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PLANNING

TRIM MILLENNIUM PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE SCHEME

Planning Statement

Prepared for:
Meath County Council



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

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PLANNING STATEMENT

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Planning Statement which has been developed in support in support of a Section 177AE Application to consent for replacement of a Pedestrian Bridge over the Boyne River at Trim, Co. Meath. This statement reports on the Planning and Environmental considerations associated with the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) have been engaged by Meath County Council to prepare a Section 177AE application to An Bord Pleanála for the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme, from this point forward referred to as the 'proposed project'.

This Planning Statement has been developed in support of a Section 177AE application to An Bord Pleanála for approval of the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme. The Planning Statement is laid out as follows:

- Section 2 - Project Description
- Section 3 - Planning Considerations
- Section 4 – Conclusions

1.2 Accompanying Documents

The following documents accompany this document and the Section 177AE application for the project:

1. A Screening Report to Inform the Appropriate Assessment (AA) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was carried out to inform the competent authority in completing their statutory obligations in relation to Appropriate Assessment under Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) as implemented in Ireland under inter alia the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). An Aquatic Baseline survey report was conducted on 10th October 2023 by Triturus (Appendix 4 of the Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement). This evaluated the existing environment and included in-stream and riparian habitat surveys to assess the potential presence of Annex I habitat types within the vicinity of the bridge. The habitat assessment was conducted utilising elements of the methodology given in the Environment Agency's 'River Habitat Survey in Britain and Ireland Field Survey Guidance Manual 2003' (EA, 2003) and the Irish Heritage Council's 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000).
2. The Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared based on the conclusions of the AA Screening report which accompanies this application. The purpose of the NIS report is to evaluate whether the project, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, in view of that European site's conservation objectives and in view of the best available scientific knowledge.
3. A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme will be updated prior to construction to take account of any relevant conditions attached to the planning permission and will be implemented for the duration of the construction phase of the project. The CEMP will be a live document and will be subject to ongoing review through regular environmental auditing and site inspections and updated as required. For the avoidance of doubt, all measures stipulated in this CEMP will be implemented in full. The CEMP sets out the key construction and environmental management issues associated with the proposed project and will be developed further at the post-planning and construction stages by the client and on the appointment of the main contractor to the project. The CEMP sets out the key environmental management issues associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed project, to ensure that during these phases of the development, the environment is protected and impacts on the environment are minimised.



4. A Planning Statement has been included to support the Section 177AE application to An Bord Pleanála for approval of the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme. The Planning Statement includes a detailed Project Description, Planning Considerations and Conclusions.
5. An Environmental Impact Assessment Screening report (EIAR) presents an assessment of whether or not the proposed scheme should be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This assessment is based upon the EPA (2022) Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR) - as well as the other guidance documents set out in planning application documents (Planning Statement - Section 1-3) and considers the characteristics of the proposed scheme and the likely significant effects on the environment.
6. An Ecological Impact Report (EclA) was conducted to evaluate the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme. This involved the following:
 - A desktop review of available ecological data for both the receiving environment and greater area, including a review of European sites within 15 km and/or potential zone of influence (Zol) of the project (as part of a separate Appropriate Assessment Screening Report) and nationally designated sites within 10 km;
 - Undertake ecological field surveys of the receiving environment;
 - Identify flora and fauna and any invasive species present within the footprint of all elements of the project and;
 - Appraise the potential impacts of the project on the ecology of the receiving environment.
7. A Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) report and photomontages have been prepared in respect of a planning application for the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme. The LVIA report describes the landscape context of the proposed works and assesses the likely landscape and visual impacts.
8. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) report has been prepared which includes a hydraulic analysis and further technical details for the proposed replacement of the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme over the River Boyne.

