

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM IOMPAR, TURASÓIREACHT AGUS SPÓRT

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT, TOURISM AND SPORT

Dé Céadaoin, 20 Samhain 2019

Wednesday, 20 November 2019

The Joint Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies

Seanadóirí / Senators

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| Marc MacSharry, | Mark Daly, |
| Catherine Murphy, | Frank Feighan, |
| Kevin O’Keeffe. | John O’Mahony. |

I láthair / In attendance: Deputies Ciarán Cannon and Eamon Ryan and Senator Alice-Mary Higgins.

Teachta / Deputy Fergus O’Dowd sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Business of Joint Committee

Chairman: I apologise for being late but there was a delay in the port tunnel this morning. That is why we were all held up.

Senator Mark Daly: Put that on the agenda.

Chairman: I would have, except it was a short delay. Apologies have been received from Deputy Ruth Coppinger. I remind members to turn off their mobile phones as they interfere with the recording equipment. We will now go into private session.

The joint committee went into private session at 9.37 a.m. and resumed in public session at 9.53 a.m.

Chairman: I thank the Vice Chairman, Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe, for stepping in and helping for a few meetings when I was indisposed due to a broken leg. I appreciate it very much. I remind members and those in the Public Gallery to switch off their mobile phones as they interfere with the recording and broadcasting systems.

The committee has agreed to write to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, the FAI and Sport Ireland to say the committee is available at short notice to deal with the issues that arise from the KOSI report and other reports as soon as they are available, and that we are very anxious, as are the public, that they would be completed under due process. We are ready, willing and able to do our job as soon as they are available to us.

Cycling Policy: Discussion

Chairman: We deal first with the Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and the national cycling strategy. I welcome to the meeting the following representatives of cycling groups: from Cyclist.ie, Dr. Damien Ó Tuama, national cycling co-ordinator, and Ms Mairéad Forsythe of Love30 on behalf of Cyclist.ie; from the Dublin Cycling Campaign, Mr. Kevin Baker, chairperson, and Ms Louise Williams, vice chairperson; and from I BIKE Dublin, Mr. Ciarán Ferrie and Mr. Alan Downey.

I draw the attention of witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to so do, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given, and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I call Dr. Ó Tuama to make his opening statement.

Dr. Damien Ó Tuama: I am grateful for the invitation. Is mise an comhordaitheoir ro-

thaíochta náisiúnta le Cyclist.ie. Gabhaim buíochas as ucht an gcuireadh teacht anseo inniu. I am the national cycling co-ordinator with Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network, which is the umbrella body of cycle campaigning in Ireland. The network comprises 25 groups and is a mixture of urban groups, rural groups and greenway groups stretching from the Inishowen peninsula down to Clonakilty, west Kerry, Connemara and everywhere in between, so we have all the corners covered. We are the member for Ireland of the European Cyclists' Federation, which advocates at a European level at the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

Our vision is that cycling becomes a normal part of everyday life for all ages and abilities in Ireland in a way that it is in many other European countries. For every different type of trip, whether cycling to school or college, heading to work, going to sports training and matches, going shopping or going to cultural events or other leisure and recreation outings, we cover all the different types of cycling. We are particularly conscious that in many parts of Ireland, particularly rural Ireland, the number of children cycling to school has fallen off a cliff in the past 30 years. For example, in 1986, when I was in secondary school myself, more than 19,000 girls cycled to secondary school, whereas according to the most recent census data from 2016, only 694 secondary school girls were cycling to school and more than 2,000 were driving themselves to school. It is shocking. Something is seriously amiss.

On the regulatory side, we welcome the new regulation regarding the dangerous overtaking of cyclists announced on 11 November 2019 by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Deputy Ross. We are cautiously optimistic there will be serious and systematic enforcement of the new regulations by An Garda Síochána. The impact the new laws will have on driver behaviour is critically linked to the enforcement regime to be employed by the Garda.

We sent a detailed submission to the committee at the beginning of October. The main point is that the proper resourcing and development of cycling nationally, as proposed in many Government strategies, can have wide-ranging positive impacts on many aspects of society. Increased everyday cycling levels will improve national health and well-being, including mental health. We are very conscious that one in four children and six in ten adults are currently obese or overweight, as noted in the Healthy Ireland obesity policy in 2016. Increased everyday cycling levels will also provide an improved public environment in villages, towns and cities throughout the country and, critically, they will support national competitiveness by reducing congestion. We know from a report published a number of years ago that congestion in the greater Dublin area currently costs €350 million per year. Increased cycling also supports local economies and increases tourism. Critically, it will also support Ireland meeting its climate change targets as the transport sector currently accounts for approximately 20% of our carbon emissions.

The €12.6 million allocated for cycling in 2018 is equivalent to approximately 1% of the total transport budget. This should be increased tenfold in order to bring Ireland's cycling infrastructure and investment into line with that of our EU neighbours and realise other broad societal benefits. Furthermore, investment in cycling provides generously high rates of return on investment compared with other public transport investments. *Cyclist.ie* calls on the Government to realise these economic and social benefits by increasing, significantly and immediately, the funding allocated to cycling both as a transport mode and a leisure activity. We call on the Government to follow its own recommendation and invest a minimum of 10% of the capital budget for land transport in cycling from 2020.

We recommend a few areas on which cycling funding should be spent. First is the provision

of high-quality cycling infrastructure, which is being developed across Europe. Cities such as Brussels, to which many Members travel regularly, Paris and London were dominated by car traffic over the last five decades. They have been transformed in the past ten years by the provision of high-quality infrastructure, pedestrianisation and taking cars out of the city centre. Even Paris's big, hostile roundabouts are being converted to become pedestrian and cycle friendly. We see e-bikes as an important part of the future of mobility and a subsidy should be provided for purchasing them. There might be competition between Cork, Drogheda and Kinsale to become the e-bike capital of Ireland or even Europe. E-bikes have huge potential. It is also essential that we set up a national cycling office in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. It does not have one at the moment, leaving a big gap in the infrastructure to create change. Many other interventions could be introduced to make cycling safe and normal, such as contraflow arrangements for cyclists, which are very common in Brussels; good traffic-free links to sports grounds, GAA pitches, stadiums, towns and suburbs; and speed enforcement.

On my behalf and on behalf of Ms Forsythe and *cyclist.ie*, I thank the Deputies and Senators for their attention. We are happy to answer any questions from the committee.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Ó Tuama. I call Mr. Kevin Baker.

Mr. Kevin Baker: I thank the Chairman and members of the committee for inviting Dublin Cycling Campaign here today. I am the chairperson of Dublin Cycling Campaign and am accompanied by its vice-chairperson, Ms Louise Williams. Dublin Cycling Campaign is a membership based charity in Dublin which promotes cycling and is 100% run by volunteers. We have a shared vision for a more liveable Dublin where people of all ages and abilities can cycle safely and comfortably. We believe that if more people in Ireland cycled, society would be stronger, happier and healthier. Our contribution will obviously have a Dublin and urban focus but it can also be applied to many towns and urban centres around Ireland.

Why should we promote cycling? Cycling is an amazing tool that tackles many of the problems Irish people face. It is a congestion-beating mode of transport. Congestion is worsening and is stealing valuable hours from people's lives and destroying their quality of life. Walking and cycling both have a major role to play in improving public health in Ireland through exercise, as well as reducing air and noise pollution. Cycling can tackle social isolation and social accessibility. It is a cheap and easy mode of transport that connects people to vital services or to work. Cycling can also tackle our climate change objectives. When towns and cities are designed with walking and cycling in mind, as has happened in Seville, Strasbourg and Paris, people of all ages and abilities cycle, either for local trips or to connect to public transport for longer trips. The more the Government does to promote cycling, the stronger, happier and healthier Irish society will be.

People cycling face many problems that, if tackled, would enable and encourage more people to cycle. Dangerous overtaking is a serious issue and our members report instances of the practice on a regular basis. Many of these incidents are backed up by footage recorded on helmet cameras, which is terrifying to watch. There are three pillars involved in tackling this issue, namely, awareness, legislation and enforcement. The Road Safety Authority's, RSA, awareness campaign was the first step in dealing with this, and the new regulations introduced by the Minister were the second. The third and final step is strong enforcement of the new regulations. An Garda Síochána needs to be given the resources and training to enforce this new legislation. In the UK, West Midlands Police has seen great results from its Operation Close Pass. When a police officer is close passed on a bike, the police either offer to educate the driver or take the driver to court. An Garda Síochána could also allow members of the public to upload their

video footage to aid in prosecutions, as London's Metropolitan Police Service does.

Speeding is another issue people cycling face. The Road Safety Authority's Free Speed Survey 2018 revealed that 98% of drivers in urban areas break the 30 km/h speed limits, and 81% speed in urban 50 km/h zones. This level of speeding is a major cause for concern for people who cycle, parents who bring their children to school and older people who should feel safe in their neighbourhoods.

Harassment and intimidation of people cycling is also a major concern for us. We are concerned at the level of verbal and physical harassment targeted at people cycling. We regularly hear reports of intimidation, with a number of women in the campaign subjected to both verbal and physical gendered abuse. We need strong political leadership on this issue in order to tackle it.

The number one thing the Government can do to promote cycling is build a network of segregated cycle lanes which protect people from motor traffic. The existing painted cycle lanes do not offer enough protection to people who cycle or provide enough incentive or confidence to people who would like to cycle but are too nervous or afraid to do so. Wherever high-quality segregated cycle lanes have been built, we have seen huge increases in the numbers and diversity of people cycling. All the cities in Ireland and all major towns in the greater Dublin area have plans for cycling networks - we just need to build them.

BusConnects Dublin offers a huge opportunity as it proposes to deliver 200 km of segregated cycle tracks. This will be transformative for Dublin and will provide the backbone of the greater Dublin area cycle network. The project is not without its challenges, which must be worked through. BusConnects alone will not deliver a cycling network for Dublin. We also need to complete many other projects, including the Liffey cycle route, the Dodder greenway, the Santry greenway, and the east coast trail. One of the issues in delivering these routes is the long lead-in time for infrastructure projects. The Liffey cycle route was first planned eight years ago and is no closer to construction today than it was then. The Royal Canal greenway in Dublin received planning permission in 2015 but the majority of it has not started construction yet. All these projects have been delayed again and again because of a lack of capital funding or human resources in either Dublin City Council or the National Transport Authority, NTA. Allocating 10% of the land transport budget for cycling, as recommended by the Joint Committee on Climate Action, will provide the resources these organisations need to deliver this vital infrastructure.

I will talk briefly about heavy goods vehicles, HGVs, in urban areas. In April 2018, Harry Boland, a 19 year old engineering student in Trinity College Dublin, was killed by a left-turning truck on the Stillorgan Road. Similarly, Neeraj Jain, 34, who came to Ireland from India to study and work, was killed by a left-turning truck in Kilmainham while cycling to work. HGVs are a leading killer of people cycling in urban areas. Educating people about the blind spots of HGVs or adding more cameras and mirrors is not a systematically safe solution. People are human and will make mistakes, but mistakes should not get people killed on our roads. The EU is requiring new HGVs produced after 2021 to meet high direct-vision standards. This effectively means that there are no blind spots around the cab of the HGV, which significantly reduces the number of fatalities for people walking and cycling. The five-axle truck ban in Dublin city is hugely beneficial for people walking and cycling. The next step is to provide legislation which would allow local authorities to only permit trucks that meet these high standards in tight urban areas. Many of those details need to be worked out, but local authorities must be granted some powers from the Oireachtas in order to do that. I want to address the duty of the State to protect

life. On the night of Neeraj Jain's death 19 days ago, the cycling community and local residents held a vigil at the site of the collision. As we stood at the junction, we watched the traffic. Each local resident would tell a story about how they have almost been in a collision while walking or cycling at this junction. They told us that they have sent letters of complaint with regard to the traffic to Dublin City Council, An Garda Síochána and the Health and Safety Authority. The traffic around this area has only worsened because of the construction of the national children's hospital. The junction is poorly designed and does not meet modern road safety standards. The risk to life was evident to us. Given that complaints had already been expressed about that junction, we must ask if the State is failing in its most fundamental duties to protect life.

I thank the committee.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Baker. I now invite Mr. Ciarán Ferrie of I BIKE Dublin to give his opening statement.

Mr. Ciarán Ferrie: I thank the committee to present to it today on behalf of I BIKE Dublin. I am accompanied by my colleague, Mr. Alan Downey.

Cycling in Dublin should not be the preserve of the brave and the foolhardy. We should aspire to be a city where people of all ages and abilities can choose to cycle. The societal benefits are manifold, with reduced congestion and air and noise pollution, along with better physical and 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 to advocate for safe cycling infrastructure for people who cycle in Dublin. Our aim is to change the public discourse around cycling, influence public opinion and draw attention to the daily challenges faced by people who cycle as a result of poor infrastructure, as well as a consequence of the illegal use of what infrastructure does exist. While our focus is on Dublin, the same issues and principles apply to towns and cities across the country.

It has recently been calculated that upwards of 30 separate organisations comprising local authorities, Departments, State agencies, task forces and private companies share responsibility for transport in Dublin. For campaign groups and local communities, 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, as well as 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, NTA, with no one taking overall responsibility for it. 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 has since installed bollards along the route. The NTA has allowed coaches to park in its coach park on Sheriff Street while Croke Park has amended its travel advice on its website accordingly. The problem has been solved but it required direct action.

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 which should be planning for, providing funding for and enforcing the rules which will enable a safe

cycling city. The growing number of people joining our actions is testament to the growing exasperation with 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 NTA 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 past two years, the managements of over 100 organisations, including Google, Vodafone, Workday, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin Chamber of Commerce and SIPTU, have called on the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport 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 past month alone.

Cycling infrastructure is relatively cheap to build and has a high return on investment. London's transport authority reports ratios of 20:1 for cycling investment. The Netherlands spends €500 million per year on cycling infrastructure, which generates €19 billion 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 Action and, most recently, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport itself in a report on last year's ministerial discussion on smarter travel.

We also need to see leadership from the Government to ensure 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 26 June. One of its 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 is not about making Dublin a cycling city. This is about recognising that Dublin already is a cycling city and providing the infrastructure to match.

