

**DURROW**  
**DARMAGH ua nDUACH**

**Laois County Council**  
Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027  
**Submission**

**DESIGNATE DURROW AS A  
COMMUNITY/FAMILY CYCLE HUB**



**Proposer:**

**“Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme**

**Date: February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021**

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Introduction.....	3
About Durrow: .....	4
Project Information:.....	5
Name of Project .....	5
Project Description:.....	5
Project Proposer:.....	6
Benefits.....	7
Stakeholders:.....	8
Statutory Information:.....	9
Property:.....	9
Ownership:.....	9
Planning Permission:.....	9
Timescale:.....	9
Red Line Trail .....	11
Scope of “Red Line Trail” .....	12
Blue Line Trail .....	13
Scope of “Blue Line Trail” .....	14
Gold Line Trail.....	16
Scope of “Gold Line Trail” .....	17
Costings: .....	19
Maintenance: .....	20
Summary: .....	20
Conclusions:.....	21

## Introduction

This Community/Family Cycle Trail proposal, was compiled, having regard to the Coillte Off-Road Cycle Strategy Document 2012, as follows:

(Community Trails – Provision 2.5.4. Page 17)

(2. Provision - Page 18)

(2. Provision – 2.5.5. Forest Cycling Areas Page 19)

(Selecting Locations for Trails. Provision 2.6. Page 20)

(Sites for Community Trails. Provision 2.6.3. Page 23)

## About Durrow:

**Durrow** is located in South County Laois in a rural landscape of gently undulating hills and surrounded by seven wooded areas.

The river Erkina skirts the northern boundary of the village and joins the river Nore some six hundred meters downstream.

It's original design and layout was meticulously planned by William Flower, "Viscount" Ashbrook in 1708. It was handed down through the Ashbrook lineage and subsequently to the local community on the departure of the Flower family from Durrow in 1922.

The town was once described by renowned travel writer and cycling enthusiast, William Bulfin as *"A Gem in the Basin of the Nore"*,

Always mindful of the continued support and input from Laois County Council, Laois Partnership, Elected Representatives and the local community, Durrow is now a town of unique character, heritage and beauty for all to admire. With its village greens, forests and limestone buildings, Durrow is a place that stirs the minds and hearts of the local community and visitors alike.

Much admired for its community spirit, the people of Durrow are passionate about their locality, supportive of their volunteers and proud of their achievements on behalf of their town.

## **Project Information:**

### **Name of Project**

The provision of a “Community/Family Cycle Hub” at Durrow Co. Laois.

### **Project Description:**

This proposal is for a series of loop trails, namely “A Community/Family Cycle Hub”, with a Start and Finish point at The Square in Durrow, Co Laois.

Surrounded by seven woodland areas, riverbank trails and a suitable road network, Durrow is rich in the natural resources and infrastructure required, to facilitate a series of short cycle trails, suitable for safe, family leisure cycling.

This proposal, will promote a development concept for three trails; A Blue Line, Red Line and Gold Line, which have been identified locally, in terms of their suitability for the project proposal, as described above.

**To achieve this objective, the committee of “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme, seeks to engage in meaningful discussion with relevant stakeholders, in a genuine attempt to advance this proposal.**

## **Project Proposer:**

“Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme is a not-for-profit community bike hire business, founded in 2019 with a view to promoting safe leisure cycling and healthy lifestyle activity, within the local community of Durrow, and beyond.

With financial assistance from Laois Partnership, Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme have, to date, purchased ten new leisure style bicycles, wicker baskets and vintage-style helmets. these create a unique “Pedal Vintage” atmosphere to our bike hire offering.

This package is offered for hire to the local community, in addition to visitors to our town.

Proposals are now in place for the enhancement of this bike hire offering; to include the purchase of eight additional leisure style bicycles, helmets, baskets and a sanitising sprayer in addition to an upgrade of our website and social media channels.

Members of “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme, have a strong cross-community and club representation. Individual members of this committee have been innovators and promoters of several outstanding voluntary projects, which have enhanced and enriched the lives of the local community in Durrow, and beyond.

### **Committee:**

Matt Doyle, Chairman.

Sean Conroy, Vice Chairman.

Hugh Sheppard, Secretary/PRO.

Margaret Aylward, Treasurer.

