



Cyclist.ie Rural Cycling Collective

VISION FOR CYCLING IN RURAL IRELAND

OUR VISION

IMAGINE AN IRELAND
WHERE CYCLING IS
ONCE AGAIN A NORMAL
WAY TO GO TO
SCHOOL, TO WORK, TO
THE SHOPS, TO VISIT
FRIENDS, TO EXPLORE.....



Our vision is that all rural communities in Ireland – encompassing towns, villages and rural areas – will be bicycle friendly.

Cycling will be a normal way to get about, especially for short trips.

Next to walking, cycling will be the most popular means of getting to school, both primary and secondary, and children will be able to reconnect with their neighbourhoods and local environments on their daily trips.

Shopping by bike will be as normal as it is in many of the Northern European cycling friendly countries, and our villages will be bustling with bicycles.

The bicycle will be the transport mode of choice for all ages, as well as a way to explore our beautiful countryside on recreational trips and for visitors.

We will have a healthier and happier population with consequent positive benefits on the health service.

We will all gain economically as cycling reduces our fuel costs and helps in easing congestion in local towns.

Imagine the greener, cleaner, healthier, happier world we could create.



Cyclist.ie is the umbrella body of cycle campaigning and advocacy groups in Ireland. Cyclist.ie's Rural Cycling Collective is the expanding array of small groups and individuals within the wider Cyclist.ie advocacy network with a focus on making rural communities (towns, villages and rural roads) cycle-friendly for all ages and abilities.

It aims to rebalance debates on active travel so that everyday journeys by bike within rural Ireland are fully addressed.

This document is just the start of the conversation. We want more people to get involved, to be part of it, to own this, to want to help make it happen

We want this to be all of our vision – an Ireland where so many more of us are cycling much more often.

OUR MISSION

To enable, promote and celebrate everyday cycling in smaller cities, towns, and their surroundings.

To help create cleaner, greener, healthier places for us to live.

To give our smaller rural cycling groups a voice by working together for a national transition towards a cycle-friendly Ireland.

To collaborate with all stakeholders, organise actions, make some noise and have fun along the way.



Our 8 priorities focus on accelerating a transition to a cycle-friendly society in a manner that ensures social equity and fairness, and supports a healthier and cleaner environment.

We call on our local and national government to:

1. Create an environment in our cities, towns, villages and rural roads where **CYCLISTS ARE EXPECTED AND RESPECTED**

2. Create and map a network of useful, **CONNECTED CYCLE ROUTES** throughout Local Authority Areas

3. Implement **BEST PRACTICE DESIGN** to ensure routes are safe and comfortable for cyclists of all ages and abilities

4. Prioritise **SAFE CYCLE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS** and car free zones at school gates

5. **LOWER SPEED LIMITS** to make our roads and streets safer and more accessible for everyone, and to reduce casualties

6. Ensure clear and timely **ACCESS TO FUNDING**, by improving capacity at all levels of local and national government

7. **COLLABORATE WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS** – including cycling and community groups – at all stages of planning and design

8. Provide **CYCLE TRAINING** for all ages, especially children

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

EACH OF THESE ACTIONS, BIG OR SMALL, PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN.

Add your name to show the government that we want this vision to become a reality – go to www.cyclist.ie for more info

Help others get started – offer to bike buddy or lend someone cycling equipment to let them try before they buy.

Invite friends to join you on locally organised group fun cycles and events.

Join your local community cycling group or workshop or contact Cyclist.ie to find out if there is a group near or for help to start your own.

Engage with the planning and design of routes in your area.

Adopt a local councillor and make sure they are aware of what's possible and what you want.

Organise events or rides (of any size – even just you and a friend) that encourage and enable more people to cycle more often.

Have conversations with family, friends, colleagues, people in your community about cycling – what are their barriers? can you help them overcome them?

Just cycle – wherever and whenever you can!



THE DETAIL

1. CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN OUR CITIES, TOWNS, VILLAGES AND RURAL ROADS WHERE CYCLISTS ARE EXPECTED AND RESPECTED

People on bicycles of all types need to be recognised as an essential and integral part of our transport future. People cycling the roads and streets of Ireland should feel that they are expected and respected by all road users.

Signs and road markings have been shown to influence driver behaviour; the use of relevant road markings and signs (such as the 1.5m passing distance), alongside critical advertising and promotion, can help create the environment and culture we need to allow cyclists to feel expected and respected. These signs would be particularly important on all new and existing on-road cycle routes.

The installation of relevant signs, road markings and bike parking, along with awareness campaigns, would represent 'quick wins' for Local Authorities and would pave the way for further appropriate measures and infrastructural changes.