This Planning Report has been prepared using the following guidance documents:

- DOEHLG (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities (as revised 2010).
- European Commission (2019). Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Brussels, (2019/C 33/01). OJ C 33, 25.1.2019.
- European Commission (2021). Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- Fry & Scott (2011). Developing IBIA: A standardised AA review package. In Impact Assessment and Responsible Development for Infrastructure, Business & Industry: 31st Annual meeting of IAIA, Puebla, Mexico (Vol. 29).
- Möckel, S. (2017). The European ecological network “Natura 2000” and the appropriate assessment for projects and plans under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. In: Möckel S (Ed.) ‘Natura 2000 appropriate assessment and derogation procedure – legal requirements in the light of European and German case-law’. Nature Conservation 23: 1–29.
- OPR (2021). Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01. Office of the Planning Regulator. March 2021.



1.3 Accompanying Drawings

The following drawings accompany the Section 177AE application for the project:

Table 1-1: Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme

Drawing No.	Drawing Title
P22256-FT-XX-ZZ-DR-S-0001	BRIDGE LOCATION PLANS
P22256-FT-XX-ZZ-DR-S-0002	PLAN & ELEVATION
P22256-FT-XX-ZZ-DR-S-0003	SECTIONS & DETAILS
P22256-FT-XX-ZZ-DR-S-0004	PROPOSED FINAL LAYOUT OF BRIDGE AND APPROACH RAMPS



2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Description of the Site

The proposed bridge location, as shown in Figure 2-1, below, is to be at the same location as that of the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge which was demolished in August 2022. The location of the previous bridge is also shown in Figure 2-1 below. The bridge spans the River Boyne and connects Trim Castle to the Porch Fields. The wooden Millennium Bridge was deconstructed in August 2022 and temporarily replaced with a bailey bridge by the Irish Army.

There are two Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the proposed development. The Millennium Bridge spans the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA. Given the nature and scale of the proposed development, any potential impacts are likely to be limited to the immediate vicinity, within a distance of no more than 100 m.

