

Cyclist.ie - the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network
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Mr. Shane Ross, TD
Minister for Transport, Tourism
and Sport
Department of Transport,
Tourism and Sport
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2

Monday 22 May 2017

An Open Letter to Minister Shane Ross

Eight Cyclist Fatalities on Irish Public Roads (by Mid-May) in 2017

Dear Minister Ross,

I refer to my previous letter of 16 June 2016 and to my Cyclist.ie colleague Dr. Mike McKillen's letter of 03 October 2016.

I am writing to you again on the matter of cyclist safety but, this time, after eight of my fellow cyclist citizens have been mowed down and killed by motor vehicles in 2017 - and it is only mid-May. In 2016 a total of 10 people riding their bikes lost their lives. The carnage can and must be halted!

There is something fundamentally wrong with our system and culture when the lives of mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters are extinguished - at a rate of more than one per month - while they are engaging in a healthy activity that is promoted as government policy.

On behalf of those who use bicycles, both for everyday transportation/utility trips, and for recreational/tourism use, I am calling on you as the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to make - as a matter of urgency - a serious intervention before any other person on a bike loses their lives. We need leadership at this point to bring a halt to the death and misery inflicted by the utter dominance of motor vehicles on Irish roads.

As pointed out in our previous letters, your Department's *National Cycle Policy Framework* (NCPF) of 2009 has all but been set-aside. All we hear about (for the last

2 to 3 years) is “an upcoming review” of same – with nothing forthcoming. Your department still has no National Cycling Coordinator in post, a basic pre-requisite for advancing a multi-faceted policy framework and a specific action of the NCPF (Objective #17.1). The promised National Advisory Forum has still not been established (Policy #17.2).

Furthermore, and to exacerbate these shortcomings, active travel is downgraded in the National ‘Building on Recovery’ Plan to a mere 1% of the proposed transport expenditure, despite the NCPF commitment of ‘adequate and timely funding’ (Chapter 4). This 1% figure compares very poorly to our European neighbours and to the UN recommended level of 20% of transport funding to go on non-motorised / active travel modes¹.

I am pleading with you to show real leadership in procuring a paradigm shift in how those who use active and healthy travel modes are treated on Irish public roads and, consequently, in how transport funds are spent. We strongly commend your support for lower vehicle speeds and for lower alcohol limits for drivers, but the parallel issue here - and the giant elephant in the room - is the need for transport to decarbonise and hence for capital expenditure on transport to switch away from endless demand-inducing road building and, instead, shift to investment in public transport, walking and cycling.

We would like to meet with you at the earliest possible date to discuss our concerns over the present level of cycling deaths, the need for adequate funding and resources, and the very real and relatively quick benefits to be gained from increased investment in cycling, as outlined in the NCPF.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Damien Ó Tuama

National Cycling Coordinator, Cyclist.ie – the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network

Vice-President, European Cyclists’ Federation

¹ See page 36 of United Nations Environment Programme (2006). Global Outlook on Walking and Cycling - Policies & realities from around the world. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/unep/document/global-outlook-walking-and-cycling-policies-realities-around-world>