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Pre-Budget 2020 submission from 'Cyclist.ie' – The Irish Cycling Advocacy Network

Introduction

Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network, is the umbrella body of cycle advocacy groups in Ireland and the member for Ireland of the European Cyclists' Federation. Our vision is that cycling becomes a normal part of everyday life for all ages and abilities in Ireland.

Cycling, as a mode of transport, offers numerous well documented benefits to society, including:

- improved public health
- reduced congestion
- reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- reduced air and noise pollution
- increased mobility
- more liveable and sociable streets and communities, and
- high rates of economic return on investment



Unlocking these benefits requires targeted and sustained investment, and international evidence demonstrates that investing in cycling provides excellent value for money.

From the available data it is estimated that spending on cycling currently amounts to less than 2% of Transport capital spending. In our budget submission for 2019 we called for 10% of the capital budget for land transport to be invested in cycling and for an increase in current spending on a range of different objectives which could support a transition to a cycling friendly and sustainable society. This year climate change has moved centre stage with the publication in March of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA) final report¹, the declaration in May of a Climate Emergency, and the publication in June of the government's Climate Action Plan², all of which recommended that 10% of the Transport Budget should be spent on cycling.

We call on the Government to follow its own agreed recommendation and invest a minimum 10% of the capital budget for land transport in Cycling, with immediate effect in Budget 2020

Ten Reasons to Prioritise Investment in Cycling

Investing in cycling aligns well with numerous government policies and societal objectives. Below we outline what we see as the ten most significant reasons, grouped into three themes, why the government needs to prioritise the growth of cycling mode share.

Transport

- Investing in cycling provides excellent value for money
- Cycling helps reduce congestion
- Cycling is an affordable mobility option for all
- Cycling can boost local economic activity

Environment

- Cycling can help us meet our Climate Change obligations
- Cycle trips don't generate air or noise pollution
- Interventions to boost cycling can create better public spaces

Health

- Cycling helps more people to get the exercise they need and improves health
- Cycling can improve psychological well-being
- Investing in cycling will improve safety for cyclists and for other road users

Transport

Investing in cycling provides excellent value for money

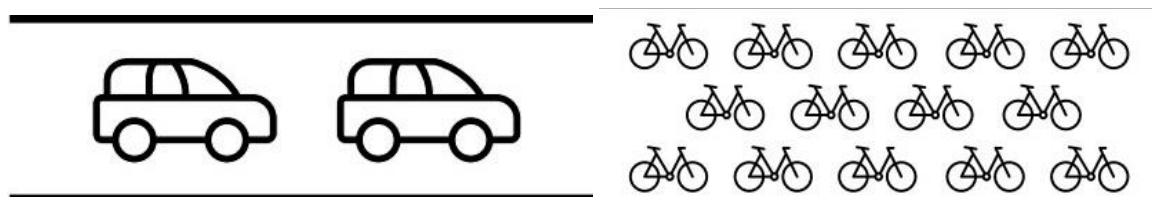
A 2014 report commissioned by the UK Department for Transport assessed cost benefit evidence for walking and cycling interventions. Almost all the studies identified by the report demonstrated 'highly significant' economic benefits, while the mean cost benefit ratio for the schemes identified was 6.28:1³. In general investment in cycling projects provides the highest rate of return on investment of all transport projects.



Dublin Example of 12:1 investment return, i.e. €12 return on each Euro invested. Source - Bullock et al. 2017: The economic contribution of public bike-share to the sustainability and efficient functioning of cities

Cycling helps reduce congestion

The cost of congestion in the Greater Dublin Area was estimated at €350 Million a year (for the year 2012) and projected to be €2 Billion a year by 2033 by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTaS) Economic & Financial Evaluation Unit. Congestion reduces labour mobility and connectivity, which are two key parts of a competitive economy. Longer travel times also reduce quality-of-life which negatively impacts Ireland's ability to attract talent and inward investment⁴. Congestion in Ireland is caused by over-reliance on private cars, which use limited road space inefficiently. In central London monitoring of new segregated cycle lanes has shown that these are moving *five times* more people per square metre than the main carriageway⁵.



The DTTaS, Strategic Investment Priorities for Land Investment policy, states that we must tackle urban congestion through improving walking and cycling infrastructure, and through expanded public transport capacity. Cycling is a viable replacement for many trips currently made by car and there is also scope to facilitate greater public transport use through improved integration of public transport and active modes.

Cycling is an affordable mobility option for all

Improving provision for cycling will reduce transport-related social exclusion amongst many individuals who do not have access to a car by improving their access to employment, education, shopping and social activities.

