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Kildare County Council,
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Áras Chill Dara,
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Wednesday, 17 February 2016

Royal Canal Greenway - Maynooth to Dublin County Boundary

Dear Sir/Madam

On behalf of Dublin Cycling Campaign (www.dublincycling.ie) and Cyclist.ie – the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network (www.cyclist.ie), the member for Ireland of the European Cyclists' Federation (www.ecf.com), I would like to express strong support for the proposed Royal Canal Greenway from Maynooth to Dublin County Boundary.

This project has the potential to create a great amenity to link with the existing and emerging developments of the Royal Canal greenways to the west and east of this proposal. It traverses a wonderful landscape and can help to revitalise this route in a new guise, and hopefully encourage an increase in visitor numbers to the area. Crucially, it will allow people of all ages to cycle safely and conveniently between Kilcock, Maynooth and Leixlip and therefore it has the potential to offer a real alternative to the car leading to improved public health and reduced congestion and pollution.

1. Introduction

We warmly welcomes the construction of high quality cycle routes by Local Authorities, where their impact on the built and natural environment has been thoroughly assessed and where they have been designed, constructed and then subsequently maintained in a manner sensitive to those environmental considerations.

In line with the aims of the National Cycle Policy Framework (<http://www.smartertravel.ie/content/national-cycle-policy>), the proposed cycle greenway should help prompt an increase in cycling and walking. The route will appeal to several different types of users:

- cycling visitors and locals wishing to cycle all, or at least a significant length, of the Royal Canal, and also to connect into the current 'under-construction' leg of the Dublin-Galway cycle route near Mullingar. This Dublin-Galway route is also part of the wider European *EuroVelo* system (www.eurovelo.com)
- (local) recreational riders, including families with young children, who may be less experienced and who may wish to avoid the busier, more heavily trafficked and dangerous roads
- cycling commuters and utility / transportation cyclists travelling between Kilcock, Maynooth and Leixlip via quieter and safer routes. A very important audience here is, of course, staff and students of NUI Maynooth

Furthermore, we would hope that the facility will help reduce car usage in the area thus helping to relieve local congestion in surrounding towns. The amenity could also be used creatively so as to get school children back cycling again and developing life-long healthier habits. The point will not be lost on Kildare County Council that 26% of 9-year olds in Ireland are overweight/obese (ESRI Report, 2011: 'Growing Up in Ireland').

2. Safer Roads

One concern we do have with cycleways/greenways is that they can sometimes generate the idea that cyclists have no place on the ordinary roads. There is insufficient attention being paid to improving driving (and indeed cycling) standards on local authority managed roads and consequently, we are now seeing a new generation of cyclists who, whether from parental pressure or their own lack of confidence, will only cycle on traffic-free paths. We see teenagers in some estates – even those without through-traffic or much traffic - where cycling within the estates is confined to the footpath only. One also sees the ridiculous situation where people now drive to somewhere (e.g. local parks) in order to cycle.

So, while greenways and trails have an important role to play as amenities for those who don't feel comfortable in hostile car-dominated traffic, they cannot reduce the need for bicycle equality and safety on the country's roads. As a Road Authority you have a duty under the Road Act (1993) to consider the needs of all roads users. Adequate and well maintained hard shoulders, cycle-friendly road design, motorist education and law enforcement, as well as traffic reduction policies, are the most effective way to increase cycling numbers.

3. Improving Access to and from the Greenway

We strongly recommend that access be provided to as many adjacent developments and destinations as possible in order to maximise the utility of the route. This should, of course, include any bus and rail connections, and features that would be of interest to tourists such as accommodation, food, entertainment, sights, heritage features, attractions etc (with appropriate signposting).

4. Bicycle Parking along the Route

It is strongly recommended that the opportunity is seized to introduce plenty of (attractive and sheltered!) bicycle parking stands at amenities and in the towns and villages along the route and close by. Such cycle parking stands will be well received by cycling tourists and by locals. For details of cycle parking planning and design, see Chapter 5 of the National Cycle Manual (www.cyclemanual.ie).

5. Signage

The provision of the cycleway is likely to generate increased cycle (and pedestrian) activity on the surrounding roads. The Local Authority should provide appropriate signage on the adjacent roads to warn motorists of the increased likelihood of encountering (young and potentially inexperienced) cyclists on the road.

6. Maintenance

An essential part of a successful cycleway is regular maintenance. A route can easily fall into disrepair with briars and low-hanging branches sweeping across it at head height, broken glass, litter and uneven surfaces immediately making the track undesirable to the public. We wish to highlight the need for a maintenance regime to be established that is specified and executed in a manner sensitive and appropriate to the environmental considerations.

