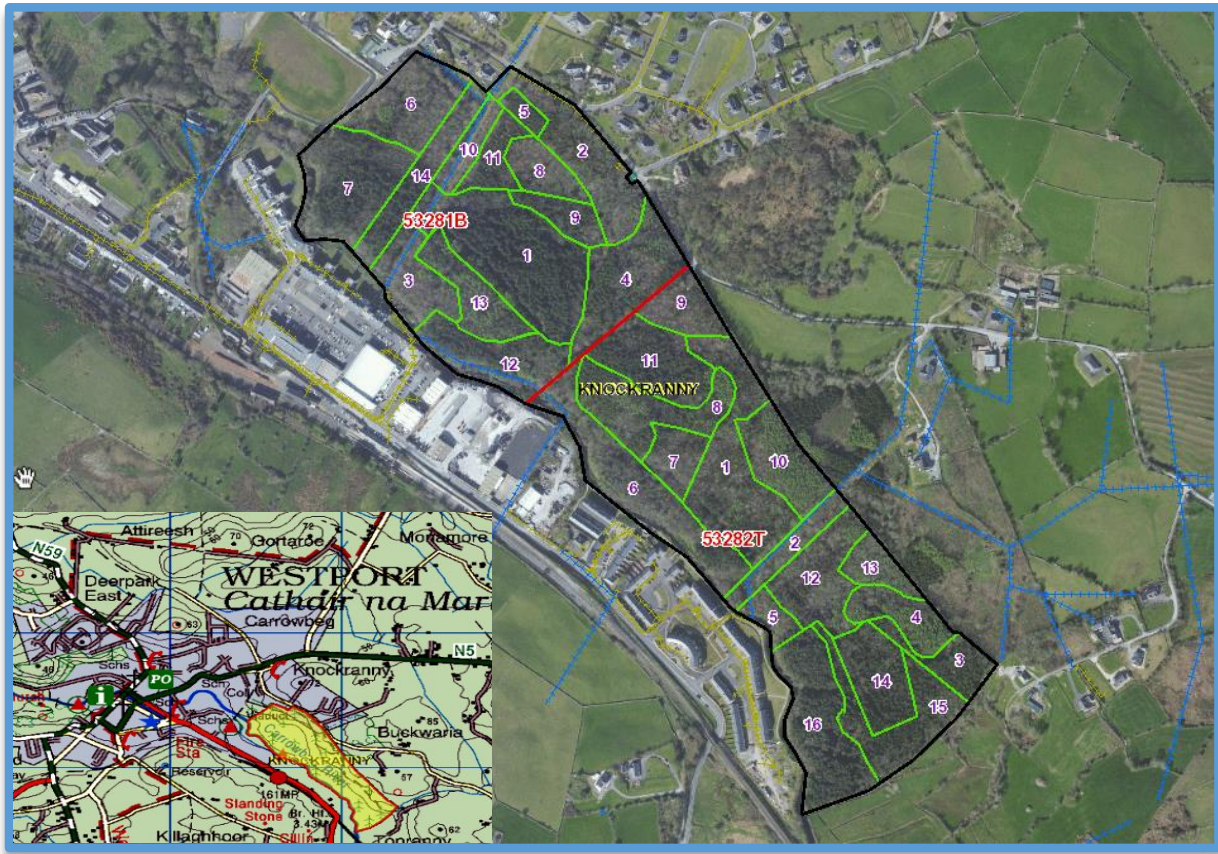


**Draft Proposal**

# Knockranny – Colonels wood

## NeighbourWood Plan



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April, 2019

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## **1.0 Executive summary**

This paper outlines the proposed recreational development and silvicultural enhancement of Knockranny woods under the NeighbourWood (NBR) Scheme, for the period 2019 to 2024. This is a Coillte initiative that will be done in partnership with Mayo County Council and the local community. Knockranny wood is situated in the town of Westport and covers an area of 27.5 ha. All of Knockranny wood is designated as “Old woodland” by Coillte, which defines the property as a unique area, where old woodland cover has existed since at least the 1830’s A.D. Originally Knockranny would have contained mainly native species, however, in the mid 1960’s, exotic conifers were introduced to the woods, with a mix of species containing spruces and hemlock. Today, the importance of the “Old woodland” designation is fully appreciated. This plan begins the process of removing the exotic conifers from this property and reintroducing native species, returning the woods to a more natural native broadleaf woodland.