Noel Mooney, Trail Guide.

Ann Lanigan, Trails Officer.

John Maguire.

Ger Sheppard.

Mike McEvoy.

Contact Name: Hugh Sheppard

Name of Group: “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme.

Email: [durrow.doings@gmail.com](mailto:durrow.doings@gmail.com)

Mobile: 086 869 4691

## Benefits

- A “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will highlight an imaginative; multi-use designation of natural resources, promote family engagement in outdoor activity, encourage the local community participation in leisure cycling and showcase the rich sources of biodiversity locally.
- *The development of this “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will make Durrow an attractive destination for safe family cycling, and likewise, appeal to those who wish to engage in outdoor recreation as part of their leisure activity.*
- Natural amenities coupled with recreation opportunities, contribute significantly to a community’s quality of life, making the Durrow area a desirable place to live and work.
- *Creating this “Community/ Family Cycle Hub” will offer a recreational opportunity for young people, helping to provide an important activity outlet for children.  
“Only a small minority of children in Ireland are active enough to meet recommended physical activity guidelines, according to a study from sporting authorities North and South”  
(Irish Times Newspapers. February 2020)*
- This “Community/ Family Cycle Hub”, as proposed, will deliver social, environmental and tourism benefits for the local community and the wider hinterland.
- *The proposed “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will complement the ambitious plans of Durrow Tidy Towns Committee, as they strive to establish and support, local biodiversity and sustainable outdoor projects.*
- A “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will support the ongoing work of not-for-profit group, “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme, in the promotion of leisure cycling and outdoor activity in the local community.
- *The designation of Durrow as a “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will play a significant role in the development of sustainable local tourism in the entire South Laois area, in addition to providing a valued recreational amenity for local residents.*
- The proposed cycle trail will present an opportunity to refurbish an “old cart/bike track”, that in olden times, was allegedly used, to provide daily access to farmers bringing their livestock and produce from Tinweir/Attanagh area to Ballykealy/Cullohill and beyond. Local folklore suggests; that customs and tales, such as “the penny stone” and a “local faction fight” were synonymous with this “old cart/bike track” area.
- *This project proposal will provide local possibilities for outdoor activity for local school groups eg. Transition year students and younger school groups, who otherwise have to travel to other activity centres for this accommodation eg. Delphi Centre, Mayo, Waterford Greenway.*
- There is a growing movement now devoted to the development of Outdoor Classrooms, given the benefits to schoolchildren in learning in this way. In an increasing number of schools, the local environment is being used as outdoor classrooms with science, art, geography, history etc delivered to some degree outdoors. This proposal has the capacity to embrace this ethos.
- *The proposed “Gold Line – Knockanoran Trail”, as set out below at Page 16, has the capacity to link with the proposed River Erkina Blueway as described at Key Tourism Initiatives – Table 8.1: (7) Laois County Draft Development Plan 2021-2027*

## **Stakeholders:**

- Coillte Management.
- Durrow Tidy Towns.
- Durrow Community Council.
- Durrow Development Forum.
- Department of Agriculture.
- Department of the Environment.
- Department of Transport.
- Department of Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- Department of Social & Family Affairs.
- Elected Representatives.
- Irish Wildlife Trust.
- Local Community Employment Scheme.
- Laois County Council.
- Laois Partnership Ltd.
- Laois Sports Partnership.
- Laois Tourism.
- “Pedal Vintage” - Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme.
- “Sports Ireland” Trails

## **Statutory Information:**

### **Property:**

The proposed Community/Family Cycle Trail, will traverse woodland trails around Durrow, with access linkage provided by designated cycle lanes and secondary road network.

### **Ownership:**

The property as described, is in the ownership/management of Coillte and Laois County Council.

### **Planning Permission:**

No planning permission exists or has been sought, at this stage, for this project proposal.

### **Timescale:**

It is envisaged that the full schedule of works will be completed, to coincide with the proposed, "Durrow Outdoors" Festival - currently planned for the October Bank Holiday weekend, 2022.

It is proposed that the official launch of the Community/Family Cycle Hub, will be held at this event.

