Cycling in Dublin

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Guidlines only adopted after repairs

Design guidelines costing nearly €250,000 and aimed at making roads safer for cyclists were set aside on a technicality for €22 million resurfacing works to 24km of roads in Dublin.

Officials from the National Transport Authority (NTA) defended the disregarding of their own guidelines, the National Cycle Manual, while cycling campaigners called it "an appalling sign for the future."

The manual was published at cyclemanual.ie early last year and was available to road authorities before this, but the NTA said the resurfacing did not have to follow the manual because the "work predated the formal adoption" of the manual.

The document, which has taken seven years to complete, sets out detailed guidelines on making streets safer and more attractive to cyclists.

Mike McKillen, spokesman for Dublin Cycling Campaign, said: "If the manual represents best practice, whether it's legally in force or not, they should have adopted best practice."

"The city had €18 million to do the road resurfacing, that's a huge amount of money and not to get cycling right… it's an appalling sign for the future"

A spokeswoman for the NTA said: "In relation to the Dublin City re-surfacing project, the design, tendering and carrying out of this work predated the formal adoption of the NTA Cycle Design Manual."

She said the board of the NTA agreed to formally adopt the manual on December 9, under powers in the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008. It means local authorities in the Greater Dublin Area must, under law, now have regard for the manual.

The NTA said with projects it is funding outside the Dublin area, it will link the manual to funding, and has "suggested" the Department of Transport does the same.

Asked why following manual was not a funding requirement for the repaving works when nearly €20 million of the funding came from the NTA, the authority repeated that the manual had not been formally adopted.

The National Cycle Policy says "it is clear that the cycling infrastructure that has been constructed to date is often of a poor standard and is poorly maintained", the design manual is supposed to address these problems and "reflect best international practice and the latest thinking."

Most of the so-called Dublin "cycling network", which includes cycle and bus lanes, is now substandard compared to the designs in the manual. Minimum standards were ignored with the recent resurfacing undertaken late last year and into the new year.

Dublin City Council said the works followed the "first principles" of the manual. A spokesman said: "The first principles of the document have been followed, by eliminating defects in the road surface, there is improved safety for cyclists."

"The cycle network in Dublin has evolved in line with the legislation that was in force at the time of construction. The NTA Cycle Manual was not adopted until after completion of the resurfacing project. The project re-instated the existing road markings."

Dublin Bikes trips passes 3.5m mark

Dublin City Council's highly popular bike rental system has clocked up over 3.5 million rentals.

The long-term hire subscriptions have now reached over 45,600, while the council has sold more than 31,200 three day tickets which are aimed mostly at tourists and other visitors to the city.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the council said that for the first phase of major expansion, including the Docklands and around the Heuston Station are, they "anticipate that construction will commence before the end of 2012."

The plan, the council says, includes doubling the number of bike stations from 44 to about 100 and trebling the number of bikes from 550 to around 1,500. After that the city wants to get to 5,000 bikes. An ambitious strategy aims for the service to expand from as far as DCU on the northside to close to UCD on the southside.

See more on page 14

"We have to do" quays route - senior engineer

A high quality cycle route on the quays is "something we have to do" a senior engineer with Dublin City Council has said.

Under the title "Liffey Cycle Route" council has allocated €150,000 for "design and commencement of construction of a high quality East-West city centre cycle route linking the IFSC in the east with Heuston Station and the Phoenix Park in the west."

Talking about providing a high-quality cycle route on the quays, senior engineer Eoghan Madden said: "That is something we have to do, realistically it's something we have to do."

The route would tie in with off-road cycle paths in the Phoenix Park and the canals route in the Docklands.

As Dublin Bikes expand to the Docklands and Heuston Station, pressure is likely to mount to provide the East-West route, but any cycling route which changes the quays is likely to be highly contentious with motorists.

"We have a study going this year, hopefully to come back with a number of options and possibly a primarily design by the end of the year," Madden said "There's obvious issues – there's bus corridors, commercial premises that need loading, there's the widths of different quays" and that the size of the quays vary from wide sections to "barely two lanes and skinny little footpaths."

He added: "The Liffey is the prime corridor in Dublin, it should have cycling facilities on it."

Labour councillor Andrew Montague said, "I would love to see some progress on the quays but have not seen any proposals – I hope something positive comes out of it."

The design work which was allocated funding recently is a follow up from a workshop last year hosted by Dublin City Council and the Dutch Embassy in Dublin, with help from Dutch cycling groups Fietsberaad and the Dutch Cycling Embassy.

Engineers at the event came up with a number of concepts, including options for moving both traffic and buses of the north quays – both concepts also improved the route for buses.

Both concept cycle route options use a two-way cycle track on the riverside of the north quays. The two options start at the Phoenix Park / Heuston Station, and end at the Point. The routes differ mainly in how traffic and buses are managed at pinch points along the quays.

The first route option diverts motorists off the quays at two points. The second route option reverts the south quays to two-way traffic and diverts westbound buses onto bus priority measures on College Green, Dame Street and Christchurch before rejoining the quays after Christchurch.

However, at this point it is unclear what the new study will recommend - it may have no link to the concepts.

Officials have strong backing to look at the route given that it is included in the Dublin City Development plan, agreed on by councillors and officials.

The development plan says: "It is an objective of Dublin City Council: …To achieve the following critical linkages within the lifetime of the development plan… To provide a continuous cycleway connecting the Phoenix Park and Heuston Station to the proposed S2S route along the city's quays in consultation with the Office of Public Works."

The route would link the Point with Smithfield, and Collins Barracks.

"Little or no progress" with complex junctions, one-way streets - report

Dublin City has seen "a definite improvement" for cycling in the last five years, an independent report says, but it warns that targets will not be met if the momentum is not stepped up. It highlights how one-way streets and large junctions are not being tackled.

The Bypad report written for Dublin City Council was finalised earlier this year, but was not reported on until now.

"The concise conclusion from the 2011 Bypad audit is that there has been a definite improvement in the quality of the cycling policy in the last 5 years which included the appointment of Ireland's first Cycling Officer," the report said. "However, cycling needs to be taken far more seriously as a core part of urban transport policy than it currently is."

It called Dublin Bikes an "undoubted major success story" and welcomed the 30km/h speed limit in the city centre, but said progress is "insufficiently" quick for the targets in the government's national cycle policy to be achieved.

The cycle policy calls for cycling to account for at least 10% of all trips taken nationally by 2020 – it is widely viewed by transport planners that for the national target to be met that Dublin would need to reach a level of 20-25%.

The report highlights that there has been "little or no progress in addressing" the issue of large junctions and one-way streets since the last report.

Slow movement on changing Dublin's large one-way streets was criticised by the report *Image: Google Street View.*

"Both of these elements of the road network – the [large, complex] junctions and the one-way streets - were highlighted in the 2007 BYPAD audit but there has been little or no progress in addressing these two major issues since then", the 2012 report said. It said the large and complex junctions "are highlighted by cyclists as the most intimidating locations on the city's road network" and the city's multi-lane one-way street systems "require cyclists to take long detours and / or weave across several lanes of (sometimes fast-moving) motorized traffic."

It also said that while there is now over 200km of "cycling infrastructure" in the city, "There is a still a perception amongst users that… many of the routes used by cyclists are not of a sufficiently high quality / are not sufficiently cycle-friendly". Eoghan Madden, a senior engineer at Dublin City Council, said the point on the lack of progress on one-way systems was "A fair comment."

Madden says: "One way streets are not something we're into doing anymore. They tend to work from a car point of view because they generate capacity and longer links for stacking [traffic], but from a cyclist's or pedestrian's point of view they are not great."

He says that "it's not off the agenda but it kind of went slow" because of planning for Metro North and Luas, but said that "there should be a priority attach to them" - solutions such as contra-flow cycle lanes, which allow cyclists to go legally on otherwise one-way streets.

The National Transport Authority said that the repaving, which was focused on bus corridors, improved conditions for cyclists but it was completed after the report.

Also see page 16.

Cycle track law to be revoked

Legislation to revoke the rule which forces cyclists to use a cycle track regardless of its condition is in the process of being finalised, the Department of Transport said.