Chairman: In 2017, one in every ten road traffic fatalities was a cyclist. Last year, it was reduced to nine people who were killed cycling. This year, so far, the figure is nine again. It is a serious issue when a much higher percentage of cyclists are injured and killed than other road users. The witnesses' points are well made and well taken.

The second half of our meeting will involve the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the NTA. I want to see a consensus for change and all agencies working together. Obviously, education and awareness are important. Being able to see cyclists is important too. Quite often, when I drive home at night, I cannot see cyclists as, unfortunately, some of them wear dark clothes and come at one out of the blue at junctions. There is an issue about visibility,

awareness, better lighting and safer intersections.

I will allow Senator Mark Daly to ask the first question as he has another urgent meeting to attend.

Senator Mark Daly: I thank members for facilitating me.

Mr. Baker pointed out how action No. 97 of the climate action plan, the full implementation of the national cycle policy framework, states every local authority should set forth a clear pathway and timetable for the installation of dedicated cycling infrastructure. Mr. Ferrie pointed out the amount of money allocated towards road infrastructure. The local authorities do not seem to be clear from where the money is coming. Accordingly, the action plan put forward by the Government does not seem to have the money to back it up.

Have the witnesses any feedback on this from local authorities which are willing to put in the infrastructure and the necessary dedicated cycling infrastructure? While I am referring specifically to Dublin, in Kerry, for example, the plans put forward by the local authority to ensure they also comply with the framework have not been vetted. More importantly, the funding is not being put in place to match the ambition. There is a disconnect in that. Is that the feedback the witnesses are getting from local authorities?

Senator John O'Mahony: While this might appear to be a significant issue in urban areas, it is also an issue in rural areas. The witnesses' points are well made. They have pointed out the advantages of cycling in modern society. What is happening at the minute is there are plans and a lack of implementation on a transport network that was never designed for cyclists. That is the issue. It is intended to have cycle lanes on roads that are not wide enough. Everybody agrees on the need for cycling and the need to provide infrastructure and investment for cycling. The Chairman referred to the lack of visibility among cyclists. Does the cycling community have any responsibility for the current situation? Is the fault all one way?

Mr. Kevin Baker: The cycling community is not one group. We can try to encourage people as much as possible to light up their bikes. Dublin Cycling Campaign is running the Light up your Bike! campaign. We are distributing lights that were given to us by the RSA. Cyclists are required to have lights on their bikes after dark. The Garda can issue fines on the spot for a failure to do so and it should do more of that. There needs to be more enforcement of the road traffic laws across the board and the requirement to have lights on bikes after dark is one such law.

On the Senator's question as to whether roads are wide enough for cycle lanes, finding space on roads can be difficult. On many roads, particularly in Dublin, there is space and cycle lanes would not take space from other traffic. We see this in the BusConnects plans. The cycle facilities it is proposed to add to roads such as the Finglas Road and Malahide Road will not take space from pedestrians or motor traffic. There is space available which can be given to cyclists. In other areas, harder choices will have to be made but we are seeing communities, particularly in Dublin, make these choices, including as part of BusConnects. Communities are opting to make certain roads one-way in order to find space to add more bus lanes or cycle infrastructure.

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: I will respond on the issues of funding and rural areas. The funding allocated to cycling is not adequate. We have been trying to find out from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport how much is spent on cycling and we have not got an answer. It would appear cycling is bundled up with things such as cycling and walking, sustainable

transport and greenways. We are estimating what percentage of the figure allocated for each of those areas is spent on cycling. It also appears that the Department has not isolated how much is being spent on cycling. As we all know, if it is not counted, it will not happen. The Department should calculate how much it is spending on cycling and ensure the 10% figure recommended by the various bodies that have been mentioned is allocated to cycling.

We could discuss the issue of securing funding all week. Local authorities compete for funding. Most funding for cycling comes from the National Transport Authority but there are other funds. Local authorities are fighting to get money from those funds. It is up to each individual local authority to make its case and to seek the funding. There is insufficient funding available and it is always a battle for a local authority to secure funding. We lobby to try to get funding for the projects we believe are important.

Senator O'Mahony referred to rural areas and roads that are not designed for cycling. That is a problem but there is considerable space on many rural roads to provide separate infrastructure and traffic calming for cycling in towns and villages and on their outskirts. There is space for traffic calming measures and cycle lanes and also scope to impose lower speed limits.

Senator John O'Mahony: I am referring, for example, to cases where traffic builds up behind cyclists on a Sunday morning because four of them are cycling abreast. I can see both sides of the argument in that case because that can cause frustrations on all sides.

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: I am not sure I have seen four cyclists cycling abreast with a car behind them on an Irish road, unless it is a charity cycle.

Chairman: Maybe it happens in Mayo.

Senator John O'Mahony: Maybe we are isolated down there.

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: I have driven and cycled in Mayo and in a fair bit of rural Ireland and the idea of four cyclists cycling abreast is a myth. It can happen that two cyclists will cycle abreast but cyclists are road users as well and they need space on the road. We are arguing that every town and village should have a travel plan to enable children to get to school by walking and cycling and they are not dependent-----

Senator John O'Mahony: I am not disagreeing with Ms Forsythe. All I am saying is that balance is always good. Cyclists deserve infrastructure, support and funding but my experience in life is that no one is ever 100% right or 100% wrong.

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: That is true but the roads are there for everybody to share and it is up to each of us to behave responsibly. I love the French phrase "*partagent la route*", which can be translated as "let us share the road". We are trying to achieve a scenario where the space can be divided so everybody can share the road peacefully and safely.

Mr. Ciarán Ferrie: I will make a brief comment on my experience. I grew up in a rural village about three miles outside of Galway city. When I was growing up, all the old people cycled to mass every weekend and all the kids cycled to school. We used to cycle into the city every day to go to secondary school and we did so *en masse*. Loads of us cycled. We used to gather at the crossroads and it was a social thing. What happened, however, was that the roads were improved, meaning they were widened and straightened and suddenly the cars started travelling faster. Vehicles also got bigger and more powerful and people were less inclined to let their children go out on the road. The road infrastructure has changed. It is not that roads

are not wide enough but that they are designed to allow people to drive as quickly as they can from one point to another. We are not asking for something new in requesting that cyclists be allowed to use the roads. Cycling has a long tradition in Ireland. Bicycles were on these roads before cars, believe it or not, and we would like to see-----

Chairman: They will be there after the cars too.

Mr. Ciarán Ferrie: They probably will. When we talk about sharing the road, what we mean is that people who drive cars, of whom I am one, should treat people who cycle as equals on the road and give them space to cycle safely.

Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe: I welcome the various groups present. I listened to their requests and I agree with them. They referred to the Netherlands. We must acknowledge that the Netherlands is a lowland country. It had to rebuild after wars so it had a chance to get infrastructure in place. In this country, we have narrow roads and streets and maybe we are trying to do a rushed job because other issues are kicking in, for example, the need to take action on climate change.

There are three categories of cyclists, namely, those who cycle to work, recreational cyclists who use the roads mainly at weekends and athletes who are competing. Trying to facilitate each of those categories is where the problem arises. The biggest concern is that we are rushing. I cycled to national school and then I went to boarding school. I cycled afterwards. I have taken part in a 180 km charity cycle. I love cycling but we need patience. I agree with our guests that children do not cycle to school. I suppose it is because of the mindset of the parents due to security and other reasons. I fully support cycling getting funding and I agree with our guests regarding 10% of funding going towards cycling. How do we implement it without disenfranchising everyone, however? One see people cycling four abreast. I have concerns about cyclists wearing ear plugs. We do not know whether they know that vehicles are behind them or whether they are switched on to what is behind them.

Roads constitute the big problem in my part of the country. I appreciate health and safety but the implementation of the new laws could create problems. Unless we shut down more roads and say that some roads are reserved for cyclists while others are just for cars and lorries, we will have a problem in rural Ireland until more greenways are built.

Chairman: Who wishes to respond?

Mr. Alan Downey: I live in Fingal in north Dublin, which is not particularly rural but where there are very many narrow roads connecting short spaces between towns. There are things that can be done quickly without disrupting road traffic in Fingal. We have a few developments happening like side roads, greenways and things that will connect schools, housing estates and town centres. These kind of things would provide benefit without disrupting traffic and the need to say that half a road must be given over - within the city anyhow. What I also find when I cycle between these areas is that although drivers feel they may be able to get somewhere faster if the cyclist was not in their way, I often pass them shortly afterwards at traffic lights or as they hit a junction or another line of cars. Some people perceive that cyclists hold them up and are in the way and that if cyclists were out of the way, they would get to their destinations quicker. Regarding certain roads with a long stretch between towns and 80 km/h speed limits, I am not familiar with all of the roads where these speed limits are in place. However, these roads are so narrow and the distances so great that motorists would effectively be held up for long periods. A different type of infrastructure is needed in those cases. In terms of what we can do quickly,

we could develop those shorter roads that link small sections of towns to provide people with access so that they do not need to use cars to cover those short distances. Once that is safer, we will find that more people will be able to cycle. We see it between Baldoyle and Portmarnock, where I live. Just under 2 km of greenway is being completed on a very narrow road where I have had a few close passes involving dangerous overtaking by cars. Once that goes in, it will enable so many more people to cycle from schools, of which there are over 20 in the area. It is a very highly populated area. The link for those people at the moment is that they must take the car, which creates the congestion that then creates the traffic that slows everybody down and creates the environment where drivers feel they must go faster to get where they are trying to go.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: I welcome our guests and thank them for attending. We pestered the clerk and the Chairman for some time to put this issue on the agenda. I am very pleased that we are hearing from our guests.

We should change the narrative relating to this issue. This is not a case “you”; it is about “we”. Regardless of whether or not one cycles, we all benefit. If we thought differently, we might well act differently. I have asked quite a lot of parliamentary questions to find out what the spend is. It is incredibly difficult to pin it down, which is one problem.

Another problem is the fact that no one has ownership of the issue. Somebody made a point about 30 different organisations. That kind of fragmentation does not help in terms of driving change. If somebody owns it, it gets done. If there is a budget for it, it gets done. I am an offender who primarily drives into town when the Dáil is sitting and I can see the growing number of people who cycle. We have created the conflict between cyclists and motorists because we have not designed the city and our towns to accommodate a more sustainable form of transport, be it cycling or walking. The Luas is a fantastic and very important investment but the number of people who cycle to work outnumbers the number who commute using the Luas. Nobody says that the investment in the Luas should not have happened but if we put even a fraction of that into cycling, we might arrive at an arrangement where there is less conflict. When I travelled in different cities in Europe, I tended to take photographs of good ideas such as contra-flow systems or proper segregation of cycling. One sees large numbers of people cycling but one does not see the conflict. A very good submission that contained lots of ideas was made in October. I would like us to take those ideas, put them into a report and make some recommendations to the Department and Minister so that there is an outcome from today’s meeting.

A colleague of mine who is a councillor in Naas is a cyclist advocate. Terrific work has been done there in terms of a plan that was put in place. One will see other people who, because they are personally invested in something, are the ones who make a difference. It should not have to be like that. There is an extremely good plan in NAAS in respect of which there is a lot of buy-in. Where something like that is put in front of people, it is amazing how they will see sense in it. However, it must come from public bodies rather than just from advocacy groups and there must be support for it.

The number one issue is getting infrastructure right. We have a great distance to go. We mix bus lanes with cyclists. Bravery awards come to mind. The way we design things is problematic. We do not target the spend at the numbers who are cycling. Are our guests happy with the design manual? Does it need to be changed or is it just the implementation? They referred to having people embedded within the Department as opposed to just the NTA.

On the fiscal side, it makes complete sense. It was only when our guests put it in the submis-

sion that it jumped out at me that it is so obvious that it should be done with regard to inequality or even advantage in terms of a financial incentive for e-bikes or extending the cycle to work scheme to cycling to school so that there is some degree of investment. Our guests might talk us through some of those types of ideas or questions regarding the submission, which is the basis for the kind of report we should make. It is not a question of us reinventing the wheel but we could make some good recommendations on foot of the submission.

Chairman: I acknowledge that it was the Deputy who asked for this issue to be placed on the agenda. Obviously, as a committee, we should take up her point about producing a report with our staff after our hearings in order to try to encourage constructive engagement and get a constructive outcome for everybody.

Ms Louise Williams: It is very important to highlight leadership. Leadership is essential to ensure that change happens. The plans are there.

We need to challenge our assumptions about how people are cycling. We should not assume that because many people commute by bicycle that they are the only type of cyclists for whom we should cater. We should be thinking about people dropping their children to school, caregivers and a range of others who wish to cycle. It is very important that we begin to challenge and examine those assumptions. If we fail to do so, there is a risk we will only cater for people who wear Lycra and go as fast as they can on urban streets. The city centre is not really an appropriate place for sport cycling because that would exclude some people who may wish to cycle. Approximately 26% of those who cycle in Dublin are women. Some people who study cycling and know far more about it than we do have stated that women are an indicator species in the sense that having a greater proportion of women cyclists indicates there are good routes that are segregated and well maintained. Clearly, that is not the case in Dublin. Leadership is important. It is also important that we do not design assuming that we are catering for everybody. Doing so involves a strong risk that it would, by default, be a design for men who tend to cycle in a certain way. The Dublin City Cycling Campaign believes that would be problematic further down the line.

On how we design our city, Dublin City Council has a list of priorities, with pedestrians first, followed by cyclists, public transport users and drivers. We must acknowledge, as has been done quite comprehensively at this meeting, that those methods of transport are sometimes put in conflict. That is what the Chairman witnessed in the case of a cyclist coming at him out of the blue. I understand that he experienced and saw the cyclist's vulnerability. When considering a design context such as that, we may have a tendency to blame the person who is most vulnerable. What we need to do is recognise that the lighting is appropriate for cars but not for people who are cycling.

Chairman: Perhaps I was unclear. The person who came at me out of the blue was going against the traffic flow and could not be seen.

Ms Louise Williams: That is frightening.

Chairman: I regret to say that it happens to me frequently in the city. I am not blaming anybody. One does not expect it. One thanks God that one did not hit the cyclist who was going the wrong way on a particular road. It often happens around Dorset Street, although I am not sure why. I do not know if others have had the same experience.

