

15 Riverwood Court,
Carpenterstown,
Dublin 15,
D15KYC1.
27th Oct 2022

An Bord Pleanála,
64 Marlborough St,
Rotunda,
Dublin 1.
D01V902.

DART + West Railway Order Application-Public Consultation

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make the following submission in relation to the above Railway Order Application. I would like to specifically address the proposals contained within Iarnród Éireann's Railway Order Application to an Bord Pleanála as they relate to the closure of the three level crossings at Coolmine, Porterstown Road and Clonsilla. With the exception of the Dr. Troy over-bridge, the above three level crossings provide the only means of crossing North/South-South/North along the railway line from the Castleknock to Blanchardstown Road, to what will be a new over-bridge to be built at Barberstown. The proposals to compensate for these closures by way of infrastructural improvements at the Park Lodge/Castleknock Road intersection at one end, and the Dr. Troy Bridge/ Diswellstown Road intersection at the other, are hopelessly inadequate. Not only local residents, but also local Public Representatives have expressed deep reservations as to the adequacy of these proposals.

The new proposals in respect of both of these locations can reasonably be viewed as amounting to no more than tinkering with the intersections by way of adding limited so called "stacking lanes". This will merely allow for the queueing of an unspecified number of vehicles that would still have to negotiate the intersections only to immediately confront the restriction of one lane each way over-bridges. In the case of the Park Lodge Intersection traffic heading north bound for Blanchardstown Village and beyond would have to cross the one lane each way Castleknock railway over-bridge, whilst traffic heading southbound for Castleknock Village would have to cross the one lane each way M50 over-bridge. In the case of the Dr. Troy Bridge/ Diswellstown Road intersection the same one lane each way restriction would apply. Both of these intersections are already extremely congested particularly so in the case of the Dr. Troy Bridge which is already at or near capacity with long delays at peak times. I am at a complete loss in trying to understand how the proposed so called up-grading of these intersections will improve or speed traffic flow so as to mitigate the impact of the proposed Level-Crossing closures.

The closing of the three level crossings on the Coolmine to the Clonsilla stretch of line will result in the imposition of draconian restrictions in terms of South/North and North/South accessibility, and result in serious delays as a consequence of drivers having to take a long circuitous route through built up residential areas. The majority of traffic movement within the catchment area (bounded to the south by the River Liffey from Chapelizod to Lucan and to the north by the Royal Canal and Maynooth rail line) is North/South and South/North. The vast majority of local services and amenities are located to the northern side of the railway line, for example but not limited to: - Clonsilla Village, The Blanchardstown Shopping Centre, the wider Blanchardstown area, Blanchardstown T.U., Banks, Shops, Credit Unions, Garda Station, Fire Station, Fingal County Council Office, Public Library, Theatre, Cinema, Recycling Centre, Social Welfare and Job Centre, Funeral Homes, Recreation and Play Centres, Industrial Estates, Business Parks, Major Employment Centres, National Aquatic Centre, Sports Ireland Campus, Local Supermarkets, Post Offices, Bars and Restaurants.

Assertions that the proposed works at the Dr. Troy Bridge / Diswellstown Road and the Park Lodge / Castleknock Road would actually enhance access within the locality are disingenuous, patronising in the extreme, and more characteristic of an Orwellian dystopia inhabited by the elements within Iarnród Éireann, responsible for such ludicrous and vacuous assertions. Whatever marginal case might be made in this regard in terms of traffic flow East West/ West East, the effect of the proposed three level crossings closures would be to permanently rend asunder the communities along an arbitrary line, without any regard to their naturally evolved, long settled, and intrinsic cohesiveness, developed over decades or in some cases a century or more. This would have the effect of creating an iron curtain straight through the heart of the communities along this stretch of rail line.

