



MAYNOOTH CYCLING CAMPAIGN NOTES March 2018



Euro - Velo Route2: From Maynooth to Kilcock (Royal Canal)

Maynooth Cycling Campaign welcomes the opening of the Royal Canal Greenway between Maynooth and Kilcock. This forms part of Euro-Velo 2, the 5500km transcontinental European cycle route which links Maynooth to six European capitals - Dublin, London, Berlin, Warsaw, Minsk and Moscow. So what is the betting for when the first Russian visitors reach Maynooth?

1.5m Minimum Passing Distance Legislation (MPDL)

The campaign for 1.5m Minimum Passing Distance Legislation continues to gather support. Originally proposed as a private members bill by the Fine Gael government ministers Ciarán Cannon and Regina Doherty, the measures were taken up and proposed as an amendment to Road Traffic Bill by Fianna Fail. Cyclist groups support the MPDL and also the higher penalties for driving offences proposed in the Bill. The measures are designed in part to address cyclist fatalities which has seen year on year increases since 2010.

What People Want - Food for Thought

The following piece was tweeted last year by Ian Walker, a psychologist at the University of Bath with an interest in transportation.

There's that famous Henry Ford quote about selling cars, "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses". Somebody recently said that the problem is we focus on the noun - 'horses' - when we should focus on the adjective - 'faster'. That is, people only really want to go faster. They only mention horses because it's the sole model of transport they know. So let's update this. When asked what they want, people reply "easier driving", "faster driving". Governments therefore build more roads. But the situation is the same isn't it? Policy-makers focus on the noun 'driving' when they should focus on 'easier' and 'faster'. We know that most urban journeys are faster by bike, but we don't build for this because we've focused on the noun. For longer journeys, we know the time spent driving is dead. But we don't make trains affordable because we've focused on the noun. But 'driving' is a red herring; it's a word used for convenience, or because people have not known other forms of mobility. So my suggestion to policy makers is: question the noun. Are communities "crying out for bypasses" or are they crying out for clean air? Are people "crying out for bypasses" or are they crying out for journeys through their local communities to be quicker and easier? Find out what higher-level outcome people desire and seek the optimum way to provide it. Don't take what people ask for at face value. And remember: everybody today has only known a world where driving is the main form of transport - just as with horses 100 years ago.



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False News Hits Westport

A recent headline in the Irish Independent read "70pc Of School Kids In This (Irish) Town Cycle Or Walk To School". The article went on to claim that the town was "similar to Dutch towns in terms of cycling rates". And where is this little piece of Amsterdam in Ireland? Westport, Co. Mayo no less. I thought "this is unbelievable". I do not mean that this is not unbelievable as in incredible - I mean that this is unbelievable as it is untrue.

Cycling rates in Dutch towns and cities vary from 15% - to over 50% and 49% of primary school children cycle to school. In Westport the 2016 Census found that only 2% of commuters and 4% of primary school children cycle.

A Department of Transport evaluation report found that despite having been selected as one of Ireland's Smarter Travel towns, the absence of cycling facilities in the town centre and the failure to reallocate space from traffic was responsible for a miniscule increase in cycling and walking. It is therefore important that Irish towns do not take the message that copying Westport will achieve high levels of active travel. If Ireland wants to emulate the Dutch, it needs to start investing in high quality infrastructure and not by spinning false news. Westport is ahead of many Irish towns but the reality is that it still has a long way to go to reach Dutch levels of cycling.