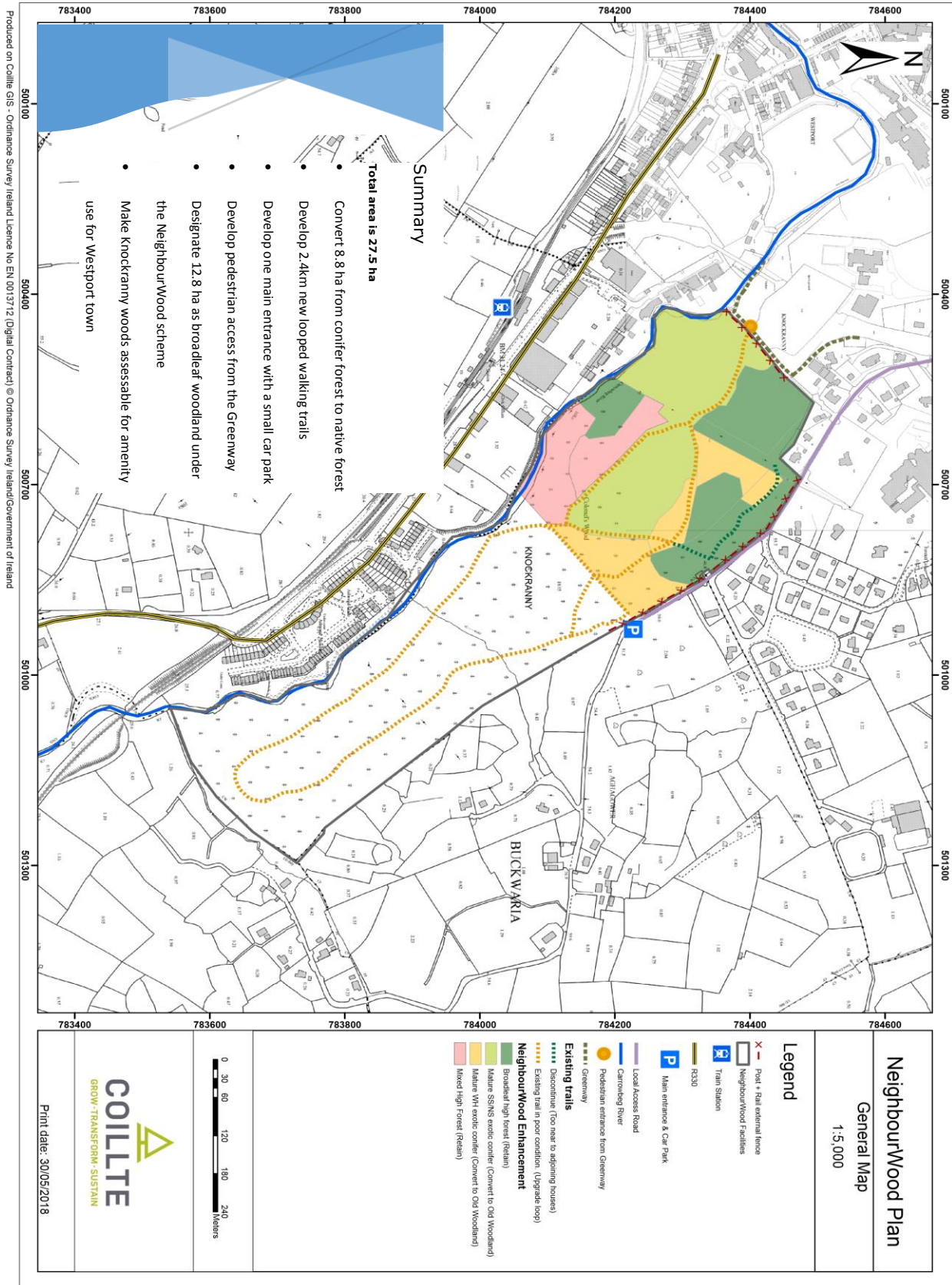
The proximity of this wood to Westport town and its direct connection with the Greenway make this an ideal candidate for recreational development under the NeighbourWood scheme. Under this scheme, Coillte in association with its partners, Mayo County Council, the Knockranny residents association and with support from local businesses, will work together to deliver the following developments in the Knockranny forest property:

- Make Knockranny woods assessable for amenity use for Westport town;
- Convert 8.8 ha from conifer forest to native woodland;
- Designate 12.8 ha of broadleaf woodland under the NeighbourWood scheme;
- Develop 2.4km new looped walking trails within the 27.5 ha property;
- Develop one dedicated entrance to include a small car park;
- Develop a pedestrian access link to facilitate access from the adjoining Greenway.



