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Construction of the Boyne Greenway Drogheda to Mornington, Co Meath and Co Louth

9 September 2020

I am writing today to declare my utmost support for the Boyne Greenway. I believe that it is imperative in these current social and economic times that this piece of public infrastructure is built in the Drogheda area. There are a vast number of reasons for this – some of which I have outlined below.

In late 2019 Meath County Council conducted a public consultation which received over 2,700 submissions **96% of which were enthusiastically in support of the Greenway**. There is a clear consensus from the general public on whether the greenway should be built. It would be disappointing if the small number of people against the greenway were to win out. I do not doubt that some of their objections may be legitimate however no issue is too great that a solution can't be found.

It's government policy – nationally and locally

The new programme for government sets out a massive shift in walking and cycling funding. It includes a planned investment of just under €1 million per day for every day the coalition government is in existence. We have seen some great initiatives by local authorities in other areas of the country on cycling and walking infrastructure in the past few months since the Coronavirus crisis hit such as the Coastal Mobility Interventions in Dún Laoghaire. It is time that Drogheda delivered on its obligations.

The R150 / R151 (Drogheda to Mornington Road) in its current state can be very intimidating at times for people cycling and walking. There is no footpath linking Drogheda to Mornington and as someone who cycles this road very regularly, it can be scary for cyclists with cars speeding and not giving safe clearance when overtaking. Between 2005 and 2016, there has been 1 fatal accident, 3 serious accidents and 34 casualties arising from accidents. However, even with these apparent dangers for cyclists and pedestrians, the road is still well-used by this group which shows a clear appetite and good reason to construct a greenway here.

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The road in its current state is not adequately designed for active travel. A footpath or any cycling infrastructure doesn't exist along most of the road. With several schools located along this road, students should be provided with a safe way to and from their school that promotes active travel. The greenway will increase the number of children using active transport to school. Unless the cycling or pedestrian network is suitable for all ages people won't be enticed out of their cars.

Laytown, Bettytown, Mornington and South Drogheda have been experiencing a population explosion. Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington's population alone is set to increase by 60% from 11,872 (CSO 2016) to 19,000 by 2025. Despite the projected increase in population the cycle and pedestrian infrastructure is very poor or simply doesn't exist in many cases. For these new housing developments to be successful and for people to have a higher quality of life in the area needs amenities such as cycling infrastructure, public walkways etc... The greenway would cover many of these areas. The last time there was significant housing development in this region there was little to no investment that promoted active travel. There must be this time around.

Along with the population increase, school populations in the vicinity of the Grammar School are exploding – 1,000 more students will be attending schools on Mill Road in the next 4 years. As mentioned previously there is no continuous footpath from these schools into Drogheda town – this is simply not right.

Connectivity with other greenways and cyclings routes.

If this project goes ahead, it will assist in other developments in Fingal, Meath and Louth. Recently the government announced it is to spend €153,000 building a 54km grey way cycle track along the former Drogheda to Dundalk road (N1/R132). Hopefully, this will give a greater impetus to invest in further cycling infrastructure in the region. It would be great to see all of the major population centres of the North East connected via active travel. The greenway would do this if it is given the go-ahead.

Best international practice.

The coastlines of France, the Netherlands and many other European countries have cycle routes on the majority of coastline in their countries. We can see during the current pandemic how these countries are benefiting from investing years ago in outdoor public amenities.

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Tourism Development

It will be fundamental in the development of a tourism offering for East Meath and Drogheda. It is key to the development of Boyne Valley Tourism. It will assist in the development of local employment, bike shops, coffee houses and restaurants and overnight accommodation. With holidaying at home becoming the norm in these times it is important that Drogheda and the northeast region can improve its tourist offering.

Thank you for reading my submission, I hope you will consider the points I have made in making a decision. It would be a great outcome for Drogheda and the North East region if this project is given the go-ahead.

Yours sincerely