Ms Louise Williams: There is an opportunity here. The better the design, the less one will

encounter that kind of behaviour. The more clarity there is on the boundaries between those who drive and those who cycle - all present do both - the better. We need to challenge our assumptions about how people who cycle will cycle. We must ensure we get it right with the right leadership. We need to think of elderly people and those with mobility challenges who could use e-bikes or other mobility aids to cycle. We need to be able to design for everybody. It is our duty to avoid discrimination and ensure there is equality within design structures.

Dr. Damien Ó Tuama: There is consensus among all present that we need high-quality cycling infrastructure. The NTA design manual forms part of that. The first point is that it should be used. Many schemes are developed without reference to it. The manual needs to be tweaked and improved, and it needs to be used. The provision of high quality routes is partly a technical challenge. It is often a political decision on to whom one wishes to give the space. In too many instances, not enough high-quality space in the road environment is given to school children, older people, women or other groups which currently do not cycle to the same extent as is the case in many other countries. There are political and technical elements to the problem.

Mr. Kevin Baker: The design manual dates from 2009. The NTA has referred to updating it but we have no further information on that. If the committee could ask the NTA the status of the new design manual, that would be great. The existing manual does not design for all ages and abilities, particularly at junctions. Many of its designs may be acceptable to more confident and fit cyclists but they are less suitable for younger or older cyclists or those not used to cycling.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: An issue I have encountered in my area involves the design of new housing estates. The latter offer a great opportunity. Cycle routes are being built into the estates, but the provision tends to be fragmented and does not look at the total package. One ends up with nothing at either end of the estate or a conflict where there is permeability into an existing housing estate but no receiving infrastructure. That issue arises continuously. There are great opportunities to put new infrastructure in place but if it is not properly connected, it loses its value.

A couple of decades ago, a State agency carried out a costing on the loss of a life. That is quite controversial because one can never put a monetary value on a life. The figure was used in cost-benefit analyses of potential road upgrades to show the benefit of upgrading roads with bad accident profiles in order to prevent further loss of life. It is an awful way to measure things, but it worked in terms of upgrading some very poor quality roads. The relevant cost allocated was approximately IR£1 million - it goes back to pre-euro days. The cost-benefit analysis woke people up and brought home to them the economic value of such upgrades. Although it is an awful way of doing it, it gave a metric against which the cost and benefit of an upgrade could be measured.

Mr. Alan Downey: On cycling to school, people of all ages cycling, infrastructure in new estates and so on, I cycle my two children to school every day on a specially designed bike. I cycled to Leinster House earlier after dropping them off. We go from a 1990s estate in Fingal, through a 1990s estate within the Dublin City Council area and end up in a very modern estate on the border between the Dublin City Council area and Fingal. The quality of infrastructure on the journey varies vastly. There are completely unsegregated and very narrow lanes, a very wide lane and a lovely greenway through the new estate. We had to campaign for the greenway to be opened when the school was finished. The builders did not wish to open it until the houses were finished, but they had to do so to allow access to the school. The ongoing building work means that heavy equipment is parked on cycle lanes for the entire length of the road from

Donaghmede roundabout to Belmayne.

We have looked into initiating cycle-buses. I have worked with parents in other parts of Fingal on these. The infrastructure is so fragmented that even though a cycle-bus is intended to compensate for a lack of infrastructure for children cycling to school, there are certain points and junctions through which we could not bring a cycle-bus of children. The cycle-bus would end up starting so close to the school that it would serve no purpose. I fully agree with the Deputy on fragmentation and the catch-up that is required to integrate older infrastructure with the wonderful greenways and green lanes that are built in new estates but not fully connected with existing infrastructure.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I thank our guests for their presentations. Deputy O’Keeffe is correct that there is an urgency in terms of taking speed off our roads and making a transition. The Joint Committee on Climate Action, of which I am a member, has discussed this issue. The 10% target rightly outlined by our guests as required was reiterated. It is very notable. Perhaps the witnesses will comment on it. I know that officials from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will be coming in later. I understand the transport budget has increased by €300 million this year. How is the Department doing with its efforts to achieve the 10% target? The question of balance has been discussed. The balance is probably poor if the target is just 10%. It seems to be a minimum that there would be 10%. As Deputy Catherine Murphy said, in the Dublin area there are more people cycling than using the Luas. It is an infrastructural need. I am particularly interested in how we can make progress in those areas where a cycling plan has been set out. A proposal involving 2,800 km of cycle paths has been set out for the greater Dublin area.

I would like to speak about the question of planning and cycling. Some projects do not seem to refer to the design manual, despite its flaws. Is that about the national cycling office? How important is the national cycling office in ensuring a few greenway projects that are about bikes are not put in as an afterthought when plans are being drawn up for many other transport projects that are about cars? We must ensure all our planning is planned for all users and is planned to be usable. Anything new that is being built should be planned with the idea that it will at least intersect with cycling. I ask the witnesses to comment on the particular role of the national cycling office. In what way will this structure differ from having some officials within the NTA driving the big picture?

I was very struck by the discussion on cycling infrastructure in rural areas. The conversation often seems to be solely about greenways. It seems to be approached from a tourist perspective, rather than from the perspective of someone who is living 2 km or 3 km outside a town and should be able to cycle safely into that town. I know there have been great initiatives in places like Ennis. Efforts have been made to make it possible to cycle again. The conversation can sometimes end up being about cyclists versus drivers. Many people are both cyclists and drivers. The real issue is not simply representing the interests of cyclists. The real issue is that it is in the public interest for there to be more cyclists. It is about those who are not cycling. Perhaps the witnesses could comment on those who do not cycle. I was really struck by the idea that there has been a 90% reduction in the number of girls cycling to school. At a time when everything globally is telling us we need to move towards cycling, it is not simply a matter of measuring the loss of life. That is the one thing I would suggest. It is one thing to measure the loss of life, but the greater loss that is harder to measure is what is lost when people decide not to cycle because of safety concerns.

The health and other benefits of cycling have been mentioned. Reference has been made to

the Netherlands in that context. I ask the witnesses to elaborate on the benefits of cycling we can measure and on what is lost when people decide not to cycle. I would like them to focus on two cohorts within that. First, it seems to me that if women are not cycling here at the same rate as in other countries, this must be an equality issue. We can assume that an extra 15%, 20% or 30% of women would cycle, as they do in other countries, if the conditions here permitted it. If they lived in the Netherlands, they would probably be cycling. The same people would cycle in a different environment. Second, I ask the witnesses to comment specifically on the issue of making it safe for people of all abilities to cycle. I say this in the context of the need for the next generation to start cycling while they are in school. Do the witnesses believe a specific cycling strategy for the next generation needs to be rolled out in our schools? What role might be played by safe zones or calm zones in this context? I know there is an issue for many people. They are worried not about the cycle, but about cars pulling in when they are dropping their children off. I ask the witnesses to comment on the idea of creating a safe space where children can cycle and safely disembark when they get to school.

I am asking about specific measures on equality and about specific measures on the next generation. I am also asking about the benefits of cycling and the loss when we do not encourage cycling. I am also asking the witnesses to comment on the national cycling office. How do we accelerate the achievement of the 10% target? Should there be annual measures? I hope this committee will be in a position to hold to account the achievement of the 10% target.

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: I will begin by speaking about the national cycling office and about the investment that is needed. If I do not cover all the other issues, Ms Williams might cover some of them. We have said in our submission that there should be a national cycling office within the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. This would be a policy-driven office that would promote cycling. Somebody at a senior level should promote all aspects of cycling and deal with all the issues that have been raised by Senator Higgins, including equality issues, schools issues, health issues and issues affecting the next generation. That person would also deal with infrastructure and would ensure the national cycling manual is brought up to date and serves its purpose.

The response we have received to our request for a national cycling office is that there is a new cycling office within the NTA. This is a design office. In effect, it is employing people to design new infrastructure, which we welcome. It appears to cover Dublin only. It may well cover the Dublin City Council area and not the other three local authority areas in Dublin. It does not cover the other cities - Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford - that are covered by the NTA. The NTA covers Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford and does not cover all of the other towns and villages in Ireland. In our view, we need a national cycling office within the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to drive policy.

We also believe there should be a cycling officer in each local authority. This is not just our view - it is in the national cycling policy framework, which is under review by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The only local authority I know of that has a full-time cycling officer is Dublin City Council. The other day, I heard somebody in a management position in another local authority saying it was not obliged to have a cycling officer. We believe there should be a cycling officer in every local authority. We believe each officer should draw up a cycling plan for the local authority in accordance with the national cycling policy framework. That would deal with many of the issues that have been raised by Senator Higgins.

The Senator asked how we can speed up the allocation of funds. Funding can move slowly. The demand is there. The Government's climate action plan contains a commitment to allo-

cate 10% of funding to transport. We accept that it may be a bit late to get that for 2019. It is certainly not too late to get it for a year like 2022. We need a rapid increase in the allocation of funding for cycling. We heard recently about moneys on the transport side being allocated to road projects. As far as I am aware, there has not been a similar announcement of moneys being allocated to cycling projects.

I will touch on the greenways issue. It seems to me - others can contradict me - that many local politicians are managing to secure money for greenway projects. I live in the South Dublin County Council area. We are looking for funding for a Grand Canal greenway between Lucan and the border with County Kildare. The rest of the Grand Canal greenway seems to have secured funding, but the part of it that might serve commuter cycling in the Dublin and north Kildare area has not received an allocation. It seems that in rural areas, there is a push to get allocations for greenways. It is very difficult to get anything done to encourage cycling among people who live within a mile or two of the local town or village. I think Senator Higgins mentioned such people. Very often, there are no huge barriers to the installation of safe cycling infrastructure in such areas. Many medium-sized Irish towns have little bits of cycling infrastructure, but they are not continuous.

The Senator raised a number of equality issues. She asked how we can cater for the next generation. We have to make it safe for children to walk and cycle to school. Fingal County Council has introduced a welcome “school street” initiative in Malahide. We think that kind of thing should be done in every town and village in Ireland. There should be a transport plan for every school that does something to enable children to travel to school on foot or by bicycle. We must devise safety plans around schools. Such plans may involve cars parking a few hundred yards away and the children being walked into school from there. We must start to try to get everybody, particularly young people in every school in every town and village, to walk and cycle more. The infrastructure, including the street design, should be in place to make walking and cycling seem attractive. We are talking about the next generation. Climate change is coming at us. We need to get people out of their cars and into more climate-friendly and healthier forms of transport. Louise Williams will talk now about the equality issues.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Before we move on, can I ask about parking? One of the key things around segregating lanes is not about sharing the road but is about parking within cycle lanes and health issues such as, for example, respiratory concerns.

Ms Louise Williams: I thank Senator Higgins for the question. We do not have specific figures and cannot calculate these for the impact of people not cycling in Ireland. Following on from Deputy Catherine Murphy’s question on calculating the impact of a death in a budgeting process, I call on this committee, if at all possible, to encourage the Department of Health to track the impact of injuries on people who cycle.

Chairman: A Road Safety Authority report is being compiled into all injuries and fatalities over a particular year. It is going into every single accident, as to the reasons, outcomes and contributory issues.

Ms Louise Williams: We welcome that.

Chairman: We will be very happy to follow that up with our witness groups.

Ms Louise Williams: The thing about cycling collisions-----

Chairman: It is very important because it gives one the facts.

Ms Louise Williams: Just yesterday I got a call from a woman who said that she had just been knocked off her bike and asked what should she do. She was uncertain as to whether she should go to the Garda to report it. As far as I am aware the Road Safety Authority will be tracking injuries that have been reported to the Garda. We would see this as an opportunity to measure the impact of injuries reported to hospitals which could be documented and tracked. It would be an opportunity to use financial analysis as a tool to consider the impact on health.

Chairman: This will be done would in 2018. We will check this out because it is a hugely important issue.

Ms Louise Williams: We will need to ensure that we are tracking all of the injuries because we know from the emergency calls we are are getting, unfortunately, that people are sometimes uncertain about this.

On health and assessing the impact of missing out on cycling as raised by Senator Higgins, the World Health Organisation, WHO, estimates that the lack of physical activity is linked to about 3 million deaths globally. I do not have specific figures for Ireland because of the complexity of tracking but there is no doubt that cycling has many physical benefits for the individual together with his or her well-being. As somebody who cycles regularly there is a lot of well-being that I can benefit from. The more people who cycle, the less congestion we will have. We are all interconnected on the roads and we are all trying to get away from that hostility between road users.

I will mention briefly schools, teenage girls and cycling. Green Schools have done some very interesting research into this that the committee may have seen. The name of the campaign is #andshecycle. It carried out focus groups with teenage girls. This is a very important aspect of looking at mobility in our country and asking what people are saying and experiencing by listening to the people who are directly affected.

Two main issues rose from teenage girls. One was that cycling was not cool. I do not think anybody around this room will be able to address that because we are not cool. The second thing mentioned by teenage girls is of absolute concern to all of us, which is verbal harassment by boys and men. There is a targeting of teenage girls which is part of this whole hostility and context within which quite an amount of harassment, violence and disputes are occurring. We have the responsibility to create an environment where teenage girls feel comfortable cycling and can experience that independence. Women and cycling have always been interconnected, with this idea of emancipation embodied by the suffragettes who took to their bikes. Women can really benefit and have the right to benefit from cycling. We should be able to cycle free of harassment. It is of particular concern that teenage girls were feeling the brunt of this and are avoiding cycling. This is a rational choice for a teenage girl.

Chairman: Is this phenomenon universal in all countries or-----

Ms Louise Williams: No. In the Netherlands, 55% of cyclists are women. I do not know about the figures for teenage girls. I lived in the Netherlands and it would be quite normal, as Mr. Ferrie said, to cycle to school.

Chairman: What Ms Williams is saying is very concerning and absolutely unacceptable.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Maybe I was not listening but are we talking about wolf-whistling-----

Chairman: We are talking about abuse.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: -----and is it harassment in that sense?

Ms Louise Williams: It is not just harassment, it is intimidation. The teenage girls are experiencing it as intimidation and this is putting them off cycling.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Forgive my ignorance, but give me an example, please.

Ms Louise Williams: I am not a teenage girl but I will give an example of what happened to me. A pedestrian in a suit going for his lunch just hit me across the back as I was out cycling. He told me to learn how to ride a bike. That happened a few months ago. That is an example of an experience of intimidation that I believe is gendered.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I appreciate that. Is it the case that men are not seeing any of that?