## Support:

The Government's recently published Action Plan for Rural Development "Realising our Rural Potential" highlights the potential of activity tourism as a vehicle for promoting economic growth in rural areas. *"Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas, by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking".*

<https://assets.gov.ie/2715/131118093828-a9da81a7a12b4f85aad3260c4f4bd80c.pdf>

The Draft "National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 Our Plan" highlights a need to create *"an attractive environment to encourage businesses and inward investment; more places for people to access nature, outdoor recreation, social interaction or physical activity by providing quality, linked green or 'blue' (water-related) spaces for walking, cycling and other physical activity and creating a sense of place and local distinctiveness."* <http://npf.ie/>

BIG GROWTH IN APPEAL OF CYCLING • 2018 - 2nd largest activity (after walking) • 450,000 overseas visitors participating in cycling while on holiday • Threefold increase since 2009 • Projected annual growth of 4% p.a. to 2028

(Cycling Tourism in Ireland – Orla Carroll Director of Product Development, Failte Ireland)

[https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/Carroll.O\\_Cycling\\_Tourism\\_in\\_Ireland.pdf](https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/Carroll.O_Cycling_Tourism_in_Ireland.pdf)

*"The aim of this Plan is 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".*

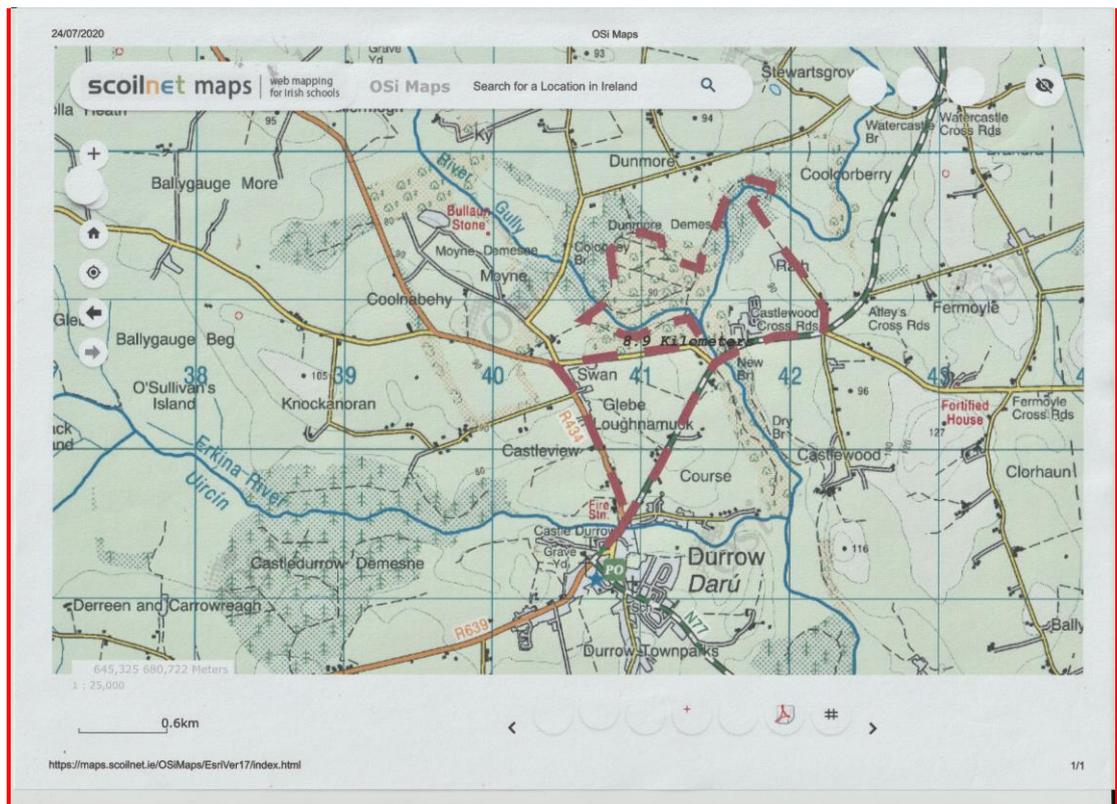
(Get Ireland Active! National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Mission Statement 2019)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland/>

# Red Line Trail

Community/Family Cycle Hub  
Red Line

## Rath/Dunmore Trail



*The Red Trail commences at The Square in Durrow and proceeds along the existing, Durrow/Abbeyleix cycle lane, to Castlewood Cross.*

