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Further reading:

Manton, R., Hynes, S. and Clifford, E. (2016). Greenways as a tourism resource: A study of user spending and value. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 13 (4), 427 – 448.

Manton, R. (2016). Novel methods for the planning and design of greenways for cycling. PhD thesis, Department of Civil Engineering, NUI Galway.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) (2015). Galway/Roscommon Greenway landowner consultation report. Dublin: TII.

Cawley, M. (2010). Negotiating access to the countryside under restructuring in Ireland. *Geographical Perspectives on Sustainable Rural Change*, 78 – 89.

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Read More About: [The Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit \(SEMURU\)](#) and the [Centre for Environment, Development, and Sustainability \(CEDS\)](#) within the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change.

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Consultation and compensation may be required to ease farmers' concerns about Greenway land acquisition

There are ambitious plans for an extensive network of off-road walking and cycling routes, known as Greenways, across the island of Ireland. Research has shown that Greenways can bring wide-ranging benefits to rural communities, providing peaceful routes for school-children, recreationalists and tourists alike. Successful Greenways have opened in Mayo, Waterford and elsewhere, generally using State-owned lands such as disused railways or canal towpaths. However, public land is not always available for greenways and land acquisition (usually agricultural) will be required to maintain off-road standards on priority routes.

Farming organisations have expressed concerns about Greenway land acquisition, particularly regarding the use of compulsory purchase orders and the lack of consultation on routing. Consequently, progress has stalled on several key greenway routes and an information vacuum has exacerbated the impasse. This research examined farmers' concerns about greenway land acquisition by analysing results of supplementary questions to the Teagasc National Farm Survey 2016, drawn from a sample of 596 statistically-representative Irish farmers. A spike willingness-to-accept model was used to estimate the average compensation required by farmers to allow a Greenway to cross their land.

Research Findings

1. Farmers are split on the issue of land acquisition for Greenways: 55% would not allow a Greenway to cross their land, irrespective of compensation; 35% would only consider a route given adequate compensation; a remaining 10% would allow Greenway development without compensation.
2. Farmers' main concern about a greenway running through their farm is a potential increase in public liability insurance (this was noted by 35% of respondents). Their second most pressing concern is the potential impact on farming operations (29%). Concerns relating to nuisance and crime were highlighted by much fewer farmers (15% and 14%, respectively).
3. The average compensation a farmer would accept is €67 per metre length of Greenway crossing their land. This compensation was specified as an upfront lump sum for a 4-metre-wide Greenway to be permanently fenced off and maintained by the local authority.

Policy Implications

While many farmers are opposed to allowing Greenways cross their lands, willingness to participate could be increased by alleviating their major concerns. For example, insurance concerns could be resolved by guaranteeing farmers that local authorities' public liability insurance will cover greenway users. Concerns about farm operations (particularly severance) are more complex and should encourage authorities to undertake extensive consultation with affected landowners during early stages of planning; compulsory purchase should be seen as a last resort. Adequate funding must be set aside to compensate farmers for Greenway land and disruption to farm operations. Typical Greenway construction costs of €100,000/km are estimated to rise by two-thirds where agricultural land acquisition is required. These implications should be considered in the forthcoming 'Strategy for the Future Development of Greenways' which will guide investment in a nationwide network of Greenways.