



## **MAYNOOTH CYCLING CAMPAIGN NOTES – August 2017**



### **Summertime**

It is summer. The schools and university are closed. The days are long and the weather is good (so far). We hope that people will have the opportunity to get out on bikes and enjoy the fresh air and the countryside.

### **Maynooth Newsletter Editorial**

The editorial in last month's Newsletter contained a number of statements on cycling with which we take issue.

Firstly, an accident is an event that happens by chance or that is without apparent or deliberate cause. A driver turning into a side street and hitting a cyclist is not an accident. The event is not by chance and has a deliberate cause although not caused deliberately. It is a collision which results from not driving with due care and attention. The media often reports such events as accidents and even worse some journalists describe them as cyclists colliding with cars which suggests that the cyclist is at fault. Several reports in different countries confirm that in collisions between a vehicle and a cyclist, drivers are responsible for about 60% of collisions, cyclists for about 20% and in 20% of cases investigators are unable to decide which party is at fault.

In relation to pinch points, the editorial states that '...these points will be more dangerous for the cyclist'. It is not clear what 'more dangerous' refers to. There will always be pinch points in a network but good design should ensure that the vulnerable mode of travel ie pedestrians and cyclists are prioritised over car travel. This is in accordance with the Hierarchy of Road Users which most civilised countries follow. The problem in Ireland is that lip service is paid to the hierarchy and instead car travel is prioritised. It is hoped that the child in question will recover soon and will not be put off cycling. It was fortunate that he/she fell on the footpath side. If it had happened on the road side, the consequences could have been much more severe. Of course, Straffan Road could have had a verge or other separation on the road side to segregate cyclists from motorised vehicles as is best international practice but Kildare County Council officials and councillors instead chose to prioritise motorised vehicles and retain right turning lanes.

Based on the provision of cycle facilities in north Kildare, I fear that your trust that the North/South will be completed to a high standard is misplaced. None of the other proposals in north Kildare are to a high or even moderately high standard internationally and in fact several are substandard. There are good reasons why the European Cycling Federation ranks Ireland at 21st out of 28 in European countries in terms of being cycle friendly - just above Latvia, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Portugal and Romania.

In relation to the desire for traffic controls on cycle routes ie traffic lights, I would point out that best international practice is to minimise delay for cyclists so good design provides for cyclists to bypass traffic lights, where feasible. Cyclists do not have to be reminded of safety. With eleven cyclists killed on Irish roads in 2017 to date including one young woman just a few kilometres outside Maynooth, we are acutely aware of safety every time we get on a bicycle. Rather than blaming the victim, I think your editorial should address drivers who after all are the ones who pose the threat.

## Census 2016

The CSO recently published the initial transportation results from Census 2016. The spin put on the report was that there was a 42% increase in commuting to work by bicycle. The reality was rather more modest. Taking work and education trips together, the increase amounted 4.15% per annum which might appear reasonable but for a country like Ireland with an existing low level of cycling 4.15% is poor. The Census figures also indicated that the number of Irish children being driven to primary school continues to increase. The table below compares how Irish and Dutch children travel to primary school.

| Country            | Means of Travel |      |       |
|--------------------|-----------------|------|-------|
|                    | Foot            | Bike | Car   |
| Ireland (2016)     | 24.6%           | 1.4% | 62.8% |
| Netherlands (2012) | 30%             | 37%  | 30%   |

Although there are footpaths to virtually all Irish primary schools in urban areas, the percentage of children who walk to school is 25% higher in the Netherlands. Dutch politicians are concerned that 30% of their children are driven to primary school and address the concerns by high levels of investment in cycling and walking. In contrast, Irish government and local government allocates a pittance to cycling and political parties and individual politicians are paralysed with fear of antagonising the motor lobby. So despite policies and strategies on health, transport and climate change, car dependency continues to increase.

## Countdown Clock

As we are fast approaching the government target date of 2020 for the achievement of 10% commuting trips and also 10% of total trips by bike, Maynooth Cycling Campaign decided to add a Countdown Clock to its website to mark the occasion. When we investigated how to do this, we found that there was a computer app (application) available. However, a problem arose, when we tried to set the countdown clock to the estimated date which was calculated on the basis of increase in cycling over the last five years. The programme would only allow a countdown date of up to twenty years ie 2037. It would not allow a date far enough in the future. We managed to get around this however and our Countdown Clock shows that the 2020 target will not be achieved for another 30 years so don't hold your breath!

*Maynooth Cycling Campaign is a non-party political cycling advocacy group. Membership is FREE. If you want to support our work, just email your contact details to [maynoothcycling@gmail.com](mailto:maynoothcycling@gmail.com).*

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