Ms Louise Williams: They may be experiencing some of it but I believe it is less likely that a man would tell another man, hit another man, and tell them to learn how to ride a bike. I imagine he picked on me because I am a woman.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Is it general hostility to cyclists as opposed to sexual harassment?

Chairman: I believe it is the same thing because it involves young girls.

Ms Louise Williams: It is gendered.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Miss Williams is saying that young girls and women are getting a higher a proportion of that.

Ms Louise Williams: This is putting them off cycling. In this environment we were put into conflict with each other by the lack of infrastructure. Often, there is a lack of boundaries around where to go. Unfortunately, teenage girls are bearing the brunt of that. I do not believe anybody in this room wants to create a sad society where that continues.

Chairman: Not at all. Absolutely, it is quite to the contrary.

Ms Louise Williams: That is just one aspect of it.

On parking and how we divide the public space in the city, we need to talk about the storage of private cars and how that takes up a huge amount of the public space on the roads. That means that there is less space for people who want to cycle. It also means that we are facing challenges in a general context. One sees that parking is happening left, right, and centre in lanes that are supposed to be allocated for people who cycle, which means that we have to veer out into the path of buses, other cars, and drivers. Impunity is a massive issue. We have talked about 98% of drivers who were speeding in 30 km/h areas and about impunity on the roads. The enforcement has to happen, not just so that more people can cycle, but so that more people do not lose their lives. That is what we have come here to talk about. That is not a minor issue, it is a major one.

It is something that I BIKE Dublin has done a huge amount of work to address and to highlight. We need to support more of this and need An Garda Síochána to take it much more seriously.

Chairman: On the point raised by Deputy Catherine Murphy earlier about our committee doing a report on this, it would be very helpful if, after this meeting today, any further studies, views or ideas that our witnesses may have might be given to our committee. All of this material will all be taken very seriously on board. In particular, we note the point made by Ms Williams about young teenage girls, and females generically, being abused, which is absolutely unacceptable.

In reply to my earlier question, Ms Williams stated that this does not happen in other countries. What strategies do we need to adopt to deal with this and what are the issues that we should address? That can also be in our report.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: The parking issue where people have to veer out is very relevant because one does not have to just pull out past the car that is parked, but one has to pull out past its opening door. One finds oneself pushed out almost into the middle of a lane.

Chairman: I apologise ach tá ceist ag an Dr. Ó Tuama ansin. An bhfuil rud le rá aige?

Dr. Damien Ó Tuama: The biggest negative health impact we are seeing at the moment as a result of so few people, and so few women, cycling is the issue of obesity. One in four children in Ireland is either obese or overweight, and some six out of ten adults. This is building up a huge long-term public health problem which will express itself in the public health system in the decades to come. These are not separate realms. Public health is intimately intertwined with our transportation policy and that is not really recognised in how funding is allocated at the moment.

Chairman: I call Deputy Eamon Ryan to speak now.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: My apologies as I had to step out to attend another meeting. I remember a cycling campaigner called Mike Curtis who died on Merrion Square 30 years ago. It was one of the reasons that the Dublin Cycling Campaign was founded. I knew Harry Boland and his family; Harry died in Stillorgan last year. I met the colleagues of Neeraj Jain last week and his family. Both his and the Boland family and their communities were completely devastated. Ms Williams is correct to highlight this issue. As the Chairman has said, our cycling population has a modal split by about 3% nationally, but it is accounting for three times that figure in the number of road deaths.

Chairman: Yes, we said that earlier.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Sometimes one thinks it is best not to talk about this because one fears that it might put people off cycling. As Dr. Ó Tuama has said, that latest health survey today shows that 60% of people are obese. Cycling-active travel every day is the best way of tackling that issue. As Mayer Hillman the great UK doctor and every analysis has shown, even with the high incidence of accidents, the reality is one will live longer if one cycles. The truth is that our conditions for cyclists are atrocious. Those who came here for the Velo-City conference could not believe people cycle in this city. It is scandalous that we have not addressed the issue.

To answer Deputy MacSharry's question on behaviour, there is a general level of abuse. Women in particular perhaps are sensitive to it but there is a general level of abuse against cyclists at present and it has escalated in the past two or three years. For some reason it is online and it needs to stop.

The issue regarding cyclists being lit up has radically changed in the past 20 or 30 years. The cycling campaign did a survey in the mid-1990s through the UCD marketing and development programme that showed a very high percentage of cyclists did not have lights on their bikes. I do my own survey because it is important that we light up and I believe it is now much higher. I believe it would be close to 80% or 90% of cyclists. It should be 100%. It has radically improved partly because the lights are cheaper and better and LED technology has improved.

Cycling behaviour is improving. In this city as the number cycling increases, I notice we are starting to self-police. When cyclists come to traffic lights they stop. We will solve the issue of behaviour by creating sane traffic and transport infrastructure. I hope that at the same time we address the issue that 98% of motorists are breaking the 30 km speed limit throughout the country every day on every road. The figure for those breaking the 50 km speed limit is 80%. Speed kills. We need to stop this cyclist versus motorist argument. Someone here told us about seeing four cyclists cycling abreast in Mayo. Big groups of people cycling overtake each other and we might occasionally have this as a rare occurrence. Cars also overtake each other. Two cars passing is the equivalent of four cyclists abreast. I do not go bananas about it.

Chairman: In fairness to the Senator who raised it, he did so as something he has seen.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I know.

Chairman: Everyone is entitled to their view, as is the Deputy.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: They are but-----

Chairman: I want to make the point that the context of what we are trying to do, and I appreciate the Deputy must leave, is to work together to find a common solution. It is not us versus them. It is how we can improve everything for everybody.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: That is exactly what we need to move towards.

Chairman: That is where we are at.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: The Liffey cycle route has been in planning for ten years.

Mr. Kevin Baker: It is eight years.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: It is the same with the Royal Canal. We have had reports, studies and analysis, and we have all gone off to Utrecht and looked at best practice, but yet we have singularly failed to make a change. We have bits and pieces. We have green flags at every school but the number of people cycling to school in particular has gone into freefall. There seems to be a correlation between having more green flags and a drop in the number of school-children cycling. There are green flags for transport. We are all flags but no substance.

There is a budget issue but it cannot just be that. What is it that is stopping us making the radical change? What is behind the disregard for this issue? Many of the witnesses have been campaigning for years. In their opinion, what is the biggest obstacle? We have €250 million for widening a road between Westport and Castlebar. That amount would sort every school in Galway and Mayo with safe routes to school. It would transform the county if we were to put it into active walking and cycling. Why is it that we keep putting €250 million into road widening? As Mr. Ferrie said, that makes for more and more cars. It is a never-ending car-based system. What is behind that? What needs to change? It is not the technical knowledge because we know what we have to do to make roads safe. What is stopping us from doing it?

Mr. Kevin Baker: The first step is that we need to realise the massive benefits and for everyone to believe in them. There is still a large number of people who do not believe that cycling can be a large part of the transport solution throughout Ireland, which it absolutely can be. We only need to look at other countries to see the potential of cycling and the benefits it can bring. This is definitely one of the issues. With regard to delivering projects, the Royal Canal project received planning permission in late 2015 but most of it has not started construction. The delays include staff being removed from the project to work on the Luas cross city, getting a licence from Irish Rail, getting a licence from Waterways Ireland because it owns the canal route, and removing Japanese knotweed and drug paraphernalia. Then we had to redesign the bridge over the Irish Rail line because it might need to be double tracked as part of DART expansion. In these tight urban areas sometimes these projects can be very complicated. At the same time, we are constantly chasing the National Transport Authority and Dublin City Council to keep these projects moving. I honestly believe that if we were not doing this, the projects would not be anywhere near as far along as they are, even though many of them are still nowhere.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: To go back to the first point Mr. Baker made, on people seeing the benefits, people are not blind. We upgraded the Grand Canal and it still has problems. The junction at Leeson Street is a mess. It was a good piece of infrastructure. Instantaneously, the volume of cyclists increased by 50%.

Mr. Kevin Baker: It has increased by more. We can see the increase in cycling in the census. If we look at all of the small areas along this section of cycle route, we see a significant increase in the number of people cycling to work.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: It is like Copenhagen and it is the same coming into Rathmines. There are more cyclists than there are cars.

Mr. Kevin Baker: Significantly so, there are almost twice as many cyclists as cars. It is getting to that stage where there might be almost as many people cycling as there are on the buses. How come people do not see the benefits? When I am at the bridge in Rathmines there are 20 cyclists where one car would fit. Perhaps not. Perhaps there are a dozen or 15. With regard to the use of space, who cannot see the benefit of this for transport planning? Who does not understand this could make Dublin like Copenhagen or Amsterdam? How come this is not clear?

Chairman: I do not want to cut across anybody but the deficit in what the Deputy is saying is that BusConnects will have 200 designated kilometres of cycle separation, which will be hugely transformational. I accept and acknowledge all of the arguments. We also have to recognise the facts. We will be discussing this at another meeting.

Mr. Ciarán Ferrie: We mentioned in our opening statement there are upwards of 30 separate bodies responsible for transport in Dublin, and this is part of the problem. The responsibility is fragmented. It is very difficult to find out who is responsible for particular things. When we have such fragmentation, one group holds up another, perhaps not deliberately but because they have different priorities and plans. We are not getting the leadership we need from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on this. Perhaps Dublin needs a transport czar or someone who takes overall responsibility for this. Money is being spent in Dublin city on resurfacing roads and the roads are being repainted with the same substandard cycling infrastructure there was before the roads were resurfaced. This does not make any sense to me. If there was joined-up thinking between the National Transport Authority and Dublin City Council, this would not happen. We would get the benefits of improved cycling infrastructure when we

are improving the surface of the road. For me, the key issues are the fragmented nature of the system, the lack of communication, the varying priorities of the various groups, and the lack of political leadership.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I agree fully. I am slightly concerned with the idea that a cycling officer in a council would necessarily overcome the multiagency fragmentation in decision-making.

Mr. Ciarán Ferrie: I do not think it would be the cycling officer. By transport czar I mean someone with an overview and authority. Perhaps it needs to come from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. I do not know. There needs to be leadership that brings these competing groups together. We cannot have a situation where the National Transport Authority, which is doing great work with BusConnects, is on a different track even within its own organisation. It prepared the greater Dublin area cycle network plan and then it prepared BusConnects, and there are complete discrepancies between the two. One does not follow the other. There is a lack of joined-up thinking generally throughout the delivery of this infrastructure, which needs to be resolved.

Chairman: Do the cyclist groups formally or regularly meet the National Transport Authority to discuss national transport issues? Is there any official recognition of status?

Dr. Damien Ó Tuama: We meet infrequently with most of the State agencies and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The real problem, however, is a lack of leadership at the highest level in transportation, namely, at ministerial level. Each of the political parties needs to be pushing cycling to the core of national and local policy, but the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Deputy Ross, has special responsibility to show leadership.

Chairman: We have asked the Minister to appear before the committee and we will ask him and his officials to comment on the points made. They are coming in next. Would it be important for us to state to the NTA that we would like to see formal meetings between it and the cycling organisations? That is notwithstanding the criticisms Dr. Ó Tuama has and is perfectly entitled to make. I suggest it is important that there be some interaction on joined-up thinking in this area.

Dr. Damien Ó Tuama: Yes, that would be fine.

Chairman: I also refer to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, whose representatives are coming in shortly. That would seem to make much sense. I call Deputy MacSharry.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Can I go ahead this time?

Deputy Ciarán Cannon: Deputy MacSharry can work away.

Chairman: I have called Deputy MacSharry three times.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I was late, but the Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, arrived later. I will come in now if that is okay?

Chairman: That is fine. The Deputy is very welcome.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: That was the first statistic of my own. I welcome everybody and apologise for being late. I am new to my role as Fianna Fáil's spokesperson on transport. I know Mr. Ferrie via Twitter, but I have not met the rest of the witnesses yet. Our policy on

transport has not changed despite the change of personnel. The witnesses will be familiar with the policy and that will continue to be pliable, to the extent that the witnesses or the wider cycling lobby might have views on issues that concern us. I start my contribution by stating I have the utmost respect for Deputy Eamon Ryan and his party's long-standing research on climate change and sustainable solutions. When it comes to a road, however, we could strip out the entire HSE budget, dedicate it all to sustainable transport and the country's problems would be solved overnight.

It is not realistic, however, even from the leafy suburbs of Ranelagh and south Dublin, to state that we should not build certain roads. There are infrastructure deficits all over the country and any Government, of whatever type, will have to be conscious and mindful of that reality, whether that Government is led by Taoiseach Ryan, O'Dowd, Catherine Murphy or whomever. We will always have competing priorities. It is a matter of getting cycling a higher priority within the agenda, as opposed to not building a certain road for €100 million or €250 million. If it were that simple, that would have been done when Deputy Eamon Ryan was a Minister. He knows better than anybody, however, that the cake is only so big and every Minister in every Department will always want all of it for themselves, if they could get away with it. Things do not work like that, unfortunately.

Regarding the concept of a transport czar, Mr. Ferrie referred to 30 agencies being responsible for transport in Dublin alone. How would it be possible to get anything done? Whether we refer to a czar, a chancellor, an emperor or a Taoiseach, however, the truth is that we already have one, namely, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. Sadly, what we also have is drift. The Government is no longer acting as the Executive in the area of transport. I am not being political in stating that because this drift goes back to when we were in Government ourselves and back into the 1980s. Governments are now expensive commentators. References are made to a matters being for Dublin City Council, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the NTA and-or Dublin Bus. These are regarded as matters for everybody but us and there is no leadership. The attitude is that we are not experts and that therefore we will be guided by the expertise. This ensures that we get to kick something down the road for so long for review and examination that the initial data will be out of date by the time it comes to a conclusion and we will get to review it again. Within that whole process, we have plausible deniability and are able to defer any budget expenditure. That is greatly frustrating.

We are striving for the 10%, but where is it in this year's budget? I mean no disrespect to the Senator I am about to quote, but Senator Lombard, in a press release after the budget, stated that €114 million was going to be spent on cycling infrastructure this year, including the greenway and two urban programmes, the smarter and active travel initiatives, etc. Do the witnesses have a view on that claim? Looking at 2018, research from the organisations represented here showed we had spent about 32.26% of funds on the sustainable transport capital side, within the land transport capital budget. If that breakdown was applied to this year, then the total budget for land transport capital spending is €1.82 billion, 32.26% of that is about €587 million on the sustainable side of the equation and 3%, which was the percentage we got in 2018, is €17 million. If we add the greenways into that figure, which is as much tourism as it is transport, we max out at about €41 million. That is 2.25% of the total budget and that means we are going in reverse. I am interested in hearing the witnesses' opinion on that situation. Later, I will be asking the representatives from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the NTA to clarify how they categorise funding spent on cycling.

