



Maynooth Cycling,
Maynooth

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Submission on Royal Canal Greenway (Confey to Maynooth)

Maynooth Cycling welcomes the proposal for the development of a Greenway along the Royal canal from Maynooth to the Dublin County border. Together with the Greenway west of Maynooth, currently under development, this will be a huge boost to active and sustainable transport in our area. Since it will allow people of all ages to cycle safely and conveniently between Maynooth and Leixlip, it has the potential to offer a real alternative to the car, leading to improved public health and reduced congestion and pollution.

The Greenway will be part of the Dublin to Galway national cycle route, which in turn is part of the EuroVelo 2 Galway to Moscow route. It will attract significant numbers of tourists to North Kildare towns, giving a welcome boost to the local economy.

We are nonetheless concerned that the proposed scheme is not of an adequate standard to fully capitalise on these potential benefits. In particular, the proposal to finish much of the route in dust, rather than black-top tarmac, will deter its use by commuters. Many residents of Maynooth and Leixlip commute to work, between the towns themselves and toward the city. A largely off road, sealed-surface, cycle track will encourage cycle use among these commuters. A dust surface can be appropriate for a pure leisure facility with limited range. However, for commuters and those travelling more than a few kilometres a dust surface which creates dirt, puddles and potholes is wholly unsuitable. Additionally, as noted by *Sustrans* in their documents, *Cycle Path Surfacing Options*, unbound surfaces are at least 50% more expensive than bound surfaces to lay and maintain.

The grass verge will limit the ingress of some dust into the canal, but it will not prevent dust being carried by the wind into the water. The environmental report does not provide consideration of dust movement into the water.

Recommendation 1: *A bound surface should be provided along the length of the proposed greenway to facilitate the large number of commuters potentially using this route. At a minimum a bound surface should be provided between the towns of Maynooth & Leixlip.*

The proposed width of the Greenway is 3 metres. We consider this to be inadequate for safety and comfort of both cyclists and pedestrians; 4 metres is more appropriate. The NRA Rural Cycling Design Standards document TD300/14 specifies 3 metres as the MINIMUM standard for a shared low-volume facility. Given its route through the most densely populated area of the country, high volumes should be expected.

Whilst the available corridor is narrow as some points along its length, additional land could be compulsory purchased to ensure adequate width. Where the removal of vegetation would be necessary to construct a 4 metre wide track, additional land acquired could be planted with native species and, when it matures sufficiently, existing vegetation removed to widen the track to 4 metres.

Recommendation 2: *A 4 metre wide track should be provided along the length of the greenway.*

The proposed scheme does not set out any objectives in terms of modal shift or number of users. In order to properly assess the scheme, its projected contribution to the government target of 10% of commuters using bikes should be considered. In this context a cost benefit of analysis of dust versus sealed surface and 3 metre versus 4 metre width should be carried out.

Recommendation 3: *Further consideration should be given to the design of the scheme in terms of government objectives for commuter modal shift.*

The default position of the proposed access controls at Straffan Road and Deey Bridge may create an obstacle to tourists and leisure cyclists with large panniers or child trailers. We appreciate that these are a considerable improvement on the barriers currently on the Grand Canal between Adamstown and Inchicore, but question the need for such restrictive barriers.

Recommendation 4: *Bollards to be used instead of access gates at all access points.*

Yours faithfully,

Secretary