A specific cycling module within the Road Safety Authority's driving test process needs to be introduced. Vehicle Driver training must include a cycling awareness module, to ensure that cyclists are respected on our roads.

The availability of appropriate cycle parking facilities at either end of a trip demonstrates that cyclists are both expected and welcome, and can have a significant influence on the decision to travel by bike. The absence of such facilities, and the consequent risk of vandalism and theft, has been shown to undermine the desire to travel by bike, and thus reduce investment in the overall network infrastructure.

People on bicycles need to be expected and respected on our roads if we want to see a real shift in the way people travel.

2. CREATE AND MAP A NETWORK OF USEFUL, CONNECTED, CYCLE ROUTES THROUGHOUT LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS

- Map all existing cycle routes;
- Map and plan proposed strategic networks of routes in local areas;
- Design & build the proposed routes and improve existing routes where needed;
- Include cycle infrastructure in the design/upgrade of all streets and roads;

Existing routes

Some signed cycle routes and greenways already exist in various parts of the country. These need to be mapped and promoted, to communicate to the public where routes are already suitable for active travel and cycle tourism, and to give users the information they require to make decisions about how to travel. Such mapping to include all routes through towns and villages.

As part of this mapping process a review should be undertaken to assess the quality of those existing routes, and to identify any areas for improvement.

The mapping of existing routes provides a basis for establishing a clear understanding of the existing infrastructure, the gaps in existing provision, and those routes or sections of route which do not currently conform to minimum standards of provision.

Proposed routes

A network of proposed strategic routes should be identified by each local authority for each key city/town/village, as well as linking towns and villages and other key trip attractors and trip generators such as workplaces, schools, community centres, cultural centres, train/bus stations/stops, shopping centres, hospitals etc.

These networks of routes should be identified in full consultation with relevant cycling and community groups and the wider public. Local user knowledge is a key source of information, and views from relevant stakeholders should be sought at all stages of the process.

Route planning and design should incorporate the use of quiet/parallel streets wherever possible, improve the permeability of our towns, villages and new developments and influence more holistic planning approaches that ensure schools, services and amenities are walk/cycle-able from towns and villages.

Cycling, as outlined in the 2020 Programme for Government (PfG) is recognised as an essential element of our transport future, and investment in improved routes needs to be accelerated. The Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP), currently being drafted by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, will need to reflect the ambitious commitments in the PfG and build on the current (2009) National Cycle Policy Framework.

The existence of a network map can help to ensure any future funds are strategically invested and enables engagement with all of those people needed to make the networks a reality. These include politicians, engineers, funding bodies and the public, as well as the development of partnerships with health, education, commercial, voluntary and other relevant bodies.

Strategic network maps are invaluable tools in enabling future improvement programmes to be developed, prioritised and managed. This would represent a shift from the ad hoc provision for cycling and help to ensure that all infrastructure will contribute to the development of a comprehensive network. The prioritisation of routes should be carried out in consultation with relevant stakeholders and be used by the local authority to inform annual investment in cycling.

The mapping of a strategic network of cycle routes enables future plans to be communicated and consulted on, funding to be accessed and usable, useful routes to be built.

3. IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICE DESIGN TO ENSURE ROUTES ARE SAFE AND COMFORTABLE FOR CYCLISTS OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

It is important that any designs put in place are safe and comfortable for cyclists of all ages and abilities, and conform to best practice design. People need to be confident when they use a route, that it is safe. Ireland needs to learn from places that already have a cycling culture.

To ensure that the best designs and project processes are put in place all Local Authorities need to increase their capacity to design high quality routes. This means that personnel such as area engineers, project personnel, consultants, need to be fully trained in the latest developments and design processes. This training needs to be embedded within the system from the top down, as part of continuing professional development. The existing National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets, and the Transport Infrastructure Ireland's (TII) Rural Cycleway Design document go some way in supporting engineers, but they must be updated to reflect the latest thinking in designing for people on bikes. The design process must also incorporate the knowledge and perspectives of cycling advocates so as to achieve the best quality designs. Cyclist.ie's Rural Cycling Collective supports the Cycling for All national campaign.

A route is only as good as its weakest link. Often those weakest links are at junctions. Cyclists must not be 'abandoned by the infrastructure at any point along a route but particularly at junctions, as a high proportion of collisions involving cyclists occur there. Junction design must consider legibility, visibility and the minimisation of delay for cyclists.

The reallocation of road space required to provide high quality space for cycling will require strong (cross-party) political support. These decisions may often be initially unpopular and difficult to make but have repeatedly been shown to bring benefits not just to people who want to cycle but to the whole community.