I turn now to integrating cycling into our public transport system. We all know the system is

creaking at the seams and it is impossible to get a person on to it, never mind a bike. Where are we on addressing that issue from the perspective of the cycling organisations? If I want to cycle around Ireland, that involves a tourism aspect. Let us take the case, as well, where I want to commute into Dublin from Mullingar and bring my bike so that when I get to Connolly Station, I can cycle from there to St. Stephen's Green, for example. How are we measuring up in that context? That aspect leads us into parking and related issues at public transport hubs. Those are my comments and questions and I would like the witnesses to address them.

Chairman: I call the Minister of State.

Deputy Ciarán Cannon: I welcome everyone and compliment then on the work they continue to do in advocating for safe cycling infrastructure in our larger urban centres and for the safety of all cyclists across the country. It is exceptionally important work. Along with Deputy Eamon Ryan, Cyclist.ie, the Dublin Cycling Campaign and I BIKE Dublin have been banging this drum for many years and, hopefully, they are now being listened to at last. Deputy MacSharry did not intend his comment to be taken this way, but when a contribution on a subject like cycling is prefaced by stating that this might matter in the leafy suburbs of Ranelagh but that we also have to worry about roads infrastructure across the country, then I am obliged to point out that cycling matters to every community.

We have to move on from portraying the perception that this is a transport solution only serving the needs of a minority. That is not the case. Cycling has the potential to transform the way we move people around all of our cities and towns, as well as rural Ireland. Coming in along the canal from the direction of Fairview and Clontarf, as I do from time to time, there is extraordinary infrastructure in place. There is also poor, but not terrible, infrastructure along the N11 into the city. If we consider the overall situation, we can see that the beginning of something special is under way.

Mr. Baker referred to CSO data. In Dublin and the greater Dublin area, GDA, more people cycle to work and study every morning than use the Dart, Luas and commuter rail combined. That is an extraordinary community of people who have chosen to use their bike as their main method of transport to get to and from work and-or study because it makes sense. It is a quicker, healthier and more sustainable method of transport.

The Chairman is right to raise the issue of BusConnects. That is an opportunity being presented to us right now. We cannot allow the dumbing down of that initiative or for priority to continue to be given to travel by car, mostly with single occupancy. That is a mode of transport that is completely unsustainable, not remotely healthy and possibly the slowest way to get around this city.

I hope we can somehow galvanise the support of the cycling community here in Dublin and increasingly similar communities in places like Galway, where we have the example of the great work of the Galway cycle-bus. That shows what is possible when children as young as five or six years of age are offered an opportunity to cycle to school safely. That is, thankfully, being replicated in some other cities nationally.

There is something very special waiting to happen here. It is about leadership and all of us who are Members of the Oireachtas and who recognise the value of what can happen here need to work together on this. I know that Senator Bacik worked hard last year and there is now a small group of people who are committed to working towards safer cycling infrastructure for all. We need to expand that group.

I thank Deputy MacSharry and, indeed, his predecessor as Fianna Fáil spokesperson in this area, Deputy Troy, for the excellent work they have done in producing a comprehensive cycling policy, something that Fine Gael has not done. We need to move to a point where we begin to develop a very strong consensus across the whole of the Oireachtas about what is possible and not lose sight of the potential that exists for a healthier, more sustainable, more efficient and quicker way of moving people around our towns and cities.

However, this is not limited to towns and cities. There are people who approach the edge of Galway city every morning in their cars and come to a complete halt. It is then taking somewhere between 45 minutes and an hour to travel the 4 km to 5 km to their places of work. I know that Galway City Council is working on a new transport strategy for the city and it tells me that new cycling infrastructure is an intrinsic part of that strategy. I hope that is the case and that the council is not dissuaded from that ambition.

This is an opportunity waiting to happen across the whole country and we should work towards it, not become disillusioned, and work to support these extraordinary people who have been pointing out to us the benefits of this for many years. I thank our guests for coming in.

Chairman: We are under a little bit of time pressure but I want to hear our guests' responses to the questions. We will want to hear from them afterwards if they do not get to say everything they want to now. The National Transport Authority and the Department is to link through someone they nominate to set up regular meetings urgently. That name should be communicated to the clerk to the committee afterwards. That will be a one-stop shop, as far as we are concerned, in getting action and change.

Mr. Kevin Baker: Deputy MacSharry's questions related to public transport and cycling. There are three ways that cycling and public transport can connect, but I will first talk about why it is important. Cycling is great for local trips but there is obviously a limit to the distance one can get a bike and an e-bike pushes that limit further. For many people, connecting a bike onto public transport is a fantastic way of travelling. It has many of the benefits of a car, in that it can go from point to point, but with the speed benefits of cycling and the distance benefits of public transport.

Taking a bike on the train is still very difficult on Irish Rail because many intercity trains do not have enough space on them to take bikes. We hear of many people who are trying to get to the Waterford greenway or the Westport greenway from Dublin and who want to take their bikes on the train, but it always proves impossible because it is booked out and oversubscribed.

Allowing bikes on trains in tight urban areas is probably not something we want to pursue too far because our public transport is creaking at the seams and there is not really space for bikes on commuter and DART trains. In urban areas, we should be looking at high-quality bike parking at public transport hubs so one can cycle to the bus or train station and continue one's journey on the bus or train. Bike sharing is also an option, such as the dublinbikes scheme and the bike systems in Cork and Limerick. Those allow people to share bikes at the other end of their journeys.

There will be opportunities in the many upcoming public transport infrastructure projects to ensure good cycling integration. MetroLink is a prime example. It will be a fantastic metro system if we build it in 2027 and it will be an opportunity, particularly in the Swords area, for people to cycle to the metro stations and then continue into town. The metro will only serve about half of Swords but it will only be a ten-minute cycle from the other side of Swords to the

metro station. It is an ideal connection if we put in enough high-quality bike parking. We see this working in Dublin.

Many people in the Ballinteer area cycle to the Luas station in Dundrum to get into town because they do not have a good bus route and are about a 30-minute walk from the Luas. It is a five or ten-minute cycle down the hill and there is good, segregated cycling infrastructure. We cannot get Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council to put in enough bike parking at that station. Every time more bike parking is put in, it fills up within a month or two.

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: Deputy MacSharry asked about the funding, and mentioned €114 million and that he had calculated a number of percentages around that. The €114 million that Government spokespersons talk about is for cycling, walking and sustainable transport. We came up with roughly the same figure. In fact, our figure was slightly more than Deputy MacSharry's but we will not argue about it.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: What was that number?

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: Our figure was just below €50 million but that was a slightly more generous calculation. It still comes out at only 2.5% of spending on transport. We need to know how much is going to be spent on cycling and we need to see that figure moving very quickly. Edinburgh committed to increasing its allocation for cycling by 1% every year. We need to see our spending figure analysed and pushed up fast.

Chairman: It would be helpful if Ms Forsythe gave us best practice in other cities or countries where practical plans have been fulfilled.

Ms Mairéad Forsythe: Okay.

Ms Louise Williams: I will briefly respond to Deputy Eamon Ryan's question about what is missing. Leadership and joined-up thinking are missing and everybody has made that comment. We also need to normalise cycling, and the Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, has been brilliant at that. Cycling is a normal way of getting around. I BIKE Dublin invited a Senator out on a cycle and it was a powerful experience of empathy with cyclists and understanding the experiences of cyclists for that Senator. We would love to invite more people out for a gentle cycle one day.

Chairman: I will certainly do that after Christmas.

Ms Louise Williams: The Chairman is very welcome. It is important that everybody talks about how normal it is. Perhaps we can water down some of the "us" and "them" bun fights and talk about how we can build a better city, tackle congestion and improve public health. That is an important part of it. Deputy Catherine Murphy is also welcome on such a cycle. It can be low key or we can invite other people to come along, whatever suits, and makes people feel comfortable. If it is a tentative and short cycle, that is great, and if it is a longer one, that is brilliant. We should support communities to go out and cycle and allow more people to experience the freedom and independence of cycling. Teenagers can experience the autonomy that is so important at that age. The more we do that, the more we will be able to dismantle some of the hostility, and perhaps leadership will flow from that, with the support of committee members.

Deputy Ciarán Cannon: I was down on the Waterford greenway last year with my wife. I stopped at the side of the road just to watch groups of teenagers cycling together. I have not seen that since I was a teenager. They knew that it was a safe place to be. We talk about men-

tal health issues and social isolation among our teenagers, and there is no better way to make friends and sustain friendships than going on a bike ride together. Seeing gaggles of teenagers chatting away to one another time after time on that greenway was really special. There is no reason that could not be replicated every morning on the way to most schools in this country.

Deputy Brendan Ryan: I will make a comment on normalising bike riding. I have not checked the numbers but I would bet that on this wet, dark, miserable day there are more bikes on the Kildare Street side of this House than there are cars parked inside the gates of Leinster House.

Chairman: Deputy Ryan will have the opportunity to count them because we are going to have to wrap up shortly.

Mr. Ciarán Ferrie: I have a few brief comments. In response to Deputy MacSharry, I mentioned in my opening statement about the amount of money that is being spent on roads, and that was not to say that we want some of that money, although it would be great if we could get it. I was emphasising the difference in cost of putting in cycling infrastructure. The European Cycling Federation has recently done a study that shows that constructing and maintaining one mile of infrastructure for motorised traffic costs 240 times more than high-quality bike lanes. As I mentioned in my opening statement, there are considerable returns on investments in cycle lanes. Looking at the cost-benefit analysis, capital outlay and return on investment is important in assessing and allocating funding for transport and particularly for capital projects.

To follow on from what Ms Williams was saying, Mr. Downey, I, and our colleague, Ms Lucille Redmond, who is in the Public Gallery, accompanied Senator Craughwell on a cycle around Dublin city on Monday afternoon. The Senator was quite critical of cyclists on Twitter last week and somebody challenged him to get on a bike himself. He had not cycled in more than 50 years. He told us that the last time he rode a bike was in 1968 and that he had not cycled since he left Galway. In fairness to him, he accepted the challenge. He rented a bike and we cycled around. We saw some of the good and some of the bad of Dublin's cycling infrastructure and he got to experience at first hand what it is like. I invite members to watch the video report Newstalk made in which the Senator talks about how he now has a very different understanding of what it is like to cycle in Dublin. He said that it has changed the way he drives in Dublin and that he now realises that, when he is driving, he is in charge of a dangerous weapon. He also realises how that can feel for people cycling alongside him. I reiterate what Ms Williams said. We would be very happy to invite any or all members of the committee to come on a cycle around the city.

Chairman: We will take Mr. Ferrie up on that.

Mr. Ciarán Ferrie: It would be very useful in allowing members to understand what it is like.

Chairman: We will definitely take Mr. Ferrie up on that. Absolutely. It will probably be after Christmas, if that is okay. He can communicate with the committee secretariat. I thank all the witnesses very much. It has been very useful. The joint committee will now suspend until 11.50 a.m., when we will have a session with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the National Transport Authority. The witnesses are welcome to stay for that session to hear the answers to their questions, if they wish.

Sitting suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

Chairman: I apologise for the late start to the session. It is my fault. We listened to everybody in the last session and ensured we heard them all. I appreciate that we ate into the time that had been given for this session's witnesses, who are very welcome. I remind members, witnesses and those in the Public Gallery to turn off their mobile phones completely, please, as they interfere with the recording equipment.

Cuirim fáilte roimh na finnéithe nua atá againn. From the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport we have Ms Deirdre Hanlon, assistant secretary; Mr. Ray O'Leary, assistant secretary; Mr. Garret Doocey, principal officer; and Ms Lorraine McGurk, assistant principal officer. We also have from the National Transport Authority, NTA, Ms Anne Graham, CEO and Mr. Hugh Creegan, deputy CEO.

Before we commence, I have to read a statutory notice, which I am sure the witnesses have heard many times before. By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of the evidence they are to give to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to so do, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. I also remind members that we have to leave the room by 1.15 p.m. That is our deadline for leaving. I apologise again to our witnesses for the delay.

Before we start, when we had representatives of the different cycling bodies here, I said that I would ask both the Department and the NTA to arrange to meet regularly the people we have named here to discuss the issues that arise. Their bodies are genuine and they have a lot of experience and some very good ideas. They also have significant concerns and criticisms. We would like to establish a formal forum where the State agencies can meet representatives of these bodies to listen to their views and, if at all possible, implement them. I take it that it will be in order to do that. I see the witnesses nodding their heads.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: We will actually be meeting them, and other groups, at an event tomorrow.

Chairman: That is great. I did not know that.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: We do meet them from time to time.

Chairman: What we want is a formal arrangement. I appreciate and acknowledge that the Department meets such representatives, but we propose that Department officials meet them every quarter and that an agenda be prepared. There is an agenda. That is what they want and that is what our committee would like.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I want to flag the numbers. There are an equal number of cars and bikes outside on Kildare Street. I counted them.

Chairman: 50-50. That is good.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: If one includes the six members of the cycling campaigns who came here today that makes it 50-50. I wanted to share information on the normalisation of cycling that is happening.

Chairman: I thank the Deputy. A lot of people who have cars came from the west of Ireland. Some came from Dublin. I hear what the Deputy is saying. It is good. I invite Ms Anne Graham of the NTA to make her opening statement, followed by officials from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Ms Anne Graham: I thank the Chairman and members of the committee for the invitation to attend the meeting. I understand that the committee wishes to focus on the road traffic (traffic and parking) (amendment) regulations 2019 and national cycling policy. To assist me in dealing with members' subsequent questions I am joined by Hugh Creegan, deputy CEO with the authority.

In terms of national cycling policy, the role of the NTA is to plan and deliver cycling infrastructure in accordance with national policy developed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The NTA has developed cycling infrastructure plans for the greater Dublin area on a statutory basis and for the regional cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford on a non-statutory basis. These plans are used to direct the investment in cycling infrastructure which will facilitate the development of a network of safe cycling facilities in those cities. The authority allocates the funding provided by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to local authorities to deliver this infrastructure.