7. Opportunities to link with Green Schools

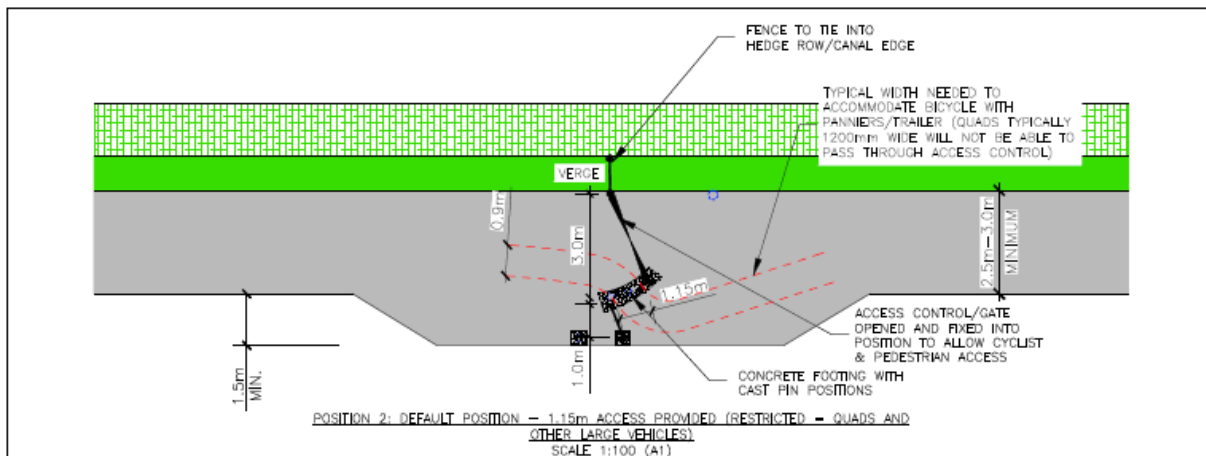
The Green School Initiative is a highly publicised, student-led initiative operated by An Taisce (<http://www.greenschoolsireland.org/>). Sustainable travel is an integral part of the programme amongst other aspects of sustainable living. We note that there are a number of schools/colleges directly adjacent to or close to the proposed scheme in Maynooth and Leixlip. We would encourage you to assess if the schools are involved in Green Schools and, if so, that the cycle route is incorporated into and promoted through the initiative. In this way, it could prove to be an excellent platform to heighten awareness and increase cycle traffic on the proposed route, thus facilitating in its success.

8. Scheme Details

- The NRA (now TII) *Rural Cycling Design Standards* (<http://nrastandards.nra.ie/road-design-construction-standards/dmr/volume6/nra-td-300-rural-cycle-scheme-design>) recommends a **minimum** 3.0m wide route for low volume shared cycle / pedestrian routes. While recognising the difficulties encountered in places along the proposed route with achieving this minimum standard, it is essential that the Local Authority achieves greater widths particularly for those sections in which larger volumes of pedestrians and cyclists are expected. At present only a 600m section between Louisa Bridge and Cope Bridge is proposed to 'possibly' extend to 4m.
- Overall length of the proposed route is 8.4km of which 4.2 km (50%) is proposed to be a 'grit' or 'quarry dust' surface. The whole-life cost differential between this option and full asphaltic concrete (tarmac) option needs to be considered more seriously by the Local Authority, as pavement laying machinery will be on site and cost savings are

possible. The likely commuter take-up will be lessened if the grit surface option is pursued, and greater maintenance levels will be required.

- We are very happy to see 'under bridge' route solutions proposed for four of the five road bridges along this route.
- To encourage commuter use lighting must be considered for the full length of this route. There are many innovative and relatively cheap lighting solutions on the market (including bat sensitive lighting), many of them only acting in response to usage. The proposed laying of ducting along the full length of the route also facilitates this consideration.
- A link to Carton House must be specified at Pike Bridge (chainage 2175 / Drawing No AL-104). The proposals currently do not provide *at all* for safe and easy movement into / out of Carlton House – this needs to be addressed.
- Photographs are not provided at the bridge locations. This would have greatly helped the understanding of the proposals.
- The purchase/inclusion of the narrow, mainly unused, land piece between the canal tow path and the roadway (R148) from chainage 2330 to 3780 should be considered, in order to widen the towpath to a desirable 3.0m minimum width (and ideally wider) and also to allow overall better landscaping along the route rather than the suggested on-road option of a two-way cycle facility.
- We note the proposal (as shown in Drawing AC-001 and copied below) to use restricted access gates at a number of locations along the route. These access arrangements only allows one user to pass at the one time and will result in users of cargo bikes / tricycles and bikes with trailers having to come to a complete stop. Adequately spaced bollards are best practice solutions in cycling-friendly countries.



Detail showing inadequate provision for cargo bikes and bicycles with trailers

- Finally, we note that no direct email address was supplied on the Planning Notice to ensure any submission could be submitted online. In this day and age, the vast majority of submissions might be expected to be made online and the Local Authority should endeavour to make it as easy as possible for the public to engage – and therefore should provide email addresses on this page:

<http://kildare.ie/CountyCouncil/RoadsandTransportation/PartVIII/>



Access to / from the greenway must cater for a diverse range of bicycles and tricycles - such as the cargo tricycle shown above. This is the norm for high quality Continental greenways

In Conclusion

The construction of this section will be critical in the overall east-west Dublin to Galway cycle route proposal. We commend Kildare County Council for advancing these plans, and look forward to planning work on the link section in Dublin Fingal to Blanchardstown. This would be the last section east of the Shannon yet to be exhibited!

We trust that our commentary will assist Kildare County Council in advancing an effective scheme.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this submission and advise us of any further decisions made in regard to this application.

Yours faithfully,

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