



MAYNOOTH CYCLING CAMPAIGN NOTES – March 2017

How much does Ireland spend on Cycling?

Maynooth Cycling Campaign and Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycle Advocacy Network are looking for 10% of the transport budget to be allocated to cycling which is in line with the government targets for cycling. So how much does the Irish government currently spend on cycling.? In 2014, in response to a Dáil question from Deputy Catherine Murphy, the Minister for Transport reported that a total of €11.1 Million was allocated by his Department and gave a breakdown of the allocation to individual local authorities. However, this was only the direct budget allocation from the Department. The National Transport Authority also provided funding of €8.2 Million to local authorities in the Greater Dublin Area and in May the government announced a Stimulus Programme which included funding of €10 million for greenway developments. Then, in November, a supplementary budget was passed which included a further allocation of funding for greenways. Overall it is estimated that funding of €21.2 million was directly and indirectly provided for cycling by central government. With a population of 4.66 million, this equates to an expenditure of €4.55 per person for 2014. How do we compare internationally? Well pretty badly - the Netherlands spends approximately €30 per person and in several other countries politicians have committed to spending multiple of this.

Butterfly Conservation Ireland

In an article in last month's Maynooth Newsletter, Jesmond Harding of Butterfly Conservation Ireland referred to the greenway "... being wide enough to facilitate a truck" and "the width of the path from the 15th lock to Allen Bridge being unnecessary". While we disagree with a number of his comments and want to see a wider greenway than was approved by Kildare County Council under the Part 8 Public Consultation, we are equally appalled at the unnecessary width of much of what has been constructed to date.

However, what appears to have been forgotten by many is that the canal towpath as well as being important from the point of view of biodiversity, is an important part of the National Cycle Network which was devised to encourage everyday as well as recreational cycling. A poor quality cycling environment suppresses the demand for cycling and results in the increased use of cars and increased greenhouse gases. The emotive use of the term 'Boy Racers' is also objectionable as in this instance it is being applied to cyclists but what is not generally known is that the design speed for rural cycle facilities is 30 kph. Pedestrians are

unhappy with cyclists travelling at high speeds in close proximity to them so inadequate space leads to conflict between the two groups.

It is indisputable that the development of a greenway will impact negatively on biodiversity but the same development will impact positively with regards to environment and climate change. The abject failure of successive governments to treat climate change seriously was reflected in recent findings by the Environmental Protection Agency that Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, which fell during the recession, are rising again with emissions from the transport sector increasing by 4.2% in 2015. Unless Irish dependency on the private car is reduced and greater use of bicycles will contribute to this, the impact of climate change will negatively affect not just the biodiversity of the towpaths but the entire country. We will all be poorer for that.

Kildare Cycle Forum

The Cycle Forum was discussed at the February meeting of the Transportation Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). However, reports suggest that little progress was made. Apparently, Cllr. Darren Scully, chair of the SPC, proposed that a representative of the Society of the Irish Motor Trade (SIMI) should be on the Cycle Forum. It is not known if this was a joke or not. It is suggested that a political representative be selected by each of the five Municipal Districts. Maynooth Cycling Campaign is opposed to this as we want a representative from all of the political groupings so that all have an input into Forum business.

Naas Cycle Schemes

In February, there was a meeting of Naas town centre traders who complained about proposals to remove car parking spaces to provide space for cycling. Cycle tracks were blamed for small shops closing their doors even though there are currently no cycle tracks anywhere near the centre. The same Cllr. Darren Scully proposed that the development of all cycle routes be postponed. Maynooth Cycling Campaign strongly opposed this proposal and urged support for a cross-party coalition of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Sinn Fein councillors who wanted the cycle schemes to progress without delay. It is normal experience across Europe that the provision of cycle facilities creates a backlash or 'bikelash' especially where it involves the removal of car parking. If there wasn't a backlash, it would indicate that the scheme is not ambitious enough. For politicians with the vision of a healthy and active community, it is worth pointing out that practically no cycle schemes have been removed after they have been introduced.

Maynooth Community Council

At last month's meeting, Cllr. Reada Cronin is reported as saying that "...until the work is finishedpeople cannot say that it doesn't work." While that statement is true, people are entitled to express the likelihood of a scheme working or not. A number of our group have

experience of cycle facilities at home and abroad and are very familiar with the quality of infrastructure that attracts mass cycling and the quality which does not. We do not know why some cyclists said that they would not use cycle paths provided. The main reason for not using a cycle path is because cyclists consider it safer to be on the road. Regardless of the reason, Maynooth Cycling Campaign supports their right not to do so and there is no legal obligation for cyclists to use cycle paths under the Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 332 of 2012).

Maynooth Cycling Campaign is a non-party political cycling advocacy group. Further information on meetings and activities is available on our website.

We are affiliated to Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cyclist Advocacy Network and through it to the European Cycling Federation.