Investing in cycling will also help reduce 'Forced Car Ownership' amongst those households who do currently have one or two cars but experience the associated costs as a significant financial burden. The AA has estimated the average cost of running a family car for a year in Ireland at €10,691⁶. Improving cycling conditions and making cycling an option for all ages and abilities will mean that car ownership and particularly having a second car in a household will become less of a necessity.

Cycling can boost local economic activity

Greenway projects completed in Ireland to date have been described as "transformational" in terms of rural development and "catalyst projects which have been shown to rejuvenate communities"^{7,8}. Greenways such as the 42km Great Western Greenway in County Mayo have been found to have a payback period of just six years based on tourism expenditure alone⁹. Investment in greenways also provides a sustainable transport option for local people who may not feel safe walking or cycling on rural roads without footpaths. Investment in cycling facilities can also boost economic activity by improving access to employment and to local shops and services.

Supporting cycling can also boost economic activity in urban areas. The New York City Department of Transport found that two years after construction, streets that received a protected bike lane saw a greater increase in retail sales compared to similar corridors¹⁰. A study on shopping travel behaviour in Dublin found that shopping and commercial activity by bike was underestimated¹¹.

Numerous international studies have found that although people arriving by car tend to spend more in an individual trip, shoppers who arrive on foot, by bike or by public transport tend to visit more frequently and spend more over the course of a month¹². Increased cycling investment produces tangible and measurable benefits to local economies¹³.

Environment

Cycling can help us meet our Climate Change Obligations

This year climate change has moved centre stage with the publication in March of the JOCCA report, the declaration in May of a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and the publication in June of the Government's Climate Action Plan².

Transport accounts for 20% of Ireland's overall emissions with 52% of overall transport emissions coming from private cars, 24% from freight and 4% from public transport¹⁴. Facilitating walking and cycling through increased investment will reduce greenhouse gas emissions linked to private car travel and has the potential to significantly reduce the level of EU fines which are expected to cost the exchequer between €350 - €600m a year in EU fines annually from 2020 onwards.

Cycle trips don't generate air or noise pollution

Enabling more cycling can reduce air pollution problems in urban areas which result from private vehicle use. The EPA recently issued a warning that our NO₂ levels will again exceed EU limits in many parts of Dublin city in 2019. Emissions from traffic are the main source of nitrogen oxides. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, a 'transition away from the use of private diesel- and petrol-powered motor cars to alternative modes of transport' (including walking and cycling), is vital for Ireland's at-risk urban populations¹⁵.



Reduction of air pollution

Exposure to persistent or high levels of noise has also been linked to a number of adverse health impacts including sleep disturbance, cardiovascular and physiological effects, mental health impacts and cognitive impairment. In 2012, over 50% of the population of both Cork and Dublin were exposed to noise levels above the desirable level¹⁶.

Interventions to boost cycling can create better public spaces

Making public spaces more cycling friendly can also make them more pleasant for people walking, as well as more pleasant and safer places to live, shop or relax.

Creating more liveable urban areas through investing in cycling will help to achieve 'Compact Growth', a key objective of the National Development Plan (National Strategy Outcome #1). As described in the NDP, investment in sustainable transport can play a crucial role in 'creating more attractive places for people to live and work'¹⁷.

Health

Cycling helps more people to get the exercise they need and improves health

The Healthy Ireland framework recognises that all sectors of society and 'the whole of Government' need to be proactively involved in improving the health and wellbeing of the population¹⁸. Facilitating active and sustainable transport modes can play a significant role in delivering this 'whole of Government' approach to population health.



Large numbers of people in Ireland are not meeting recommended levels of physical activity¹⁹, while 39% of the adult population are overweight and 23% are obese²⁰. Startling evidence given earlier this year by health professionals from the Obesity Clinic at Temple St Children's Hospital to the Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs stated that 40% of young patients were showing the signs of heart disease previously only evident in middle age²¹.

Physical inactivity contributes to obesity and links between obesity and heart disease, cancers, type 2 diabetes, mental ill-health, respiratory problems and musculoskeletal conditions are the reasons why the Irish Heart Foundation, Diabetes Ireland, The Irish Cancer Society, Irish Doctors for the Environment and The Association for Health Promotion Ireland support Cyclist.ie's call for investment in active travel²².

Regular cycling for everyday journeys, such as cycling to work or school, builds exercise into busy lives and can be easier to maintain compared to recreational physical activity.