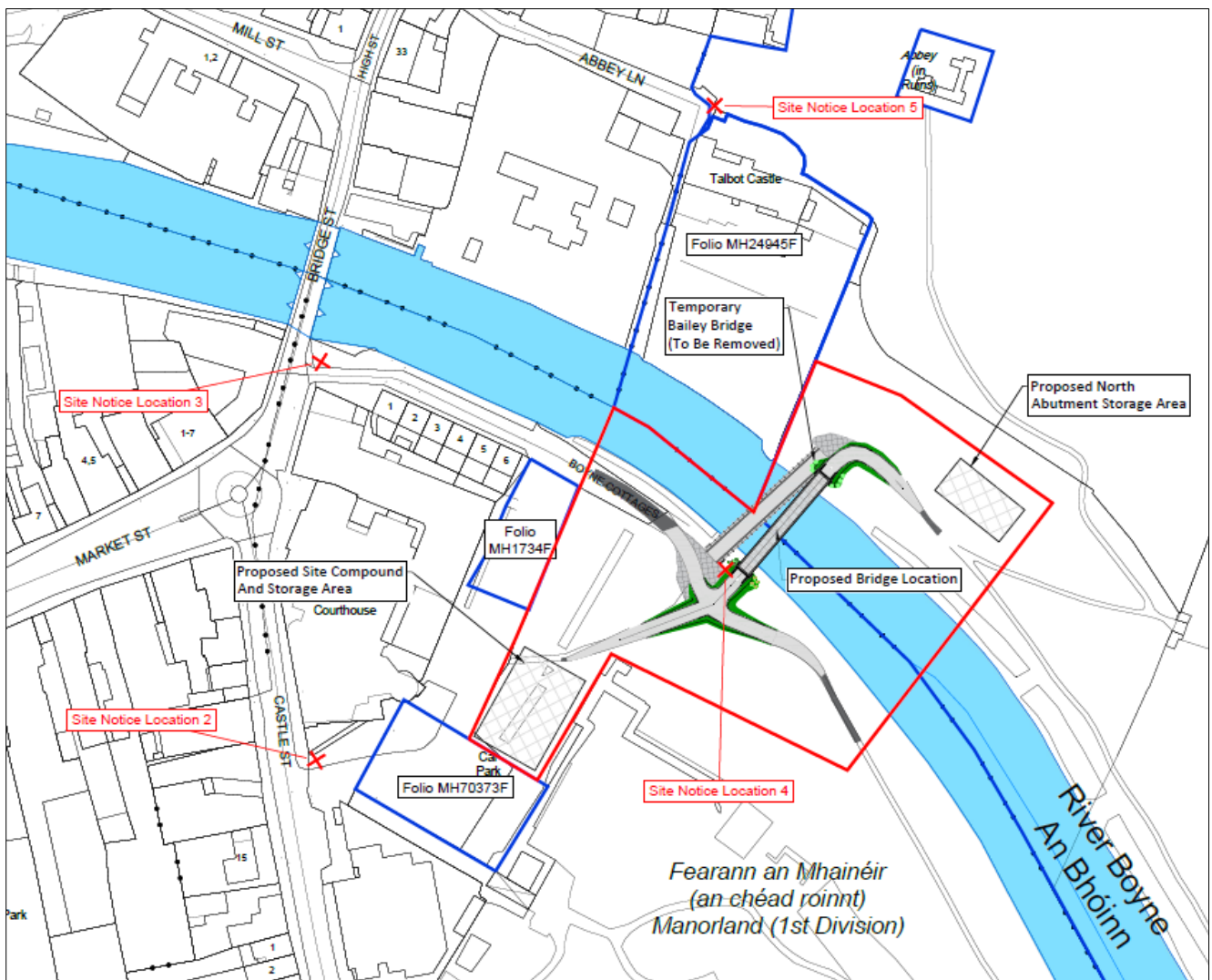


Figure 2-1: Proposed Bridge Location

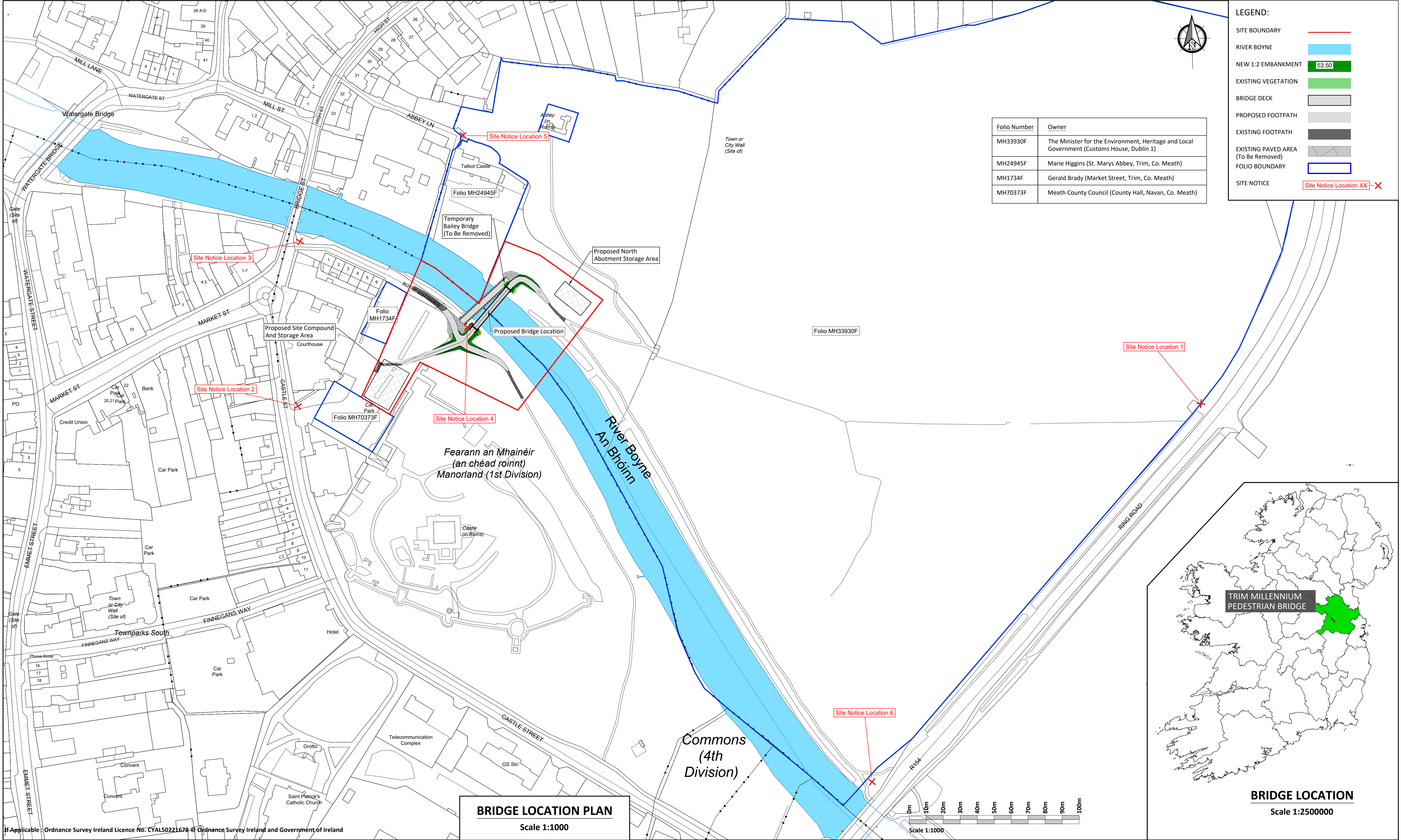
A map titled 'Bridge Location plan' showing the site and its immediate environs is shown in **Figure 2-2**, below.



2.1.1 Overview Description of the Project

The proposed pedestrian bridge is a replacement for the Millennium Pedestrian footbridge which was demolished in August 2022. The superstructure of the demolished bridge was constructed from Ekki timber in 2001 but was observed as having undergone significant failure during a structural inspection undertaken in July 2022. Failure of one of the pinned connections at the bottom chord caused the bridge to rotate and the bridge was no longer safe for use. The reason for the failure was due to rotting of the timber forked connection. The abutments and foundation of the bridge are still in place, and it is proposed to reuse these for the new bridge structure, subject to geotechnical and structural verifications. The new bridge will therefore be at the same location and have the same span as that of the original Millennium Pedestrian Bridge.

It should be noted at this stage of the report that the 'construction' phase of the project relates to the replacement for the Millennium Pedestrian footbridge, with the 'operational' phase of the structure being the pedestrian bridge to remain in-situ and functioning as a pedestrian footbridge with no plan for a 'decommissioning' phase for the structure.



LEGEND:

- SITE BOUNDARY
- RIVER BOYNE
- NEW 1:2 EMBANKMENT 53.50
- EXISTING VEGETATION
- BRIDGE DECK
- PROPOSED FOOTPATH
- EXISTING FOOTPATH
- EXISTING PAVED AREA (To Be Removed)
- FOLIO BOUNDARY
- SITE NOTICE Site Notice Location XX-X

Folio Number	Owner
MH33930F	The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Customs House, Dublin 1)
MH24945F	Marie Higgins (St. Marys Abbey, Trim, Co. Meath)
MH1734F	Gerald Brady (Market Street, Trim, Co. Meath)
MH70373F	Meath County Council (County Hall, Navan, Co. Meath)

BRIDGE LOCATION PLAN
Scale 1:1000

Map of Ireland showing the location of the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge in the east of the country.

BRIDGE LOCATION
Scale 1:2500000

Rev.	Description	App By	Date
P01	ISSUE FOR APPROVAL	BB	19.02.24
P02	ISSUE FOR APPROVAL	BB	08.03.24
P03	FOR PLANNING	BB	31.05.24

PROJECT		CLIENT		
TRIM MILLENNIUM PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE		comhairle chontae na mí meath county council		
SHEET		Date 19.02.24	Project number P22-256	Scale (@ A1-) 1:1000
BRIDGE LOCATION PLANS		Drawn by SK	Drawing Number P22256-FT-XX-ZZ-DR-S-0001	Rev P03
		Checked by AB		



2.1.2 Purpose of / Rationale for the Project

Meath County Council is the competent authority responsible for works on infrastructure such as the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme. Bridge replacement works are now required as the original Millennium Pedestrian footbridge was demolished in August 2022. The superstructure of the demolished bridge was constructed from Ekki timber in 2001 but was observed as having undergone significant failure during a structural inspection undertaken in July 2022. Failure of one of the pinned connections at the bottom chord caused the bridge to rotate and the bridge was no longer safe for use. The reason for the failure was due to rotting of the timber forked connection.