The national cycle policy includes a commitment to remove the current law, known as the "mandatory use" rule. That promise was originally made by Noel Dempsey, the transport minister in the last government, but has been slow to be delivered.

Cyclists are currently required to use cycle lanes marked with the correct bicycle logo sign, but cyclists view this as unfair given the current state of the country's cycle lanes It's understood that a number of bodies including the RSA are against changing the law.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Transport said: "Secondary legislation to permit this is currently being finalised with the OPC (Office of the Parliamentary Council) and is expected to be enacted shortly."

"Provision for the removal of the mandatory use of cycle lanes is being provided for in the legislation, except for contra-flow cycle lanes and cycle lanes in pedestrian areas," she said.

You might do it everyday, but currently passing a car on the left often isn't strictly legal - is seen as a legal grey area. The department also is to change this to allow cyclists to undertake.

The rules of the road say you can "overtake on the left" only when: "You want to go straight ahead when the driver in front of you has moved out and signalled that they intend to turn right; You have signalled that you intend to turn left, and when traffic in both lanes is moving slowly and traffic in the left-hand lane is moving more quickly than the traffic in the right-hand lane."

The department however said it has no plan to implement a legal minimum passing distance of 1.5m when a motorist is overtaking a cyclist – the measure had been called for by cycling campaigners.

The national cycle policy says: "We will revoke the Statutory Instrument that requires cyclists to use cycle tracks where they are provided It explains: the law is "unsatisfactory" because::

"(i) it is clear that the cycling infrastructure that has been constructed to date is often of a poor standard and is poorly maintained, and cyclists are required to use it;"

"(ii) it can force cyclists to be on cycle tracks and (when they are planning on continuing straight ahead) to be on the inside of left-turning vehicles, including Heavy Goods Vehicles;"

"(iii) if a group of cyclists (on a weekend cycle for example) is using a road with an off-road cycle-track alongside it, then they are required to use it – which is not practicable."

Law forcing cyclists to use cycle lanes to binned. *Image: Cian Ginty*

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BRYAN DOBSON
TV news presenter

"It's the quickest way to get around. I suppose the advantage besides speed is predictability – I know if I head off now I'll be there in 20 minutes, or whatever, and you're not going to be stuck in traffic or waiting for a bus

The other thing I like about it is that you get to see a bit of what is going on around the city, I cycle mostly in the city.

I meet people, stop at traffic lights and people I know and people I don't know recognise me and say, 'oh, how are you Brian' or 'hey, Dobo' – I get a lot of social interaction out of it as well.

It does not rain as often as people think; Dublin is relatively flat within the canal area anyway and traffic moves so slowly that I don't think it is much of a hazard."

"WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT CYCLING?

REBECCA BURRELL
MD of a PR company

"It's improved an awful lot with this new cycle path along the canal. I come into work from Terenure into Fitzwilliam Square and since this new corridor has come in it's brilliant, because you're away from the cars and you can see the swans and the ducks. It's so much quicker than sitting in a car. You keep fitter and see a lot more on a bike."

EOGHAN MURPHY
TD

"I enjoy cycling – it's fun. Some of the public transport links aren't brilliant so cycling is more convenient as well. I can see why people would be put off when they hear of the road conditions – we've got some good cycling infrastructure and some very poor stuff. There's more and more cyclists now and the more cyclists there are the safer its going to be – and it actually is very safe."

NIALL CAVANAN
Chartered secretary

It's cheap and it's quick. It's a bit of fresh air. My commute by bike is from Grand Canal Dock to Ranelagh.

CIARA BACKWELL
Communications and marketing executive

"It makes me feel really good and it's a lot quicker than driving. It's more efficient in general because you're not paying the larger expenses that you would be for a car. And I can jump on my bike and head on in and don't need to think about parking.

I cycle from the bottom end of Rathmines up to Baggot Street, but I use my bike for leisure as well – so, into town to meet friends, all over the city really and out to my course in Tallaght.

I'm addicted to cycling. Adrenaline is my favourite thing about cycling. The ease of use. The fresh air and the social aspect of cycling; you're out with other people, you're not in your car boxed away.

EDWINA KEOWN
Lecturer

It's the quickest way to get places. It makes me feel chilled, relaxed and happy. It's a healthy way, it's good to be outdoors. I commute from Baggot Street to Drumcondra and Marino.

PAUL TURNER
Works at Holles Street

I cycle in and out of work to Holles Street; I do 10km a day. I've always cycled, and used to race but not now. The buzz you get from it is better than any artificially induced buzz – you feel really good and positive after it.

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Cycling as everyday transport makes a lot more sense for Dublin than you would think. Here's why:

TEN REASONS CYCLING IS RIGHT FOR DUBLIN

1 TRAFFIC CONGESTION: The more people on bikes, the more congestion becomes less and less of a problem. Congestion is not just an inconvenience to motorists and bus users it has real costs due to loss of productivity, health impacts and lowering the attractiveness of a city to investment and tourism.

In 2010, IBM estimated that traffic congestion in Dublin cost the economy 4% of GDP – in other words, billions of euro.

Some routes in Dublin remain congested even in the downturn. On other routes the perception is that roads are half as busy as they used to be, but traffic levels overall have not dropped as much as it seems.

Traffic engineers in the city council put this down to Dublin being so close to capacity for cars. When you're so close to gridlock a little bit less or extra traffic can make a massive difference. With the population growth already recorded in the census, Dublin just can't handle private cars as a major mode of transport. There isn't the space.

2 SPEED AND RELIABILITY: Distances are often overestimated by car and public transport users, even moderate cycling is faster than many people think it is. For many journeys around Dublin or down to the shop it is the fastest method.

Almost all short journeys are faster by bike, and some longer journeys are faster due to traffic, or other reasons such as the need to wait for a bus or train.

Cycling is one of the most reliable forms of transport because congestion has a tiny affect on cycling compared to how much it impacts on motorists and even buses. If you cycle you usually go door-to-door on a bicycle, so there's no walking to or from a bus stop or train station and no waiting around for late buses or trains, and no spending ages looking for parking.

Because cycling is not affected by congestion, it's surprisingly fast compared to taking the car. The department of transport says: "Data from the 2006 Census reveals that, for journeys within the Dublin Canal Ring, cyclists reached an average speed of 12km/h compared to just 15km/h for cars. For trips within the M50, the 2006 Census reveals an average speed for cyclists of 14km/h compared to 18km/h for cars."

3 ENJOYABLY: Subjective? Yes and no. Many people we interviewed for this paper talked of a 'buzz' from cycling or feeling fresher and more relaxed – this isn't thrill seekers getting a buzz from going fast on the roads, the mental health effects of even moderate cycling – as well as other exercise – is well documented (see the next page).

"100,000 people drive 4km or less to work in Dublin when 4km is just a 17mins cycle"

Cycling also offers freedom: Freedom from bus or train timetables, freedom from the fear of making needless trips when the cost of filling the family car is so high, freedom from congestion, and freedom from searching for parking.

Above: Cyclists zoom past congested traffic on the Rathgar Road. Cut out: A cyclist on the quays in the city centre *Cian Ginty*

4 DISTANCES: There's a lot of hype about the amount of people commuting long distances, but the census shows there are now nearly 1.3m people living in Co Dublin and over 0.5m alone living in the city council's area. In Co Dublin, 65% of people live under 10km from their place of work or study – that includes just under 40% who commute between 1-4km, and another 25% are within the 5-9km range.

City people have even shorter commutes. Over 76% of commuters travel less than 10km – 50% of trips are between 1-4km and the other 26% of trips are between 5-9km. The population numbers are based on 2011 figures, and while the distance figures are based on 2006 data, it's not likely that the greater numbers of people living in Dublin are travelling much further.

The actual figures for "the low hanging fruit" – those making very short trips by car, many of which could be cycled – are even starker. From the 2006 census, the department of transport said that almost 100,000 people drive 4km or less to work in Dublin and, of those, over 45,000 people drive 2km or less.

Taking the above mentioned average speed of cyclists of 14km/h, a 4km cycle should take around 17mins and a 7km cycle should take around a half hour.

