



MAYNOOTH CYCLING CAMPAIGN NOTES

July 2019



Climate Action Plan 2019

June finally saw the launch of the much heralded all-of-government Climate Action Plan 2019. This set over 180 actions and defined the steps to implement them for all government departments. Needless to say, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport figures prominently.

The areas affected range from electric vehicles (7 actions), biofuels (1 action), regulation and fiscal measures (7 actions) and empowering modal shift and sharing economy in transport (16 actions).

Cycling featured prominently and Maynooth Cycling Campaign warmly welcomes the proposal for 10% transport expenditure on cycling. The deadline of 4th quarter in 2020 was a cause of some concern but on reflection it will take some time to ramp up the design, public consultation and construction before facilities appear on the ground. There is also a commitment to complete the recommendations on Smarter Travel and the National Cycle Policy Framework which date back to 2009. We also welcome the proposal to set up a cycling unit in the NTA as a consequence of ramping up additional funding.

However, we were disappointed that the appointment of a National Cycling Officer in the Department of Transport was not included as that is where the key decisions are made and the key priorities are set. Unless there is someone at a high level of management to drive the process there, there is concern that the existing pro-car ethos in the department will continue to hamper and postpone the development of cycling nationally.

It is also disappointing that county towns the larger urban centres in counties (outside of cities) appear to have been overlooked and that mention of walking does not warrant a higher priority.

There is also concern that no explicit focus on travel to school and the problems caused by the school run.

There is frequent use of words like "assess", "develop" and "where feasible" so much more work is required to deliver the decarbonisation of our transport system. Nevertheless, it is an landmark document and is a sea-change in our attempts to belatedly address the challenge of climate change.

Celbridge Road Active Travel

In their reports, the Citizen's Assembly and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Change recognised the need to prioritise active travel – walking and cycling – over motorised transport. This has now been recognised by government in the Climate Action Plan and will lead to an approximate tenfold increase in the funding for cycling nationally which will also impact on walking.

The implications for Celbridge Road is that lack of funding can no longer be blamed for building low quality infrastructure. What will be required in the future by our elected councillors is a commitment to high quality and to spend the available funding provided, a commitment which has been lacking in the past.

Electric Scooters

In recent months, an increasing number of electric scooters have appeared in our towns and cities and have been the cause of criticism in some quarters because of their use on footpaths and their speed. Maynooth Cycling Campaign and Cyclist.ie welcome their appearance but like bicycles, if used in close proximity to pedestrians, users need to exercise care. They are part of the “micromobility” movement where people are seeking out more space efficient and environmentally friendly methods of travel than private cars. Like users of mobility scooters, tricycles and skaters, they will be welcome to use high quality cycle facilities.

Electric Vehicles

The Climate Plan forecast almost 1 million electric vehicles on the road in a decade which will require a lot of additional charging point. When they began to install them in the UK, the authorities faced opposition because of locating the units on footpaths – often on narrow footpaths. Kildare County Council should ensure that space for such units should be taken from the space for vehicles rather than for walking or cycling.

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 Cyclist Advocacy Network and through it to the European