In addition to the above the Kellystown Strategic Housing Development comprising upwards of 1500 residential units, a new graveyard, playing pitches, and commercial development, will result in some 2000 plus additional vehicles, together with considerable commercial and service vehicle traffic, virtually all of which must come through the Dr. Troy Bridge / Diswellstown intersection. To suggest as Iarnród Éireann do, that this traffic would traverse the canal and railway line via the proposed Barberstown over-bridge is fanciful and self-serving. A further consideration is the significant additional traffic resulting from what is already well on its way to becoming a 2000 student school campus, directly adjacent to this intersection.

The widening of the Dr. Troy Bridge to allow for two lanes in each direction would provide a partial solution or would at least help to alleviate the problem and assist in the dispersal of the traffic onwards towards the M3 and M50 motorways, and therefore must be worthy of consideration. In addition to this, alternative possibilities such as a proposal to examine the option of building an over-bridge within the Kellystown SHD has been surreptitiously dropped by Fingal County Council.

Proposals for Coolmine also include the construction of a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists. I find it impossible to conceptualise the imposition of an ugly, brutal, unsafe, environmentally damaging, and intrusive concrete/steel monstrosity, at say Sydney Parade Station. I understand the dimensions of such would be of the order of 300 metres long, taking upwards of 5 minutes to transverse, 9 metres high and 5 metres wide. Such an imposition would not be acceptable at Sydney Parade, nor should it be acceptable at Coolmine/ Porterstown or Clonsilla crossings or elsewhere along the Maynooth line.

The building of the proposed pedestrian / cycle lane over-bridges, incorporating the cul-de-sacing of both sides of the level crossings will result in the creation of imposing and brutal concrete realms, stood back from what were previously busy pedestrian and vehicular (right of way) roadways, and which will give rise to an increased risk of crime and anti-social behaviour. This will also lead to a sense of isolation, trepidation, and insecurity for people crossing these over-bridges, perhaps alone in the dark, which in winter time can be from as early as 4.00pm onwards. In practical terms this would amount to the effective marooning of pedestrians, cyclists, and disabled, on either side of the railway, outside of daylight hours. Public safety seems not to matter, since we continue to build these unsafe, isolated underpasses, bridges, tunnels and associated concrete realms as part of our urban landscape, in what these days passes for progress. Lighting these kind of locations like the proverbial "Blackpool Illuminations" doesn't compensate for the fact that they are intrinsically unsafe.

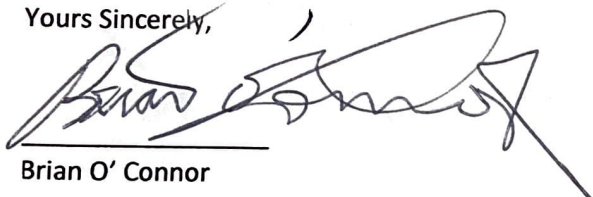
Whereas support for the upgrade of the Maynooth line is universal, no local communities are in favour of closing the level crossings - "None". It seems that there is no limit to the level of disruption, traffic chaos, inconvenience, dislocation, environmental destruction, and upset, to people's lives, that Iarnród Éireann is prepared to countenance in the pursuit of its lazy and ideologically driven crusade to close these level crossings. It has simply closed its mind to the possibility of any other solution and has sought instead to make its case by simply ignoring or understating the many and varied negative impacts on the local communities.

For the reasons outlined above I believe that the most efficacious course of action is to keep these rail crossings open. I further content that this would be possible though the up-grading of the signalling systems on the rail line, to the level and standard of modern automated systems operating successfully in the U.K., Continental Europe, The U.S and the wider developed world.

The two Iarnród Éireann non statutory consultations were hugely instructive, if only in the manner in which they clearly demonstrated that Iarnród Éireann had no interest in engaging in a meaningful and authentic process of consultation and that they had no objective other than the closure of these level crossings, no matter what the consequence and damage wrought upon the local communities.

Finally , I would like to apply to attend the Oral Hearing, which I understand will be held at some stage following the Public Consultation closing date .

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian O'Connor', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Brian O' Connor