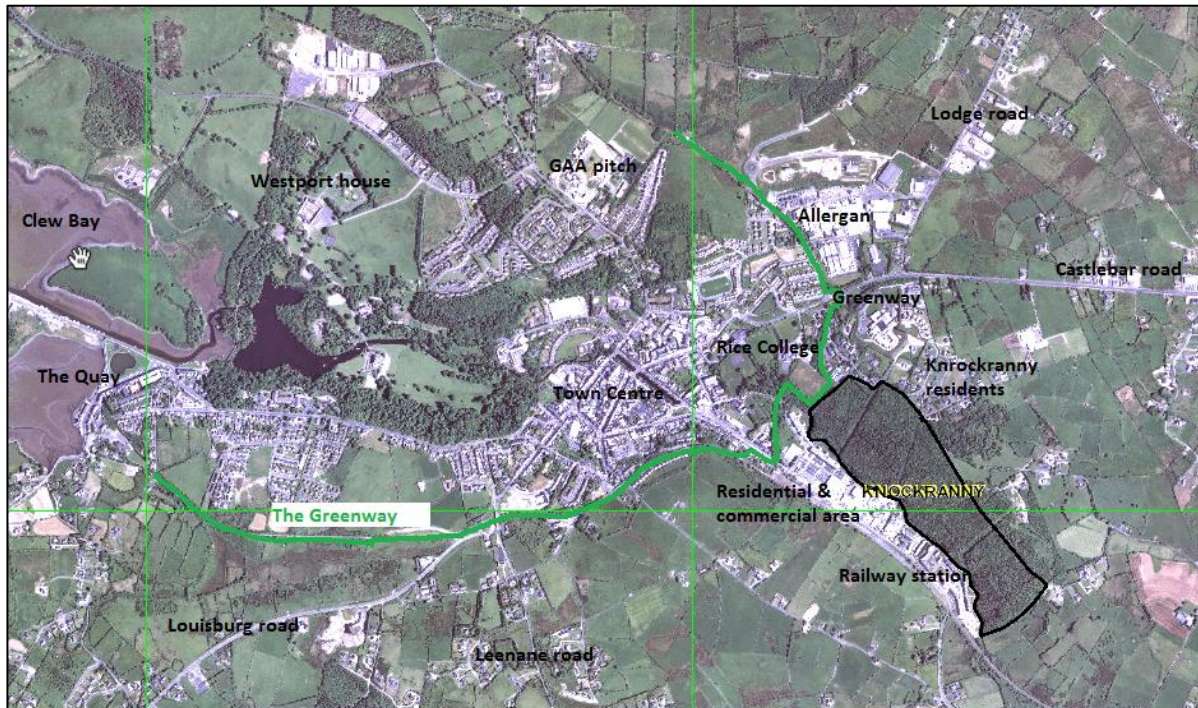
## 2.0 Summary of the plan on one map

This map shows the NeighbourWood plan for Knockranny on one map.



### 3.0 The vision for Knockranny (Colonels wood)

Knockranny, known locally as Colonels wood, will be developed as a ‘NeighbourWood’, which is defined as an accessible, close-to-home woodland amenity, developed in partnership with local people and other interested groups, for public use and enjoyment. The restoration of the property to a native forest will be silviculturally and ecologically significant. Currently, this wood is not utilised for recreation, due mainly to the lack of recreation facilities and limited access. The vision for this wood is to make it assessable as a NeighbourWood, for use by people of all ages and abilities on a regular basis, for strolling, family visits and picnics, walking-the-dog, ‘power-walking’, jogging, and a host of other outdoor activities. In all cases, what makes a woodland a ‘NeighbourWood’ is how it is perceived by local people, and following this development it is expected that the people of Westport will take ownership and pride in the new woodland facility right on their doorstep. Due to its proximity to Westport and its link with the Greenway, opening up Knockranny to the general public will prove to be a welcome additional tourist attraction, that has the potential to become an integral part of the sustainable planning and development of Westport.

