

**PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL – COOTES LANE TO
RING ROAD PEDESTRIAN/CYCLIST SCHEME, KILKENNY CITY**



**Report Prepared for
Kilkenny County Council**

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1. INTRODUCTION

I was contracted by Kilkenny County Council to prepare a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report for the site of a proposed new shared pedestrian/cyclist facility between Cootes Lane and the N77 Ring Road in Kilkenny City. The proposed scheme will necessitate the construction of a new bridge structure over the Breagh River, with a span of approximately 16m.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is a scoping/constraint assessment that is usually carried out at the early stages of a proposed development. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is a common element of such a report, with habitats classified according to Fossitt (2000).

2. DESKTOP STUDY OF PROPOSED SITE

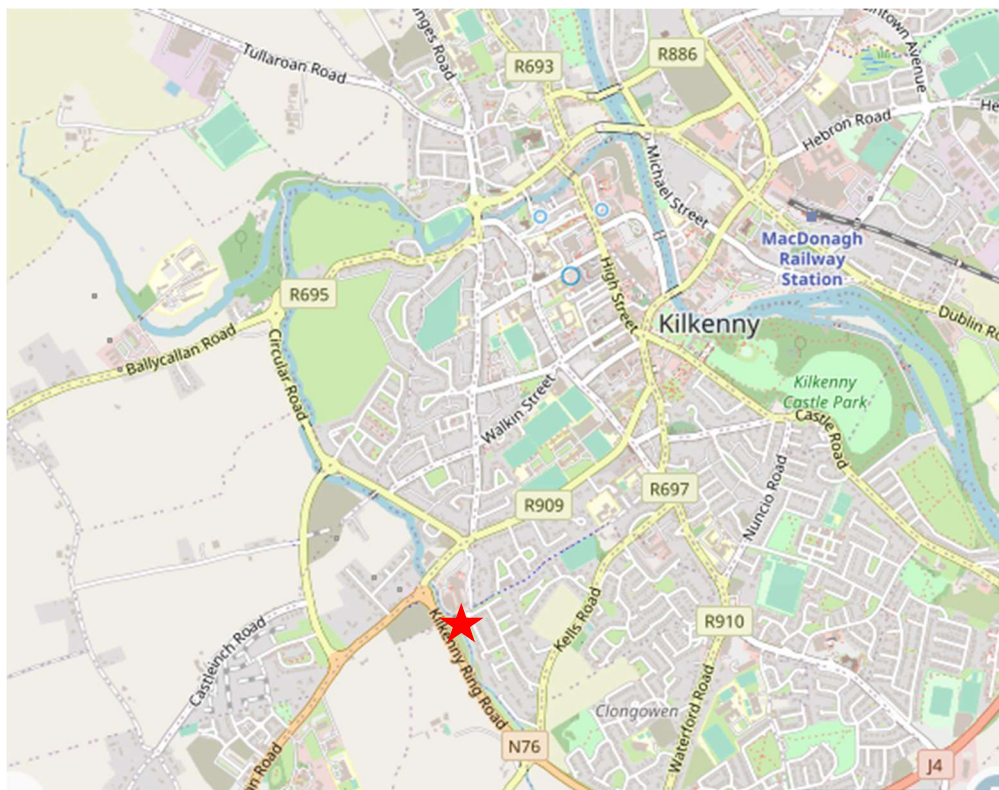


Figure 1 - showing location of proposed footbridge crossing the Breagh River on Cootes Lane

The proposed footbridge will be located on Cootes Lane where it crosses the Breagh River on the south western side of Kilkenny City. The Breagh River flows in a north westerly direction under Cootes Lane and then swings east to join the River Nore at Abbey Quarter in the centre of Kilkenny city. The confluence of the Breagh River with the River Nore lies approximately 2.5 km downstream of the proposed site for the footbridge.

The Breagh River itself is not a Protected Site but it is a tributary of the River Nore. At the confluence the River Nore is both a Special Area of Conservation (River Barrow and River Nore SAC – Site code 002162) and a Special Protection Area (River Nore SPA 004233).

A search of National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) maps reveals that this section of the Breagagh River is within the distribution range for otters *Lutra lutra*. There are no records of Freshwater Caryfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* from the Breagagh River but they do occur in the River Nore downstream of the confluence. There are no records of Freshwater pearl mussels *Margaritifera margaritifera* from the Breagagh River but they do occur in the River Nore, well upstream of the confluence.