A key objective of the NTA is to increase the delivery rate of cycling infrastructure. Accordingly, the authority has put in place a dedicated cycle office to bring a number of projects forward for planning and construction. This is in addition to the projects that the local authorities are developing with the assistance of the NTA.

BusConnects Dublin is the largest cycling infrastructure project ever designed in the state. This project will deliver 200 km of segregated cycling infrastructure on the key radials into the city. BusConnects in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford will see similar ambitious cycling plans included. The authority has developed a cycle design manual which sets the design standard for cycling infrastructure to be designed for our cities and towns and will ensure that there is a consistent approach to designs. That concludes my statement and I and my colleague will be happy to respond to any questions the committee may have.

Chairman: That was nicely brief. It gives us the opportunity to take a lot of questions.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: The Department is here in response to the committee's recent invitation to assist in its consideration today of two related matters, namely, the road safety regulations made earlier this month that legislate against the dangerous overtaking of cyclists and cycling policy more generally. Reflecting those areas of the committee's interest, the Department is represented by the road safety and active travel areas of our remit. I am joined by colleagues who deal with the road safety brief in the Department, Mr. Ray O'Leary, assistant secretary, and Ms Lorraine McGurk, assistant principal officer, and by Mr. Garret Doocey, my colleague in my sectoral area which includes active travel policy and investment. The NTA has also joined us.

The Committee is aware of the road traffic (traffic and parking) (amendment) regulations 2019 that came into effect last week on 12 November 2019. These new regulations signed by the Minister build on previous legislation regarding dangerous overtaking. Specifically, they

separate out the offence of dangerous overtaking of a pedal cyclist from the general dangerous overtaking provisions in the legislation. They also increase the fixed charge that can apply to this new offence.

We are aware that a number of groups, such as cycling advocacy groups, had previously expressed a preference for a different approach, namely, that a minimum passing distance be enshrined in law, specifically 1 m on roads with speed limits of up to 50 km and 1.5 m on roads where the speed limits are higher than 50 km. However, when we engaged with the Office of the Attorney General about the practicality of such legislation it had serious concerns about the enforceability of such an approach.

As a result, the Department, in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, An Garda Síochána and the RSA, came up with an alternative approach that would be workable and legally robust, and that is the legislation that commenced last week. The regulation specifically targets drivers who put cyclists at risk.

Over the past number of months and weeks the RSA has run advertising campaigns across various media to make drivers aware of the new legislation and the importance of passing at a safe distance. New warning signs have also been prepared and have been included in the recently updated traffic signs manual. The first of these new signs was installed last week in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown local authority area and many more are set to be erected by local authorities throughout the country. Both these signs and the current advertising campaign will act as a reminder to drivers to only overtake a cyclist where it is safe to do so.

Of course, road safety legislation is only one aspect of Government policy and intervention that impacts on cycling in Ireland. The overall policy stance and funding for cycling are also important considerations for this area of activity. At a policy level, the Minister and the Department are committed to supporting and encouraging more sustainable forms of travel. This is central to our approach to climate action and to helping to achieve a better quality of life and more liveable cities for people.

We want to facilitate more people being able to use more sustainable travel modes for more of their journeys. Active travel, a term that encompasses cycling and walking as a means of transport, is obviously a critical component of this approach. At a policy level our objective is to encourage walking and cycling. We recognise that both of the active modes have a strong role to play, either as a primary mode of transport themselves or very often as a complement to other sustainable modes.

We expect that the committee is interested in two key areas, namely, what are we doing on funding and what our overall approach on policy is. On Exchequer support for infrastructure, on the funding front considerable progress has been made in the last two or three years in identifying and securing additional enhanced Exchequer funding that can support cycling and other sustainable forms of travel.

Under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 plan, the type of multiannual funding we need to allow the delivery of infrastructure is now being provided. In the earlier years of this decade, we were able to fund the development of cycle network plans so these plans now exist for all the cities. Since the last two budgets, we now have substantial step-up in funding that will enable the planned investments to be undertaken. For example, next year alone there is some €100 million to invest across the Department's two principal programmes that support active travel.

Our focus now needs to be on ensuring delivery and good use of the substantial funds we are receiving from the taxpayer. A challenge for us is to ensure a sufficient pipeline of projects is moving forward and brought successfully through the planning system, and is ready to absorb the increased level of funding available now and into the future. The NTA's new cycling office will help us to ensure that, between the NTA and the various local authorities involved, the ambitious projects for expanding and enhancing urban cycle networks will progress and get delivered.

The committee will also be aware that funding has is available from Government for the development of greenways, predominately across more rural areas of the country. Of course, the purpose of the Government's investment under the greenways programme is somewhat different. It is less centred on commuting and sustainable travel and more focused on providing joint cycling and walking infrastructure that provides a local amenity and an attractive tourism product. The committee will be aware that the Department has been working on a review of public transport and active travel policy over the past while. In the past week, the Minister opened a public consultation on these topics. As part of this, he published a range of background information papers and analyses prepared by the Department to support a well-informed public conversation. Among these is a specific paper on active travel which is helping us in this area. The public consultation seeks the views of transport stakeholders, public representatives and the general public on what is important in public transport and active travel policy, what we have got right, where we need to improve and how we should we prioritise.

This is the first formal review of our policy in over a decade. As part of this work, we have used the occasion to look back at two documents we published in 2009 - the National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020, and Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future – to see how we have progressed. Of course, 2009 is memorable for other reasons, principally the global financial and economic crises. The grave fiscal position that Ireland needed to address in the years thereafter meant that we did not receive the level of investment that had been anticipated when the policies were initially drawn up. Obviously, this affected our capacity to deliver the various actions and measures. The position has changed and there has been a substantial stepping up of funding.

A decade on from our last policy statement, we want to concentrate now on shaping our path ahead. What do we want to achieve with policy in this area? Do we need to refresh our priorities? How can our experience inform our future approach? What can we learn from other places? The Minister's consultation will run until late January. We are engaging with stakeholders during this period with a view to stimulating discussions on what is the first review of Ireland's sustainable mobility policy in ten years.

We hope this opening statement is a helpful introduction to today's discussion and that we can be of assistance to the committee in its consideration of cycling policy and cycling safety.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses for their presentations. The biggest issue arising from the earlier session earlier was the issue of establishing a national cycling office, which would not necessarily be located in the National Transport Authority because its statutory remit extends only to Dublin city and surrounding areas. This new office should drive the agenda for change and investment and push cycling as a policy issue with all the other parties nationally and regionally. I will ask the witnesses to address that point when they respond.

On the consultation, representatives of a number of cycling campaigns appeared before the committee this morning. Ms Hanlon stated the Department is committed to meeting stakehold-

ers. How does the Department identify stakeholders? Who will they be?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: On how we identify stakeholders, in the course of the public transportation process we are taking a broad view and coming at this from a sustainability perspective. We are looking at sustainable transport, of which there are various types, and then more detailed aspects such as cycling and active travel. The stakeholders on the State side are easy to identify. We know the various bodies and have strong contacts with them. We have built up fairly strong relations with several stakeholder bodies. Through the NTA and local authorities, there is a familiarity with the groups that represent different interests in this area. About a year and a half ago, the Minister hosted an event in the Mansion House which was attended by a number of groups and to which several cycling groups were also invited. They are also invited to attend another engagement tomorrow, a technical workshop event which will examine the detail of some issues. We notice that groups involved in cycling are easier to identify because they make themselves known, feature in the media and appear before Oireachtas committees. Our interest is in promoting, encouraging and facilitating active travel, which is cycling and walking. It is harder to identify groups that represent the public interest in the area of walking. We endeavour to make up for that by seeking the views of various parties that have expressed views in this area and wish to engage in public consultations. We advertise the public consultation widely. It only opened about seven days ago so we have not yet been inundated. However, we expect to see a flow of submissions coming in the coming weeks.

Chairman: Will Facebook be used to get people to engage? What will the Department do?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: There is a Department Twitter account which is used to point people towards these types of initiatives and to encourage responses.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I welcome everyone. I have had the pleasure of meeting the witnesses before, notably Ms Graham and Mr. Creegan who would need offices in Leinster House at this stage, such are their commitments to the various committees. I sympathise with them as I do not know how they manage to do their core business with all the committees they must attend, especially with all that is going on with BusConnects.

How many staff have been allocated to the cycling office?

Ms Anne Graham: Mr. Creegan will answer that.

Mr. Hugh Creegan: We expect to have a team of seven. There are four in place so far and seven will in place within the next two months.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: What is the budget for that?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: It is in the region of €1.5 million annually.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: What is the role of the office?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: It is to add to the local authority's resources on cycle design schemes by taking other schemes that we want to see accelerated. It will also do all stages of design, right up to getting planning approval, whether Part 8 or otherwise, and prepare tender documents for contractors to build schemes. At that point, we see the office handing over the tender documents to the relevant local authority as local authorities are better placed to supervise construction work.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Will these seven people be leaned on by 45 local authorities?

Will all the local authorities be dependent on these seven people?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: No, it is not just seven people. There are seven in-house staff and the company providing the resources has further resources on which we can draw on top of that.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: What company is that?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: AECOM is the company involved.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Is that a private consultancy company that we are paying? Is it paid a retainer? Does it appear on the books annually or is from project to project?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: It is providing this design team which will manage a number of projects. In almost all the projects across the State a design team must be procured in any event. In this case, we have a design team in place which can develop a certain number of projects. We do not want to exaggerate the number involved.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: They would only have to be procured if we did not have them in-house. Is that correct?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: Yes.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: If we had them in-house, we would probably save a few shillings. Is that correct?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: Yes, but there is also an issue of staffing levels.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: If the Department had the resources required to procure a design team, we would not incur the expense of tendering and the time that takes and we would not be dependent on private companies coming in to design projects.

Ms Anne Graham: Maybe I will respond to that. The idea of the design office is to be able to scale up the delivery. It would probably not be appropriate that we would have a full design team in-house to be able to deliver the infrastructure. The rate of delivery is ramping up now but that does not necessarily mean we would have to retain that level as we go through the projects.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: We are behind the curve so we will probably need staff in the office for a significant period.

Ms Anne Graham: That is why we think the most appropriate model is to provide a design team that can extend the resources within its own consultancy firm, depending on the number of projects that we can give to it. That is what we think is the most appropriate model for the delivery of this service.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: The office will cost €1.5 million and have seven staff. Are these staff exclusively dedicated to Dublin, as anecdotal evidence suggests?

Ms Anne Graham: No. They are not staff. They are not-----

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Are they on the agency side?

Ms Anne Graham: It is an outsourced design consultancy that is delivering designs. It is a consultancy service we are taking on but the staff are placed in our offices and are working

alongside our staff.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Are these staff on the agency side? Ms Graham will know this issue came up last week at a meeting of the Committee of Public Accounts.

Ms Anne Graham: They are outsourced but they are placed within our organisation. It is a consultancy for design services.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: In real terms, would it be accurate to say the workers in the national cycling office in the NTA are not public servants? They are contracted in.

Ms Anne Graham: Yes, they are contracted in.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: In that case, we do not really have a national cycling office.

Ms Anne Graham: It is a cycle design office. It works on and will continue to work on cycle designs outside of Dublin.

Chairman: It does not have a policy function.

Ms Anne Graham: We work to our own-----

Chairman: It is a technical service.

Ms Anne Graham: Yes.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Is it fair to say that we had design people before this announcement?

Ms Anne Graham: Does the Deputy mean in-house?

Deputy Marc MacSharry: No, I am referring to contractors for the schemes that have managed to get through.

Ms Anne Graham: Yes, usually they would be designed by an external consultant.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: It is, therefore, a case of smoke and mirrors. It is a superficial announcement that we have a national cycling office when all we have done is given a name to something that already existed.

Ms Anne Graham: We have a cycle design office. It is additional resources to be able to bring forward and increase our delivery rate of cycling infrastructure.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: The cost this year is €1.5 million. What was the cost last year before we announced the office?

Ms Anne Graham: There was no expenditure because there was no office.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: An office is like a room. There were, however, people dedicated to schemes and we were paying them to do designs and so forth. The announcement of a national cycling office within the National Transport Authority seems to me to be a little superficial. It is smoke and mirrors because there are seven people in the office who do not really work for us. They are contracted in to do a particular job.

Ms Anne Graham: They work for the NTA. They are working to a programme that the

NTA-----

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Yes, but they are subcontractors for want of a better word.

Ms Anne Graham: They are working to a programme the NTA has set for them in association with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. They are additional to what is already being done within the local authorities. In earlier years, the funding that was available for active travel would have been assigned to the different local authorities. The local authorities would either do the design in-house or go out to external consultants for assistance with their designs. It is a mixture, depending on what resources are available within the local authorities.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I know the NTA is depending on the resources that are available and all of that kind of stuff. I suggest, however, that what it says on the tin and the public perception of that is not what we are getting.

Chairman: I hear what the Deputy is saying but I also hear the NTA and I have great respect for the work it does.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: As do I.

Chairman: I want to make this point in a fair way. I have the greatest respect for the work the NTA does. The issue is not so much with the design because we accept that this has to be done by professionals and qualified persons who are able to do the job. The issue for the cycling representatives we met today is one of policy and who drives policy nationally. It should not be the function of the NTA. While it is appropriate and proper that the office reside within the NTA, the key point being made this morning was that it must push the boundaries. It must determine where to get more money and where to spend it and identify what people want. Operating that agenda is entirely separate from what the NTA is doing.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: I will expand on that and assist Deputy MacSharry in the discussion on this point. The policy is driven and made at Department level. The NTA is an important player in this and it works at the level of strategy, technical design and interaction with the local authorities around delivery. At the policy level in the Department, the Minister has looked for us to put an increasing focus on this in the past couple of years. The funding he has secured for it has stepped up in recent years. We are looking at how to align the funding available now and in the future, which is unlike the levels of funding available five or ten years ago, with getting projects delivered. The delivery of infrastructure has been identified by everybody, including the cycling groups the committee and the Department have met, as a key and critical feature that needs to be delivered, alongside some other features which I will address in a moment. Our emphasis at policy level has been on ensuring the NTA is in contact with the local authorities to get them to develop the plans they need to develop. That has been done and now it is about getting the projects through, having them technically designed and providing the assistance the local authorities need to do that. It is also about getting the projects through the planning process. There has been difficulty in some local authorities with achieving progress in the planning process for cycling schemes. Decisions have to be made on the allocation of road space between cycling and other forms of transport. Some local authorities have experienced difficulty with elected members coming to a view on what is the appropriate way forward and on what they can agree to. We have placed much emphasis on that thus far.