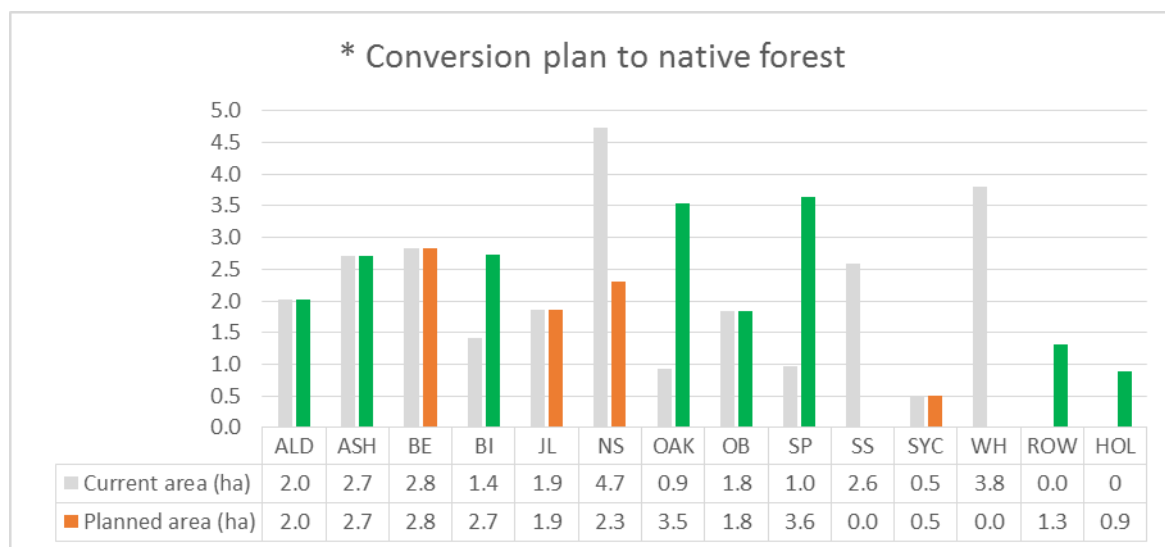


## 4.0 Environmental considerations

The main environmental consideration for Knockranny is its classification as an “Old Woodland” or ancient woodland. Thousands of years ago, Ireland, was largely covered with native forests, which had their own characteristic biodiversity. Over time these native forests were lost through woodland clearance for agriculture and timber. By the 1600’s A.D only 3% of Ireland was wooded and by the early 1900’s, only 1% of these native woods remained. The decline continued in the 20th century, where many of the remaining 1% of native woods were converted to more productive exotic forest crops. Today, the percentage cover of native woodland in Ireland is only 1.8%. To assist in the restoration of these old woodlands, Coillte developed a methodology to identify all areas owned by the state, where there is an old woodland history. By cross referencing historic 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey maps (1833-1844 A.D.), Coillte identified areas where the woodland history remained unbroken as far back as the 1800’s. These OWS represent a link back to the natural forests of thousands of years ago and are recognised as important reservoirs for natural forest biodiversity that are to be treasured.

The history of Knockranny woods follows a similar pattern. The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey maps in the 1800s show a wooded Knockranny woods, most likely all broadleaves with some Scots Pine, which remained unbroken in subsequent ordinance surveys. However, in the mid 1960’s, under state management, 54% of the property was planted with exotic species, with mostly spruce and hemlock. These species are now at maturity and the decision on the species selection for the next generation is imminent. As Knockranny contains a relatively high percentage of broadleaf cover today (46% of the property), it is likely that many of the characteristics associated with Old Woodland could be restored. It is expected, that the flora and fauna associated with our ancient natural forests, will have survived in the existing broadleaf areas within Knockranny. These areas are important reservoirs of natural biodiversity that are expected to colonise into the areas where the native trees will be replanted. In this plan, the NeighbourWood enhancement will result in an increase in the broadleaf cover in Knockranny from 46% to 80% (Figure 1).





\*The areas in green are native tree species  
 (ALD = Alder, ASH = Ash, BE = Beech, JL = Japanese larch, NS = Norway spruce, OAK = Oak, SP = Scots pine, SS = Sitka spruce, SYC = Sycamore, WH = Western hemlock, ROW = Rowan, HOL = Holly)

**Figure 1: The current and planned changes in tree species where the native species cover will increase from the current 46% to 80% following thos NeighbourWood scheme.**

Apart from the Old Woodland status, Knockranny is not particularly environmentally sensitive, which makes it ideal for development for recreation use. There are no statutory designations on site (SAC, NPA, SPA, pNHA). The soil types are robust fertile brown earths/podzols (90%) and alluviums (10%). The site itself is bordered by the Carrowbeg river, which is an order 4 catchment, 7.8. km2 in size (IE\_WE\_32\_4312), that is classified as “not at risk” under the Water framework directive. In terms of cultural heritage, the property has no archaeological monuments and there is no internal ordinance survey detail, such as stone walls or ditches present. *(The entire forest property is enclosure free, which is further evidence of the pedigree of the undisturbed woodland history for Colonels wood).* It is noteworthy, that the only ordinance detail present is on the external boundaries, where the external ditches serve as townland boundaries. In conclusion, there are no environmental impediments to the development of Knockranny property for recreational development.