This isn't rocket science: While cycling may not suit every single person, it's clear that a huge amount of trips can be cycled.

5 "THE IRISH WEATHER": The weather in Dublin is generally comparable to Copenhagen and Amsterdam, both seen as cycling cities with cycling accounting for 40% of commuters. Average weather conditions from BBC.co.uk shows both Copenhagen and Amsterdam have more 'wet days' (+0.25 mm) than Dublin.

Amsterdam and Dublin have comparable rain fall, while Copenhagen has extremely cold weather and snow in the winter is the norm. Dublin is sometimes noted as being windy, but so is Copenhagen.

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Cycling daily to better health

Cycling to work or school is a great way of building activity into your daily life, writes **Caroline Peppard**

Health and wellbeing are two of the most important resources for a happy and fulfilled life. Choosing an active lifestyle is one of the most important things we can do for our health.

For most people the easiest and most acceptable way to do this is by choosing activities that can be easily incorporated into everyday life for example, cycling to work or school instead of driving or using the bike for short journeys. At first this might seem like a daunting task but when you do it once or twice it's surprising how easy and pleasant it can be. You can now purchase a bike on the bike to work scheme and start by cycling to work on one day per week, for example.

As well as saving you money on car fuel and reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions associated with car usage, there are many health benefits to be had from regular cycling. Your risk of developing chronic disease such as heart disease and some cancers is greatly reduced and regular physical activity has been proven to promote positive mental health. Recent research also shows that doing regular physical activity improves cognitive function and achievement in children. The good news is that many of these benefits are immediate and you continue to benefit even after you have stopped cycling.

How much physical activity is recommended for health benefits? For good health the minimum level of physical activity recommended for our children is 60 minutes per day everyday and 30 minutes per day on five days per week for adults. The activity needs to be of moderate intensity. This means that you need to be breathing a little bit heavier than normal, feeling warmer and feeling your heart beat a little bit faster.

The easiest way to meet these recommendations is by building activity into daily life, such as by switching from the car to cycling. Leisure cycling or cycling to work is a good form of moderate physical activity and research has shown that switching from a car to a bike for a distance of 7.5kms would enable a person to meet the recommendations.

So, how active are we as a nation? We know that currently in Ireland 3 out of 4 adults and 4 out of 5 children are not active enough for good health.

> "At first it might seem like a daunting task but when you do it once or twice it's surprising how easy it is "

This causes concern for the future health of our nation in particular for our children. Low levels of physical activity can lead to overweight and obesity which, as well as being a problem in itself can lead to other related chronic health problems. It is estimated that as a population our obesity levels have doubled over the past 30 years.

Because of the many health benefits of cycling and the associated cost savings to health services, international researchers in the area of health economics have developed a system to quantify the economic benefits.

The health economic assessment tool (HEAT) for cycling has been used in several countries and it suggests that considerable savings can be made by increasing population levels of cycling. For example in Austria, cycling represents about 5% of travel with an average trip length of 2kms. Applying the model shows that the current level of cycling saves 412 lives per year in terms of reduced mortality from being regularly physically active. This reduced mortality translates to annual savings of €405 million.

A frequently cited reason for not cycling is safety. However research from the Netherlands shows that the health benefits from cycling are substantially larger than the risks relative to car driving and increased air pollution associated with traffic.

People who switch from car usage to bike usage can expect a nine times increase in life years compared to losses in life years due to increased air pollution or traffic accidents. Because cyclists can more easily choose a low traffic route this also reduces their risk of traffic accidents.

For information on how you can meet the recommendations on keeping active see www.getirelandactive.ie.

Caroline Peppard is a senior health promotion officer with the HSE

CYCLING: THE MANY HEALTH BENEFITS

A HEALTHY HEART
Apart from the most important heart functions (heart rate and stroke volume), blood circulation and the heart muscles are also positively changed during cycling, writes **Caroline Peppard.** Blood pressure is lowered and this is a major benefit since it reduces the risk of stroke and heart attack. Numerous studies have also shown the beneficial effects on blood cholesterol.

A recent large heart health study in Copenhagen proved that cycling had a strong health protective function. In this study measurements such as blood pressure, cholesterol and body mass index were assessed before and after a cycle to work intervention. Even after other lifestyle factors were taken into consideration those who did not cycle to work had a 39% increase in mortality rate compared to those who did.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT
Rising rates of overweight and obesity in Ireland are a major public health concern and can lead to the development of life threatening chronic diseases. In Ireland currently 60% of our female population and 70% of males are overweight or obese which is an increase of 8% or 9% over the past 40 years. Cycling contributes to weight reduction by burning energy.
A person can expect burn between 600 and 800 calories per hour cycling depending on fitness levels and the amount of effort.

Good legs: A health benefit of cycling? *Image above: Richard Masoner (Creative Commons: Attribution-ShareAlike); main image and far right: Cian Ginty*

During cycling, almost 70% of the body weight is borne by the saddle and this makes it especially suited for people who are overweight or obese. It increases physical fitness and also stimulates fat metabolism which is so important in weight management.

Because it is non weight bearing there is much reduced strain on joints and muscles. For example, during jogging 2 to 3 times the body weight is borne by the hip joint, which would represent a massive overload for an overweight person.

MENTAL HEALTH
Cycling has been proven to have a significant relaxing effect, due to its uniform, cyclic form of movement which results in a harmonious state which leads to a reduction in stress. After cycling for about 30 or 40 minutes "happy" hormones, or endorphins, begin to be released into the bloodstream. These hormones have a profound effect on mood and brain function. This effect continues even after the cycling has stopped.

JOINTS AND MUSCLES
Cycling also actively provides joint protection and reduces the development of arthritis and other joint disorders. Because all the lower body leg muscles are used cycling is a great way to tone and strengthen muscles.

SKIN
The skin also benefits from this activity, due to the increase in blood circulation and the stimulation of metabolic processes which gives the cyclist a "fresh" and "healthy" complexion. Remember to wear sunscreen containing SFP 30 when you are cycling since sunlight and UV rays can come through clouds and reflect off concrete. Cover as much skin as is practical, for example by wearing long sleeves and high neck tops and wear wrap around sunglasses with at least 99% UV protection.

IMPROVED IMMUNE SYSTEM
Cycling boosts and stimulates the body's immune system so that it is more resistant to infection and attack by bacteria. These effects continue even after you have finished your cycle.

Ten reasons why cycling is right for Dublin

CONTINUED FROM P9 >>>

6 COST: For individuals, a good commuting bicycle can be picked up between €350 to €500, or a second hand bike can be bought for less. For commuters, the cost of a bicycle can be recouped in a matter of months, saving on fuel or public transport ticket costs. After that, the savings continue. Cycling is cheaper than public transport or driving. Parking is free and ongoing costs are a fraction of the maintenance and running costs of cars.

But the costs for individuals are a minor consideration compared to the costs to the state. One of the main reasons the Dutch and Danes invested in cycling is simply because it costs less than providing public transport or providing for private cars.

Our road and public transport systems are subsidised. Dublin Bus, Irish Rail and Luas are all heavily subsidised. While the Luas system had until recently been covering its operational costs, its construction and tram costs are heading towards €1.5 billion – that's not to say Luas in general was not worth the investment, but that high quality cycling infrastructure costs a fraction of that to put in place and to maintain.

7 HEALTH: Regular exercise has physical and mental health benefits. Moderate exercise reduces levels of depression and stress – cycling is great for this as it can be done as part of your daily commute. Cycling also reduces the chances of heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity and the most common form of diabetes. It will increase fitness, and help with weight loss and maintaining a healthy weight. Cycling is not only good for people's health; the knock-on effect of having a healthier population lowers health care costs (see article left).

8 MORE CYCLISTS, LESS DEATHS: It may seem strange, but researchers keep finding that when more people cycle it leads to an increase in safety. Deaths and injuries do not increase – the amount of collisions decline. Because of this researchers conclude: "Policies that increase the numbers of people walking and bicycling appear to be an effective route to improving the safety of people walking and bicycling."