Best practice designs are those that are safe, attractive, comfortable, coherent and direct and will encourage and enable more people to cycle everyday.

4. PRIORITISE SAFE CYCLE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS AND CAR FREE ZONES AT SCHOOL GATES

Our children need to be active and healthy. A simple way to support this, is to provide footways and cycleways that allow for the opportunity to replace a car journey to school with an active alternative. In addition all schools should provide adequate covered bicycle parking.

The school-gate vehicle issue also needs to be addressed, to reduce congestion, to reduce air pollution, and to enable children to be safe within the school vicinity.

We would like to see widespread adoption of the 'School Streets' Initiative where roads outside schools are temporarily transformed into car-free, pedestrian and safe school zones to create a safer and more environmentally friendly space outside the school.

We fully support the An Taisce Green Schools project and recommend that all schools avail of the resources and expertise provided.

Safe routes to schools and car free zones at school gates would have a significant impact on the activity levels, health and wellbeing of our children.

5. LOWER SPEED LIMITS TO MAKE OUR ROADS AND STREETS SAFER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR EVERYONE, AND TO REDUCE CASUALTIES

- Reduce urban speed limits to 30kph
- Reduce speed limits to 30kph near all schools
- Review and reclassify key minor rural roads to ‘Rothar Roads’* and reduce speeds
- Review and lower speeds on coastal/tourism access roads with peak-season traffic and little or no infrastructure for people on foot or bike

As former Transport Minister Paschal Donohoe stated; ‘Speed limits should not be seen by drivers as setting a target speed, or as being appropriate in all conditions, nor are they intended to be. Drivers must take responsibility to drive at a safe speed appropriate to the particular road and surrounding environment, while not exceeding the posted speed limit’.

Speed has a direct influence on the occurrence of traffic crashes and on their severity and setting speed limits is known to be one of the most effective measures in helping to reduce road traffic injuries and deaths.

A review of speed limits should include an approach to road management that shifts from multi-functional roads to roads with designated functions.

Built up areas and schools

We want to see 30 km/h limits, not just in residential estates but in city, town and village centres. 30 km/h speed limits help to make the roads safer and more pleasant for cyclists, pedestrians and other road users.

‘Rothar Roads’

– minor roads where bicycles are expected and respected and where drivers who use them travel at a speed that would allow them to react to a cyclist and walker around any corner.

Minor rural roads

In rural Ireland we have an enviable dense network of smaller roads potentially safe and great for cycling. These are lightly trafficked, generally have good surfaces and already go virtually everywhere.

What we need is for key minor rural roads to be reclassified as *‘Rothar Roads’ – roads where bicycles and pedestrians are expected and respected. What we need is for the people who use them to travel at a speed that would allow them to react to a cyclist around any corner.

The current default speed limit on these minor rural roads is 80 km/h. The current recommendations for these narrow country roads is the rural speed limit sign – the ‘white circle with black diagonal stripes’. This sign means that drivers must use their judgement when using the road in question but must not exceed 80km/h in any event.

We propose nationally that this RUS Sign 041A is reclassified to indicate a new lower default speed limit.

Coastal/ tourism access roads

As the tourism industry continues to develop in Ireland, speed limits along roads that lead to areas of attraction – coastal routes, areas of historical interest, hill walks, etc must be reviewed. With tourists driving trails like ‘The Wild Atlantic Way’ and ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ we are seeing more and more traffic on these narrow rural roads that have little or no pedestrian or cycling infrastructure. Many of these roads are not equipped for the volume of traffic they receive in peak season. The impact on people walking and cycling needs to be part of the planning process when identifying these driving trails and speed reductions or infrastructure should be implemented where necessary to help ensure the safety of all road users..

Lower speed limits help to reduce casualties on our roads, and make our roads and streets safer for all road users, of all ages and mobility.

6. ENSURE CLEAR, TIMELY ACCESS TO FUNDING

The agreed 2020 Programme for Government (PfG) guarantees increased funding for cycling and walking schemes. The EU has also increased available funding for cycling. Local Authorities must improve their capacity to access all available funding, complemented by their own resources, and spend strategically to achieve the modal shift needed to meet government targets.

A corollary of this is that plans and policies need to be developed and agreed to enable increases in cycling and walking. The existence of a strategic cycle network map would enable authorities to gain access to a broader use of funds to develop networks, allowing other departments within the local authority, and outside organisations, to identify overlaps with their programmes.

For example, the resurfacing programme could be used to alter road markings to create cycle infrastructure; toucan crossings could be installed as part of a road safety junction improvement scheme; or new cycleways could be included from the outset as part of new developments.