*Turn left here, taking the L16501 Rath road.*

*Continue on this tarmac surface to reach the entrance to Coolcorberry Wood. Proceed along this forest access track (1) to the Nore River; crossing a bridge here (2) into Dunmore Wood. Proceed along the existing forest track (3) to exit at Dunmore Wood carpark.*

*Turn right here, cycling along the New Line road to the junction of the R434, Ballacolla Road. Turn left here to finish in Durrow.*

*(Total trail 8.9k approx.)*

## Scope of “Red Line Trail”

**Fig.1**

Provide new road (to Coillte engineering standards) to Coolcorberry Wood access road, to extend to the Nore riverbank. 0.35k approx. (Image below)



**Fig 2**

Provide new footbridge (at site of previous bridge) to link Coolcorberry Wood to Dunmore Wood. (Image below)



**Fig. 3**

Upgrade pathway (to Coillte engineering standards) to existing forest track, from Nore riverbank to Old Dunmore House site. 0.46k. approx (Image below)



4. Provide suitable woodland trail signage and all ancillary works.

# Blue Line Trail

Community/Family Cycle Hub  
Blue Line

## Capponellan Trail



### Proposed Trail:

*The proposed trail will begin at The Square in Durrow and proceed southwards along the old Cork Road, (R639) (1) to the forest entrance at Capponellan Wood. Continue on the main gravelled road through Capponellan Wood, to within 100 meters from its junction with the Ballagh Hill. Turn left here and proceed on an old disused and overgrown "Cart Tack" to the bottom of the Ballagh Hill, Cross the road here and continue on the aforementioned "Cart Track" to the Derry Wood. Continue on the Derry Wood track to its entrance at Tinweir. Turn left here and follow the Kilkenny/Ballyragget Road (N77) to the finish point in Durrow. (Trail Distance: 9k approx.)*

## Scope of “Blue Line Trail”

**Fig. 4.**

Provide dedicated cycle lane extending from Durrow outskirts to Capponellan Wood entrance. 2k approx. (Image below)



**Fig 5.**

Provide upgrade to existing Capponellan Wood track. 2.5k approx (Image below)

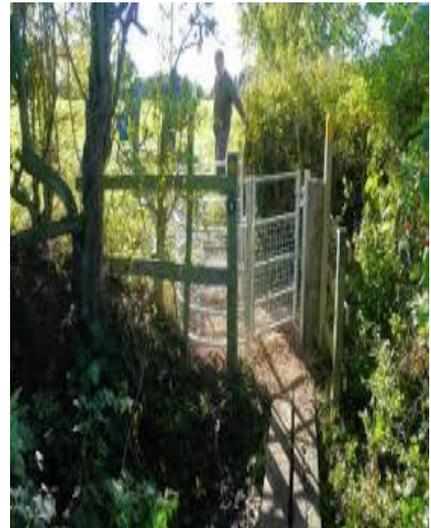


**Fig 6.**

Provide new roadway (to Coillte engineering standards) at “Old Cart Track” 550meters approx. (Image below)



**Fig.7.** Provide Greenway style “Kissing Gates” at junction of “Old Cart Track” and Ballagh Hill public road. (Image below)



**Fig 8.** Provide dedicated cycle lane on Ballyragget Road N77, extending from Derry Wood entrance to Barnhill. 1k approx. (Image below)

