



Irish Cancer Society



Cyclist.ie,
Tailors Hall,
8 Back Lane,
The Liberties,
Dublin 8.

Mr. Simon Harris, T.D.,
Minister for Health,
50-58, 1, Miesian Plaza,
Baggot St. Lr.,
Dublin 2.

9th April 2019

Re Active Travel, Health and the Climate Action Plan

The optimal way to meet the objectives of *Get Ireland Active* is to incorporate active travel measures into the forthcoming Climate Action Plan.

Dear Minister Harris,

On behalf of Cyclist.ie, (the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network), the Irish Pedestrian Network, the Irish Heart Foundation, the Irish Cancer Society, Diabetes Ireland, Irish Doctors for the Environment, the Association of Health Promotion Ireland and Professor Donal O'Shea, National Clinical Lead for Obesity, I am writing to ask you to meet with us prior to the publication of the All of Government Climate Plan. We understand that this is due to happen before Easter. We wish to present you with an open letter which is addressed to an Taoiseach, Mr Varadkar, to Shane Ross, Minister for Transport, to Richard Bruton, Minister for Climate Action, to you, Minister for

Health, and to Catherine Byrne as Minister of State at the Department of Health with responsibility for Healthy Ireland, in which we ask all of you to ensure **that concrete measures to facilitate active travel will form an integral part of the new Climate Plan.**

The ground-breaking report by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA) makes a very strong case for active travel with the statement - "active travel measures are also among the most cost-effective emissions reduction strategies". Our particular focus is how this needs to happen on health grounds. As you are aware there is overwhelming evidence that lack of physical activity is a contributory cause in a host of debilitating chronic illnesses, including heart-disease, stroke, some cancers and diabetes. Hence the endorsement of our letter by all of the above health bodies.

Three years ago, the Departments of Health and of Transport Tourism and Sport jointly published **The National Physical Activity Plan, *Get Ireland Active***. The objectives of the National Physical Activity Plan and the forthcoming All of Government Climate Plan are inextricably linked. ***Get Ireland Active*** lists 5 guiding principles for its work, the first of which is – ***creating increased opportunities for people to be active in ways which fit in to everyday lives and which suits individual needs, circumstances and interests.***

Action area 4 of the Plan *Environment*, states” ***Promoting walking and cycling as modes of travel has benefits for air quality and reducing CO₂ emissions, it reduces traffic congestion and noise pollution and can make better use of land.***

Currently there are many barriers to active travel which the current version of the National Mitigation Plan does little to address. Addressing them in the new plan is a whole of government responsibility. We are aware that the Department of Transport’s walking and cycling budget is increasing this year, but planned expenditure comes nowhere near the 10% level for cycling demanded by Cyclist.ie in its Pre-Budget Submission 2019 and endorsed by the JOCCA.

The Government now has a golden opportunity for joined-up action. By growing active travel, it can support Climate Action by reducing transport emissions. At the same time, it can help to achieve the objectives of *The National Physical Activity*

Plan and the *National Cycling Policy Framework (2009) (NCPF)* which sets a target of 10% of commuting trips made by bicycle by 2020.

Sport Ireland has made good progress in promoting physical activity for all via the various Sports Partnerships initiatives. However, successive Healthy Ireland surveys have shown that Irish adults are not achieving the recommended minimum 150 minutes a week of physical activity. For this to happen physical activity has to become an integral part of day to day life and not an add-on extra. Providing the infrastructure to enable active travel is the obvious solution to increasing the levels of physical activity, since CSO figures from the National Travel Survey for 2016 show

- 74% of journeys nationally being made by car while at the same time -
- 26% of all journeys nationally were less than 2 km, and
- 57% were 8 km or less.

The JOCCA report stresses the health and environmental benefits of active travel and urges the Department of Transport to resurrect its Smarter Travel and NCPF ambitions. We are aware that the Department of Transport is conducting a review of Public Transport which will incorporate the NCPF and that this review is due to go to public consultation shortly. However, the Climate Action Plan is due to be published imminently so we are concerned that it won't contain sufficiently robust measures to prioritise active travel.

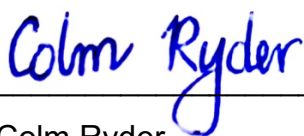
We urge you, Minister, to recognise the health benefits of active travel, to ensure that active travel targets are embedded in the Health and Transport components of the Climate Action Plan and that funding for these will be made available on a multi-annual basis.

We trust you will find time to meet with us and accept the full version of our letter which is based on our examination of sections of the current *National Mitigation Plan* and associated 2018 Annual Transition Statement, *The National Physical Activity Plan*, successive Healthy Ireland Surveys, evidence from the Institute of Public Health, the CSO National Travel Surveys and our own Pre-Budget Submission 2019.

Tim Collins, CEO Irish Heart Foundation, Professor Donal O' Shea, HSE Clinical Lead for Obesity, Averil Power, CE Irish Cancer Society, Kieran O'Leary, CEO Diabetes

Ireland, Dr Aoife Kirk, co-founder of Irish Doctors for the Environment, Dr Patricia Heavey, Chair of the Association for Health Promotion Ireland and Neasa Hourigan, co-founder of the Irish Pedestrian Network, all endorse this letter and our request for a meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Colm Ryder

Chairperson: Cyclist.ie (Tel: 087 237 6130)



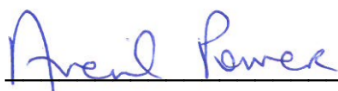
Tim Collins

CEO: Irish Heart Foundation



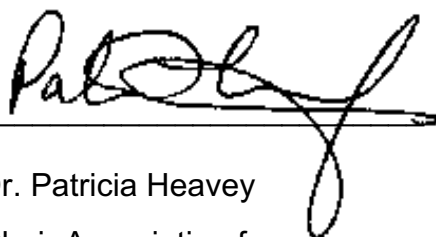
Kieran O' Leary

CEO Diabetes Ireland



Averil Power

CE Irish Cancer Society



Dr. Patricia Heavey

Chair Association for
Health Promotion Ireland



Neasa Hourigan

Founder: Irish Pedestrian Network

Professor Donal O'Shea

HSE Clinical Lead Obesity,
Honorary President Cyclist.ie