

## Heather Cooke

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Please see attached brief submission on the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region, on behalf of Cyclist.ie. I would appreciate acknowledgement of this submission.

Yours

Colm Ryder  
Chairperson, Cyclist.ie

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## Introduction

Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network (ICAN), is the federation of Cycling Advocacy Groups, Greenway Groups, and Bike Festivals on the island of Ireland. We are the Irish member of the European Cyclists' Federation ([www.ecf.com](http://www.ecf.com)). Our vision is that cycling will be a normal part of transport and everyday life in Ireland.

We are delighted to be able to make this short submission on the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region, and will concentrate our comments on the issues related to Climate Change and Connectivity.

## Connectivity

Cycling offers the best and quickest return on investment of all transport expenditure. We believe that if sufficient investment is made in creating safer and more comfortable cycling conditions, substantial and rapid growth in cycling mode share can be achieved. This growth will support the move to a lower carbon economy. The CSO National Travel Survey 2016 showed that more than 25% of journeys were less than 2 kilometres, while nearly 57% were less than 8 km and with improved cycling conditions, many of these trips could be made by bike.

Additionally, electric bikes have significant potential to replace car use for longer journeys (e.g. 10 – 20 km) and journeys in hillier towns and cities, while also making cycling an option for a much wider range of people. Multi-modal trips which combine cycling with use of public transport need to be facilitated, and upgraded by provision of secure bike parking at train and bus interchanges and where possible by allowing the carriage of bikes on public transport at all times.

We note that none of the above issues appear to be adequately addressed in the Draft Strategy. In particular the advancement of multi modal travel, which has massive potential to reduce private vehicle use needs to be clearly addressed.

### **Further societal benefits as a bonus**

Investing in cycling, as referenced in the Draft Strategy, also aligns well with numerous government policies and societal objectives. Here below we outline what we see as **the ten most significant reasons why this draft strategy needs to prioritise the growth of cycling mode share**. National and international evidence relating to these benefits of cycling highlights that, although a significant increase in investment is required to achieve the necessary modal shift, such investment will yield significant positive returns in the long term.

1. Investing in cycling provides the highest rate of return on investment of all Transport projects
2. Cycling helps tackle congestion, as less public space is required to transport people
3. Cycling helps more people get the exercise they need and improves general health
4. Cycling can improve psychological well-being
5. Investing in cycling infrastructure will improve safety for cyclists and for other road users

6. Cycling can help us meet our climate change obligations and reduce reliance on finite fossil fuel energy
7. Cycle trips don't generate air or noise pollution
8. Interventions to boost cycling can create better public places
9. Cycling is an affordable mobility option for all
10. Cycling can boost local economic activity

## **Environment/Climate Change**

Cycling is the mode of transport for more than 40% of people in many progressive European cities. We of course realise that cycling will not solve the problem of climate change on its own but, as 57% of Irish journeys are less than 8 km, it can make a significant contribution, as well as alleviating congestion, contributing to cleaner air, improving health outcomes and creating attractive neighbourhoods. For cycling to play its climate action part however, the need for clear upgrades in opportunities for multi modal travel must begin, and the Greenways outlined under Green infrastructure section need to be properly resourced. We also note the omission of any reference to the Grand Canal Greenway, which will also link Dublin City to the Shannon, as well as providing multiple improvements in sustainable commuting options. This Grand Canal Greenway proposal is likely to be completed before the Royal Canal link.

Yours

Colm Ryder  
Chairperson, Cyclist.ie

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