The Department also has a strong understanding that road safety policy and legislation, which are areas on which the Department leads and works closely with the Road Safety Author-

ity, are critically important to cyclists and other people using the roads and footpaths. A number of measures have been progressed in the past while, including some by the Department and Minister, for example, the regulations we are discussing today. Others have been progressed with agencies such as the Road Safety Authority, which is doing the advertising campaign that is needed on the soft side to complement the hard legislative measure and get the message and understanding across.

Deputy Eamon Ryan briefly mentioned the normalisation of cycling. That is one of the critical things we are trying to achieve in the Department. We have a policy around behavioural measures. We have brought in a scheme of training in cycling that is being developed and rolled out in conjunction with cycling groups. Predominantly funded by the Department, it teaches children at an appropriate age about cycling and moving safely on the roads and about the things they need to be aware of. That has just started. We have been able to do that in the past couple of years and we are expanding and rolling it out further. We now want to evaluate it and look at rolling it out further for training older children and adults.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I thank Ms Hanlon for what was to some extent a second opening statement on what is going on. The crux of this is that the national cycling is not what I thought it would be.

Chairman: It is not a policy office.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Maybe we need a policy office in the Department. We basically have a structured design team within the NTA. That is not what I understood the office to be. It is specific to infrastructure. Ms Hanlon mentioned all the good things taking place in education, challenging stigma and normalising cycling, to which Deputy Eamon Ryan referred. That is all great but people are interested in the delivery of infrastructure. I will move on because other members want to contribute.

On the money that is available, Ms Hanlon mentioned a sum of €100 million for active travel. Senator Lombard, in a press release after the budget, stated €114 million had been made available for cycling through funding for greenways. As we heard earlier, *Cycling.ie* has done an analysis showing that in 2018 the budget for cycling would be about 3% of the transport budget. If we note the percentages from the total land transport budget for 2020, the amount is €1.82 billion. In the past, subheading B8 was for sustainable transport, and approximately 32.26% of that budget in previous years was allocated to it. That would put the figure at approximately €587 million, which would mean approximately €17.62 million would come towards this area. If we add to that the €23 million for greenways, that adds up to approximately €41 million. Other figures have been given that would bring it closer to €50 million, which is less than 3% and closer to 2.25% or 2.5% of the budget. How does Ms Hanlon categorise expenditure on cycling and what are the real figures? We have Senator Lombard's figure of €114 million and Ms. Hanlon's figure of €100 million in terms of active travel. However, taking account of the figure from *Cycling.ie*, from what we heard from our guests earlier this morning and my calculations, the figure is somewhere between €40 million and €50 million, including greenways, which are as much to do with tourism as transport.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Cycling is funded under a number of headings and there are a number of headings under which we provide Exchequer support to benefit cycling. Two programmes within the Department are principally targeted at supporting active travel. One is the cycling and walking programme. It alone will have funding of €70 million next year

Deputy Marc MacSharry: What programme will have €70 million in funding?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: The cycling and walking programme.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Can we separate those out? Presumably the walking programme involves funding for footpaths for local authorities. Is that the case?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Perhaps I could explain a few figures first.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Certainly.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: There is a sequence to this and then I will be happy to disaggregate as best I can. If we consider 2018, the spend the Department supported under the two principal programmes was approximately €37 million. The allocation under those programmes for 2019 is €48 million. The allocation for them for 2020 is €100 million, which is a considerable step up. We need to ensure when spending taxpayers' money that the projects are in place, ready to absorb it and that we can get them done. That does not include the money being spent on greenways. Money is allocated for greenways in addition to that. The allocation for greenways next year is €23 million.

Chairman: Does that come under rural affairs funding?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: No. It comes under our Department. We examined the greenways programme a few years ago, which is on the travel and transport side. While it comprises cycling and walking infrastructure, its focus is not on transport as such. It is not about getting somebody from one place to another. People are not travelling on them with that type of purpose, as if they were commuting. It is about having a local amenity for communities and a good strong tourism product for certain rural areas. It is led on the tourism side but that does not mean it is divorced from what we are doing with respect to cycling. We have a connection with them. We deal with issues of common and mutual interest and topicality and we keep in touch with what is happening.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Can I interject? There is a benefit from greenways for walkers and cyclists. The allocation for it is €23 million and nobody is arguing with that. I am still confused how we get to a funding figure of €100 million or €114 million for cycling. Let us take €23 million off the €114 million-----

Chairman: I am sure Ms Hanlon is coming to that point.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Can I explain that very directly? Regarding the €100 million figure I spoke about for cycling, about €70 million of that is for the cycling and walking programme that the Department funds and the remainder of it is for the sustainable urban travel programme that it also funds. Both of those are delivered through the National Transport Authority.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: In terms of that €70 million funding, can Ms Hanlon strip out walking from cycling?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: At the moment, no, because----

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I apologise for interrupting. Coming at this issue from being a member of this committee, perhaps I am a bit more aggressive than I should be and I apologise if I am. Does the walking infrastructure include footpaths?

Chairman: People can walk on the cycling paths-----

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I am trying to strip out walking from cycling.

Chairman: Is funding for walking areas separate from cycling or does it cover both?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: On the implementation side, the NTA might be closer to the action.

Ms Anne Graham: In terms of the projects funded through the Department's grants, they can be for specific cycle paths and for joint cycle ways and pathways, which are shared pathways. There can be schemes addressing junctions to improve pedestrian facilities as well as the cycle facilities. It is very hard to strip out what funding is for cycling alone. That is why we also refer to active travel, which is walking and cycling, and our funds go through to all types of projects.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I know I am being incredibly annoying but how much of the €70 million is for infrastructure that is exclusively for walkers, that is, where bicycles cannot be used?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: It is very difficult - almost impossible - to do that because most cycle schemes cannot be built without interfering with the footpath or making some changes.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Okay.

Mr. Hugh Creegan: Effectively, we get the benefit of a footpath change as well as the cycle lane.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I suggest all public commentary on this should indicate it is for cycling and walking.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: We do. We call it active travel.

Chairman: Mr. O'Leary wishes to add a comment.

Mr. Ray O'Leary: On a point of clarification, regular footpaths in most local authorities come under roads expenditure.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Yes, I know that.

Mr. Ray O'Leary: As I have responsibility for roads and road safety, sometimes I can get annoyed when people talk about roads versus pedestrians versus cyclists versus public transport because roads expenditure serves all users. I wanted to clarify that is distinct from the specific investment through the NTA to support bicycle movement or pedestrian movement through difficult junctions.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I thank everybody for their efforts and they are doing a great job, but this is a matter of policy and resources, which is not necessarily in their domain. It is down to Ministers and the Government. We have established that the national cycling office is not that, rather it comprises a design team that has been subcontracted.

Chairman: It has been stated it is a dedicated cycle office to bring a number of projects forward for planning and construction.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: We are glad to have the opportunity-----

Chairman: There is no problem. It is separate from what we want.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: -----because we represent members of the public and it is important they know we are not getting what we assumed or thought we were getting. The €100 million in funding is not exclusively for cycling and it is wrong to say it is. We need to build towards that 10% figure and I might contribute further later, but I want to allow my colleagues to contribute.

Chairman: I would add one further point to be helpful. If the Deputy were to submit a parliamentary question to the Department, it might be able to provide him with a list of where the money has been or will be spent.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I do not want to create additional expense for people who are working hard to answer parliamentary questions when I can get them answered here.

Chairman: Of course, but the Deputy would have to give them due notice of such a list. That is what I would like to see. The point they have made is that cycling and walking are joined up in the space they occupy. It is hard to be specific unless the route is only a path on which nobody could cycle such as a narrow path near a cliff surface or somewhere like that. Cycling and walking go together. They are compatible. They are not mutually exclusive. Is that not it?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: In policy terms, we are trying to progress both because the benefits we get from them, in terms of impact on reducing congestion and on the deliverability of cities and urban areas and health and safety benefits, all work together. That is the policy, and what we have discussed in terms of funding is in the area of active travel.

Chairman: I call Deputy Catherine Murphy.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: I welcome our guests.

Ms Anne Graham: On another point of clarification, we publish an annual report that covers where the grants have gone, the sustainable transport measures and all the projects that have been funded every year. The 2018 annual report is the most recent one. It would give members an example of the types of schemes we are discussing, such as shared schemes, full cycling schemes, or other facilities. It will show how they work together.

Chairman: The transfer in respect of funding.

Ms Anne Graham: They are available online.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: I have asked several parliamentary questions to try to get a sense of where the money is spent because I find it difficult to track what is spent on cycling. I take issue with the idea that footpaths and cycleways are more or less the same piece of infrastructure. While in some cases they are, in others they certainly are not. As I noted earlier, where new housing estates are developed, they will typically include cycling infrastructure, but there will be permeability and the route will pass through a housing estate that does not have it. That causes an immediate conflict because it has not been provided for. We are not building a network but rather increments that might lead to a network over time. There is great frustration when someone intends to cycle somewhere but experiences a range of obstacles. The public, in many ways, are leading from the front, given the growing number of people who cycle. Nevertheless, we will never normalise it unless a safe environment and network are provided

for them to cycle, and we will not encourage people to take up cycling. I refer in particular to certain groups who have been highlighted, such as women.

The question is how to develop the network. The issue of institutional arrangements was raised, and there is a question as to whether they are an inhibitor, which is why the views of the cycling office at the Department, in particular, are being sought. There are some matters I do not understand and would like to clear up. Ms Graham spoke about the statutory basis in the greater Dublin area. What does that include? My notion of the greater Dublin area might be wider. Does she mean the city and county of Dublin?

Ms Anne Graham: Yes, and the counties of-----

Chairman: It includes the River Boyne but not Drogheda.

Ms Anne Graham: Yes, the counties of Meath, Wicklow and Kildare.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: That area is on a statutory basis.

Ms Anne Graham: Yes.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: What is the advantage of it being on a statutory basis?

Ms Anne Graham: We have a statutory transport plan that includes a network of cycle routes. It is part of our statutory delivery of transport infrastructure. We progressed the others on a non-statutory basis because we do not have a statutory function to carry out a transport strategy in the regional cities, although we have developed a network of cycle plans for them.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: Is a change in the area for which the NTA has direct responsibility on the cards?

Ms Anne Graham: Part of the national planning framework seeks to determine whether we could have additional powers in respect of transport strategies for the regional cities.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: One criticism relates to the institutional arrangements and the fragmentation, of which there is a great deal. Some of that will be inevitable because there are various local authorities and approaches, but is an attempt to reach a logical institutional arrangement, where there is one point of engagement on both policy and delivery, likely to rest with the NTA or will it be combined with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport?

Ms Anne Graham: Our focus is on the design and delivery of the networks. That the NTA is in place means it breaks down some of the barriers, not least in respect of cycle routes that cross local authority boundaries. One of the strengths in the cycle design office we have put in place is that it can work across those boundaries, which should ease the bringing forward of plans for construction.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: The primary organisations that will deliver will be the local authorities, and some will be better than others. I understand the kinds of conflict there may be, such as where shops may lose parking space in the street because it will be turned into a cycle-way. Such conflict will remain until demand increases and people see the success and change, which will be beneficial for other areas. Is there an exemplar network anywhere in the country? If so, where is it and has Ms Graham seen it?

Ms Anne Graham: It will take a number of years to build the network. We agree that

a number of cycle projects have been initiated throughout the region but they have not been joined up, which is why we wanted to put in place a plan - a network - to show we needed to join up all the bits of infrastructure in the region and to provide those connections. The Sutton-Sandycove route is a prime example of where we are trying to build one major route but it is being delivered in sections. A number of exemplars, in respect of the infrastructure put in place in recent years, are segregated cycle infrastructure. Braemor Road in Churchtown is one example. The design manual is in place to be able to have consistency in designs and to ensure there will be the best cycling infrastructure in our cities and towns.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: Improvements to the design manual happen all the time. Will it be updated and when might we see it?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: As we are working on many cycling designs as part of the BusConnects project, we will take advantage of what we learn from the project to update the manual and add further guidance, probably next year.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: Will it be towards the end of next year?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: Yes, I think so.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: The NTA's remit is wider than the local authorities' remit, given that it includes public transport infrastructure as well as that of roads. I recall seeing at a train station in another country a ramp at the side of steps to allow people to wheel up and down bicycles. There are other basic measures such as facilities for storing baggage. What engagement has there been? Is there dedicated money for such infrastructure? I acknowledge there is a capacity issue on trains and buses but that will sort itself out over time. Is the design of such infrastructure automatically a central feature when dealing, for example, with the procurement of new carriages or where a train station is to be upgraded?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: In the design of new train stations, the issue of its location, cycle parking facilities and accessibility to the platforms for bicycles is a consideration. As for the carriage of bicycles on the fleet, there will be space provision to allow for it but there are definitely policy issues to be sorted out.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: I return to the issue of cycleway projects. In my area, I am familiar with those on the two canals. I accept that it is not a straight route all the way and that there are pinch points but it is taking an incredible length of time. What are the impediments in that regard? For example, is it a matter of finance or design?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: Up to the past few years, finance was a big issue because such schemes are expensive. For one of the schemes on which we are working, at the Royal Canal, the budget is in the multiple millions of euro. It is not a small-scale scheme. The funding is now available but we have to catch up on the planning aspect. There are also challenges to have the scheme approved, for all the reasons the Deputy mentioned. There are others in respect of which there are environmental issues to be addressed, in particular on the Royal Canal. These are not unusual impediments. Rather, they are the usual impediments but it takes time for the issues to be dealt with.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: I thank Mr. Creegan for his responses but I would like to continue my line of questioning on this issue because people are interested in it and they are putting pressure on me to get answers. This demonstrates that there is a desire for this mode of travel. When one factors in the number of people that could travel that route and take pressure

off city streets it makes complete sense to get that done quickly.

