



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



An Roinn Forbatha Tuaithe
agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta
Department of Rural and Community
Development and the Gaeltacht



The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2026/2027 has been launched.

Applications are invited as follows:

Scheme Measures	Deadline for application to Galway County Council:
<p>Measure 1 – €40,000 Small scale repair/development/promotion and marketing</p>	<p>20th August 2026</p>
<p>Measure 2 – €200,000 Medium scale repair/upgrade and new trail/amenity development</p>	<p>10th November 2026</p>
<p>Measure 3 – €500,000 Large scale repair/upgrade and new strategic trail/amenity development</p>	<p>10th November 2026</p>
<p>Project Development Measure:</p> <p>Development Costs for Outdoor Recreation Projects Such work might encompass detailed design, screenings, preparation for planning and/or procurement, appropriate assessment, ecological surveys etc.</p> <p>Up to 4 prioritized applications allowed per Local Authority. The combined total of these 4 projects may not exceed €100,000.</p> <p>One additional application focusing on equestrian trails/bridleways up to €50,000 may be allowed and for local authorities with inhabited offshore islands or Gaeltacht areas, one additional application, up to €50,000.</p> <p>(Max 6 overall per LA)</p>	<p>20th August 2026</p>

Important Advisory Notice:

For the attention of all Groups considering submitting applications under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, please read below. This applies to all Measures - M1, M2, M3 and PDM

1. All Projects must be **shovel ready** with all **permissions in place**.

As outlined by the Department of Rural & Community Development – projects must be shovel ready with all permissions in place, together with match funding. Please see below project [types](#) which are **NOT** considered eligible under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

2. **Pre-Planning:** Use this pre-planning enquiry system to generate a free report for your proposed site, which will collate common planning information relating to land use zonings, flood risk, protected structures and other topics. This information can assist with the preparation of a planning application for permission or with deciding on whether or not a pre-planning meeting may be required.

[Co. Galway Pre-planning Enquiry System](#)

3. Applications under this scheme will **not** be accepted if **Planning Permission** is not in place. Planning Permission **must** be in place and a copy of the Grant of Permission **must** be submitted with all Applications.

If Planning Permission is not in place, Groups **must** submit a **Declaration of Exempted Development** to the Planning Authority with the required detail. When the Planning Authority grants a decision, this decision **must** be submitted as part of the ORIS application at the time of submission. It will not be accepted at a later date.

Proposals will **not** be accepted without the Section 5 Declaration of Exempted Development.

Please see further information [here](#).

4. **Activities Requiring Consent (ARC)**

Proposals impacting on a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA) which fall under Activities Requiring Consent ARCs - may require consent from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) e.g. Activities Requiring Consent (ARC)-09: Construction or alteration of tracks, paths, roads, bridges, culverts or access routes. Further details are available [here](#)

5. Applications must align with **Irelands National Outdoor Recreation Strategy** document, please see attached link:
<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/240596/8f843f7b-c08c-42eb-bc5c-f31d6bdea38b.pdf#page=null>

6. All works/projects must have evidence of adequate and comprehensive Public Liability Insurance. Evidence of Public Liability Insurance cover (€6.5m cover) and Employers Liability Insurance Cover (€13m cover) must be submitted, and the applicant must submit proof of indemnification for Galway County Council against any claims arising.
Trails registered with Sport Ireland will be covered by the National Trails Insurance policy. Please see below links for further details:
<https://www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/trail-development>
https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-06/criteria_1.pdf

7. When considering a proposal for submission, groups **must** first liaise with the local Municipal Area Engineer in relation to the proposed project and then make contact with Siobhán Cleary or Trevor Coleman in the Rural & Community Development Section at outdoorrecreation@galwaycoco.ie

8. Match Funding – **Cash Contribution** – Minimum of **10%** of Total Project Cost
Successful groups/projects will be required to pay the Match Funding Cash Contribution prior to commencement of the project to Galway County Council which will then be assigned to the Project Code.

9. Benefit in kind is **not** permitted for 2026/2027 ORIS applications as outlined by the Department of Rural & Community Development.

The following types of projects and activities, are NOT eligible under ORIS (Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme)

Ineligible Projects under this scheme

- Greenways in excess of 20km
- Infrastructure for commercial activities
- Purchase/lease of land
- Legal fees
- Sport Ireland Inspection fees
- Standalone outdoor gym/calisthenics workout area projects
- Sculptures
- Motorised vehicles
- Sports grounds, traditional playgrounds and Multi-Use Gaming Areas (MUGAs)
- Works within Town Parks, marked street trails, walkways and cycleways within towns and villages except as outlined in Project Location above page 16 of Guidance Doc.
- Any surfacing works to public roads regardless of whether they form part of an existing trail. The level of finish for any works on trails on non-public roads must be commensurate with the needs of walking trails and not the needs of vehicular traffic i.e. the scheme is not designed for tarring roads.
- Refurbishment and construction of buildings² (except in very exceptional and limited circumstances for projects where this would substantially improve access to, and the utilisation of, recreational resources by the wider public)
- Walking or running tracks located in a confined space, e.g. around sports pitches or playgrounds, or within other sports grounds.
- Maintenance works on elements of trails which form a normal part of the work undertaken as part of the Walks Scheme
- Works covered under the agreed work plans of the Walks Scheme
- Activities which do not comply with the definition of countryside/outdoor recreation as set out above and as defined in Embracing Ireland's Outdoors³.
- Capacity building or training
- Ongoing operational costs
- Costs not directly related to the project.
- Indirect costs of the project e.g. community organisation staff time spent working on the project in an administrative capacity .
- Organisation core costs, including overheads.
- Retrospective costs - activity that has already been undertaken or costs incurred prior to date of project approval.
- VAT where applicants are registered for VAT.
- Charges such as bank interest costs, fines, financial penalties, and legal dispute costs

- Sponsorship and charitable donations
- Depreciation
- Notional costs e.g..

