

RESPONSE TO IRISH RAIL RESPONSE TO SUBMISSION BY WILLIAM J, SMYTH RE DART + PROJECT

In its response to the point that the location of the Depot is at variance with Kildare County Council development plan, Irish rail points to the commitment of KCC to facilitate improvement in transportation , including passenger rail services. This is correct. But Irish Rail ignores the fact that its Depot proposal is at variance with KCC's endorsement of and protection of the Greenway that runs 132 kilometres from Maynooth station to Longford. Construction of the Depot west of Maynooth represents a profound threat to the quality and integrity of the Greenway.

It is contended by this observer that any apparent contradiction between these two objectives can be reconciled by viewing the development of Dart + West and the construction of the Depot as being two related but separate goals

1.0 The primary contention of this observer is that the electrification of the Dublin - Maynooth railway line is a linear component within a much greater system-wide plan to electrify the railway system along rail corridors that serve Hazelhatch, Dunboyne and Drogheda.

2.0 The construction challenges of the scheme primarily arise from accommodating the electrification scheme within fixed geographical corridors.

The construction challenge of creating a maintenance Depot is, in geographical terms, a footloose project that may be sited at a number of competing but suitable locations within the much wider system of railway electrification.

3.0 The adjudication between possible Depot locations is qualitative based and lacks the published verifiable detail required to measure site advantage. The MCA applied to identification of possible Depot sites does not lend itself to precise measured attributes of competing sites. Specifically, the adjudication process selects six variables and assesses them according to a scoring system based on **Most Preferable, Preferable,**

Neutral, Not Preferable and Least Preferable. No numerical weighting is attached to these five subjective descriptors. Furthermore, no numerical weighting is attached to the primary selected variables. Final selection is inherently subjective.

Irish Rail does not acknowledge this in its response.

4.0 The identification of Maynooth West as a depot site was first made a decade and a half ago in the context of a linear project stretching from Connolly to Maynooth. In the intervening period the electrification scheme has broadened out from a linear to a system-wide project. In addition the context for the original linear scheme has altered significantly – a Greenway has been constructed at considerable cost to the Exchequer and large residential development within 500 metres of the suggested Depot site has been approved and built.

Irish Rail does not acknowledge this dynamic in its response.

5.0 Following its identification of Maynooth West as the preferred option for the Depot Irish Rail engaged in further analysis of the site. Its further assessment of the complexity of the Maynooth West site has revealed (a) the requirement for the preservation of the protected structure, Jackson's Bridge, (b) the consequent realignment of local roadways involving bridge and roundabout construction, (c) the construction of an elaborate system of water retaining berms and (d) the doubling in scale of the amount of farmland initially proposed for compulsory purchase.

All of these post-selection qualifications are ancillary to the primary requirement that a five kilometre track be constructed in parallel to the existing Sligo line, linking Maynooth station to the Depot on a facility that will be exclusively devoted to empty running of trains. There has been no acknowledgement that these amendments may have had the effect of unbalancing the original ranking in which Maynooth West was marginally privileged over three other possible locations.

Irish Rail has not responded to the Value for Money aspect of their chosen site and has retained its original MCA rankings despite fundamental alterations in the cost implications of the necessitated changes.

W. J. Smyth, October 2023

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