2.1.3 Construction phase

During the construction phase, it will be necessary to provide temporary facilities for construction personnel. This project will have a temporary compound located near the southern abutment which will include welfare facilities and a storage compound adjacent to the northern abutment. The location of the temporary site compound is proposed to be set back c. 50m southwest of the southern abutment of the bridge in a grassed area adjacent to the existing car-park, with the storage area located on agricultural lands as shown in the Figure 2-3 below. Temporary facilities and storage compounds will be removed on completion of the on-site works (10-12 weeks), and the lands fully reinstated upon completion of the construction phase.

Facilities to be provided in the temporary site compounds will include the following:

- Welfare facility consisting of container with Portaloo;
- Employee parking;
- Contractor lock-up facility;
- Bottled water for potable supply;
- Water tanker to supply water used for other purposes;
- Fuel storage with bunded area to accommodate 110% of fuel storage;
- Diesel generator;
- Storage areas;
- Waste management areas.

During the construction phase, it is proposed to install 2 no. temporary compounds (Figure 2-3, below). The proposed Main Site temporary compound will be located in the grassed area adjacent to the existing car park, c. 50m southwest of the southern abutment which will include staff welfare facilities. A second temporary compound will be located c. 30m east of the bridge providing storage on agricultural land for machinery and materials.



Figure 2-3: Temporary Site Compound and Storage Area Location

2.2 Construction Stage Mitigation Measures

- The use of plant and machinery during any tree trimming works will require the storage and use of fuels and oils. Details of oil spill protection measures adjacent to sensitive receptors and emergency spill response procedures are outlined in CEMP Section 4.3.5.
- Storage tanks, used to store fuel for the various items of machinery, will be self-contained and double-walled.
- Refuelling of equipment/machinery will be carried out from these tanks or from delivery vehicles at designated refuelling area at site compound location. Any diesel, fuel or hydraulic oils stored on site will be stored in bunded storage tanks – the bund area will have a volume of at least 110 % of the volume of such materials stored.
- Details of oil spill protection measures adjacent to sensitive receptors and emergency spill response procedures are outlined in CEMP Section 4.3.5.
- Storage tanks, used to store fuel for the various items of machinery, will be self-contained and double-walled. Refuelling of construction vehicles will be carried out from these tanks or from delivery vehicles at designated refuelling areas. Specific mitigation measures relating to the management of hydrocarbons are as follows:
- Fuels, lubricants and hydraulic fluids for equipment used on the construction site will be carefully handled to avoid spillage.



- Any spillage of fuels, lubricants or hydraulic oils will be immediately contained, and the contaminated soil removed from the site and properly disposed of;
- Waste oils and hydraulic fluids will be collected in leak-proof containers and removed from the site for disposal or re-cycling; and
- Appropriate spill control equipment, such as oil soakage pads, will be kept within the construction area and in each item of plant to deal with any accidental spillage.

2.3 Waste Management Plan

It will be the objective of the Developer in conjunction with appointed contractor to prevent, reduce, reuse and recover as much of the waste generated on site as practicable and to ensure the appropriate transport and disposal of residual waste off site. This is in line with the relevant National Waste Management Guidelines and the European Waste Management Hierarchy, as enshrined in the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended.

Any waste generated during the development construction phase will be collected, source separated and stored in dedicated receptacles at the temporary compound during construction.

2.4 Construction Working Hours

The hours of construction activity will be limited to avoid unsociable hours as per Section 8.5 (d) of the code of practice for BS 5228: Part 1: 1997. Construction operations shall generally be restricted to between 08:00 hours and 18:00 hours Monday to Friday and between 08:00 and 13:00 on Saturday. Work on Sundays or public holidays will only be conducted in exceptional circumstances or in an emergency.