Mr. Creegan mentioned that a percentage of the NTA's budget is spent on active travel. What is that percentage and how does it relate to other spend?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: I do not have the exact percentage but it is in excess of 10%. Between 10% and 12% of our capital budget will be spent on cycling and walking schemes. The percentage will increase next year to approximately 15%.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: Is the increase related to BusConnects?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: No. It will increase because additional funding has been provided and because we are starting to catch up and develop a pipeline of projects that can be delivered.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: Returning to the NTA's engagement with the local authorities and some of them being better in this area than others, are those who are good at this better because they have staff that are committed to cycling and walking, they have more advanced plans or they are better at drawing down funding or are there common denominators in that regard? Where there are people who are more proactive this is reflected in drawdown. What are the stand-out issues?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: It is fair to say that there are differences between local authorities' approach to cycling and walking projects and sustainable projects. Some are better than others. We cannot put our finger on why that is the case. In some cases, it may be down to resources and the fact that the people involved have multiple projects to deal with such that these projects may be low on their priority list. I would not be capable of identifying the causes, but it is fair to say that there is a different approach in some local authorities.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: If there was a staff member dedicated to active travel would that make a difference?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: It would not do any harm but I do not know what difference it would make. Fundamentally, it is an issue of resources and priorities within the local authorities. They have multiple tasks to perform. The key question is whether they have the resources to bring this work far enough up the pecking order.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: Is this work being driven by the local authorities or the NTA?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: It is a mix of both. Where progress is not happening, the cycle design office which I mentioned earlier can intervene and take on the design and move it ahead. In that sense, the NTA is driving it. When it comes to bringing the project through the council chamber and getting approval for it, that has to be the remit of the local authorities.

Chairman: The NTA does not have a statutory remit in regard to the local authorities and so, therefore, its voice does not have to be recognised.

Mr. Hugh Creegan: That is true.

Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe: It was mentioned by the witness for I BIKE Dublin that in regard to cycling policy and infrastructure requests it has to deal with up to 30 organisations. Is there a role for the NTA in co-ordinating and streamlining those requests?

My second question is to the witness from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

and relates to enforcement of the road traffic legislation. Is the legislation open to legal challenge in respect of the interpretation of dangerous overtaking? In many cases, dangerous overtaking occurs on a 50:50 basis. I travel to Dublin via the Long Mile Road. I have noted that on parts of that road the cycle lane is 1.5 m wide and on other parts of it the cycle lane is 1 m wide. In that situation, how would a garda make a judgment in regard to dangerous overtaking? Will an assessment be made on the basis of a collision and so on? Is it possible that we could be facing many legal challenges in the Four Courts in regard to this legislation?

Mr. Ray O'Leary: I will respond to the second part of the Deputy's question. Enforcement will be a matter for An Garda Síochána. The legislation that was introduced took account of views in regard to enforceability. My recollection is that the Deputy raised questions in a previous discussion about the enforceability of a minimum passing distance of either 1 m or 1.5 m. The legislation takes account of those views. It is important to stress that there always has been a general offence of dangerous overtaking. The question of dangerous overtaking is long established in Irish road traffic law. In the current legislation we have separated out dangerous overtaking of cyclists because they are particularly vulnerable road users who are sharing the road space with mechanically propelled vehicles, unlike pedestrians in normal circumstances, and therefore they are particularly vulnerable and there is an increased penalty in terms of the fix charged notice.

On the question of legal challenge, legislative provisions are always open to challenge by a citizen. I cannot say whether this legislation specifically will be open to challenge. In bringing forward this specific legislation, we decided that it was best to build on a long established offence in Irish road traffic law that had been tested through the courts and had been the basis of previous action by the various parties. These issues were borne in mind in bringing forward and distinguishing dangerous overtaking of a cyclist from dangerous overtaking generally.

Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe: In regard to enforcement of the legislation, some years ago when the sugar beet factory in Carlow closed and the company moved its operations to Mallow, concerns were raised in regard to the ability of the infrastructure in place in north Cork to accommodate the heavy goods vehicles. At that time a motion was tabled to the local authority requesting that on the N73, which was the road from Mitchelstown to Mallow, these heavy goods vehicles be required to pull in at designated areas to allow other traffic to pass. We need a gentleman-type agreement on country roads in regard to cyclists. I have spoken to various people about this issue. In bygone days there was a gentleman's agreement among road-users in that slow moving vehicles would pull over to allow other vehicles to pass. Nowadays, our roads are increasingly busy with cyclists. The N73 is a national secondary road. As one approaches that road there is a sign advising motorists to be aware that owing to the width of the road oncoming traffic may be in the middle of the road. Lately, while stuck in traffic congestion I assumed there was a slow car in front of me. When I eventually got to this section of road, one cyclist had held up 40 cars. I know there were 40 cars because the person in the car in front of me asked. It causes confusion and frustration. It can lead to road rage, which we are trying to avoid. I enjoy riding a bicycle as well but road users must share the road and care about each other. Much of the focus is on what happens in Dublin but we must not forget rural Ireland. We welcome the greenways but as previous speakers have said, they are for recreational purposes. Something more must be done to get more money to rural Ireland, as Deputy MacSharry noted, not just for footpaths but for cycle lanes. We need proper legislation as well.

Mr. Ray O'Leary: To be honest, the answer to those kinds of issues do not necessarily lie in legislation. To some extent this is always an issue and we cannot legislate for or against what

might be called “road courtesy”. It can be encouraged through education. The State cannot do everything to change behaviour but we can encourage it through education, enforcement and, in some cases, engineering or investment. For example, greenway investment provides an alternative. One of the biggest issues, whether it is in rural or urban areas, is the limited amount of road space. We are trying to manage a limited amount of road space with a limited amount of funding to maintain and invest it and make the best use of it for the many different people who want to use it. This takes in the tourist, the tractor and the cyclist. One of the advantages of greenways, for example, is to create space for more vulnerable road users and reduce the chances of them being in “conflict”, to use the word in the engineering sense and where it refers to different kinds of users on the same stretch of road.

The Deputy might be aware that on the national secondary route from Tralee to Dingle, a cycle track was built into the side of the road despite environmental objections being made. The track required some extra width and an environmental organisation objected to the inclusion of a cycle track being added to the improved road. That has been delivered but such a project is subject to environmental capacity and resources available for investment. There will always be a mix of different solutions. We might work with local authorities where investment in an alternative route or in enhancing the existing route is feasible. Engagement with stakeholders can be useful in trying to encourage people to respect each other, whether that is a driver respecting a cyclist or the cyclist respecting the driver.

From the road safety perspective, we do not like using terms like cycling safety. We talk about road safety for everybody because people do not live in boxes. The same people who use bicycles use buses, footpaths and cars. Therefore, it is about trying to create the conditions where people using public infrastructure can do so in an optimal way.

Chairman: Between 2009 and 2013, road fatalities of cyclists averaged seven per year. Between 2014 and 2018 the figure was 11 per year, so the trend for cyclist deaths is up while it is significantly down for road users as a whole. The number of road fatalities in 2009 was 238, compared with 142 last year. That includes pedestrians. The point by the witness is very well made but cyclists are undoubtedly at a particular risk.

I referred earlier to the cyclist injury report and collision data from 2008 to 2016 that is due early next month. It would be important to have representatives of the Road Safety Authority before us to discuss that. We will learn much from that as I understand it goes into every reported injury and fatality and we can get a really clear picture of what more we need to do.

Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe: There are organisations that can help in this respect.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: The Deputy is talking about structures for engagement with stakeholders, which was mentioned by the Chairman earlier. I spoke about the public consultation we are doing and one of the questions being put in the public consultation is the question of engagement with various stakeholders both in this and other areas. It is about seeing whether we should or how we can widen existing processes, or whether they should be formalised. We are very open to ideas around that and to progressing it in future. The Deputy speaks about the proliferation of parties involved in this, and we are looking at institutional structures under the public consultation. We are inviting views on this and are open to hearing them. It is about asking what is the best way of having that interaction at the policy, strategy, implementation and user levels, which is really important. It is about ensuring that the views of users, when they come in, are not just targeted at one of the parties but that they influence and inform what is happening at the policy and strategy levels, as well as at the delivery and implementation levels.

Chairman: We must leave by 1.15 p.m.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I have some questions that will require a bit of back and forth.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I have seven rapid-fire buzzer questions. The Senator can go ahead.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: When we speak about road conflict and frustration, there are different consequences for different users and cyclists have a higher risk of death. Cyclists are also more likely to get off a bike and not cycle again. There are not many drivers who have a frustrating driving experience and never drive again but this happens with cyclists. It is not just about individuals and there is a negative social consequence if the collective social policy goal we have identified nationally is that we want people to cycle. It makes it everybody's business and not just the business of those involved if people are deterred from cycling. We have heard about the work on design but what about the work on cycling promotion and encouraging people to do it? That is what is different about potentially having a cycling office in the Department as opposed to having people who can offer expertise on the detail of cycling design. The Department or a local authority could have a cycling officer who is not just looking at how to accommodate the needs of cyclists but how we can create new cyclists in future. It is a stated collective public goal.

There was mention of a figure of approximately 12% or 14% of budget for active travel from the National Transport Authority. What part of that relates to cycling? The Department mentioned an increase of €385 million in the budget, with over €354 million relating to capital increases. I am on the climate action committee and I know there is a 10% target so does the Department envisage that 10% of the new capital infrastructure might move to cycling? How can this be accelerated?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Under the Government's climate action plan published in the summer, there is a commitment to increase the amount of funding to facilitate cycling infrastructure. The figure of approximately €354 million mentioned by the Deputy is the increase in the Department's budget from 2019 to 2020.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: It relates to capital expenditure.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: I replied earlier to Deputy MacSharry about the level of capital funding. For simplicity, we are just looking at the two main programmes we run that have a beneficial impact in this area. The 2019 allocation for those is €48 million and the 2020 allocation is €100 million.

Chairman: There are five minutes left.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: An enormous slice of the step up next year is-----

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: It is going to address the imbalance in the overall percentage lag.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Yes. Over time we want to build that up. That is the budget for active travel, as I said earlier.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: What about cycling promotion?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: The Department has been involved in two main areas in cycling promotion. One of them is National Bike Week, which is very well known. That is an initiative run by the Department. We have ramped up what we have been doing in that for the last ten years. We are also engaged with European Mobility Week. One that is really interesting and encouraging because it gets in at an earlier stage is the initiative we have developed with cycling groups on cycle training.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Could I ask-----

Chairman: I must call Deputy MacSharry. He is a member of the committee and I want to give him a fair amount of time.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Of course.

Chairman: I want to look after members of the committee first and other Members thereafter.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: To be helpful rather than rude, Ms Hanlon gives great detail in her answers but perhaps I could get a “yes” or “no” to the questions I have. This will inform parliamentary questions in which I can tease the matter out further. I want to use the time as best I can. If the reply is neither “yes” nor “no” the witnesses can tell me it is not that simple or that they do not know.

Chairman: In fairness to our witnesses, they have been as brief as they can be.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: It is just that I do not have much time. Is there still a cross-departmental team on infrastructure at assistant secretary level that meets regularly?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: It is at Secretary General level.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: How often does that meet?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: It will meet on Friday and it last met about six weeks ago.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Would it be fair to say it meets about six times a year?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: It meets more regularly than that.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Do the same representatives attend? Is it always the Secretaries General?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: It is the Secretaries General of the Departments that deal with infrastructure. They bring supplementary officials with them depending on the subjects on the agenda.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Are there plans to fund a cycling officer in each local authority?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Is that local authorities?

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Yes. Will the Department give the local authorities funding to fund an officer?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: We have not developed that piece of work yet.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Okay. Fingal County Council has €100 million on deposit

on any given day while Sligo and Leitrim can barely fund a librarian, so that is an issue. Has the Department considered full segregation on a pilot basis in certain towns or certain parts of urban centres, that is, to make a street one way with one side for traffic and the other for micro mobility?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: Yes, some of our schemes do things like that.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Is that being actively considered?

Mr. Hugh Creegan: Yes.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Okay. I will tease that out further in parliamentary questions. Regarding more financial incentives, there is the bike to work scheme but what about pensioners, retired people, non-workers and children? Are financial incentives being considered for them?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: It is a tax arrangement and it is done by the Minister for Finance-----

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I know, but if I am a child I do not pay tax and if I am a pensioner I possibly do not pay tax either.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: It applies to workers and that is the tax arrangement.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: There is no other scheme under consideration at present.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: No.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Okay. I will tease that out further as well. Regarding the new laws that came into force last week, have additional resources been provided to An Garda Síochána for enforcement?

Mr. Ray O'Leary: We are not in a position to answer questions about Garda resources.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I understand that.

Mr. Ray O'Leary: They are a matter for the Garda Commissioner.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: Mr. O'Leary does not know.

Mr. Ray O'Leary: I do not know.

Chairman: Put a parliamentary question to the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I will tease that out as well.

Chairman: It could be referred to the Garda as well. There is one minute left.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: This is my second last question. Are there any current plans for a cycling division in the Department?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: There is an active travel section in the Department and that is where we lead and progress this.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: We established earlier that it is walking and greenways.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: No, it is not greenways. We have moved greenways to tourism. We

still have links, but it is led by the tourism side.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: How many staff are there?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Walking and cycling are within the sustainable transport area of the Department.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: That is the broad sustainable transport area.

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: No. Sustainable transport is my brief. Within it there is a group of people who deal with active travel.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: How many are in the group?

Ms Deirdre Hanlon: Approximately five.

Chairman: We are near closing time.

Deputy Marc MacSharry: I know. This question has a “yes” or “no” answer and is for Ms Graham. When we discussed the disability issue in public transport previously I asked Ms Graham how long it would take, at current resource levels, to have saturation coverage in terms of vehicles that are accessible for disabled people. She answered that it would be at least ten years with current funding. I will apply the same question to cycling. At current resource levels, how many centuries will it be before we have saturation in terms of cycling infrastructure?

Chairman: I do not know about centuries but our time is up and I must conclude the meeting. I thank Deputy Catherine Murphy for organising this meeting and advising all the people who participated. Minutes and correspondence have to be deferred to the next meeting. Senator Higgins can take up the issues with the witnesses as they leave.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I have a supplementary question.

Chairman: I must adjourn the meeting.

The joint committee adjourned at 1.16 p.m. until 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 27 November 2019.