For this reason, the CEO of the Irish Heart Foundation, Tim Collins appeals to government to “make the healthy choice the easy choice” and the Irish Medical Organisation at their annual conference in April this year passed a motion proposed by Irish Doctors for the Environment calling on the government to increase investment in cycling and walking to 20% of the transport budget. The motion referenced air quality benefits, climate mitigation benefits and health benefits as do we in this submission.

Children who cycle to school are more alert and generally healthier.



Source: Masseeksperiment 2012, Denmark.

Greater targeted investment to encourage growth in everyday cycling can help to save significant funds in the national health budget, as has been demonstrated in other jurisdictions²³.

Cycling can boost psychological well-being

In addition to physical health benefits, active commuting can also benefit psychological wellbeing. For example, researchers who analysed data from around 18,000 commuters across the UK over eighteen years found that people who walked or cycled to work benefited from improved mental wellbeing in comparison to commuters who travel by car²⁴.

Investing in cycling will improve safety for cyclists and for other road users

Since 2011 the three-year average for cycling fatalities has increased from 7.0 to 11.7. Data released by the HSE in 2018 showed that 1,339 cyclists attended HSE hospitals in 2016 due to being injured in a “transport accident”²⁵.

Increasing cycling can also improve safety for non-cyclists. An individual who walks or cycles for a trip instead of driving is posing less threat to others by not using a motor vehicle.

Cyclist.ie's Budget Priority Recommendations

1 Prioritise Investment in High Quality Safe Cycling Infrastructure

a. Expedite the Development of Strategic Cycling Infrastructure Projects

- Throughout the State there are numerous plans and proposals for a variety of quality cycle routes. But, as exemplified by the GDA Cycle Network plan, agreed and published in 2013, very little has actually been developed on the ground 6 years later in 2019. The need for the requisite funding and resources is critical and must be expedited to ensure that all of these plans are brought to full development as soon as possible. Full and comprehensive professionally operated public consultation must also take place in tandem, to ensure these schemes are understood and agreed by local communities.
- Local Authorities need to be encouraged to begin to take cycling seriously as a transport option and to develop cycling action plans and comprehensive cycling policies for their counties. Such action is called for in the Climate Plan but the National Transport Authority (NTA) should be given an extended brief to support the development of cycling plans and projects in these areas.

b. Improve Existing and Planned Transport Infrastructure

- Conducts audits of major urban junctions and prioritise the remediation of the top 50 most dangerous junctions to comply with the National Cycle Manual, the Department of Transport Tourism & Sport's 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' (DMURS), and the 'Cycling for All' guidelines.
- Include provision for cycling in all existing and new roads in urban areas that meets the standards set out in the National Cycle Manual and DMURS, and ensure these designs are audited before funds are released.
- Ensure cycling is fully integrated into transport system, for example by enabling carriage of bikes on trains and buses, and adequate and secure bike parking at transport hubs. Crucially, the planned Dublin Metro stations must include high quality and high capacity bicycle parking to make multi-modal trips as easy as possible.
- Conduct audits of all road designs and transport projects by an independent cycling expert.
- Allocate current expenditure to ensure ongoing maintenance of cycling infrastructure

c. Develop Greenway Network

- Resource the new National Greenway Strategy²⁶ adequately over and above present funding level proposals, and with connections to urban centres and places of work, study, and leisure included.

- Prioritise completion and upgrading of the EuroVelo Network in Ireland, EV1 and EV2, and the addition of a new section of EuroVelo along Ireland's East Coast from Rosslare to Larne in Northern Ireland.

d. Bike Parking

- Develop high volume, safe and secure bike parking at the main transport hubs in cities and towns to ensure integration into wider public transport system, and encourage multi modal travel.
- Provide more cycle carriage on bus, rail and tram services.
- Provide grants for agreed quality bike parking at all public buildings - schools, hospitals, museums, venues, shopping centres etc.
- Mandate the provision of bike parking facilities at major events such as sports, concerts, festivals, conference venues such as the RDS, the Convention Centre, Croke Park, Aviva Stadium, Pairc Uí Chaoimh, etc.

2. Incentivise the Purchase of E-bikes

The Climate Action Plan contains some welcome initiatives related to cycling but one major omission is the absence of any mention of e-bikes. e-bikes (including e-cargo bikes) have the potential to:

- replace a family car,
- enable longer commutes,
- enable older people to remain active for longer,
- facilitate cycling in hilly areas, and
- Increase levels of everyday cycling.

Evidence from France shows that when they introduced a national purchase incentive scheme for electric bicycles in 2017, 61% of beneficiaries stated in a survey that they used e-bikes to replace car journeys²⁷.

