails,  
Sustainability, Environment,  
Tourism



## Opportunities

The extension of the Great Western Greenway created strong environmental, social, and economic opportunities for the region. Environmentally, it showed how low-impact infrastructure—such as reused peat roads and elevated boardwalks—can protect sensitive habitats while improving access to nature. It also demonstrated innovative sustainability features, including circular-economy elements like solar-powered bins and recycled wind-turbine furniture.

Socially, the Greenway provided safe, inclusive walking and cycling routes that connect remote communities and encourage active, healthy lifestyles throughout the year.

Economically, the project supported rural development by attracting eco-tourism and boosting local businesses such as bike hire, cafés, and accommodation providers. It also enhanced cultural connections by linking destinations like Croagh Patrick, Westport House, and the Achill Gaeltacht, offering visitors a richer experience of the region's heritage and landscapes.

## Challenges

- **Environmental Protection:** Developing infrastructure across sensitive bogland and peat habitats required careful design, including elevated boardwalks and use of existing peat access roads to prevent ecological disruption.
- **Stakeholder and Community Buy-In:** Balancing the needs of landowners, residents, environmental groups, and tourism providers demanded transparent communication and collaboration to address concerns around access, conservation, and long-term management.
- **Integrating Sustainable Technologies:** Incorporating features such as solar-powered bins, e-bike charging stations, and recycled wind-turbine furniture required sourcing and testing materials that were durable, cost-effective, and suitable for local conditions.

## Actions to support environmental sustainability

The project incorporated several measures to minimise environmental impact. It reused low-use peat access roads and installed elevated boardwalks to protect bogland habitats and biodiversity. Solar-powered bins and e-bike charging stations reduced energy use and encouraged low-carbon travel, while public furniture made from recycled wind-turbine blades demonstrated circular economy principles. Together with the promotion of walking and cycling, these actions lowered emissions, conserved resources, and ensured the Greenway aligned with best-practice environmental management.

## Solutions

- **Low-Impact Construction:** Used elevated boardwalks over sensitive bogland and repurposed low-use peat access roads to minimise habitat disturbance and protect biodiversity.
- **Environmental Oversight:** Conducted detailed environmental assessments and worked closely with ecologists to ensure best-practice landscape management and regulatory compliance.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Built trust through early and ongoing collaboration with landowners, transparent communication, and incorporating local feedback into project planning.
- **Community Support:** Highlighted long-term benefits and addressed concerns openly, helping foster local ownership and broad support for the project.
- **Sustainable Technology Integration:** Managed budget constraints through strategic partnerships and phased rollout of features like solar-powered bins, e-bike charging stations, and recycled wind-turbine-blade furniture.
- **Cost-Effective Implementation:** Introduced innovative materials and technologies gradually, allowing time to evaluate performance and ensure durability and value.

## More information

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