Unscientifically: It seems this 'safety in numbers' effect has worked in Dublin in recent years. Counts by the city council show a 45% increase in the amount of cyclists entering Dublin city centre in the last five years and, around city centre, Dublin Bikes are a common sight on streets, but the amount of deaths and injuries have decreased in the same time.

9 GOOD FOR BUSINESS: Employers gain as cyclists arrive to work more refreshed and research shows that cyclists take less sick days compared to non-cyclists. Cycling is good for retail businesses too. "Even in the Netherlands, there are some misconceptions: cyclists don't contribute much to the till, so accessibility by car is very important for shopkeepers," says the 'Cycling in the Netherlands' report by the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment. It added: "However, this is not the case. Cyclists spend less per visit, but they do come more often." It goes on to say that people cycling from the city area means that scarce parking spaces are freed up for the cars of regional visitors. In Dublin, not only does more people cycling free up parking but – more importantly – it also frees up road space for those who have little choice but to drive.

10 ENERGY USE AND EMISSIONS: Cycling is the most efficient form of transport, bar none. It is more efficient than walking – less energy is required to cycle 1km than it is to walk it. Bicycles emit no air pollution, and almost no noise pollution. While there are emissions in the construction and delivery of bicycles, this is tiny compared to the construction and running of cars and public transport vehicles. More cycling also reduces dependency on energy imports so it makes the economy less affected by oil shocks or the general increasing price of oil.

"Network will not always mean a cycle lane"

Dublin's cycling network is under review, but what should we expect? **Cian Ginty** reports

Dublin has a 20-25% target level for cycling, however few people expect this to be reached without changes on and off road.

"For years local authorities have had aspirational networks on their development plans – we want to work with them to move from aspirational to reality and to make that reality a prioritised one," says Michael Aherne at the National Transport Authority

The NTA is to appoint consultations to report back this year.

"It's really important to get it right," says Aherne. "If we are going to expect a massive increase in cycling, there has to be an increase in the offer for cycling. It has to be better to cycle to school or work than it is – not all of that is around infrastructure."

He says permeability is key: "The network won't always mean putting in a cycle lane or cycle track. Back streets and opening up permeability is to be used as well as hard infrastructure."

Sometimes it's a matter of opening a gate or knocking a wall -- he uses an example of a school where people were "literally next door to the school" but were 18mins away because there was a permanently blocked gate.

One of the routes the NTA is pushing forward with is the Dodder River cycle route, from Tallaght to the south eastern business district. It's a "no brainier" he says. "To make it work we not only have to get the route along the Dodder to work, but also the access to and from it and the management of it works," he says. "It will take a while to go through the planning process."

Another they are looking at is Fairview to North Strand and "at least to Talbot street if not down to the river [Liffey]". He says even before cycle network review, the case for these routes us "robust – no matter which way the cookie crumbles, we are going to need these anyway."

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council has just finished public consulation for their local network review, and this will feed into what the NTA is doing.

Conor Geraghty, an assistant engineer with the council, highlights a greenway project they have worked on at the Slang River in south Dublin. He says "it was not monumental design" but it's functional and gets people from Marley Park to Sandyford" and "nearly to Dun Laoghaire without cycling on a main road."

These were not large scale works, but it included "knocking gaps in walls." He says they were also looking at passive provision on quiet residential streets. Using one example he says: "It's a good route to cycle on but you won't need cycle lanes or cycle tracks."

"Into the future we're looking at a route between the Luas station in Windy Arbour, through UCD to the Dart at Booterstown – hopefully starting to design it this year," says Geraghty. They are also looking at the larger routes. The N11 will be upgraded "on a rolling basis"

> "If you take cycling as the most effective way to get around an urban area within 5 miles – there's a huge potential for cycling"

Eoghan Madden, a senior engineer with Dublin City Council, says that with roads in the "middle of town are 1,000 plus years old" cycling offers "a space saver in the city centre."

"It's probably the handiest way to get around town, it's certainly one of the fastest, and the infrastructure is less expensive than the corresponding cost for anything to do with motorised transport," says Madden.

"At the minute we can take 25,000 vehicles per hour into the city centre and that's it," he says, pointing to the restricted canal crossings into the city, most of which they "can't touch" because of their listed status. "If you take cycling as the most effective way to get around an urban area within 5 miles – there's a huge potential for cycling. You need 3 meters to make a traffic lane – if you had a 3 meter wide cycle lane and enough people to populate it would beat cars in terms of capacity – around three times as many people by bike in the same space as cars," Madden says.

"We're coming to a 'let's get serious about this' stage," he adds.

He said the law has changed a lot since the council put in its first cycle lane outside the Four Courts 15 years ago. Back then a cycle lane turned the "whole road into a 24 hour clearway."

"At the very start we had to protect the cyclists which were there – so the first focus we had on cycling was 'where are the cyclists' and strangely enough they were on the main routes. And the first focus was how we can get lanes out there to show people there are cyclists here – we got that eventually," he says. In a clear reference to quality, or lack of it, he says "You might not be very happy with the way we got it but we got it."

"Now we're at the point where if you take a step back there's a target of 10% cycling for the country, so they are looking to Dublin City to over double that – 20-25% -- if we get 25% of people it means we go from 7,900 to 50,000," he says.

"If we are trying to put 50,000 people on what we have already agreed are not optimal conditions crossing the bridges on the canals you're trying to shove a quart into a pint pot, so we're now looking to see other ways at crossing the canals – we're at the cross roads with that – we're just starting to do it."

The council is eager to put cycling routes on the Royal and Grand Canal. Design work has been done on some sections and other sections are going out to tender for further design work.

Madden said this would be "hopefully for construction next year. Started next year – but not all sections," and that the Grand Canal was obviously a priority given there's so little to do to join up the cycle routes which end at Portobello and Inchicore, with little over 4km between them.

"You're starting to come up to industrial volumes of cyclists and once you start reaching that you're coming towards a tipping point – somewhere we're going to start looking at dedicated cycling routes."

He describes this as a route where a car has to stay behind a bicycle and a bicycle would have the right to the lane. "That's difficult if you only have say 30 cyclists an hour – but if you have bunches of cyclists it can be self enforcing."

Also see pages 18-19.

MAIN OFF-ROAD ROUTES

Light Blue: Sutton to Sandycove / Dublin Bay

Red: Royal Canal

Orange: Quays and the park

Yellow: Grand Canal

Purple: River Dodder

Black: M50 and Port Tunnel shown as landmarks only

Are all doors open for cycling?

'Open doors' for cycling was mentioned a lot to us in the process of writing this paper, so we asked Mike McKillen, of the Dublin Cycling Campaign, for his view on how open the doors really are.

McKillen, who is also a member of the cycling campaign umbrella group Cyclists.ie, says when they met Minister Alan Kelly recently he told them that 'cycling was the only game in town in terms of road based transport'.

But overall he does not seem too sure about how open every door is to cycling.

"Just look at the Smarter Travel unit in the Department of Transport – it's tiny in relation to the task they face and a lot more needs to go into the Smarter Travel unit. It's inadequate for the task of getting 10% of all commuting journeys nationally to be done by bike by 2020. We're nowhere near it," says McKillen.

He adds: "The door is not open fully – the chicanery that took place over the cycling officer position [which is now gone]. If the door is open to cycling that should never of happened, so what went wrong there? And why does no other local authority or a collection of them not have cycling officer?"

McKillen says that's the measure of government commitment to cycling.

Munich, with a population equivalent in size to Dublin, spends "a fortune on cycling promotion."

"In Dublin, where people are wedded to their car, we need to spend money to convince people to switch. The doors may be open but unless there's promotion nothing is going to happen," says McKillen. "To keep people in their cars and to keep people buying cars the motor industry spends €21m on advertising across all media – that's the figure from the 2010 Nielsen ratings."

The Irish bicycle industry can't, he says, match that kind of spend on advertising and marketing, "so the government has to match it."

"Sort measures, like convincing the RSA that it needs to implement the 1.5m overtaking rule and teach drivers that," he says.

Is a 1.5m passing distance realistic? He replies: "It has to be; we will not get people cycling unless they see drivers giving them more space. We need a sea change at the Road Safety Authority – it still has a from the windscreen view."

A "beefed up" module on interacting with cyclists needs to be included in driver training and the RSA needs to stop asking cyclists to "dress up like a Christmas tree."

"More cyclists on the road automatically leads to safer roads – stop dangerising cycling. The number of fatalities and injuries has come way down – that's because there's more cyclists everywhere."

He said they support the plans for green routes, including the canals and rivers, but that "We pleaded with the minister to stop putting money into infrastructure – that they have to concentrate on promotion and soft measures. Engineers will always want to build infrastructure and look for funding to build it – that's what engineers do."

From city to suburbs

Dublin Bikes have made it in town, but can these city bikes survive in the wild suburbs, **Cian Ginty** writes

'A successful bicycle scheme is where you get two to three trips per bike per day and on our best days we're heading towards 13 trips per bike," says Andrew Montague, outgoing lord mayor.

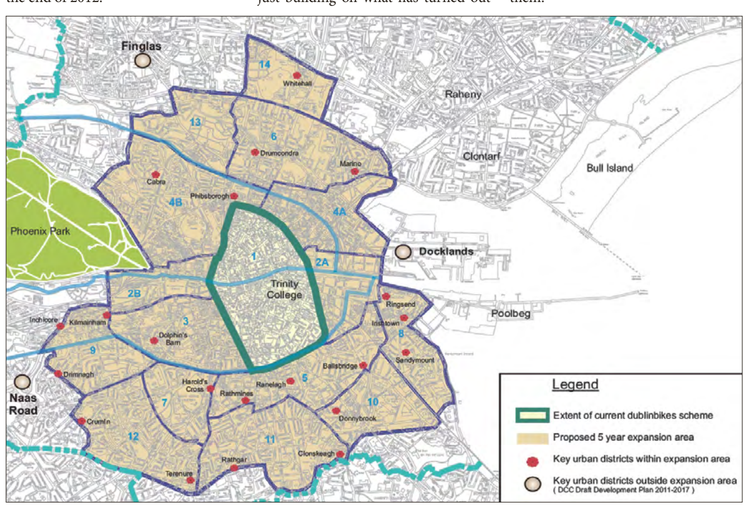
A spokesman for the council said that for the first phase including the Docklands and around Heuston Station they "anticipate that construction will commence before the end of 2012."

The plan, the council says, includes doubling the number of bike stations from 44 to about 100 and trebling the number of bikes from 550 to around 1,500. After that the city wants to get to 5,000 bikes. An ambitious strategy aims for the service to expand from as far as DCU on the northside to close to UCD on the southside.

Montague – a Labour councillor, who is seen as one of the main people to call for a bike scheme in the first place – says the planned expansion is just building on what has turned out to be one of the most successful bike schemes in the world and that "The numbers are a phenomenon."

But he cautions that demand will be lower at outer stations as the network expands into less dense areas. "As we expand we won't have 13 trips per bike as you don't get the same concentration of people in the suburbs – but we would expect it to be very high."

Michael Aherne, from the National Transport Authority, says "When they resolve the issues we want to support them."



It's understood that the outstanding issue is the council finalising a deal with advertising firm JCDecaux, which runs the system.

Once a deal is brokered he says they'll closely "monitor the impact" of the new phases. In a reference to the search for alternative models rather than paying for it by advertising, Aherne says "It's all about getting a sustainable model that works."

Advertising alone won't work as the amount of ad space the city would have to give away to finance a city-wide bike sharing system would be too great.

"At the moment with our first 500 bikes, we're more than covered with advertising but we want ten times more bikes and we can't have ten times more advertising in the city and besides the advertising market has collapsed – if we were to try to renegotiate the original deal now we would not get near as a good deal as we got in the first place," he says.

Asked if a subscription hike will be needed to cover part of the expansion cost and if the cost to use it may go up, but he says that they want to keep it as "low as we possibly can afford, we have to balance the price with paying for the system." Having a low annual cost, he says, is attractive to occasional users who may not re-subscribe if the cost was too high.

"Up to now it's been totally free for the taxpayer. It has not cost the tax or rate payer a penny – in fact the council has made money out of it. In the future it won't be paying its own way so we're going to have to start looking to the cyclist to pay a little bit more," says Montague.

The Department of Transport has given half a million for the first part of the expansion. "We're also looking to see if we can get sponsorship," Montague adds.

But is the demand there for an expansion? If the city council manages to expand out to the suburbs, Montague sees trips into the city centre as only part of the picture.

"People will cycle from suburb to suburb so you might cycle from Santry to Beaumont or from Rathmines to Rathgar. These are unpleasant trips to do by car because there's such a shortage of parking spaces and a bit too long to walk – but perfect to cycling. Plenty of people will cycle into town but I'm interested in local trips," he says.

Almost half of Dublin Bike users had never cycled before and a lot of users then move onto buying their own bicycles.

"I met with one of the city centre bike shop owners and he said three or four people cycle into his shop every day on a Dublin Bike and say, 'I want to buy something like this,'" says Montague. "And once you get cycling most people really enjoy it."

PLANNED EXPANSION

[01] Original area;
[02] Docklands and the Heuston;
[03] Dolphin's Barn and the Liberties;
[4A] Fairview, East Wall, and Croke Park;
[4B] Phibsborough, Cabra, and Stoneybatter;
[05] Ballsbridge, Ranelagh, Rathmines;
[06] Drumcondra, Marino, and parts of Glasnevin;
[07] Harold's Cross;
[08] Ringsend, Irishtown, and Sandymount;
[09] Parts of Drimnagh, Inchicore, and more of Kilmainham;
[10] Donnybrook;
[11] Further into Rathmines and Ranelagh, out as far as Rathgar and Clonskeagh;
[12] Areas around Crumlin and Terenure;
[13] Glasnevin east and central;
[14] DCU and Whitehall.

Source: Dublin City Council

Cycling against traffic [legally]

Contra-flow cycle lanes are far from new to Dublin, but is it time for the city to provide more of these cycling shortcuts? **Cian Ginty** reports

Even when driving, one-way streets can be very frustrating, but most drivers don't realise just how much Dublin's network of one-way streets is designed for the car.

"One way streets are not something we're into doing anymore. They tend to work from a car point of view because they generate capacity and longer links for stacking [traffic], but from a cyclist's or pedestrian's point of view they are not great," says Eoghan Madden, a senior engineer at Dublin City Council.

Dublin's one-way system is extensive in the city centre area inside the canals - see the map left, showing just the multi-laned one-way streets. It's nearly the flip opposite of the Dutch model.

Our roads were made one-way for capacity to the benefit of motorists and at a cost to everybody else – cyclists who have to live with detours, bus users who have disconnected in and outbound bus stops, and the people living on and round what amount to very urban sections of dual carriageways.

Cycling friendly Dutch cities design central areas much differently. Cyclists get direct routes. City centres are designed on the principle that cars are pushed away from the centre and the one-way systems generally only apply to motorised traffic.

In a way, the system of using the extra capacity is nearly ingenious in allowing the city to hold more cars than it should be able to. But it fails because Dublin is too often so close to capacity for cars that it leads to too much unpredictability when a little extra traffic or an event can cause gridlock for half the city centre.

If you live, work or study on or near a one-way street, it could mean a long detour or, like in many cases in Dublin, it means being forced to cross many lanes of sometimes fast moving traffic.

Other European cities such as Brussels, Paris, Berlin and to a lesser extent London have been progressive on the issue while Dublin has stalled.

The latest edition of a report on cycling conditions, published every five years, says there has been little or no progress on one-way streets and major junctions (see news, page 3).

The city council had outlined a plan to allow cyclists two-way access to Westmoreland Street, D'Olier Street, Moss Street, Leinster Street South, Nassau Street, the Clarendon Street area, St Stephen's Green, Baggot Street Lower, Merrion Row, Leeson Street Upper, Camden Street, Parnell Street, Steven's Lane, and Watling Street. But nothing has happened since.

Eoghan Madden says "it's not off the agenda but it kind of went slow" because of planning for Metro North and Luas, but he says there should be a priority attached to implementing contra-flow lanes.

