



## **Maynooth Cycling – Submission on County Development Plan 2017-2022**

Maynooth Cycling welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the framing of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023. Most of our comments relate to transport policy and planning issues related to transport, in particular the need to reduce car dependence and improve conditions for cycling and walking in the county.

Shifting people from cars to walking and cycling has numerous benefits, including: improved health due to higher levels of physical activity; reduced air pollution, in particular carcinogenic particulates from diesel fumes; more pleasant and attractive neighbourhoods and town centres; reduced congestion; reduced greenhouse gas emissions; and fewer deaths and injuries on our roads.

There is ample scope for such a shift: a large proportion, estimated at 50%, of trips are less than 5km in length, which can very easily be walked or cycled. With appropriate traffic management and infrastructure, ordinary bicycles are a viable means of commuting for distances up to at least 10km, and combined with public transport or the increased use of eBikes, commuting distances can be extended. Most people in the county live within cycling distance from public transport services.

Faced with the challenges presented by internet shopping, we believe that our towns must be welcoming and pleasant places where people will want to spend time. High levels of motorised traffic, in particular through traffic, are inimical to this. National and international experience shows that local businesses thrive when motorised through traffic is removed from or strongly restricted in town centres. The need to reduce through traffic is especially urgent in the case of Maynooth. A strategy for making town centres traffic free or almost traffic free should be developed. On the other hand, there is overwhelming evidence that building more roads to facilitate car use over short distances never solves congestion problems.

The National Cycling Policy Framework (NCPF) has set a target of 10% commuting by bicycle by 2020. For Kildare, this must imply a big increase on the current proportion of 1-2%. No town in Kildare has

more than 2.2% bicycle commuting to work according to Census 2011. We believe the County should set target levels for walking and cycling in the county and larger towns in particular for travel to educational establishments and workplaces. Progress on achieving these targets must be measured annually and the results reported to councillors and disseminated to the wider public.

We encourage the council to commit to the Department of Transport's Smarter Travel policy. We ask why no towns in Kildare were selected for consideration as an 'Active Travel' Town? We would ask that the new development plan looks to bring, at the very least, the same funding to the towns of Kildare for local cycling and walking strategies by 2023.

Two important measures which would follow from this are:

- Develop a cycle skills programme both for schools and for adults who either have previously not cycled or who are returning to cycling, and
- Introduce 30km/h speed limits as a general rule in town centres as well as residential areas.

On a general level, funding for active transport should be commensurate with the target levels for these modes of transport. This means that, with a target of 10% for cycling, 10% of the overall transport budget should be spent on dedicated facilities for cycling, and at least 20% on facilities for walking.

Planning decisions must take into account the impact on cycling, walking and public transport. As a general rule, no planning permission should be made to developments which increase car dependency. All new developments must, as a condition of planning permission, include concrete plans for access by foot, bicycle and public transport. There are far too many examples of recent developments which are in direct contradiction to a sustainable transport policy, including the new out-of-town secondary schools in Maynooth.

To encourage sustainable and active travel, the design of roads and junctions, including traffic signals, must follow the hierarchy set out in national and international best practice, with pedestrians at the top, followed by cyclists and public transport, with private cars having the lowest priority. The county should commit to these principles and explicitly repudiate free flow of motorised traffic as an overarching aim -- indeed, free flow of motorised traffic is a direct barrier to walking and cycling. Where possible, car travel should be discouraged. In particular, through traffic in town centres should be discouraged, and alternative routes should be used where possible.

Other initiatives that could be included are:

- Reduction of car parking spaces in general where they are not essential - A study carried out by the UK Dept. of Transport in 2002 showed that, overall, 56% of car users said they would use the bus more if parking was more expensive, and 64% said that they would also use the bus more if parking was difficult to find.
- Increase costs on car parking to encourage less driving and use the money to improve environments for walking, cycling and public transport for those who feel the need currently to travel only by car (advertise that this is where the money is going in the car parks).
- Reduce car parking fees for rail car parks where these are not at capacity, to encourage the use of public transport. Provide buses from and to the main train stations from towns not on the rail line during rush hour.
- Connect the main towns with more regular bus services and ensure that the buses are used by promoting the service to change driving habits e.g. Maynooth to Naas.
- Provisions need to be made to provide support structures for effective mobility strategies for major employment centres, schools, other locations and events generating transport demand.
- Large companies, industrial and retail parks, hotels etc. should have incentives to provide free buses and cycling initiatives (such as showers and bike stands) for employees and customers. .