Construction commencement dates are yet to be confirmed at this stage; these will be made known to the Planning Authority by way of a formal Commencement Notice.

2.4.1 Operation / Decommissioning Post Construction phase

There will no 'operational', or 'decommissioning' activities directly associated with the bridge following the completion of the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme.



3. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Relevant Planning History

A review of the planning history attached to the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme shows it is not subject to any planning process, application or grant of planning permission. The proposed pedestrian bridge is to be at the same location as that of the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge which was installed as part of Trim Town programme of improvements in 2001 and demolished in August 2022. The bridge spans the River Boyne and connects Trim Castle on the southern bank to the Porch Fields on the northern bank, with the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge located within lands zoned as being within 'H1 - High Amenity' on the south bank adjacent to Trim Castle, and 'F1/D1 - Open Space - Tourism'. The original wooden Millennium Bridge was deconstructed in August 2022 due to the timber structure rotting and becoming unsafe.

3.2 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027: Planning Policy Context and Project Compliance with Planning Policy

The current Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, Chapter 3: *Settlement and Housing Strategy*, 'Section 4.7.3.3 Kells and Trim' states in relation to Trim Town:

"Trim is a self-sustaining growth town with a unique cultural and built heritage identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) as a medieval heritage town. With a 'Jobs: Resident' Workforce ratio of 0.67 and 2,500 jobs in 2016, Trim is the second largest centre for employment in the County behind Navan. The vision going forward for Trim is to maximise the number of local job opportunities while investing and expanding in the tourist product in the town. A variation to the Trim Development Plan adopted in Q3 of 2019 supported the continued economic development of the town through the facilitation of the development of a live work community including a key piece of road infrastructure for the town. Trim is designated as being eligible for the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) (as a town of fewer than 10,000 people but with more than 2,500 jobs) which will present opportunities for funding going forward. In this regard, the Council has taken a proactive approach in securing funding to obtain Planning approval to develop Trim Library and Cultural Centre."

In relation to Trim Town Development, the proposed Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 states it is an Objective (OBJ) of the plan under the following:

Table 3-1: County Development Plan Objective: Self Sustaining Growth Towns

Objective	Objective Description
ED OBJ 49	<i>To work with and support the Office of Public Works, Fáilte Ireland and other relevant stakeholders in facilitating the development of visitor centre services at the Market House premises on Castle Street for the promotion and development of visitor facilities in Trim and the wider Boyne Valley region including the Trim Castle attraction.</i>



During the lifetime of this Plan, in relation to Trim Town and the proposed works, 'Section 4.27 Tourist Infrastructure' describes how Meath County Council will endeavour to facilitate new tourist attractions which are sensitive to the rural character and heritage of the area. These will include the opening of historic houses or gardens to the public, farm visits, museums and interpretative centres. In relation to tourist facilities and Trim Town, it is a Policy (POL) of Meath County Council to:

Table 3-2: County Development Plan Objective: Self Sustaining Growth Towns

Policy	Policy Description
ED POL 44	<i>To support the development of new tourist facilities or upgrading/ extension of existing tourist facilities at tourist sites within the County such as the Hill of Tara, Loughcrew and Trim Castle in conjunction with OPW and DCHG in accordance with the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 and with proper Planning and sustainable development principles. These facilities should avail of shared infrastructure and services where possible and will be designed to the highest architectural and design standards.</i>

Section '4.28 Culture & Heritage' in relation Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme show it is imperative for Meath County Council to develop tourist facilities at locations such as Trim Castle, with Section '4.28.5 Walking and Cycling Routes', enhancing the requirements of the pedestrian bridge to support Meath County Councils objectives of improve access and public enjoyment of the castle and surrounding area and promote active travel within the town through the following:

- Addressing Pedestrian Infrastructure Needs: It could improve pedestrian connections within Trim and provide direct access to Trim Castle for walkers and cyclists.
- Contributing to the Boyne Greenway: It could act as a crucial link in the greenway, attracting visitors and boosting local tourism.
- Promoting Sustainable Transport: It could encourage walking and cycling, reducing car dependence and emissions.
- Enhancing Heritage and Amenity: It could improve access to Trim Castle, potentially increasing visitor numbers and enjoyment of the Castle and the town.