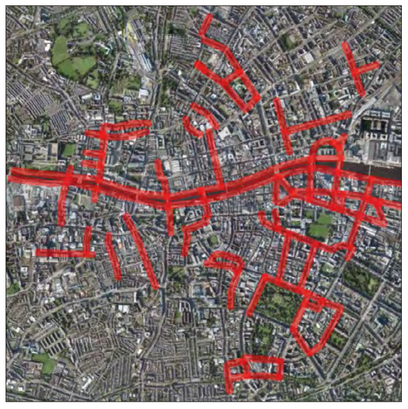
"It is something that we should attach a priority to just plainly because it is perfectly obvious," says Madden. "It's not obvious unless you're on a bike but becomes perfectly obvious once you are on Parnell Square and you go up the hill only to come down the other side again."

Traffic and transport officials in Dublin have mixed opinions. Michael Aherne from the National Transport Authority is supportive at looking at the issue but seems less convinced.

"Contra-flow cycling is something we are looking at with the city council," says Aherne. "The first question is do we still need the one-way street, do we actually need the one-way system?"

But when it comes to contra-flow on narrow streets without separation, he says: "We just were not ready to go there" when designing the authority's cycle manual, and he says: "It could be a peripheral… We do have to get our priorities right."

Andrew Montague, the outgoing lord mayor and Labour councillor, says the law needs to be changed. "On narrow one-way streets in Belgium and France the research shows that making them two-way for cyclists makes them safer for cyclists. I'd like to see on narrow, one-lane one-way streets that it would be legal for cyclists to go both ways. But that's not a decision for the council, it's a decision for government – we lobbied for it in the past and we're lobbying for it again," he says.



Above images clockwise from top: Contra-flow in Paris, a recently built track in Blackrock, and a map of Dublin's multi-laned one-way streets. Far right: Blackrock again; a cyclist-only entry treatment to Usher's Quay; and just enter in Phibsborough. *Images: Cian Ginty*

Montague adds: "The results elsewhere show it's safe and I'd like to see it implemented here." But you don't have to look elsewhere. There's at least two examples of this type of contra flow working for cyclists right here in Dublin – one in Phibsborough and the other in Terenure. These are not trials, but examples which have already stood the test of time and are now more than a few years old. These examples are backed by legal measures – it's under the provisions where local authorities can make a street or one side of a street no-entry except, for example, buses, cyclists, or motorcyclists.

Meanwhile, Parnell Street eastbound stands as a classical example of a long detour around the one-way systems just to progress a short distance, just 100m in this case. Cyclists are sent uphill on more than a half a kilometre detour around the wide, multi-lane one-way system on Parnell Square. For cyclists it disrupts east-west flow as well as access to O'Connell Street.

Because of the Luas and Henry Street, which is pedestrianised, there is no east-west alternative south of this point for over a kilometre and, even then, the quays is that alternative which is seen as one of the most hostile place for cyclists in the city centre.

Here and elsewhere in the city centre the council has assigned the blame to the Railway Procurement Agency which had been planning Metro North and still is planning the cross-city Luas BXD line. Montague says: "We kept running into the same problem -- 'Luas is coming, leave it for the moment' we were told."

When asked about the contra-flow lanes far away from the planned Luas or stalled Metro, he says the lanes were harder to design than had been expected. "The other thing is they are hard to design. We thought we'd pick up the low hanging fruit but none of them are easy. They were much more difficult to implement than expected so there has not been much progress to it," says Montague.

He also rejects the idea that there was political backlash against providing contra-flow for cyclists. "I don't remember any political backlash." Even if there was, he says: "There's 52 councillors so if two councillors are against it I'm sure a majority would support it."

Mike McKillen, spokesman for the Dublin Cycling Campaign, says: "I don't think they fully accept that they have to deconstruct one-way streets particularly the multi-laned ones."

"Look at the example of D'Olier and Westmorland Streets – they've known and talked about doing something about it for the past four or five years. I don't there's any willingness so far – there's talk about it, but just get on with it," he says

He adds: "I think they are terrified to do anything which might have a knock-on affect on the quays"

Another major problem with talking about changing one-way streets is that some people see it as contentiously providing for lawbreakers, rather than seeing it as providing for everybody including children and cyclists carrying children who prefer to avoid dual-carriageway like conditions.

Allowing cyclists to avoid such unfriendly conditions was exactly what Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council was doing when it recently provided a segregated contra-flow only cycle path between Blackrock Village and Dun Laoghaire.

The Sunday Independent however billed it as "Cyclists who illegally went the wrong way up a suburban road have got their own way – at a cost of €150,000 to the taxpayer."

The paper highlighted the mention by the council of the "high numbers of cyclists currently cycling illegally along" the road. This however was a footnote in the council's consultation report, which mainly highlighted how the lane was part of a route serving Booterstown, Blackrock, Monkstown, Dun Laoghaire and Dalkey and how there is a catchment of thousands of school children, students, workers and residents within just 500m of the route.

The stark cost also included a bus stop upgrade and as much new footpath as new cycle path.

"I think all the difficulties were before the work and the consultation and before getting agreement," says Conor Geraghty, an assistant engineer with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

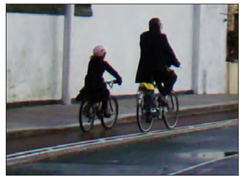
"But once it was put in it has been very well received – the gardai are very happy with it. Consultation is always a big part of the process."

The consultation report for the project also includes some interesting comments from a resident who had at first objected.

He wrote: "Thanks for that reassurance, seems one of our local councillors went off half cocked and misinformed us as to the detail."

Some of the older designs could be better – and the city is in the process of fixing a number of these – but overall contra-flow seems to work in making cycling that bit more attractive.

WHAT IS CONTRA-FLOW?



Contra-flow basically means going against the flow.

In the context of cycling it includes a range of means of legally allowing cyclists to go both ways on otherwise one-way streets – the methods of doing this ranges from putting up little more than signs on small residential streets to providing fully segregated, off-road cycle tracks. A contra-flow cycle lane is also sometimes provided within a contra-flow bus lane. The use of contra-flow is a popular means in many European cities of retrofitting the road network to make it cycling friendly and making cycling more attractive to more people.

The lanes allow cyclists to bypass long detours, and often are also designed to give cyclists an alternative to larger and more heavily trafficked roads.

> "It can be one of the cheapest ways of making the city's network of one-way streets friendly to cyclists"

CASE STUDY ONE: SEGREGATED

CASE STUDY TWO: ENTRY ONLY

CASE STUDY THREE: SIGNS ONLY

Will Dublin become a city of women on wheels?

A new group is aiming to do their bit to address the cycling gender imbalance, member **Bebhinn Hare** explains

It takes passionate women to make a difference, and Dublin is full of them. So when one bike activist and social entrepreneur learned of the massive gender disparity of cyclists in this country, she put out the call.

All of us who hold a major crush on our bicycle can understand why there was such a great response to bicycle campaigner Anne Bedos's plan to create Wow (Women on Wheels). This new, informal Dublin-based group is focused on getting more women choosing bike over car. With a nearly 80:20, male/female split, something had to be done.

"Anne told me the figures and I thought, we can only improve on that" says WOW's Angelique Brunell, encapsulating the positivity of this "baby organisation".

Made up of one-time professional cyclists, bike-shop owners, ex-couriers, fixie fans and loads of average commuters, this informal group wants nothing more than to share its bike love and get more women on wheels .

During the inaugural meeting, WOW distilled some main themes as focus for its campaigning, including infrastructure, image and fear.

Anne herself feels that infrastructure is the main reason that women are not cycling: "Proximity to traffic, potholes, very bad conditions where you can't bring your kids, you can't do your shopping or any of these things that women traditionally did and still do".

Traditional roles remain a defining factor for many women making transport choices, including the old doozy, "How do I look?"

"For women the image thing is huge - it is a problem in society that women in professional jobs are often believed to have to look a certain way, and act a certain way, wear skirts, make up etc... all things that are a bit prohibitive on the bike, and issues blokes don't have to deal with" says Heather Boyle, another WOW member and coordinator in Cycling Ireland.