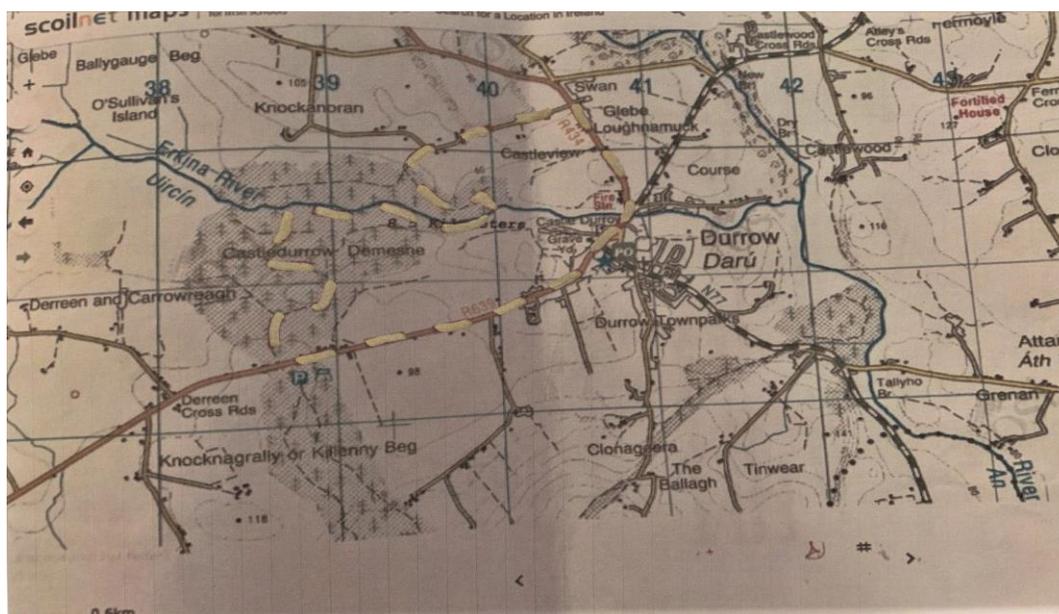


6. Provide suitable woodland and road signage, to include all ancillary works.

# Gold Line Trail

Community/Family Cycle Hub  
Gold Line

## Knockanoran Trail



*Similar to the other trails, this route will commence in the Square in Durrow, before proceeding along the R434, Ballacolla Road to Knockanoran Lane. Turning left here and cycling to Knockanoran Wood entrance. Proceed through the forest track before turning right on to a narrow pathway, leading to the existing steel bridge over the River Erkina. Traverse this bridge and turn right along the riverbank to the intersection with Bishops Wood. Turn left here and proceed through Bishopswood and adjoining farmland to the exit gate on the R639 Cork Road.  
(Trail distance: 8.5k approx.)*

## Scope of “Gold Line Trail”

**Fig.9.**

Provide a dedicated pathway extension, to existing infrastructure, to extend from The Harps GAA Club, (carpark entrance) to Knockanoran Lane. 600 meters approx. (Image below)



**Fig 10.**

Upgrade existing forest roadway (to Coillte engineering standards) in Knockanoran Wood 400 meters approx. (Image below)



**Fig 12.**

Provide new road build (to Coillte engineering standards) to trackway leading to existing steel bridge. 90 meters approx. (Image below)



**Fig 13.**

Provide road upgrade (to Coillte engineering standards) to selected areas at existing Bishopswood trail and extending to Cork Road gate exit.

(Image below)



5. Provide suitable woodland trail signage and all ancillary works.

## Costings:

A preliminary cost estimate for two of the major works involved in the delivery of this project is provided below. These costings are provided by experienced, registered contractors and based on their previous work, of this nature.

A more detailed costing for the project, as proposed, will be required when agreement is reached with relevant stakeholders and design decisions are complete.

1. Provide new bridge (at site of previous bridge crossing) spanning the River Nore from Coolcorberry Wood to Dunmore Wood, (Fig.2 Red Line Page 12)

**Oldtown Construction Company Ltd.**  
TELEPHONE: 057-8737221  
E-MAIL: oldtown@eircom.net  
VAT NO: 4511812B  
OLDTOWN, CULLOHILL  
PORTLAOISE, CO. LAOIS,  
R32 F86W

www.oldtownconstruction.ie

Mr Hugh Sheppard,  
Secretary Pedal Vintage,  
Durrow Community Bike hire scheme,  
25/02/2021  
By Email

Quotation

Dear Hugh,

Below is a rough estimate for the bridge deck and supporting pier reinforcement.  
All work to be re measured once a design is in place.

Pier reinforcement to both banks	€ 5,000
Bridge deck and side guarding	€15,000.
Outsourced engineering design fees	€ 4,000
Total	€ 24,000
Vat @ 13.5 %	€ 3,240
Total including Vat	€ 27,240.

Note: This is an outline budget price and may vary once a design is in place.  
Kind Regards,  
Kieran Mc Evoy

2. The provision of a new roadway at the "Old Cart Track" (Fig.6 Blue Line- Page 14)

FOGARTY FORMWORKS LTD.  
DEREEN  
DURROW  
CO.LAOIS

VAT NUMBER 3286977FH  
Contact :0879081435  
02/03/2020

QUOTATION  
Durrow community bike hire scheme.

