

Dart + West - An Board Pleanála Observation (case reference 314232)

Blakestown Residents

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Kilmacredock
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Co Kildare
W23V9K0

28th October 2022

We the residents of Kilmacredock and Barrogstown (referred to as Blakestown Residents for the purposes of the Dart + West Project) welcome the Dart + West project, extending the Dart service to Maynooth and look forward to availing of the service once it goes live.

In addition to the Dart West Community Coalition observation, we want to include the following observations.

The project officials never informed the residents and general users of the Blakestown level crossing of the Dart + West project, meaning public consultation no. 1 was over before we heard of the impending project. Indeed it was only by a stroke of good fortune that someone spotted the fact that consultation no 2 was to commence. It is our understanding that any proposed alterations to public access ways are to be notified to the public – despite our communications to the Dart + West project team there is still no notice (within the vicinity of the site) of their intention to close Blakestown Level crossing. It must be stated that the level of communication between Irish Rail and the public in relation to this project is very unsatisfactory.

Reading through the project teams report it is very clear that Blakestown (referred to many times as rural in nature and therefore not analysed in the same way as level crossings closer to Dublin). We would have thought that all citizens would be treated equally but this appears not to be the case.

We acknowledge that the Blakestown crossing does not experience the same volume of use as other crossing but the impact of closing the crossing would have a similar impact to those using the other crossings.

Irish Rail conducted a traffic survey in 2018 almost 5 years ago – this is totally out of date. Many new developments have since been opened in the greater Leixlip area and while some of the land to the south of the rail line has been designated commercial industrial, this can change, especially due the huge demand for housing and in any event only relates to a small area of land west of Leixlip – there are many acres of land South of the rail line, which we're sure will be designated residential in due course (demand for housing, next in line to existing developments and adjacent to the rail corridor).

The area around Blakestown level crossing doubles up as a leisure amenity as it is strategically positioned between the towns of Maynooth, Leixlip and Celbridge and is nicely positioned on the Royal Canal way.

In more recent years this crossing has seen a huge increase in use by cyclists and walkers as well as an access/egress point for people moving into the area, who are employed in Intel. If the Covid 19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is the importance of having access to appropriate leisure space – closing this crossing will have an adverse impact in this regard.

We strongly object to the closing of the current permanent way at Blakestown. This Lane (L81204) has served the community of Kilmacredock, Barrogstown and the surrounding area for generations and if closed will cause untold disruption, inconvenience, cost and may also lead to potential Health and Safety issues (cul de sac – antisocial behaviour, dumping etc). This is the only level crossing where no alternative access/egress is being offered – this is wrong and in essence appears to be a total disregard for the users of this crossing.

Points of Interest:

- ✓ The original access to Kilmacredock was via Blakestown (The leg linking Kilmacredock to Leixlip via Green Lane only emerged many years later).
- ✓ Older members of the community walked to and from school in Leixlip via Blakestown level crossing
- ✓ The community for many years have been boarding the bus at Blakestown to access destinations west to Maynooth and east to Dublin.
- ✓ This crossing is used to access work, retail, sports facilities and leisure activity North of the crossing.
- ✓ The farming community brought their milk to Blakestown for collection by Dublin Dairies in the late 50s and early 60s. While this is no longer the case, farmers are still using the crossing to access lands, which they farm on both sides of the crossing.

Should this crossing be permanently closed the community will be cut off from using Public Transport. For example to board a bus will add approximately 1.8km to our journey - the nearest bus stop is 2.8km away (as measured by an Irish Rail Official) this is unacceptable. The very reason the DART+ project is being implemented is to encourage the use of public transport, yet it is prohibiting a community from using the public bus service and adding considerable costs with the use of private cars and taxis. To use the train would only be viable by taking your car or bicycle to the station carpark in Leixlip.

Anyone who cycles or walks know only too well the benefit of these activities away from the dangers of busy roads (highlighted in discussions on the objective of the NDPr to develop safe walking and cycling routes). Access at Blakestown is an excellent example of this, as it acts as the nucleus for numerous quiet routes for walkers and cyclists.

Closing the crossing on a permanent basis is taking away a natural amenity that has served the wider communities of Kilmacredock, Barrogstown and Leixlip for over 150 years and it is totally unacceptable to these communities. It's not right that access to public transport (bus), access to the Royal Canal Greenway and access to the road infrastructure north of the crossing is denied.

There is also precedence in retaining level crossings on the Dart Line (i.e. Merriam Road and Lansdown Road). These are very busy areas and current frequency of trains are much greater than that anticipated on the Maynooth line and to the best of our knowledge (since the inception of Dart in 1984) they have worked very well and without serious incident.

For all of the above reasons we are imploring Irish Rail to retain the level crossing in its current state or provide us with an agreed suitable alternative.

Please note the residents in this area were not made aware of the initial consultation process and therefore were unable to make any submissions. It's important that this is taken into consideration as one may infer from the report, following consultation number 1 that there was no real opposition to the proposed closure (there couldn't be as we weren't aware of it).

Yours Sincerely

Padraic and Carmel Lennon

On behalf of Blakestown Residents