## 5.0 The NeighbourWood plan

The NeighbourWood (NBR) plan is outlined in detail in the Form 1 application and a summary of this plan is detailed here. The NeighbourWood plan for Knockranny involves 2 elements:

1. NBR Enhancement;
2. NBR Facilities.

### 1. NBR Enhancement

A total of 12.8 ha will be designated for silvicultural enhancement. The element involves the silviculturally enhancement of the existing woodland, where 8.8 ha of exotic conifers will be removed and native species will be established. Before any operations begin, robust silt tarps will be constructed, on the relevant watercourses on site, as a means to manage siltation. These silt traps will be maintained during operations and removed once the crop is deemed to be free growing. The exotics will be removed using conventional forestry machines and following suitable site cultivation (scrap mounding) the site will be pit planted with native species at 2,500 stems per ha where possible. The native tree species to be planted will include sessile oak (30%) in predominately pure groups, with downy birch (3%), holly (2%) and rowan (2%) scattered intimately throughout the oak. Scots pine (30%) will be planted in smaller scattered groups, away from watercourses on the more free draining portions of the site. the remaining rowan (13%), downy birch (12%) and holly (8%) will be planted as an intimate mixture in the remaining areas of the site. The site will not be fenced as trespass is not an issue on site. The oak saplings used will be the largest possible (grade 1) and if required these will be dipped in the nursery prior to planting as a weevil control measure. The need for any weevil spraying will be dynamically assessed using stump hacking, where the chemical weevil control requirement can be minimised. The control of invasive species such as Laurel and Rhododendron will be conducted. At present, there is no significant issue with invasive species but this is expected to increase once the conversion plan from exotics to oak commenced. One application of GRP fertiliser will be applied at 250 kg/ha post planting. The site will be monitored for weevil attacks and stump hacking will be carried out if required to estimate potential weevil infestations. Filling-in with suitable sized oak saplings will occur in year 2 and 3 as required. There will be no chemical vegetation management on site. All vegetation management will be conducted manually until the crop is deemed to be free growing. This is expected to be required for a number of years owing to the slow growing nature of native trees.



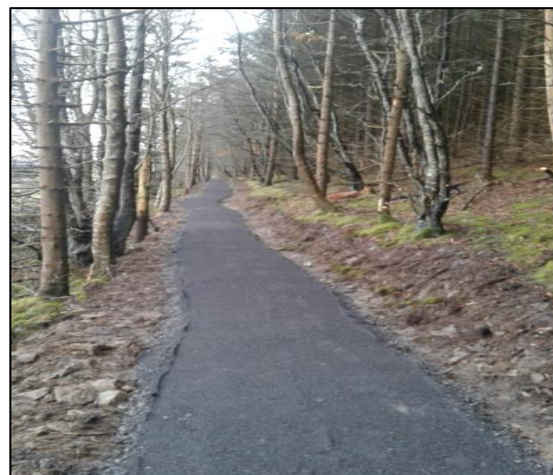
## 2. NBR facilities

The NeighbourWood (NBR) facilities to be developed are as follows:

- a) Develop 2.4km new walking trails;
- b) Develop a dedicated entrance and car park;
- c) Develop a pedestrian access link to the Greenway.

### a) Develop 2.4km new walking trails

A total of 2.4 km of new walking trails are planned to loop around the entire forest property. The location of these trails will be along the existing tracks that will be upgraded and resurfaced to a high standard, as shown in the attached picture. There will be two looped walks, a short loop walk and a longer loop walk. A small spur extension will be needed to connect these looped walks with the Greenway.



*Proposed walking trail standard*

### b) Develop a dedicated entrance and car park

Access to the property will be via one dedicated entrance, which will be located on the northern end of the property at the existing forestry entrance. All other entrances will be closed off using decorative post and rail. The dedicated entrance will be the starting point for the looped walks. A tarmacadam car park for up to 10 cars will be provided, with at least one disabled parking space included. The entrance will contain a security barrier and fenced off with a post and rail fence. Threshold signage in keeping with the forest environment will be erected.

**c) Develop a pedestrian access link to the Greenway**

The unique location of Knockranny woods, adjoining the Greenway, affords the opportunity to create new pedestrian access from the Greenway directly into the woods. Given its location, only pedestrian access is recommended. It will be necessary to upgrade a small walking trail spur to link up with the looped walks, thus allowing users of the Greenway to have full access to Knockranny woods. The entrance off the Greenway is to be discreet and contain a simple swing gate for pedestrian access, with its position denoted by a small threshold sign.



**Appendix 1: Completed Form 1 Application form**

**Appendix 2: Proof of ownership**

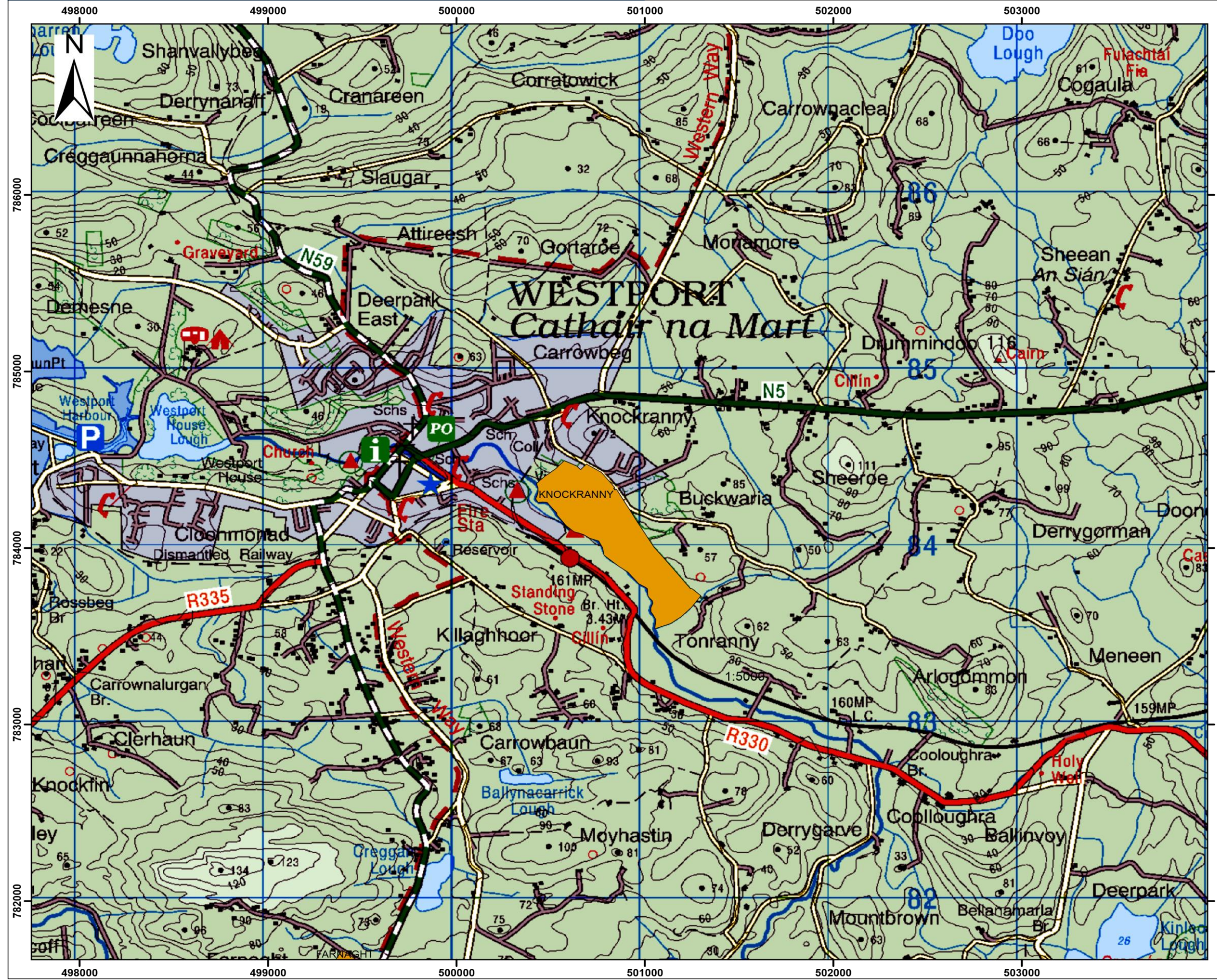
**Appendix 3: Letters of support**

### Appendix 4: Maps

This appendix contains the following maps:

Site Location Map	✓
NeighbourWood Plan (including fencing plan)	✓
Species Map	✓
Biodiversity Map	✓
Aerial map	✓





**NeighbourWood Plan**

General Map  
1:20,000

**Legend**

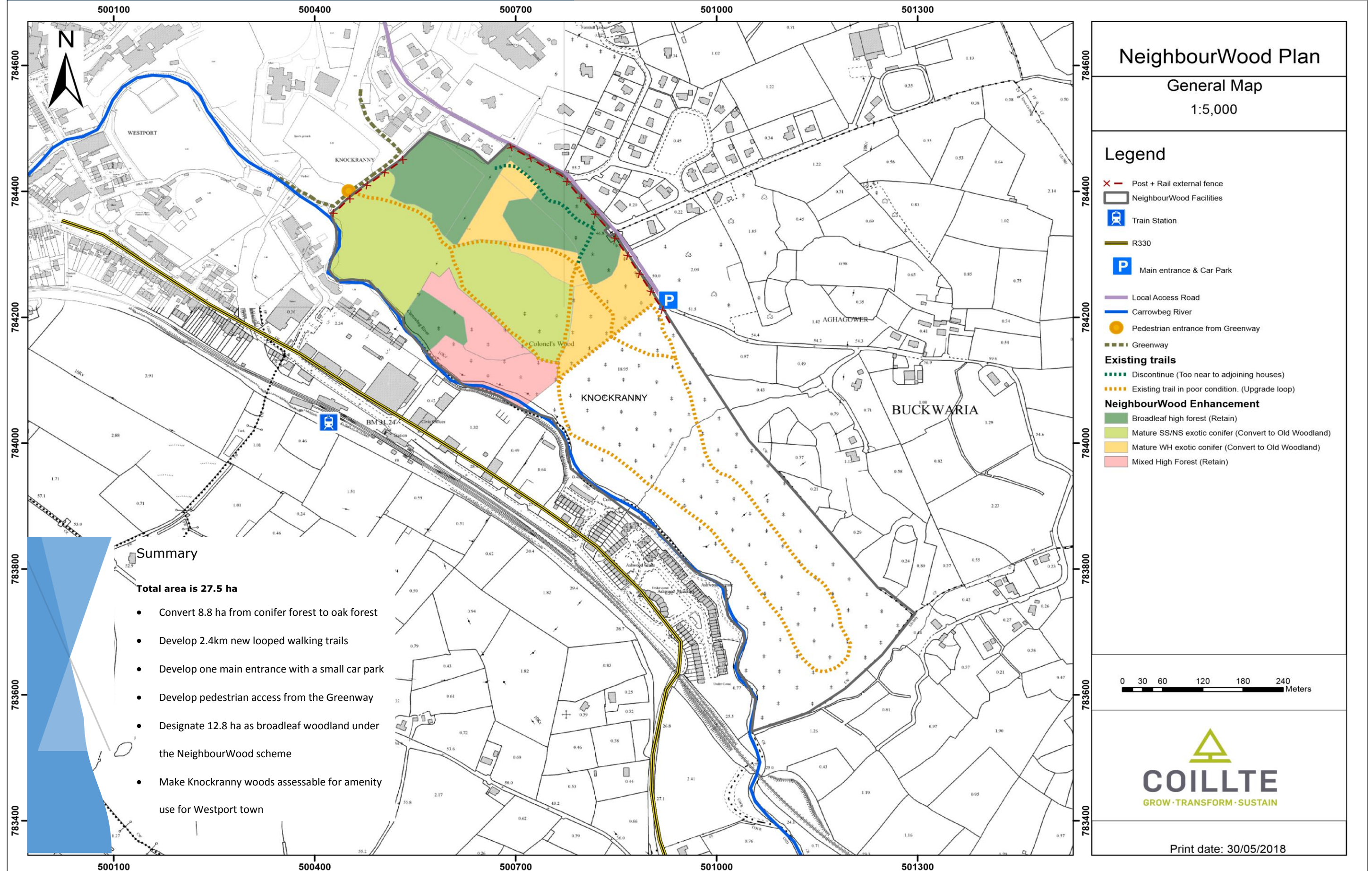
- Knockranny

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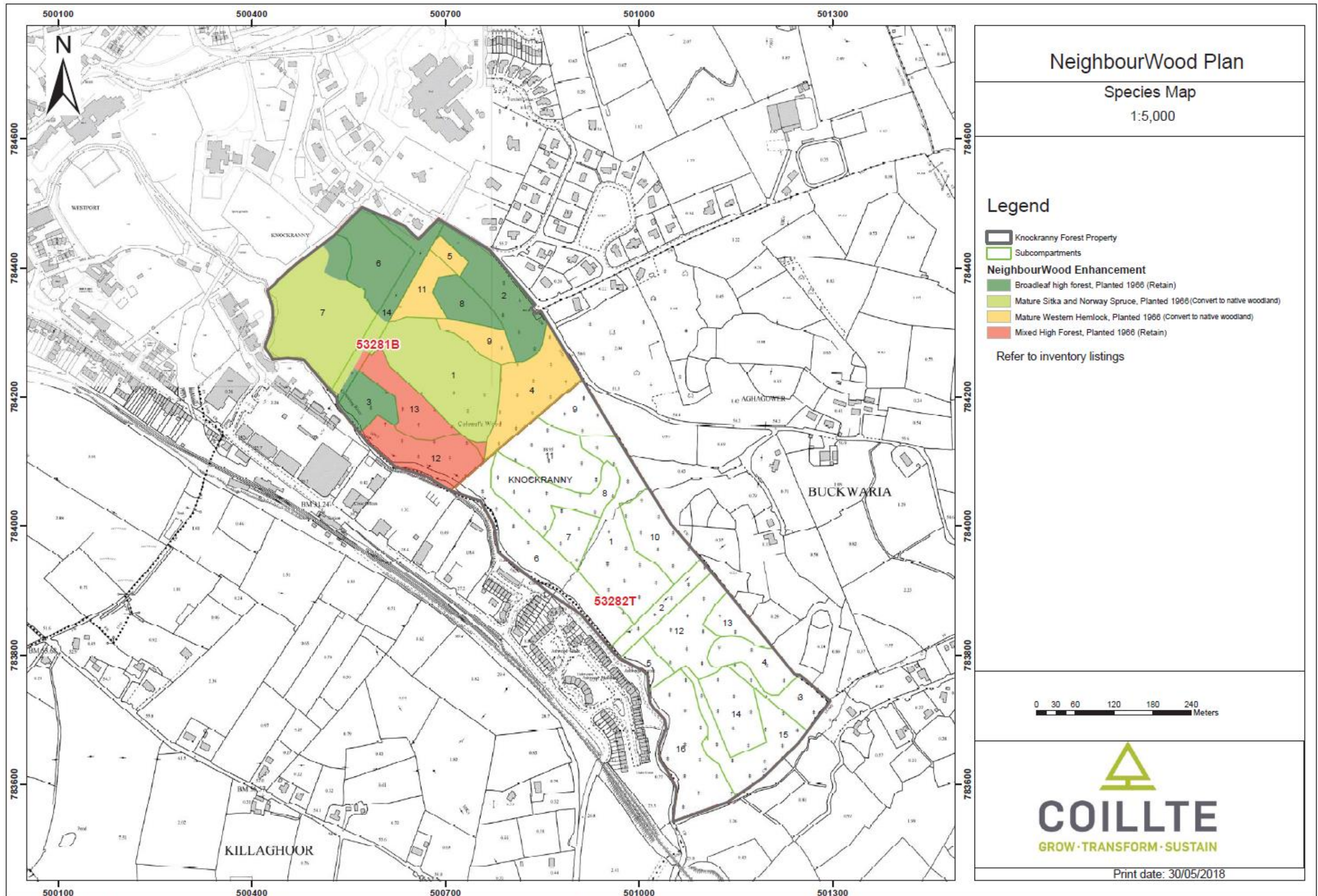
**COILLTE**  
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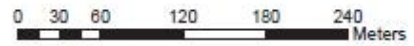
# NeighbourWood Plan

Species Map  
1:5,000

## Legend

- Knockranny Forest Property
- Subcompartments
- NeighbourWood Enhancement**
  - Broadleaf high forest, Planted 1966 (Retain)
  - Mature Sitka and Norway Spruce, Planted 1966 (Convert to native woodland)
  - Mature Western Hemlock, Planted 1966 (Convert to native woodland)
  - Mixed High Forest, Planted 1966 (Retain)

Refer to inventory listings



Print date: 30/05/2018



