



**Letterkenny
Chamber**
Advancing business together

SUBMISSION

Active Travel Project – L1007 Circular Road

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Letterkenny Chamber in principle supports the objectives of Active Travel and indeed developing Active Travel routes that bring people into, around and out of Letterkenny are something we should be striving for. This type of project will go some way in achieving sustainability goals and could help with reducing reliance on the car.

However, we have a number of concerns not least the timing of these Active Travel projects that are being planned before the new Town Bus becomes operational and with no timeline on the Ten-T.

Currently we are all aware that Letterkenny is at capacity and the only solution that would actually act as some relief is to have the Ten-T project delivered, specifically the link between the Dual Carriageway and the Business Park Road. The actual timeline of this project is still very unclear and people who travel into and out of Letterkenny for work, leisure and services are increasingly frustrated.

The extremely negative narrative about the traffic is causing severe reputational damage to Letterkenny and the resultant reduction in footfall is clearly evident. Therefore the discussion around active travel routes that will narrow carriageways is adding to the negativity.

In our discussions with the project team were very clear that projects would not add to capacity, but on surveying the plans it seems that capacity would be reduced even further. It would seem much more sensible to have other road projects started before capacity is reduced even further.

We have emailed our members (310) to encourage them to make submissions individually and we would hope that the businesses directly and indirectly affected will do so. It should be noted that not all businesses are Chamber members and project planners need to be aware of this.

However, we do understand that this is funding that we may not attract again or that is not accepted will be diverted to other counties, so we need to strike a balance between Active Travel and making getting around the town better for vehicles and pedestrians.

We are here to work proactively with the stakeholders for the benefit of Letterkenny and the wider area but as the largest lobby group in Letterkenny representing 310 rate paying members our concerns have to be taken seriously. If the Active Travel Plan projects result in a negative impact on Letterkenny during construction phase and after businesses will close and jobs could be lost.

Observation 1 Communication of the Public Consultation Event

Firstly, we would like to make a comment about communication around the public consultation event.

Our understanding was that there would be a leaflet drop across the whole of Letterkenny, not just the Glencar area. We have had a number of reports that these were not received across Letterkenny and indeed we did not receive one ourselves.

We do acknowledge that there was VMS signage and a social media campaign, and we understand that businesses along the route have been in direct discussion with the Council throughout the process.

Observation 2 Bus Stops

We are surprised that bus stops will have no lay by / pulling in area. It is noted by NTA that bus stops only hold up the traffic for 20/30secs. However, this takes no account of peak times or accommodation for people with mobility issues or people with prams and buggies.

Observation 3 Long Lane

We were told at the consultation that the entrance to Long Lane would take into account the proposed new Hospital entrance and that signalisation would really be the best solution here. This signalisation however is not in the plan but will likely be added at a later date. Surely this then leads to more disruption when it has to be added in the near future, so we would urge planners to include it now.

Observation 4 Right Turn Lanes

We understand that the right turn lanes will be removed completely. We have reservations on this move here and in other areas of the town. It would seem to us that this will result in more congestion on the road at busy times.

This is particularly true on the turn into Glencar Business Park & Shopping Centre. We understand there may be changes to the business centre that will impact here but all these projects need to be mindful of the businesses they are going to directly affect.

We understand that the project team has discussed the plan with Glencar Business Centre directly, we actively encourage them to keep on communicating and ensure that they are on board, as this project progresses. Businesses on the route know their

customers and their inflows and outflows better than anyone so the project team must understand their concerns and take them into account.

Observation 5 Construction

Should this project go ahead, the project team must make every effort to minimise disruption during business and at peak traffic times a priority.

We have seen from past projects that good communication and liaison with the businesses affected leads to a better outcome at all times. This means that those effected on a daily basis know what to expect each and every day so that they can make staffing decisions and keep their customers informed. In addition, they must have a direct point of contact on the ground should things go wrong.

Prior to the project starting it is important to outline each stage of the project, including detailed traffic management plans, how work over entrances is to be handled, etc. On paper these works always look easier than they actually turn out in the long run so planning and preparation are key.

The contractor also needs to take into account the busy times and react accordingly. We all know how quickly traffic can lock in Letterkenny and with current bad press this needs to be avoided at all costs. The contractors and Traffic Management teams must be able to react quickly when things go wrong.

A clear line of communication must be in place between this project team and others carrying out work. It defies belief that information on roadworks is not shared between parts of the same organisation and others. This includes utility works as well as routine road repairs. We simply cannot have major works happening at the same time.

We strongly urge and advise the no works should take place on Friday - Monday of both **Irish and UK bank holidays**. Letterkenny is the access for Dunfanaghy, Downings and Glenveagh National Park and anyone who is moving round Letterkenny at these times knows the reality of the traffic congestion. Any roadworks will have a very serious impact on this already congested traffic as we have learned to our cost on countless occasions.

There is no doubt that the businesses in the area will be adversely affected when work is taking place, so it is the responsibility of the project team and contractor to be in regular contact. We have to learn from past mistakes and make communication of disruption during the construction phase a priority for the project team and contractor.

Observation 6 Emergency Access

Access for emergency services particularly ambulances is important. These service providers know best how they operate and can always provide valuable insights. This plan really must take them into account during the design and construction phase.

Observation 7 Signalisation at Glencar Roundabout

This roundabout is busy at peak times in the morning and afternoon. The signalisation solution needs to be evaluated very carefully in light of learnings from other traffic light projects.

We have some questions in terms of replacing roundabouts with signalised junctions:

Is this always the correct solution?

How has this been modelled?

Who actually benefits?

We urge the project team to ensure all key stakeholders are consulted. You really only have to look at one social media post to see what people think about more traffic lights.

If this is the only solution for this junction we ask that the project team considers making them part time lights only. We have seen this work in other cities and towns.

Rest assured there will be only negative comment if people are stationary at lights when there is nothing on the roundabout.

Observation 8 Maintenance

These active travel projects must have maintenance built in. Once the project is complete it needs to be maintained to the highest level. That includes regular cleaning, surface maintenance and a plan for any planting or landscaping. As we have seen with previous projects without maintenance it will start to look old and neglected very quickly.

We also believe the project team must take into account the type of landscaping /planting that will happen on the project. It must be suitable for its environment and be easily maintained.

A clear statement of maintenance and responsibility for it should be included in the project plan.

Observation 9 Benefitting from Active Travel

As we have pointed out the principles of Active Travel are valid. However, movement around and into Letterkenny is overly reliant on the car. Just introducing Active Travel routes as planned will not in themselves encourage people to stop using the car for all journeys.

There will need to be an activation programme within communities, schools and neighbourhoods. If children can be encouraged to cycle or walk to school safely through such an activation programme, it might encourage others to change car use.

The new Town Bus that is due in 2025 will need to be up and running.

The much talked of bike scheme would also need to be in place.

A full communication and activation programme will be needed as soon as plans are agreed to encourage the community to support the routes and if they are to benefit from them.

Conclusion

We trust that you will take the views of our organisation and our members into serious consideration when deciding the future of this project.