3.2.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 (RSES)

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) sets out the long-term spatial planning and economic framework for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, in accordance with the economic policies of the Government, for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Eastern and Midland's Region from 2019 to 2031 and beyond.

As shown in 1.4.4 of the MCDP, the vision of the RSES states:

“to create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all”



3.2.2 Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027: Core Strategy Vision

The MCDP 2021-2027 sets out a core strategy on how Meath County will grow and develop over the next six years, as shown in Chapter 2: Core Strategy. The aim of the Core Strategy Vision for County Meath is:

“to continue to support the creation of socio-economically progressive vibrant, dynamic, and healthy communities throughout the County and ensure that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development that delivers a high-quality living and working environment that meets the needs of all residents, in accordance with National and Regional Guidance.”

The MCDP 2021-2027 'Section 8.9 Green Infrastructure' demonstrates Meath County Council is supportive of the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme adhere to the Core Strategy Vision in delivering:

"strategically planned and managed network featuring areas with high quality biodiversity (uplands, wetlands, peatlands, rivers and coast), farmed and wooded lands and other green spaces that conserve ecosystem values which provide essential services to society".

In relation to the development of open spaces and Natura 2000 sites, the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme are within lands zoned as being within 'H1 - High Amenity' on the south bank adjacent to Trim Castle, and 'F1/D1 - Open Space - Tourism' and in proximity to the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (Site code: 002299) and River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (Site code: 004232). The MCDP 2021-2027 contains legislative context within Section '7.7.7 Open Space' which states:

“Public open space is a critical element in the creation of a quality and distinctive urban environment, offering opportunities for both passive and active recreation, contributing to the quality of life of residents and visitors alike. Accessible, useable, dedicated open spaces and recreational facilities to meet both passive and active recreational needs offer environmental and ecological benefits and improve building energy performance. There are significant health benefits for communities with access to green spaces and blue spaces (rivers, lakes and canals). The RSES supports the preparation of open space and parks strategies by local authorities, and for enhanced cross boundary collaboration to provide for a hierarchy of open space provision including regional scale open space and recreational facilities.”

This is supported through MCDP Policies as outlined in **Table 3-3**, below:

Table 3-3: County Development Plan Policy: Open Space

Policy	Policy Description
SOC POL 38	To promote the development of a wide variety of high quality accessible open space areas, for both active and passive use, and formal and informal activities in accordance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy and the standards set out in Chapter 11 Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objective taking into account any environmental sensitivities including likely significant effects on European Sites (SACs and SPAs).
SOC POL 39	To protect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites during the identification of suitable sites for recreation, in particular in terms of their design and use

The proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme are in full compliance with the Objectives and Principals as described in the current Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.



3.3 Justification for the Project

The original Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge was demolished in August 2022 due to concerns over its structural integrity, as the timber structure of the bridge was found to be unsafe and beyond. The proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme align with the objectives of both the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the RSES 2019-2031, as outlined above, which demonstrate that the replacement of the bridge is critical, not just about restoring a route within Trim Town, but also about reinstating an essential link that contributes to the social, cultural, and economic vitality of Trim and the wider region. The new pedestrian bridge will ensure the continued sustainable development of the area of Trim and Trim Castle, with the proposed development justified as it is in line with the guiding policies of the development within the strategic objectives of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the RSES 2019-2031.



4. CONCLUSION

The proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme aligns with planning policy as defined in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 (RSES).

The Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) screening has concluded, that on the basis of objective scientific information, that the proposed works will not, either alone nor in combination with other plans or projects, adversely affect any European (Natura 2000) sites. Therefore, the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the qualifying interest species and habitats of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (Site code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (Site code: 004232). The Environmental Impact Assessment report (EIAR) and Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) concluded there are No Negative/Adverse Effects or Significant Effects likely to arise from the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme.

Given all of the above, the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme is considered to adhere to the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Therefore, the proposed Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Scheme will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site and should be granted approval by An Bord Pleanála.



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