



MAYNOOTH CYCLING CAMPAIGN NOTES – December 2017



Review of Year

For the last Newsletter of the year, we look at two of the major challenges to government for the past year and for future years - climate change and community health. Both impact on people directly affected but also impose a financial burden on the wider community. Increased cycling will not solve these problems but will reduce their detrimental effect. Before that though, we look at the issue which concerns all cyclists and the families of cyclists – road safety. While the risks of an accident are small, the effects of an accident can be appalling.

Fatalities

2017 has been a horrendous year for cyclist fatalities – the worst for more than a decade and a 50% increase on the number in 2016. With eleven months of the year gone, there has been 14 (15) fatalities including a young woman in a collision just a few kilometres from Maynooth. The official statistics say 14 - the 15th was pushing his bike at the time of a collision with a car. In November a coalition of cyclist groups staged a major demonstration in front of Leinster House to protest at (1) lack of investment in safe cycling facilities by government, (2) lack of enforcement of traffic regulations by the gardaí and (3) lack of support for Minimum Passing Distance Legislation. There is a lot of anger at indifference by the government and by Shane Ross, the Minister for Transport.

Climate Change & the Citizens' Assembly

Maynooth was well represented among observers at the recent meeting of the Citizens' Assembly in Malahide which was debating Climate Change. Maynooth Cycling Campaign was there along with representatives from Trócaire who are part of Stop Climate Chaos campaign and Prof John Sweeney.

On Saturday, the Assembly heard experts and discussed the issues while on Sunday the Assembly voted on thirteen motions related to climate change including three on transport :

- Sustainable transport
- Electric vehicles
- Public transport

The vote on sustainable transport was for greatly increased bus and bike lanes. The second was for increased charging points for electric vehicles. The third was for a reallocation of funding from roads to public transport. All of the votes were carried overwhelmingly so we shall have to wait and see the response of government.

Ireland has now become the worst performing country in Europe on the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI). The journalist Eoin Burke Kennedy described the situation very well when he wrote:

The Government's decade of inaction is, however, finally beginning to overtake its rhetoric. In nearly every metric by which a country can be vetted on climate change, [Ireland](#) is failing.

Emissions are on the rise across all sectors; renewable-energy targets have not been met, water quality is plummeting, while cities are clogged with cars and public transport infrastructures starved of investment.

Community Health

The second major challenge to the government is health. The Department of Health recently published the results of the 2017 Healthy Ireland Survey. Its findings include

- 36% have a normal weight, 39% are overweight and 23% are obese.
- Men are more likely to be overweight than women, with 70% of men overweight or obese, compared with 53% of women.
- The proportion that is obese rises from 9% of 15 to 24 year olds, to 32% of those aged 65 and older.
- Over a third (36%) indicate that they are trying to lose weight, 28% are trying to maintain their weight and 5% are trying to gain weight.
- The most common action taken to lose weight is doing more exercise (68%).
- Almost two-thirds (65%) of those travelling to work or education mainly travel by car.
- 73% of those whose usual journey is less than one kilometre mainly use an active form of travel (by foot or cycle). This falls to 37% for those travelling between 1 and 3 kilometres.

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 Cycling Advocacy Network and through it to the European Cycling Federation. Membership is FREE. If you want to support our work, just email your contact details to maynoothcycling@gmail.com .