WOW is facing this head on, with a basket load of positive initiatives and inclusive social events on the way.

Safety fears also come up time and again as a reason not to cycle, with many women too apprehensive to make the change. One WOW lady shared her friend's story of still being too scared to try a Dublin Bike, one whole year after registering. The perception of cycling as an unsafe activity is rife and WOW feel that much of this fear can be allayed through knowledge and support.

WOW's Cycle Bus, arranged group cycles along major commuting routes, hopes to at least offer a chance to overcome the less than welcoming conditions through the power of numbers. "It will really give women a chance to try cycling to work along with someone who is more experienced and the companionship alone I think will get women out giving it a go," says WOW's Lisa Cavern.

The present cycling climate challenges the average woman throughout all stages of her life. In her teenage years, at a time when the urge to conform is at its peak, the chance of her cycling drops to near zero.

Image pressures on the young professional pile on and are followed by the struggle against a lack of suitable routes and facilities for mothers of young children. At what point is a woman supposed to see cycling as the better option?

This is a good time to look for an answer. The Dublin Cycling Campaign, headed by its first female chairperson, Muireann O'Dea, is giving this issue a deserved focus in its Bike Week conference, 'Growing Cycling Participation and Closing the Gender Gap'.

In the mean time, Wow are going to keep doing their thing and they want you to be a part of it: "Join WOW, come to us and we'll get you learning how to cycle with assertiveness, how to maintain your own bike, how to get friends who can cycle with you and to overcome your fear." WOW is calling, will you listen?

You can find Wow online at www.womenonwheels.ie.

> "Women on Wheels is a new informal group focused on getting more women cycling"

HOP ON THE SADDLE

Excuses, excuses. We've heard them all. Wow members give their tips to get on the saddle.

DON'T BE A WALLFLOWER
All Wows have something positive to say about how motorists' attitudes towards cyclists are improving in Dublin (yes, really) but you still need to make yourself known to traffic for your own sake.

Lisa says: "The one thing that helped me most when I was beginning to cycle in Dublin was to constantly remember to take the lane when you need it and not allow yourself to ride in the gutter. Just a half metre from the kerb is enough often to be in a safe place".

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL
Each Wow will tell you that you have to choose your bike according to your lifestyle and activity level.

Angelique chose a foldable bike, not for talking on the train but to combat her tendency to leave her old bike at home instead of dragging it up from the basement every morning.

"It waits for me in the hall, I unfold it while I wait for the lift and then go down and when I go into the office, I just wait for my lift, fold it and I'm in." Genius!

IT'S NOT A RACE!
If you need to get to the office looking/smelling presentable the Wows will tell you their biggest secret, slow down, shhhhh, don't tell anyone. A top tip from the experts that doesn't cost you anything and actually works.

Mother and daughter Wow's Nicky and Georgia Scott agree and their advice is super simple "Leave a little bit earlier and cycle at a slower pace, enjoy it!"

77/23

is the male/female split of commuter cyclists nationally in 2006; the census data for 2011 is due at the end of this year. In the Netherlands 56% of bike trips are made by women.

Why what women want is so important

Julian Ferguson speaks to John Pucher, author of a major new cycling book

Why is that that some countries see more women cycling than men? "Even today, women tend to cycle a lot less than men in most countries. For example, women's cycling levels are only about a third as high as for men in North America and Australia," says Professor John Pucher, whose new book, 'City Cycling', dedicates a chapter to cycling and women.

He says, "It only makes sense that a chapter about women and cycling should be written by women, and the authors of this chapter are the world's leading experts on the topic: Jan Garrard, Susan Handy, and Jennifer Dill."

"Perhaps the most important finding of their analysis is that women are an 'indicator species' when it comes to cycling," Pucher explains.

In cities where a high percentage of bike trips are by women, overall rates of cycling are high, and cycling conditions are safe, convenient, and comfortable. Where few women cycle, overall rates of cycling are low, and cycling conditions are unsafe, inconvenient, uncomfortable, and sometimes outright impossible. Thus, the authors suggest that the percentage of women cyclists is a key indicator of the success of cycling.

"In short, the best way to raise overall cycling levels is to get more women cycling. And that is the heart of this chapter," says Pucher.

As it turns out, the biggest obstacle to more women cycling is their fear of traffic danger, and that is also the main factor discouraging children and seniors from cycling as well. Thus, improving cycling safety is the key to increasing cycling by women, children, and seniors, and all persons who are risk averse or especially vulnerable to traffic dangers. The Netherlands, with the world's safest cycling, is portrayed as the model of what needs to be done to get everyone on bikes for all trip purposes.

With 56% of all bike trips by women, the Dutch certainly pass the 'indicator species' test of successful cycling policies. So, what do the Dutch do that makes cycling so safe, convenient, and comfortable so that virtually everyone in the Netherlands rides a bike?

"The short answer is that the Dutch do everything," he says. Indeed, the Dutch provide a fully integrated package of infrastructure, policies, and programs to promote cycling.

The authors highlight two aspects of the Dutch pro-bike package:

- Superbly designed cycling infrastructure physically separates cyclists from motor vehicles on arterial roads and provides priority crossing at intersections, while traffic-calming of residential neighborhoods (30km/h speed limits), in effect, turns local streets into bikeways.

- Rigorous training and testing is required of both cyclists and motorists, and traffic regulations are strictly enforced for everyone. In addition, motorists are legally responsible for any crash with a cyclist, thus putting motorists on the defensive and forcing them to pay special attention to avoiding the endangerment of cyclists.

"It is the combination of superb cycling facilities and responsible, considerate motorist behavior toward cyclists that explains why cycling is safer in the Netherlands than in any other country in the world," explains Pucher.

"And that, in turn, helps explain why so many Dutch women, children, and seniors get around by bike." Pucher's message is clear: if you want to get a city cycling, you've got to focus on women.

Julian Ferguson is the press officer of the European Cyclists' Federation, find out more at ecf.com.

A beginner's tale: Wobbling to work

Convert **Leah Murray** on her 14km commute

I'm not really sure why I started cycling. Maybe there was a vague remembrance of childhood enjoyment or passing cyclists subconsciously called out to me, but three years ago I got a notion to ditch my car and start cycling to work and college. It didn't happen overnight, but here I am, pedalling a 28 kilometres roundtrip three times a week. And for the most part, I love it.

The first time I cycled was in the Phoenix Park with an experienced cycling friend who watched me wobble and provided pointers. In the beginning, I cycled just the 10-15 minutes into college and into town. The first time I ventured out to my job in Swords, that same friend came with me for a test run.

Although I'd cycle to work occasionally, I still drove most of the time, thinking the journey too long. A kind-hearted car thief put a stop to that. He did me a favour, really. While it took a few months for total dependence on the bicycle to kick in, I'd moved farther away from my job. The journey to work that had seemed so long by bicycle had now doubled, and there were extra hills thrown in for good measure. But as the bus stop was a good walk away, cycling was now the faster and more direct option.

> "I still drove most of the time but a kind-hearted car thief put a stop to that"

When I started commuting frequently, I was glad I'd had practice. I had the confidence to interact with traffic and knew my bike well. I didn't realise how important this is until I fell off a borrowed bike after breaking too hard at the bottom of a hill. The tighter breaks on my heavier bike would have accommodated the sudden stop – the light bike I was on buckled under the weighty panniers and went from under me. It's worth noting that this is the only accident I've had in three years. My commute begins on the North Circular Road on busy streets with heavy traffic before heading out toward the suburbs with cars enjoying 80km/h speed limits. Both stages can be both pleasant and unsettling.

It's nice to sail along the inside of cars and buses in town when they're not moving but frustrating to get caught at traffic lights frequently when there's an unfortunate phase. Other annoyances are finding cars randomly blocking cycle lanes and having to use poor cycle paths in the first place - ones which expect you to magically pass through solid objects like bus stops or end abruptly, dumping you into oncoming traffic.