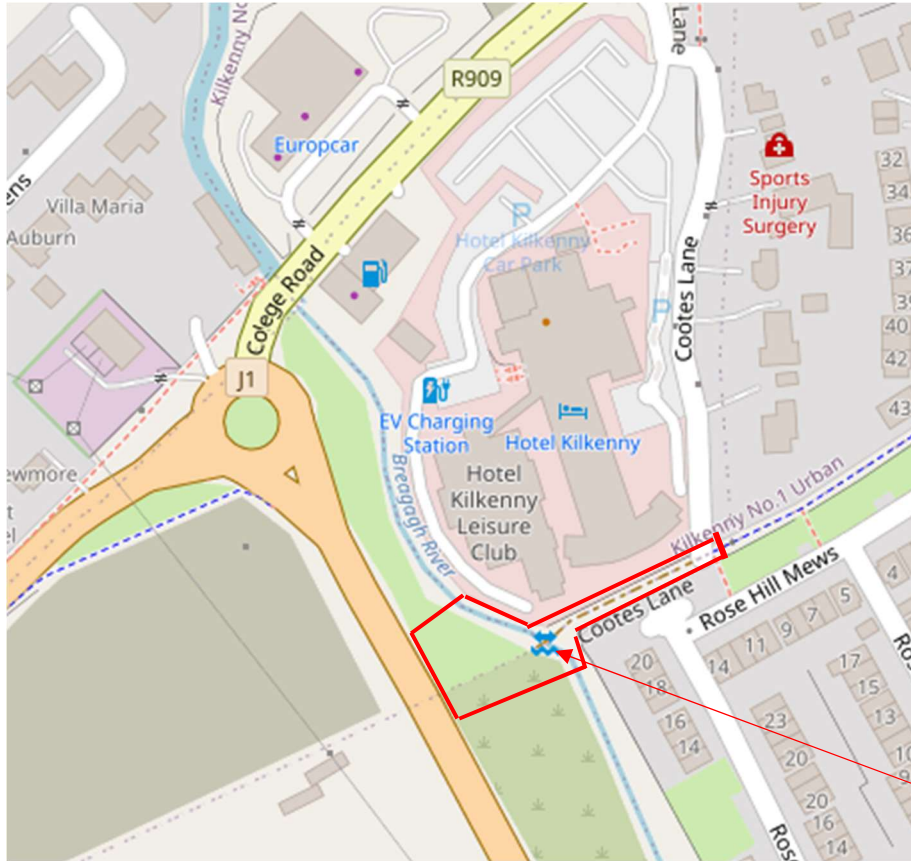


Figure 2 – showing extent of Cootes Lane and surrounding area covered by survey, (c.100m in length). The existing ford crossing of the Breagagh River is indicated

A search of the Bat Conservation Ireland database was conducted to investigate records of any known bat roosts in the vicinity. None were recorded.

3. SITE VISIT

A site visit was conducted on 28th September 2022 to conduct a habitat survey and to identify any possible constraints on site.

The route runs to the rear (south) of Hotel Kilkenny. There is an existing old ford on Cootes Lane (also known as Quarry Lane). Cootes Lane formerly led to a house which has now fallen down and is cut off from the rest of the lane by the N77 Ring Road.

The survey commenced at the eastern end of Cootes Lane and progressed in a westerly direction towards the N77 ring road.



Figure 3 – aerial photo of survey site at Cootes Lane. The original crossing of the Breagh River is indicated and an outline of the path of the Breagh River. The treelines along Cootes Lane and along banks of the Breagh are obvious in this photo.

4. PHOTOS OF SITE AND NOTES ON HABITAT



Photo 1 – easternmost point on Cootes Lane running behind (south of Hotel Kilkeny). Mature beech tree with some roosting potential for bats in garden of Hotel Kilkeny. Stone walls on both sides of track were surveyed and considered to have no potential for bats.

Habitats present – BL1 (Stone walls & other stonework), WL2 (Treelines)



Photo 2 – high stone wall to rear of Hotel Kilkeny running along northern boundary of lane is very well pointed and has no potential for roosting bats. Ash and beech trees on southern lane edge growing on earthen bank.

Habitats present – BL1 (Stone walls & other stone work), WL2 (Treelines), BL2 (Earth banks)



Photo 3 – high stone wall to rear of Hotel Kilkenny running along northern boundary of lane is very well pointed and has no potential for roosting bats

Habitats present – BL1 (Stone walls & other stonework), WL2 (Treelines), BL2 (Earth banks)



Photo 4 – Cootes Lane to east of existing ford on Cootes Lane with sycamore trees either side of lane

Habitats present – BL1 (stone walls & other stone work), WL2 treelines



Photo 5 – upstream (southern) elevation of former bridge structure on Cootes Lane
Habitats present – BL3 (Buildings and artificial surfaces) – concrete wall of ford



Photo 6 – Breagh River upstream of old ford. Water was not flowing under ford on date of survey
Habitats present - FW2 (Depositing lowland river), WL2 (Treelines)



Photo 7 – southern elevation of old ford on Cootes Lane



Photo 8 – northern (downstream) elevation of old ford – this structure was surveyed as assessed as having no potential as a bat roosting site



Photo 9 – fissures in wall on northern side of old ford – no potential for bats
Habitats present – BL1 (Stonewalls and other stonework)



Photo 10 – Concrete structure inspected and assessed as having no potential for roosting bats
Habitats present - BL3 (Buildings and artificial surfaces)



Photo 11 – stone embankment downstream of ford was searched for signs of otters. None were recorded.



Photo 12 – Breagh River downstream of ford. This section of the river was searched for signs of otters – none were recorded.

Habitats present – FW2 (Depositing lowland rivers), WL2 (Treelines)



Photo 13 – Breagagh River upstream of ford with animal trail – most likely otter - running along eastern river bank

Habitats present – FW2 (Depositing low land rivers), WL2 (Treelines)



Photo 14 – Breagagh River upstream of ford

Habitats present – FW2 (Depositing low land rivers), WL2 (Treelines)



Photo 15 – lane between ford and ring road with mature lime trees either side of lane
Habitats present – WL2 (Treelines) and WS1 (Scrub)



Photo 16 – point where Cootes Lane meets N77 ring road south of Callan Road Roundabout
Habitats present – BL3 (Buildings & Artificial surfaces)



Photo 17 – green amenity area to north of Cootes Lane adjacent to N77 ring Road. Mature sycamores and stand of brambles

Habitats Present – GA2 (Amenity grassland), WL2 (Treelines)



Photo 18 – looking east from amenity area towards Breagagh River

Habitats present – WL2 (Treelines) WS1 (Scrub)

5. CONSTRAINTS

No invasive plant species were recorded on site during the present survey. No signs of badgers were recorded on site. An animal trail (most likely otter) was recorded on the eastern bank of the Breagagh River upstream of the ford. Otters will not be adversely affected in the

long term by the proposed pedestrian/cyclist facility. There may be some temporary disturbance during the construction of the new bridge.