We propose that from Budget 2020 onwards SEAI develop and operate a purchase subsidy for e-bikes, in parallel with the subsidy for electric cars. An extra generous allowance should be given to those who show that they are replacing a car with an e-bike. It is critical that e-cargo bikes are included in this scheme as they are a cost effective and low emissions means of freight deliveries in cities.

3. Set Up a National Cycling Office in DTTaS

Cyclist.ie welcomes the recent announcement of the setting up of a Cycling Projects Office within the NTA. However, this does not meet the need for a properly resourced National

Cycling Office within the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The NTA has a limited countrywide brief and does not deal with policy issues, which are critical. The National Cycling Office should be set up within the DTTaS with a remit to:

- Review and continually develop national cycling policy and infrastructure standards
- Introduce specific legislative initiatives to encourage greater levels of cycling, as has already occurred in many European jurisdictions, and as outlined in this Transport for London (TfL) report²⁸
- Coordinate cycling initiatives across Departments and Agencies, to ensure they are in line with policy, standards, and budgets
- Ensure the development of local regional cycling plans
- Allocate spending for cycling initiatives and monitor these for return on investment
- Monitor the latest research and evaluate the effectiveness of projects. In this regard DTTaS should immediately commit to using the world Health Organisation HEAT (Health Economic Assessment Tool) which enables users to conduct an economic assessment of the benefits of walking or cycling.

The National Cycling Office should be led by a National Cycling Officer at senior level to drive the cycling agenda. This officer will ensure the coordinated approach across Government Departments to the development of cycling and should have the authority to ensure that Government Departments and Agencies, and Local Authorities, adhere to stated policy and design guidance. The National Cycling Officer would liaise closely with similar European counterparts in order to build and share new ideas and best practice.

At local authority level, dedicated cycling officers at an appropriate senior level should be appointed. This will be necessary if Action 97 of the Climate Plan re Local Authorities drawing up “a clear pathway and timetable for the installation of dedicated cycling infrastructure” is to be respected. A network of such officers should be created in order to share best practice and provide mutual support.

4. Safety and Awareness

a. Cycling Promotion

- Continue and expand the very successful bike-to-work scheme to allow greater flexibility and take-up of cycling.
- Introduce an equivalent scheme for those not in work, including secondary and third level students, the unemployed, and retired people.
- Complete green schools cycle audits and funding to promote cycling to school nationwide
- Run targeted National Campaigns to promote cycling as a recognised transport option

- Run Health Awareness campaigns to highlight the benefits to the individual and society of cycling
- Reduce VAT level on bicycle sales to further promote cycling

b. Cycle Training

- Make cycle training available in all primary and secondary schools free of charge
- Make cycle training widely available to adults including third level students
- Ensure cycle safety becomes a core part of the vehicle driving test and CPD, particularly for HGV and Public Service Vehicle drivers.
- Require all taxi drivers to undergo European Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) standard certification.

c. Legislation / Enforcement

- Introduce cycle friendly legislative initiatives to promote growth of cycling, including contra-flow cycling, left turn at red lights, and joint use of pedestrian crossings³³. Many suggested initiatives are outlined in this TFL Report²⁸
- Increase Garda resources to provide greater enforcement, to support safer cycling
- Increase the monetary fines for FCNs for vehicle infringements of cycling related incidents, such as parking illegally in cycle tracks or dangerous overtaking.

Conclusion/Summary

The prioritised resourcing and development of cycling nationally, as demonstrated above, and proposed in many government strategies, can have a wide-ranging positive impact on many aspects of Irish society.

Increased cycling levels will

- improve national health and wellbeing,
- provide improved areas of public realm
- support national competitiveness by reducing congestion,
- support local economies and increased tourism, and
- support Ireland in meeting its climate change targets.

The present low level of transport funding, of less than 2%, allocated to cycling, needs to be increased immediately and radically, both to bring Ireland into line with our EU neighbours, but also to realise the broad societal benefits that a cycling economy can bring. Furthermore, investment in cycling is a ‘no brainer’ as it provides generously high rates of return on investment in comparison with other public sector investments.

Cyclist.ie calls on the government to realise these economic and social benefits by, significantly and immediately, increasing the funding allocated to facilitate and support cycling as both a transport mode and as a leisure activity.

We call on the Government to follow its own recommendation and invest a minimum 10% of the capital budget for land transport in Cycling with immediate effect in Budget 2020

This can be done, as outlined above, by:

1. Investing in High Quality Cycling Infrastructure
2. Promoting the investment in, and purchasing of, e-bikes through a national subsidy scheme
3. Setting up and resourcing a National Cycling Office in the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport
4. Increasing safety and awareness of cyclists through a variety of initiatives as outlined

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