On the open road toward the airport is a great cycle. There's no worry about slowing down and few traffic lights. But when a car or bus goes hurtling past you at the aforementioned 80km/h quite closely, it can be intimidating. Sometimes you realise how vulnerable you are. Fortunately most drivers give a wide berth.

There is the odd driver that makes me question human decency sometimes. I don't know when it became acceptable to scream at or threaten others in the street.Sometimes I wish I had a plaque on hand that says: "I'm a wife/mother/sister/daughter, trying to get home/to work, who just happens to be on a bike", to get aggressors to see I'm a person rather than just a cyclist.

On occasion I've felt like never getting on a bike again because driver behaviour has annoyed me so much or genuinely frightened me. But thankfully, these incidents aren't non-stop. In the same way that not all cyclists can be tarred as red light runners, not all drivers can be painted as intolerant and impatient. The majority are fine.

On the whole, I love cycling. I love the feeling of the wind whooshing by me on the way down a large hill that I pushed myself up.

I love the consistent journey times and the occasional sense of achievement when a few minutes are shaved off. I love the time to myself that I wouldn't otherwise get, and knowing that my journey was worthwhile because it doubled as my exercise for the day.

I think I've shown my colleagues by arriving into work in one piece each time that it's not too dangerous or difficult and I've reassured my initially wary family of how safe and enjoyable it is, to the point where they're envious of my cycling life.

I never wanted to be one of those cycling pushers, who cajoles everyone they meet into giving it a go. When I hear someone despairing though, about the cost of petrol, or not having the opportunity to exercise, or waiting on buses, I occasionally pipe up with, "why not cycle?" Because that is the one thing I would really like to change about cycling – I wish there were more of us doing it.

QUICK-FIRE GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS'

1. TRY BEFORE YOU BUY
It may seem obvious, but take any bike you like the look of for a test spin before you commit to buying.

Consider too all possible uses for it – if you think you're only going to use it occasionally then you might not feel like investing that much but it would be a pity to discover 12 months down the line when you're cycling daily that you need a trade in.

2. FIND A FRIEND
It's not essential, but heading out those first few times with someone who knows what they're doing can be a big confidence booster, not to mention good fun.

Cycling may seem like a solo sport but it is really enjoyable with a partner so even going out with someone who is not that experienced could do you the world of good when you're starting off.

3. PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT
You wouldn't get behind the wheel of a car and expect to drive to work on your first go, so don't think a bike should be different.

Take the time to learn how to safely manoeuvre, make sure you can look behind without veering wildly, and get your hand signalling sorted. It'll stand to you when you're in traffic and have to react quickly to other road users' movements. Finding a quiet street or park where you won't feel under pressure to perform will help to build confidence.

4. INVEST IN ESSENTIALS
While the weather in Dublin is not as hideous as it may seem, and most of the time you can be quite lucky and miss a downpour if it does happen to be raining, it's good to have some wetgear to hand, just in case.

You'll be pleasantly surprised by how little you need it, but glad it's there when you do.

5. LEARN THE BASICS
You don't need to carry a full maintenance kit each time you head out on the road but it's good to know how to fix simple problems like your chain coming off.

It can make the difference between getting to work on time or having to abandon your bike for the bus. Tip: keep a pair of disposable gloves in your handbag or backpack to avoid an oily mess.

6. PREPARATION IS KEY
If you can leave a few changes of clothes at the office at the start of your week, then you'll have even less to think of before heading out the door in the mornings.

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Cargo bikes may look a bit strange but these useful bikes are becoming more common, **Cian Ginty** reports

The urban SUV of bicycles

A common sight in the Netherlands and Denmark, large cargo bikes are starting to turn heads in Dublin.

"It's in its infancy and there's only a couple of us who sell them. But the more that the bikes get seen, the more normal they become and then the more popular they become," says Astrid Fitzpatrick, who runs Dutchbikeshop.ie with her husband Frank.

"I've already sold more this year so-far than all of last year," she says. While there's still only small numbers.

Cargo bikes are essential load-carrying bicycles used mostly to transport children and shopping, and used by businesses for deliveries.

The Dutch Bike Shop sells a two and three wheeled version Dutch brand Babboe, while Bear Bicycles at Greenaer, based off Pearse Street, sell two-wheeled bikes from another Dutch brand Bakfiets.nl.

One cargo bike that can often be seen in Dublin City Centre is the 'Bullitt' by Danish bike builders Larry vs Harry, which is used by bicycle couriers. It's the racing bike of cargo bike world – it was built to be the fastest and has forward leaning user position compared to the others which hold the typical upright Dutch cyclist position. However Larry vs Harry no longer has an Irish dealer listed on its website.

The bicycles used by An Post are a small type of cargo bike, although the difference between it and an average bicycle is far less striking.

The Fitzparticks use one of a Babboe three-wheeled cargo bike to taxi their three children around Lucan, in west Dublin.

Astrid, who is originally from Amsterdam, sees the bicycle as a second car. She says: "It's dead handy – I hardly ever use the car anymore. I bring them to school in it, they have a roof over them if it's raining, and I've often been seen cycling with the three kids in the box up to their necks with grocery shopping. It's like my second car."

"I've on occasion cycled from Lucan to Howth and back," she adds.

But are these bulky things as easy as cycling a regular bike? "In the beginning it took a bit of getting used to, because unlike a two wheel bike you can really feel how uneven the road is, but your body adjusts to it after a while," says Astrid. "It's not made for speeding, but when you have such a precious load as kids on board you don't want to go too fast."

Most people who have bought it from her have been using it on a daily basis as a car or second car replacement. "They make a well informed decision before spending money on a cargo bike, it's not a cheap purchase," she says.

Emma Tierney, who lives in Blackrock, owns a two-wheeler from Bear Bicycles. "I've three kids who are 7, 6, and 3 years old – I take them to school in it and shopping. It's fantastic, it's paid for its usefulness at this stage," she says.

She says you need to be fit enough but the bikes are not a massive leap from normal bicycles.

"You do have to have a certain level of fitness, especially going up hills, but you get fit from being on it. For anybody who cycles an ordinary bicycle, it would not be a massive leap to a cargo bike."

"The only thing is the kids are getting a little bit big and I live on the top of a hill and on days that are very windy or wet I tend to leave it at home," adds Emma.

Caitriona Walsh, who also uses a Bear-branded two-wheeler in her business Little Green Fingers, an outdoor childminding service for under preschoolers in Malahide, says she finds the bike easy to use.

"I find it easy to cycle – it's different, but I find it easy. I really like it and would highly recommend it. The first time you sit on it you say 'I'll never be able to do this' but within seconds you get it. It's so smooth and well built. It's better than buying a buggy." she says.

With Little Green Fingers she mostly cycles around parks. She lives close to the grounds of Malahide Castle.

"I trained as a Montessori teacher and do some Montessori work with the children but we also go outdoors, identifying wildlife and flowers. We go to the beaches and parks. The children really like it – the uniqueness of the business is that we get outside and they love going on the bike" says Caitriona.

Emma also says her children love getting transported in the bike. She says: "I think they get a kick out of the fact that no other kid in the area has one, they like that the kids in their school all want to go in it and if they invite a friend home on a play date the first thing they ask is 'can we go home on the bike?'"

What about Irish drivers? Emma says: "The bike is nearly three meters long, so on a couple of occasions I've had people trying to overtake as I'm going around the corner not realising that, but I have not had any near misses or anything like that."

She says they had looked at a trailer for a normal bike but went with the cargo bike because the children are so low down in a trailer and with their bike the children are strapped in and in front – so you can see what is going on.

It has proven handy for shopping, she says: "I used it at Christmas when the car parks were jammers – I did my Christmas Day food shopping on the bike. It's not as big as a car boot but a week's shopping for five will handily fit in it – what more do you want?"

Rain/wind covers – or 'tents' as the makers call them – are available as an extra. There's a trade off between keeping your children fully covered and adding extra wind resistance. The more agile two-wheeled bikes have pushed cargo bike sales worldwide, but the two or three wheel choice is a personal one based on needs and style.

Dublin City Council were looking at electrical assisted cargo bikes to keep deliveries running smoothly to city centre business while the now stalled Metro North and other projects were underway.

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