



Opening Statement from I BIKE Dublin

Cycling in Dublin should not be the preserve of the brave and the foolhardy. We should aspire to a city where people of all ages and abilities can choose to cycle. The societal benefits are manifold - reduced congestion, reduced air pollution, reduced noise pollution, better physical health outcomes and better mental health outcomes. In the Netherlands 75% of secondary school children cycle to school. In Ireland that number is 2.1%.

I BIKE Dublin was established in 2017 as a Direct Action group which advocates for safe cycling infrastructure for people who cycle in Dublin. Our aim from the outset has been to change the public discourse around cycling, to influence public opinion and to draw attention to the daily challenges faced by people who cycle as a result of poor infrastructure and as a consequence of the illegal use of what infrastructure does exist. And while our focus is on Dublin - the same issues and the same principles apply to towns and cities throughout the country.

It has recently been calculated that there are upwards of [30 separate organisations](#) - local authorities, government departments, state agencies, task forces and private companies - that share responsibility for transport in Dublin. For campaign groups, this presents an intractable problem - every time we think we have found the body responsible for a particular issue, we are referred to another body. Our solution and our campaign method has been to expose the problems at source and force a decision.

By way of example, the problem of coach parking on the Alfie Byrne Road cycle lane during large events was tossed around between Dublin City Council, An Garda Síochána and the National Transport Authority. This persisted until we forced the issue by creating a human chain of 75 people along the cycle lane during a recent event in Croke Park. Dublin City Council have since installed bollards along the route, the NTA have allowed coaches to park in their coach park on Sheriff Street, and Croke Park have amended their travel advice on their website accordingly.

Our actions have directly resulted in many incremental improvements such as the installation of wands and orcas in hotspots. More recently, following the death of Neeraj Jain earlier this month, our actions have shifted towards highlighting the failures of the authorities who should be planning for, providing funding for, and enforcing the rules that will enable a safe cycling city. The growing number of people joining our actions is testament to the growing exasperation at the current environment for people cycling in Dublin.

Tens of thousands of people get on their bikes in Dublin every day. Tens of thousands more would do so if they felt it was safe.

Earlier this year, Moyagh Murdock, CEO of the Road Safety Authority claimed that Ireland has the second safest roads in Europe. If our roads are so safe, why are so few children and women cycling?

In 2013 the National Transport Authority published the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan. It promised 2,840 km of a comprehensive, integrated network of safe cycling routes. To date, there is no sign of this plan being implemented. Over the last two years, the managements of over 100 organisations - including Google, Vodafone, Workday, Trinity College, Dublin Chamber of Commerce

and SIPTU - have called on the Minister for Transport and the National Roads Authority to progress these plans in order to provide their workers, students and members with safe routes to commute by bike. Over 400,000 people are represented by their employers, places of education or trade unions in this call, yet there has been no discernible action to date. Meanwhile, the cabinet has approved almost €1 billion in funding for new roads projects in the last month alone.

Cycling infrastructure is relatively cheap to build and has a very high return on investment. London's transport authority reports ratios of 20:1 for cycling investment. The Netherlands spends €500m per year on cycling infrastructure, which generates €19bn in health benefits alone – a 38:1 return on investment. We need the government to show it is serious about funding cycling by allocating at least 10% of the land transport budget towards cycling infrastructure as recommended by the United Nations Environment Programme and as endorsed by the Citizens' Assembly, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Change and, most recently, by the Department of Transport itself in a report on last year's ministerial discussion on smarter travel.

We also need to see leadership from the government to ensure that the various bodies with responsibility for transport and road safety are at one on the urgency of delivering safe cycling infrastructure.

We refer the committee to presentations made to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action by delegates from the Velo-City Conference on June 26th. One of the key recommendations was to provide grants for e-bikes. E-bikes are particularly important for older people, offering a cheaper alternative to running a car. If the infrastructure is safe, it could extend active life and health by many years.

Dublin can lead the way and be an exemplar for safe cycling infrastructure throughout the country. This isn't about making Dublin a cycling city, this is about recognising that Dublin already is a cycling city, and providing the infrastructure to match.