The delivery of cycle infrastructure could also be achieved through non-highway functions and organisations, such as public realm and environmental management projects and new developments, including developer contributions.

The design or redesign of all streets or roads in Ireland should include consideration of the needs of cyclists, as outlined clearly in the National Cycle Manual. This inclusion will also contribute to the delivery of additional cycle routes beyond what is achievable within the cycling budget alone.

Local Authorities need to capitalise on all available funding opportunities to create the environments that will allow more people to walk and cycle more often.

7. COLLABORATE WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS – INCLUDING CYCLING AND COMMUNITY GROUPS AT EVERY STAGE OF PLANNING AND DESIGN

Projects need to be discussed openly with all stakeholders at the different stages of pre-planning, planning and design. Ongoing, structured and constructive dialogue with the ultimate users of the transport infrastructure will ensure that better quality facilities are created.

Cycling advocacy organisations need to be represented on the relevant Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) of each Local Authority – most likely the Transport & Infrastructure SPC. This means that, from the outset, Local Authority policies and practices acknowledge the need to cater properly for walking and cycling.

Meaningful engagement with stakeholders has been shown to result in better design and better schemes. As such, it is best carried out at several stages – from the development of the network down to individual schemes.

Though the process may require more investment, good consultation at early stages can help to avoid conflict and poor decisions and will gain greater community support for any new scheme.

There are many resources available which provide detailed advice on successful strategies and techniques for involving, engaging, and consulting with cycling stakeholders and the wider public.

The more opportunity people have to influence and shape cycling schemes for their local area, the more likely they will be to use them.

8. PROVIDE CYCLE TRAINING FOR ALL AGES, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN

Cycling on Ireland's streets and roads requires standard cycling skills. Cycle Right, the National Standard for Cycle Training provides participants with the necessary skills. Built upon similar principles to training for motorcycle riders and car drivers, it helps cyclists to assess risks and to adopt the best road positions while out on the road.

We want free cycle training for all school children, to encourage them to cycle safely into adulthood.

We also need cycle training to be widely available to adults – those that are new to cycling, returning to cycling, or want to improve.

All local authorities need to avail of grants for cycle training for all ages, but particularly children.

Groups can also access other cycle training programmes operated by Cycling Ireland.

We propose cycle training/cycle awareness training is incorporated into the RSA Driving Test and the relevant professional driver training programmes – bus drivers, taxi drivers, delivery drivers and others – to better understand cyclist behaviour and encourage cyclist-friendly driving. – see Priority 1 above.

Beyond this, cyclist awareness training must be provided for street planners, local authority area engineers and other relevant officers to aid understanding of the needs of people on bicycles.

Cycle training for all has a proven track record in helping to keep our roads safer.

REFERENCES +LINKS

Cycle Right, the National Standard for Cycle Training –
<http://www.cyclerright.ie/>

Cycling Ireland cycle training programmes –
<http://www.cyclingireland.ie/page/programmes>

Cycling for all – <http://cyclingforall.ie/>

Cyclist.ie – the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network – <http://cyclist.ie/>

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets – <https://www.dmurs.ie/>

European Cyclists' Federation – <https://ecf.com/>

EU funding – <https://ecf.com/news-and-events/news/cycling-breakthrough-eu-covid-19-recovery-plan>

Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits –
<https://www.rsa.ie/ga-IE/Utility/Nuacht/2015/Minister-Donohoe-publishes-new-Guidelines-for-Setting-and-Managing-Speed-Limits/>

National Cycling Manual – <https://www.cyclemanual.ie/>

National Cycle Policy Framework –
<http://www.smartertravel.ie/content/national-cycle-policy>

Programme for Government – https://www.greenparty.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ProgrammeforGovernment_June2020_Final_accessible.pdf

Rothar Roads –
<https://leitrimcyclingfestival.com/2019/06/11/why-cycling-matters-and-why-greenways-are-not-the-only-answer/>

RUS Sign 041A– <https://www.speedlimits.ie/>

Speed limits and injuries – <https://www.itf-oecd.org/lower-speed-means-fewer-road-deaths>

Sustainable Mobility Policy submission –
<https://cyclist.ie/2020/03/cyclist-ie-submissions-on-new-sustainable-mobility-policy/>.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Rural Cycleway Design –
<https://www.tiipublications.ie/library/DN-GEO-03047-02.pdf>



HOW TO REACH US

www.cyclist.ie/contact-us

www.cyclist.ie/ruralvision

This document was created through the collaborative efforts of people from all over the country with a shared vision for cycling in Ireland. Thank you to all who contributed.

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