CYCLE WAY  
1.8m wide by 550m long  
Dig topsoil off 250mm deep. Replace with 250mm 804 stone, plus 50mm fine dust. Compact and leave to a high standard for cycle track.  
€60 a running meter by 550 metres long.  
Subtotal €33000  
Vat 13.5 €4455

Total €37455.

If you have any queries please contact me  
Regards  
Mick Fogarty

## **Maintenance:**

The committee of “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme, recognise the importance of a proper and sustained maintenance programme to the success of any high-quality recreational facility. It is our intention to appoint a Trail Maintenance Officer to oversee a dedicated Trail Maintenance Plan for the Durrow Community/Family Cycle Hub. This plan will be set-out having due regard for the Sports Ireland Trails “Guidance Notes for Local Trail Monitors”.

Small day-to-day works will be carried out by the local Community Employment Scheme employees and will typically include the following tasks:

- Clear debris off tracks and clear back undergrowth.
- Pick litter and remove waste where dumped.
- Cut low hanging branches with handsaw.
- Surface dress trails where ponding or soft areas occur.

Where more substantial works are required, these will be carried out by local contractor, Fogarty Formworks, who have substantial experience in the maintenance and supply of walking and cycling trails.

## **Summary:**

The committee of “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme are aware of the many steps necessary, to bring this project to fruition. Included among these are; engagement and buy-in with relevant stakeholders, detailed costings and an appropriate assessment plan to comply with the relevant Biodiversity, Habitat, and Bird’s Directive.

The Durrow Community/Family Cycle Hub will traverse woodland trails, currently in the ownership of Coillte. The advancement of this project will require their permission and full conformity with their policy regulations.

The Durrow Community/Family Cycle Hub will traverse secondary roads in the local area. While one proposed trail is served by a designated cycle lane; N77 Durrow/Abbeyleix Road, the remaining, proposed roads; N77 Tinweir/Durrow Road, R639 Cork Road/Durrow Road and R434 Durrow/Ballacolla Road, have, in the main, sufficient layby accommodation to facilitate, suitably marked, cycle lanes. See (Fig.4 Blue Line Page 14) (Fig.8 Blue Line Page 15) (Fig.9 Gold Line Page 17)

## Conclusions:

“Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme believe that every family should have access to safe cycling connections within their own community.

One local study suggests that sixty-nine schoolchildren, in, just one Durrow hinterland, could be accommodated in their desire to cycle to school, should this proposal be adopted.

The recent announcement by Bank of Ireland, that the closure of the local branch was imminent, has left local people, stunned, perplexed and angry; at hierarchy disregard for a community, many of whom are working in a voluntary capacity, to regenerate the rural hinterland of Durrow, following the devastation of our business community, caused by successive Covid 19 lockdowns.

In light of the above, an announcement of the adoption and imminent development of this proposal, would act as a positive stimulus to local Durrow business, families and the wider community hinterland.

Therefore, given the undoubted benefits of our project proposal to the local community and its economy, the committee of “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme seek an accommodation of our proposal, as follows:

**Include - “The Designation of Durrow as a Community/Family Cycle Hub” as a Policy Objective for Activity Based Tourism, in Laois County Development Draft Plan 2021-2027.**

This can be achieved in line with the Laois County Council Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027 - following sections:

- 8.5 Tourism Sectors – 8.5.1 Policy Objectives for Tourism in Laois
- Table 8.1: Key Tourism Initiatives
- **“Table 8.1 TM8 – Policy Objectives for Tourism in Laois - Laois County Development Draft Plan 2021-2027”** *“Work in collaboration with Coillte, neighbouring local authorities, Failte Ireland, community organisations and other interested parties to develop new forest accommodation, with required ancillary facilities, access signage and trails for walking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding”.*
- **8.5.1 ABT 2** *“Support in principle and investigate the feasibility of, subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directive, developing and marketing off-road Slieve Bloom Mountain Biking Trail by Coillte, Mountmellick – Portlaoise – Abbeyleix Greenway and Durrow Green Network Cycle Trail in co-operation with relevant stakeholders including Durrow Development Forum”.*