



Proposed Cycle Paths in Killarney – Observations and Suggestions from Killarney Cycling Club

(Part 8 – Killarney Cycle Lanes)

The stated aim of Killarney Cycling Club is to “promote all aspects of cycling in the greater Killarney area” (www.killarneycyclingclub.com). The club caters for all types of cyclists ranging from youth to elite road-racers and we are expanding to include older people immobilized by age and infirmity. Our biggest membership cohort is adult cyclists in the ‘leisure’ category.

We share the vision of making Killarney a cycling-friendly town with a modern outlook that sees cyclists as equal road-users rather than ‘guests’ on the road, and where it is acknowledged that good cycling infrastructure can greatly enhance both the living experience and the business life of the town.

We therefore greatly welcome these proposals and are happy to contribute observations and suggestions on them.

These observations are largely made from the ‘everyday user perspective’ rather than with any engineering or design experience, and therefore, in cases, the plans may not have been interpreted accurately. Neither do we have sufficient expertise in the most up to date international design standards and thinking to be able to make detailed suggestions.

In addition to the proposed new lanes, the County Council invitation for observations also refers to “ ...dealing with proper planning and sustainable development in which the development would be situated”. With regard to that, we would like to say that Killarney is generally a compact town with good planning, but also with very high traffic volumes and congestion problems, and therefore has the potential to become an exemplar of a provincial-scale town with an integrated transport plan driven by standards and thinking of the future rather than merely trying to ‘catch up’. In this regard, it would be desirable to consider these particular plans within the context of [1] the existing cycling infrastructure and [2] that broader, long-term vision which might have stated priorities including the identification of current hazardous locations for cyclists and prioritizing these; connections between schools and the main residential areas; connections between residential and the main shopping and commercial areas, and connections with the main tourist and recreational routes.

We make further reference to this in the conclusion below.

OBSERVATIONS

Rock Road Proposal

1) Going northward – end of cycle path at approach to Cleeny Roundabout

Most cyclists approaching the Cleeny roundabout opt to stay on the road because, using the current system of shared footpaths and pedestrian crossings:

- going west (left) involves crossing one road (entrance to Reeks Gateway)
- going straight through the junction to the N22 involves crossing two roads including one light-controlled pedestrian crossing
- and turning east (right) involves crossing three roads including two light-controlled pedestrian crossings.

Therefore, consideration should be given to cyclists wishing to exit the cycle-path at this point for that purpose of opting to stay on the carriageway and avoid these detours. The current design seems to show that cyclists will have to move out, into the flow of traffic at that point, in order to access the roundabout, and there is no provision for cyclists on the roundabout.

At a minimum, protection and space should be given to cyclists at that point so that they can safely filter into the flow of traffic. Otherwise, many cyclists will take the safer option of staying on the carriageway from further back and ignore the cycle path (this forces traffic to flow around them rather than having to enter into the flow of traffic at a dangerous point where there are many things for drivers to process).

Also, provision should be made for cyclists using the roundabout.

2) Filling stations on both sides on southern end of Cleeny roundabout

Trucks often park on the footpaths on both sides, blocking sight-lines for traffic exiting the filling stations and forcing cyclists (and pedestrians) out into the road. Particular attention might be given to protecting the cycle paths at these points.

Upper Lewis Rd. Proposal

1) South-bound path at Junction of Lewis Rd/Dalton's Avenue

At this point the south-bound path is contra-flow and it ends suddenly, in the middle of a junction, at the 'wrong side of the road'. This means that cyclists will find themselves at the wrong side of the road in the centre of a junction and this appears to be a rather vulnerable situation.

Park Road Proposal

1) Park Rd./East Av./College St Junction (roundabout at Friary)

The plan envisages that cyclists using the path going west, through the roundabout to College St, would divert to East Avenue and cross this via the lights-controlled pedestrian crossing. However, many cyclists will wish to proceed directly and uninterrupted through

the junction. But, the cycle path appears to be 'raised' on the approach to the roundabout from the east, meaning that cyclists can't exit off of it to continue directly on the carriageway. This, in turn, will mean that most cyclists may ignore the cycle path because of the delay and inconvenience in taking the pedestrian diversion via East Av.

There is no provision for cyclists on this roundabout and this should be addressed.

2) The Railway Bridge

This is the most dangerous part of Park Rd. and the cycle lane is just discontinued at this spot and cyclists are diverted back into the flow of traffic at a dangerous point.

If there is no alternative solutions, attention should be given to the detail of where this diversion occurs so that cyclists don't have to ride directly into the flow of traffic and are given some space and protection in order to filter into it.

3) Ardshannavooly Rd. Junction going east

After Circe K going eastwards, the cycle path is diverted away from Park Road onto a crossing on the Ardshannavooly Rd. Here, the plan does not appear to show a raised crossing or that cyclists will be given priority. This would mean that they will have to dismount if there is traffic, walk and remount again as they won't have a 'right of way' here, even though they are on a 'main route'.

Most, therefore, will probably remain on Park Road where they have an uninterrupted right of way.

Most cyclists would make more use of the cycle lane if it went uninterrupted through the junction rather than via the proposed diversion onto Ardshannavooly Rd..

4) Junction with Countess Rd./Deerpark Rd.

Going west, the cycle lane is diverted off Park Road onto Countess Rd. and going east onto Deerpark Rd. This means that cyclists in both cases will have to dismount, walk across the road and remount. Therefore, for example, the plan envisages that cyclists going east will twice, in the space of approx. 150 meters, have to divert off Park Rd., dismount, wait for traffic to pass and walk, and remount again.

Most will probably opt not to do this and instead opt to ride uninterrupted through the junction. However, the cycle path is 'raised' along some of this section which means that it cannot be exited approaching these junctions. Therefore, it is likely to be ignored altogether by most.

Provision should be made before and on the roundabout for cyclists opting to use the road.

5) East of Countess Rd./Deerpark Rd. junction

The use of bollards to segregate the cycle path on this stretch is welcome as there are a lot of commercial premises and parking on footpaths is very common at the moment. Therefore, the detail of the placement of bollards to prevent parking will be important.

6) The Church

The cycle lane should be well protected at the church as parking on footpaths and cycle paths at churches and schools seems to be taken for granted generally.

In summary: given the accumulation of issues above, there appears to be a possibility that much of the Park Road plan will not work for most cyclists, meaning that it will also not work

for drivers who will be frustrated with being delayed behind cyclists using the main carriageway when there is a cycling path option. In practice, this leads to frustration and anger, with some motorists blowing horns and giving close 'punishment-passes' to cyclists.

This, in turn, raises the question of whether the overall planning of cycling infrastructure in Killarney still sees cyclists as 'guests' on roads and granted less priority, and that they are the road-users to be inconvenienced when priorities and compromises have to be decided. If this is the case, it is backward thinking and 'behind the times'.

Therefore, in this case, we would encourage that consideration be given to a plan that would allow cyclists to proceed uninterrupted along the length of Park Rd. as is the case now.

Having said all of the above, the more convoluted planned cycle path might also suit a minority of cyclists including younger school children, and beginners or less confident adults.

In addition, and in common with comments on the Rock Rd. proposal, it seems that cyclists will just be diverted back into the flow of traffic at points where they most need protection – e.g. entering roundabouts; railway bridge – and this hazard will discourage the use of the cycle paths.

Deerpark Rd. / Pinewood Estate Proposal

This proposal looks satisfactory and we welcome priority being given to cyclists on Deerpark Rd. over motorists entering commercial properties as is currently the situation.

Additional Notes

The approach in the past sometimes seems to have been based on putting cycle lanes where there was plenty of space and it was relatively safe, discontinuing them where there was a lack of space and therefore more hazardous, or diverting cyclists away from the direct route where cycle lanes would involve compromises with motorist (not exclusive to Killarney of course).

The provision of cycling lanes mustn't be seen as a solution to 'the problem' – i.e. getting cyclists off the roads where they are inconvenient. Therefore, all parts of roads should be planned and maintained to be safe for cyclists and in no case should vehicle drivers be given the impression that cyclists shouldn't be on any particular stretch of road as this encourages hostility.

Again referring to comment in the invitation referring to "...dealing with proper planning and sustainable development in which the development would be situated", we would also like to raise the following:

"Existing cycle lanes"

The plans show 'existing cycle lanes' as continuous, whereas they are interrupted in many places to give priority to motorists entering private and commercial entrances. However, we appreciate that this may not be shown because of the scale of the plans. Nevertheless, it

should be acknowledged that the existing cycle lanes are not continuous nor ‘cycling friendly’ in this regard.

In addition, indicating them as ‘cycling lanes’ gives the presumption that they are actually fully functional as cycle lanes. However, they are not ‘fit for purpose’ in parts and are avoided by cyclists for a variety of good reasons, including being potentially hazardous in places (see examples in Appendix). This leads to frustration by both cyclists and drivers alike.

Also, in places these are shared footpaths and cycle paths, rather than designated cycle lanes. In places, and at times, these are very crowded with pedestrians, dogs, buggies, etc, and are not viable, functional commuting alternatives to the roads.

Functional routes

The impact of the proposed new routes, especially serving residential areas such as Pinewood Estate, will be greatly reduced unless they are connected with safe, convenient, ‘joined-up’ functional routes to schools, shopping, recreational areas and such like.

Therefore, while more modern cycle lanes, such as on Muckcross Rd., are of a much higher standard, the joining of these proposed new paths to existing ones will not fully result in such ‘functional’ continuous routes because of the inadequacies of much of the current infrastructure.

Because of this, and in addition to these new proposals, consideration might be given to planning and funding for remedial works on the existing infrastructure and on joining these effectively with proposed new routes – as part of an overall integrated network as we stated above.

In that regard, we are also contributing an Appendix to this document to Killarney Municipal District with some examples, from the cyclist’s perspective, of how parts of the existing infrastructure could be made more cycling friendly in the hope that planning and funding might be considered for such maintenance and remedial work.

Conclusion

Killarney Cycling Club greatly welcomes these proposals and will contribute in any way possible towards the vision of Killarney as an Irish model of a good urban cycling environment where people’s living experience, along with the tourism reputation of the town, is enriched by safe, functional and convenient cycling routes.

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