

Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Parkgate Business Centre
Parkgate Street
Dublin 8
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21 June 2022

The National Cycle Network

A Chara,

RGDATA as the representative body for the independent retail grocery sector in Ireland would like to make a short contribution on the TII consultation process on the National Cycle Network.

RGDATA members, as community based, owner operated food retailers welcome any proposals which serve to increase the accessibility and permeability of Irish towns and villages. Many of our members are in areas which have seen significant benefits through the development of new cycle greenways bringing visitors and wider access to the retail core of towns and villages.

Whilst we welcome new cycling networks, we would like to highlight the importance of ensuring that the realities of operating a town centre-based food retail outlet are taken into account in the design and implementation of all traffic schemes including cycle networks. A locally run retail food store is at the centre of every vibrant community and it acts as a key driver of footfall and social/community engagement. Town centre-based retail grocery stores need to have regular accessibility to the stores from a range of transport modes, both in terms of facilitating customers and to facilitate deliveries to and from the store.

It is vital that when approaching the design and implementation of cycle networks, that there is due regard taken to examining the impact of the proposed road configurations on the multi-modal accessibility of local shops. This needs to be based on a reality that for an independent retail grocery shop to remain viable and trade competitively alongside other retailers based in edge of town and out of town locations, they need to ensure that their stores are accessible to car-based travellers who will do the weekly shop or wish to buy a larger volume of goods. These customers are a key part of the mix which makes local stores viable.

Distribution and logistical services to the stores must also be taken into consideration when designing the schemes to facilitate safe and efficient deliveries to the store and ensure health and safety issues for cyclists, delivery drivers and pedestrians are taken into consideration.

RGDATA is aware of a number of instances where town centre improvement schemes involving the installation of cycle networks had the perverse impact of reducing the accessibility to the town centre and consequently damaged town centre businesses. It would be highly ironic if a measure that was supposedly advanced to support making our communities more accessible and sustainable actually had the impact of deterring people from shopping in their town centres and instead migrating to edge of town or out of town retail outlets, which rely almost entirely on car-based custom.

RGDATA would request TII to ensure that in the design of the National Cycle Network, that a set of criteria are developed to ensure that local cycle schemes and networks are developed in a way that supports and sustains the viability and vitality of town centres. This would involve proper consultation with town centre businesses as key local stakeholders and a determination to ensure that the design of cycle schemes would explore alternatives to minimise the disruption or adverse impacts on local businesses.

If the schemes are designed correctly, they should represent a win-win for society and lead to a significant enhancement in transport provision nationally.

We would be pleased to have more detailed engagement with you on this issue as you progress the consultation process and the cycle networks strategy and policy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Buckley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long tail on the final letter.

Tara Buckley
Director General
RGDATA