

Cycling can make a significant contribution to reducing Transport GHG emissions

Submission to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action

Cyclist.ie - the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network

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Introduction

The recent IPCC report clearly spells out the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C. To minimise environmental damage and fines arising from the failure to meet Ireland's climate change targets, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport must adopt much more ambitious climate actions than currently outlined. In Ireland's draft EU mandated National Energy and Climate Plan there's a failure to acknowledge the contribution that cycling can make in this regard

Emissions from Transport still rising ?

Transport accounts for over 52% of energy used in Ireland and is increasing. It is one of the four key areas where a reduction in carbon emissions is required to meet our international obligations. It accounts for 20% of Ireland's overall emissions (and 27% of our non-ETS emissions), with 52% of overall transport emissions coming from private cars, 24% from freight and 4% from public transport.

Failure to meet our EU agreed emissions targets is expected to cost the exchequer between €350 - €600m a year in EU fines annually from 2020 onwards. To successfully decarbonise transport involves providing meaningful alternatives to the private car, continuing investment in sustainable transport and promotion of modal shift.

Perfect fit for shorter trips

Cycling offers the best and quickest return on investment of all transport expenditure. We believe that if sufficient investment is made in creating safer and more comfortable cycling

conditions, substantial and rapid growth in cycling mode share can be achieved. The CSO National Travel Survey 2016 showed that more than 25% of journeys were less than 2 kilometres, while nearly 57% were less than 8 km and with improved cycling conditions, many of these trips could be made by bike.

Additionally, electric bikes have significant potential to replace car use for longer journeys (e.g. 10 – 20 km) and journeys in hillier towns and cities, while also making cycling an option for a much wider range of people. Multi-modal trips which combine cycling with use of public transport should be facilitated by provision of secure bike parking at train and bus interchanges and where possible by allowing the carriage of bikes on public transport at peak times .

Further societal benefits as a bonus

Investing in cycling also aligns well with numerous government policies and societal objectives. Here below we outline what we see as **the ten most significant reasons why government need to prioritise the growth of cycling mode share**. National and international evidence relating to these benefits of cycling highlights that although a significant increase in investment is required to achieve the necessary modal shift, such investment will yield significant positive returns in the long term.

1. Investing in cycling provides excellent value for money
2. Cycling helps tackle congestion
3. Cycling helps more people get the exercise they need and improves health
4. Cycling can improve psychological well-being
5. Investing in cycling will improve safety for cyclists and for other road users
6. Cycling can help us meet our climate change obligations and reduce reliance on finite fossil fuel energy
7. Cycle trips don't generate air or noise pollution
8. Interventions to boost cycling can create better places
9. Cycling is an affordable mobility option for all
10. Cycling can boost local economic activity

Cycling playing its part as a low carbon solution

Cycling is the mode of transport for more than 40% of people in many progressive European cities. Cycling will not solve the problem of climate change on its own, but as 57% of Irish journeys are less than 8 km, it can make a significant contribution, as well as alleviating congestion, contributing to cleaner air, improving health outcomes and creating attractive neighbourhoods. For cycling to play its climate action part however, the Government must begin to properly fund high quality cycling infrastructure which will enable cycling for all.

Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network (<https://www.cyclist.ie/>), is the umbrella organisation for cycling advocacy groups in Ireland and is the Irish member of ECF, the European Cyclists' Federation (<https://ecf.com/>).