It should be noted that private commercial entities or bodies trading for profit are not eligible for funds under the scheme.

Maintenance, Management & Insurances

Trails must be maintained once complete. Please see below guidelines and advice in relation to ongoing management & maintenance of the trail

How will the applicant provide for the ongoing maintenance of the project?

The trail proposer will be responsible for all aspects of the project. Remember that a trail requires a significant amount of on-going management, maintenance and funding after it is completed. This work and commitment should not be underestimated, and the proposer should only go ahead with the trail development if they are fully committed to the long-term needs of the trail.

Groups should liaise with Sport Ireland regarding Trails Registration on the National Trails Register (Insurance and ongoing maintenance).

Have you sought a pre-assessment for your project?
If so, please submit this with your ORIS Application.

Please see below links:

<https://www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/trail-development>

https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-06/criteria_1.pdf

Why Register a trail?

- Provides confidence to trail developers that their trail meets the criteria
- **Allows trail management groups access to the national trails insurance policy**
- Gives assurance to the public that a trail is of an acceptable quality
- Allows the trail to be listed on the Sport Ireland trails website
- Allows the trail to be listed on Ordnance Survey maps
- Provides a marketing opportunity for the trail management group
- Provides an opportunity for introduction of Walks Scheme on the trail through the Department of Rural and Community Development and Local Development Companies

Trail Development Experience

It is advisable that the Project Developer attend Sport Ireland Trail Development courses and/or become familiar with the resources below, Ireland Outdoors publications:

(Available at <https://www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/publications-resources>)

- A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland
- Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails
- Walking Trails Criteria for Ireland

Further information also available here:

- *Cara's Accessibility and the Great Outdoors Resources*
<https://caracentre.ie/fact-sheets/accessibility-and-the-great-outdoors-resources/>
- Disability and Age Friendly measures should be incorporated line with the [Universal Design Principles](#) and as far as practicable, be accessible to all.
- [The Great Outdoors – Accessibility | Active Disability Ireland](#)

Further information and Application Forms available from:

Post: Community & Rural Development Section, Galway County Council, Prospect Hill, Galway:

Email: outdoorrecreation@galwaycoco.ie

Contact: Siobhán Cleary – scleary@galwaycoco.ie - 091509347

Trevor Coleman – trcoleman@galwaycoco.ie - 091509540

Note on Exempted Developments:

Exempted development is development for which planning permission is not required. Categories of exempted development are set out in the [Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended \(Part 2 - Exempted Development](#)

Guidelines). They usually refer to developments of a minor nature, such as small extensions to houses, garden walls and so on.

All development of land or property requires planning permission, unless it is classed as exempt.

However, if the property is in an **Architectural Conservation Area**, **Special Amenity Area Order**, or is a **protected structure/listed building** these exemptions **do not** apply.

Section 5 Declaration

A Section 5 - Declaration (i.e). The Decision as issued by the Planning Authority, which declares the Proposal as exempt or not, must be submitted with all ORIS Applications (if Planning Permission is not in place).

- A **Declaration of Exempted Development - Section 5** should be made in writing (hard copy only) to the Planning Authority, to determine whether a proposal requires permission or is considered exempted development:

Exempted Developments - Section 5
Planning Department
Galway County Council
Áras an Chontae
Prospect Hill
Galway
H91 H6KX

- ***The application should be accompanied by all relevant site maps and include a fee of €80***
- The Planner will then assess the application and make a ***decision within four weeks***
- The applicant can appeal the decision to An Bord Pleanála, accompanied by a fee (€210)

Exemptions:

157. (1) Where a planning application consists of or comprises development which, in the opinion of the planning authority, is development proposed to be carried out by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation, and which in the opinion of the planning authority— (a) is designed or intended to be used for social, recreational, educational or religious purposes by the inhabitants of a locality, or by people of a particular group or religious denomination, and is not to be used

mainly for profit or gain, (b) is designed or intended to be used as a workshop, training facility, hostel or other accommodation for persons with disabilities and is not to be used mainly for profit or gain, or (c) is ancillary to development referred to in paragraph (a) or (b), a fee shall not be payable when making any such application.

(2) Where a planning application consists of or comprises the provision of houses, or development ancillary to such provision, which is proposed to be carried out by or on behalf of a body approved for the purposes of section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992 (No. 18 of 1992) and is not to be used mainly for profit or gain, a fee shall not be payable in respect of any such development.

Further information:

[Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended](#)
[Part 2 - Exempted Development Guidelines](#)