



## Press Release

11 September 2017

### **EU INTERREG VA funded Ulster Canal Greenway Project between Monaghan and Armagh is officially launched**

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross TD and the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys TD, attended the launch of the EU-funded €4.95m Ulster Canal Greenway Project which will see the development of an off-road sustainable travel route between Smithborough, Co Monaghan and Middletown, Co Armagh.

The project is supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

The project is also supported by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in Ireland and the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The project partners, led by Waterways Ireland, are Monaghan County Council, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council and East Border Region Ltd.

Minister Ross stated: **“This is a wonderful initiative. Greenways connect communities, promote healthier lifestyles and encourage engagement with the outdoors. They also offer active travel opportunities for both pedestrians and cyclists and have proven to be a major attraction for visitors.**

**“I’m very pleased to be launching Phase 2 of the Ulster Canal Greenway here today. Creating a new Greenway involves years of planning, construction and goodwill from those in surrounding lands. But it’s a commitment that delivers back to the community in spades. This Greenway promises to be a major asset to surrounding areas, as it brings the old towpaths of the disused Ulster Canal back into use and extends the Monaghan Town Greenway by 22km in a very welcome cross-border project. By 2020, the Greenway will link Smithborough, Co Monaghan to Middleton, Co Armagh.**

**“I very much look forward to making use of it in the future and I encourage you all to do likewise,” he continued.**



The Ulster Canal Greenway (UCG) Phase 2 project is a pioneering move to develop the first sustainable transport alternative for cross-border commuters between Smithborough, Co. Monaghan and Middletown, Co. Armagh. Monaghan to Northern Ireland is the second highest of all South-North commuter flows, and Armagh to Ireland is the third highest of all North-South flows.

The project valued at €4.95m aims to construct 22km of new cross-border Greenway by 2020 and actively to promote commuter behavioural change through a targeted community engagement programme. It will result in a 4.5% increase in the number of cross-border journeys via walking / cycling by 2023. The project is designed to connect with the completed Phase I section, which utilises the disused Ulster Canal to provide a highly strategic route linking the east/ west sides of Monaghan.

Minister Heather Humphreys in which constituency the Greenway will run, said at the launch: **“I am delighted that Waterways Ireland, an agency under the remit of my own Department, have agreed to act as the lead partner for this flagship cross-border project. The first phase of the Greenway, here in Monaghan, already attracts over 100,000 users per year and has been a fantastic success since it opened in 2014. The further expansion of the Greenway will strengthen cross border relations by directly linking communities North and South of the border. The provision of this landmark recreational amenity will also provide a huge tourism boost for County Monaghan and the wider border region.”**

Speaking at the event Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive Officer with the Special EU Programmes Body, said: **“When completed this cross border project will help to meet some important targets under the sustainable transport objective of the EU’s INTERREG VA Programme. It will encourage more people to get out of their cars and increase the number of cross-border journeys made by walking and cycling, thereby helping to reduce our collective carbon footprint.**

**“Not only will this produce many benefits for the region, but the project is also making a contribution towards the EU’s ‘Europe 2020’ strategy which has been specifically designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help safeguard the environment,” she continued.**



Also attending the launch on the day were children from St John's Primary School, Middletown, Co Armagh and Gaelscoil Ultain, St Marys Boys School and St Louis Girls School. The extended Ulster Canal Greenway route will create the first cross-border greenway that will enable cyclists and walkers commute to work and study in future years.

The Cathaoirleach of Monaghan County Council Cllr Cathy Bennett stated: **"The 4km Monaghan Town Greenway has been a huge success and it attracts over 100,000 users annually. I am delighted that the INTERREG VA programme is supporting the next 22km section of the Ulster Canal Greenway. This new phase of the greenway will join communities north and south of the border, bringing huge benefits to our area and encouraging even more people to get out walking and cycling on a daily basis."**

Alderman Elizabeth Ingram, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council stated: **"A key facet of our vision is to engage and support initiatives that protect and safeguard our environment for future generations to come that is why we are delighted to partner up on the EU funded Ulster Canal Greenway project. Bringing about substantial environmental benefits whilst enhancing the quality of life in the area, this pioneering project will deliver an alternative and sustainable pathway for cyclists and walkers to commute between both sides of the border. The collaborative project highlights our commitment to growing a connected, welcoming and healthy community."**

The project will also contribute to a deepened level of partnership between key stakeholders and to the development of expertise and dissemination of best practice in delivering cross-border projects.

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**For more information please contact John McCandless, Communications Manager with the SEUPB on Mob. 07834 778018 or via e-mail [john.mccandless@seupb.eu](mailto:john.mccandless@seupb.eu)**



## Notes to Editor:

### SEUPB

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society.
- The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.
- The INTERREG VA Programme has a value of €283 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu)