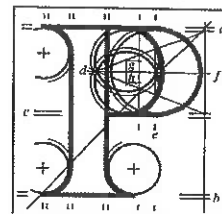


Our Case Number: ABP-310286-21



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Bernadette Leahy
Gurrane
Ballyhea
Co. Cork

Date: 29 June 2021

Re: Railway works and all works necessary to eliminate and, where necessary, upgrade seven numbered level crossings and carry out all associated and ancillary works along a 24-kilometre section of the Dublin to Cork Railway Line.
Fantstown, Thomastown, Ballyhay, Newtown, Ballycoskery (Ballyhea Village), Shinanagh and Buttevant, Co. Cork and Co. Limerick.

Dear Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed railway order and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter. A receipt for the fee lodged is enclosed.

The Board will revert to you in due course with regard to the matter.

Please be advised that copies of all submissions / observations received in relation to the application will be made available for public inspection at the offices of Cork County Council and at the offices of An Bord Pleanála when they have been processed by the Board.

More detailed information in relation to strategic infrastructure development can be viewed on the Board's website: www.pleanala.ie.

If you have any queries in the meantime please contact the undersigned officer of the Board. Please quote the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,

pp. Sarah Caulfield.
Kieran Somers

Executive Officer

Direct Line: 01-8737250

RA05

Teil
Glaao Áitiúil
Facs
Láithreán Gréasáin
Ríomhphost

Tel (01) 858 8100
LoCall 1890 275 175
Fax (01) 872 2684
Website www.pleanala.ie
Email bord@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

AN BORD PLEANÁLA
LDG- 041119-21
ABP- 310286-21
25 JUN 2021
Fee: € 50 Type: cheque
Time: _____ By: post

Gurrane,

Ballyhea,

Co. Cork,

June 23rd. 2021

The Secretary,
An Bord Pleanala,
64 Marlborough St,
Dublin 1

Case no. NA04.310286

Fee enclosed. Please acknowledge receipt.

Oral Hearing is requested.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for the possibility of commenting on the propose bridge over the Dublin to Cork line at Ballycoskery level crossing, XC212. Having seen the plans and drawings supplied to you by CIE there are some things that I would like to bring to you attention.

I live on the road going east from Chapel Cross in Ballyhea on the N20, to Kilfinnan. This road passes through Ardpatrick. It is numbered L1327. The level crossing at Ballycoskery straddles this road. I travel on this road every day and know it very well.

Unfortunately, the document supplied by CIE has mistaken the location of Ardpatrick and has erroneously placed it to the west of the N20 on what appears to be L5530 which is a local road going west from the N20, through the townland of Ballinadridden, and eventually to Churchtown. Ardpatrick and Ballycoskery level crossing are in the exact opposite direction.

I pass the school everyday on my way to Ballyhea. Some of the maps in your documentation appear to be out of date. For example, the new community hall does

not appear on any of the maps included in CIE's application. As this is a recent development I was inclined to think that the Ordinance Survey had not yet updated their maps. On closer inspection, I find that the maps for the school at Ballycoskery do not show the new class rooms added to the east end of the school building. I am certain that the new school rooms were built and opened in 2012. This would have allowed the Ordinance Survey ample time to update their maps. It seems to me that CIE has used maps to illustrate this development that are almost ten years out of date.

Tourism has grown in and around Ballyhea at a very strong rate over the past twenty years and further investment is planned for this sector. Its main attractions are natural beauty and out door activities of which there are many in the Ballyhoura mountains. These activities are supplemented by amenities such as Doneraile Park which is close by and a very popular attraction. CIE reports that Doneraile Park takes an entrance charge. This was true for the period between 2000 and 2012. But because it was costing more to police the charge than the returns it generated and because of parking problems arising from the charge in and around Doneraile, the OPW dropped the entrance charge to Doneraile Park ten years ago. It is very surprising that CIE's in depth study of tourism in the Ballyhea area had not picked up this change. As far as I can see, this looks like an indicator that the tourist data presented here is hopelessly out of date and surely cannot be relied on.

There are two SAC areas close to Ballycoskery. One is the Blackwater river special area of conservation which is intersected by streams passing through Ballycoskery, the other is the Ballyhoura Mountains special area of conservation. The Ballyhoura Mountains SAC is home to the Hen Harrier, 20% of whose national population is located in Cork. Whooper Swans are also to be found in the local area. There is also an Annex I area of Hydrologous habitat very close to the Ballycoskery gates. From my reading of CIE's report, it seems to me that the proposed bridge at Ballycoskery has been designed with little or no consideration of alternative options that would have a lesser impact on the environment or none at all. The Ballycoskery bridge would introduce into the landscape of high value in and around Ballycoskery a gaping blot on the landscape. Unfortunately, no amount of mitigation will relieve that fact. The bridge would become the major built element both in the village of Ballyhea and in the surrounding countryside and would be visible for miles around. When seen from the vantage point in the mountains it would be conspicuous in the valley below and a terrible intrusion.

I drive a motor car to and from Ballyhea. The proposed new bridge would make access to the east part of the village very complicate and unsafe in poor weather, especially during the winter months when we have ice on the roads. The bridge also complicates access to the church, shop, and parochial house in the west part of the village. As for pedestrians, the proposal makes little sense as it will not be possible to use it in poor

weather conditions. A much simpler solution such as automated gates or a tunnel under the railway line would be a much simpler solution, less costly, and likely to have minimal impact on the landscape and the community.

I would ask An Bord Pleanála to set this proposed development aside and to require CIE to provide a working alternative for Ballycoskery.

Yours sincerely,

Bernadette Leahy.