

PRESS Statement 12th April 2021:

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown CoCo set to abandon the Sutton to Sandycove Promenade and Cycleway in the Draft Development Plan 2022-2028

The DLRCC Draft Development Plan 2022-2028 makes no reference to the S2S, the Sutton-to-Sandycove promenade and cycleway, www.S2S.ie, anywhere in the policies that set out the objectives for the period of the Plan. The S2S has been included in all three Development Plans adopted by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council since 2004 until now. Objectives in previous Plans that proposed the S2S on the seafront have been replaced in the new Plan by references to the East Coast Trail, a plan for a cycleway (without a walkway) not on the seafront but inland, mostly on existing roads. "Time and tide" now raises an urgent need for Irish Rail to implement coastal protection of the railway between Merrion Gates and Dun Laoghaire. To quote Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan, TD on 29/12/2020: *The protection of that rail line is not a small engineering issue and not an easy one to resolve.* Combining essential repairs to the sea defences with a seafront promenade is an obvious solution.

The proposal for the S2S in South Dublin Bay, on Plans since 2004, was a combined walkway and cycleway on the seafront between Merrion Gates and Sandycove. It would provide a safe, off-road, level, noise and pollution-free public amenity with no traffic junctions, pedestrian crossings or vehicle entrances and exits. It provides the possibility of cycling or walking from Dún Laoghaire to Dublin city centre, without having to interact with motorised vehicles other than in a couple of places. The S2S would provide uninterrupted views across Dublin Bay and enable people to enjoy the amenity without having to go onto Sandymount strand at high tide and would benefit the protection of the sensitive habitat. It was envisaged as primarily a leisure/health facility with obvious uses as a traffic-free route for tourists, families, children, disabled, and less experienced cyclists, as well as commuter cyclists. The S2S has always been seen as completely different to the equally important parallel Commuter Cycleway planned to go inland on existing roads between Dun Laoghaire and the City Centre which is, for the most part, the cycle route that has been established under the emergency Covid mobility measures.

The policy outlined in the **Draft 2022-2028 Development Plan** is framed to commit the Council to an inland cycle route only, making no mention of a walkway as proposed in the S2S:

5.5.4 Policy Objective T13: Coastal Cycling Infrastructure Objective

It is a Policy Objective of the Council to promote the development of Dublin Bay Trail from the boundary with Dublin City to Wicklow County as a component part of the National East Coast Trail Cycle Route.

The Policy is the essential statement that gives the Council authority and the responsibility to act during the period of the development plan.

Background

The value of the seafront in South Dublin Bay has always been recognised by the local community and Councillors who campaigned tirelessly in the 1980s and 1990s to get the Council to do something to improve access to South Dublin Bay, without success. That changed somewhat in 1999 with the inclusion in the Dún Laoghaire Coastal Plan of a proposal for a walkway along the seafront from Sandycove to the County boundary at Booterstown. In 2001, this proposal was expanded to include a cycleway and extended around the Bay to Sutton and became known as **the Sutton-to-Sandycove Promenade and Cycleway (S2S)**. It was subsequently adopted by Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council and included as an objective and it remains in the development plans of those authorities both of whom have also acted upon the idea.

Both the S2S on the seafront and the commuter cycleway on existing roads are justified. The distinction between the two was recognised and clearly articulated in the policies of the DLRCC 2004-2010 Development Plan as follows:

Policy T7: Coastal Walkway/Cycleway 11.2.3

It is Council policy to support the development of a coastal walkway/cycleway from the County boundary at Booterstown to Sandycove.

Table 11.1 Cycle Route Network, Booterstown to Dalkey via Rock Road, Blackrock Park, Idrone Terrace, Newtown Avenue, Seapoint Avenue, Seafront, Queens Road, The Metals, Barnhill Road to Castle Street.

The later 2010-2016 Development Plan strengthened the commitment to the S2S on the seafront by including the following Policy in respect of a combined walkway and cycleway:

Policy T12: Walking and Cycling

The Council, in co-operation with the relevant agencies, will promote the development of the Sutton to Sandycove Cycle-track Scheme (S2S) as highlighted in 'Smarter Travel' and in the 'National Cycle Policy Framework', subject to the appropriate environmental assessments including any assessment required under the Habitats Directive in co-operation with the relevant agencies. Subject to compliance with environmental regulations, and statutory approvals the S2S would be progressed during the life of this Plan as it is recognised as a significant development of Dublin Bay with potential recreational and tourism benefits as well as providing a traffic free cycleway for both recreation and commuter cyclists. It is recognised as a significant opportunity to promote cycling to schools, having regard to the large numbers of children and students attending schools in close proximity to the route.

Since 2012 there has been a gradual blurring on the distinction between a combined walkway/cycleway on the seafront and a commuter cycleway inland on the existing roads. This has now morphed into a narrative that they are promoted as one and the same thing, which is clearly not the case.

Coastal Protection

An opportunity now arises with the Government's recognition of the urgent need to proceed with the coastal protection of the railway in response to rising sea levels and increasing intensity and frequency of storms that threaten this essential element of our public transport infrastructure. That project, whatever its form, must be on the seafront. The construction of a new sea wall to protect the railway could readily incorporate the S2S and benefit the railway, the community and the environment.

Quoting from The Irish Times 29/12/2020: *The east and southeast coast from Dún Laoghaire down to beyond Bray and Greystones are at most immediate risk from rising sea levels, Minister for Climate and Transport [Eamon Ryan](#) has warned. He said significant intervention will be required to protect the railway line from Dublin to Rosslare.*

Much has been made of the fact that South Dublin Bay has been designated under EU Directives as a Habitat for Seabirds and that this is a significant obstacle to putting a walkway/cycleway along its edge. This oft repeated argument ignores the simple fact that there are examples of similar walkways and cycleways all across Europe that have been accepted as compliant with the Directives. Even closer to home, both Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council have obtained approval from An Bord Pleanála to put combined walkways in similarly designated habitats. Furthermore, there are many environmentalists that hold the view that such a facility would be a benefit to the Habitat by providing access that would allow citizens to enjoy the proximity to the water without having to walk on the sand or disturb the birds at high tide.

We call on:

(1) DL RCC to reinstate the commitment to a combined walkway/cycleway on the seafront and

(2) Citizens to write to their TDs and Councillors asking for this to happen.

The email addresses of your politicians are here:

<http://ecouncil.dlrcoco.ie:9071/mgMemberIndexMP.aspx?bcr=1>

<http://ecouncil.dlrcoco.ie:9071/mgMemberIndex.aspx?VW=TABLE&PIC=1&FN=>

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