

## **Observations on Dart+ West Draft Railway Order**

### **Introduction**

I welcome the extension of Dart services to Maynooth. However, Irish Rail's proposed closure of every level crossing along the Maynooth line is not the correct response to a perceived problem that is not supported by the available evidence.

Dart West is a great project, which will see an increase in train frequency for West Dublin. Part of the project, however, involves closing level crossings and constructing "alternative structures" at Ashtown, Coolmine, Porterstown and Clonsilla. These alternative structures mean an underpass and a pedestrian/cycle bridge for Ashtown and a pedestrian/cycle bridge at Coolmine, Porterstown and Clonsilla.

### **Impacts**

#### **Safety**

For Coolmine, the pedestrian/cycle bridge is visually unattractive and located right beside the Royal Canal, a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). The proposed pedestrian/cycle bridge is extremely long and, as no lifts are planned for Coolmine Station, it will be the only way that the elderly, mobility impaired and anyone with a buggy will be able to cross over the rail line, should the level crossings close.

There is also the huge potential for anti-social behaviour. Walking home from the train station on a dark winter's evening will be a lonely journey, in what will become a quiet cul de sac leading to a laneway.

Irish Rail and Fingal County council have not put enough thought into the safety implications for locals with these changes. There is already a problem with dumping in the laneway and this is likely to increase.

#### **Local Diversity**

Inserting these hideous large bridges and walkways through the Royal Canal will lead to detrimental damage to the biodiversity of the canal area.

There is a lot of wildlife in this unspoilt stretch of canal and building enormous bridges in the vicinity together with keeping them lit 24 hours a day will almost certainly have an impact on the wildlife.

#### **Emergency Services**

The Coolmine/Carpenterstown Road is the primary access route for emergency services from Blanchardstown Fire Brigade on Snugborough Road and estates in Carpenterstown and Laurel Lodge.

However, the permanent closure of the level crossing at Coolmine to road traffic will more than double the time it takes to access Carpenterstown at off peak times.

The potential impact of increased response times to medical and other emergencies is both significant and avoidable if appropriate measures are adopted to improve waiting times and safety measures at Coolmine Level Crossing.

### **Traffic Congestion**

The wider Dublin 15/Dublin West constituency has a population of over 120,000 people.

Few people have the option of travelling by public transport around Dublin 15. Most links in the area move passengers west to east along rail or bus corridors. Indeed, Coolmine and Clonsilla stations, which are located in south Dublin 15 only serve passengers along the line and into Dublin City and Maynooth.

By NTA's estimates, some 1,000 road users cross Coolmine level crossing (northsouth/south north) daily by car to access local services or work at peak times. If they did not need to use the level crossing they would choose other routes or means to travel other than tolerate long delays at the level crossing. These road-users will be forced to move on to the already congested bridges at Diswellstown and Castleknock and through housing estates in Glenville, Delwood (at which a primary school is located) and Roselawn, or along a very busy Clonsilla road to access Castleknock, Coolmine as well as north Blanchardstown (including Ballycoolin and Blanchardstown Shopping Centre).

### **Summary**

I would ask An Bord Pleanála to seek the amendment of the draft Railway Order to address the concerns set out below by requesting that Irish Rail undertake the following measures.

1. Undertake a capacity assessment on the Maynooth line after the electrification of the line before a final decision on the future of the level crossing at Coolmine.
2. Improve the signalling to reduce waiting times at Coolmine level crossing.
3. In conjunction with Fingal County Council, introduce appropriate safety measures along Coolmine and Carpenterstown Road and the approach to the level crossing.

The alternative is to increase emergency-service response times to Castleknock, increase road congestion and air pollution, have a significant impact on local biodiversity and wildlife and to potentially deny thousands of local residents with mobility issues road access to local amenities.

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