

**Meeting of the Travel and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee
to be held on Tuesday the 20th April, 2021**

Question submitted by Ms. Ailish Drake

The impact of Covid-19 is being strongly felt by city residents, performers, traders and hospitality services. Recent funding announcements by Failte Ireland and The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media could have a significant positive impact on the city and towns across the county in the short and long term. In order to benefit from these schemes this summer Local Authorities must prioritise Covid Mobility Plans. Last week Cork announced that they will permanently pedestrianise 17 streets for outdoor dining.

In order to encourage people to use outdoor space in urban areas, changes to traffic and movement of vehicles will be required. Pedestrian safety, noise pollution, air pollution all have a significant negative impact on outdoor spaces.

What plans, if any, are in progress for Limerick City Centre and county town centres for covid mobility, walking and cycling and pedestrianisation of streets for outdoor dining, performance and urban animation? How are LCCC engaging with business owners, stakeholders in the arts and culture sector and the public on plans at pre-draft stage, so that barriers to delivery are identified and resolved prior to plans being announced? Has a committee of community, arts, cultural, active travel and business representatives been set up to facilitate open discussion and if so, are representatives of Limerick PPN included.

Reply:

It is acknowledged that the impact of COVID-19 is being felt strongly by all. This impact can be reduced to some extent by the following grants and supports for business, for which further details will be circulated as they are finalised;

1. Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme, which will aid businesses which sell food to buy tables, chairs, windbreaks, heaters, etc for outdoor serving.
2. Tables and Chairs Licence and footpath buildout. This will facilitate footpath widening, where appropriate, to facilitate outdoor dining, while at same time maintaining safe pedestrian movement.
3. Street Event Licensing which will facilitate street closures for on street events such as community festivals, street parties and entertainment.

4. Outdoor PublicSpace Scheme 2021 which will allow local authorities to adapt, equip or otherwise improve publicspaces for cultural and event activities.
5. The Failte Ireland Urban Animation Investment Scheme which will promote public realm artistic features in central city locations for the successful local authorities following submissions for shortlisting.
6. The Failte Ireland Weatherproofing and outdoor dining infrastructure scheme to support local authorities to upgrade and enhance existing pedestrianised/part pedestrianised streets and implement weather proof solutions which will facilitate year-round outdoor dining.

Limerick City and County Council will coordinate, manage and implement all of the above schemes which will have a positive impact in the short and long term with respect to the re-opening of the Limerick economy. Pedestrianisation of streets is covered under scheme 3 above and the Council will consider applications for street closures for successful requests from applicants. Clearly pedestrianisation will have effects on traffic movement but safety of all road users will be to the fore in all instances. Engagement with relevant stakeholders will be of prime importance for the successful rollout of the schemes and the Council will ensure that appropriate consultation will take place in relation to developing a successful re-opening of Limerick.

In addition to the measures outlined above, Limerick City and County Council are proceeding with approximately 6.5km of two-way cycleway segregation/2km of one-way cycleway to make the cycling experience safer. This segregation is located at Condell Road, Plassey Park Road, Groody Road and Dooradoyle Road. It is intended that these works will commence shortly. Active travel measures and improved public space is a fundamental part of the O'Connell St Improvement Works and the Greenway at Castletroy which are now under construction. In addition to these measures, multiple Active Travel schemes are at various stages of design for improved pedestrian and cycle facilities throughout the metropolitan area. Many of these will reach construction later this current year with a very intensive 5-year rollout plan thereafter. In this regard, it is intended that the following active travel schemes will go to public consultation in May/June 2021:

- Mill Road;
- Raheen to Quinn's Cross;
- Shannon Bridge to Clare Street;
- South Circular Road;
- Parnell Street to Clare Street; and
- LIT to the City Centre


Brian Kennedy
Director of Service
Physical Development Directorate

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The Three Bridges Walking Route has provided residents with much needed outdoor space during lockdown. As we move toward summer this beautiful route will become even more popular. Improvements to include the addition of the Shannon Bridge cycle lane last year have been very successful. However, there are still improvements that can be made, such as widening the route at Howleys Quay which proved a popular addition last summer.

The Limerick Pedestrian Network carried out a walkability audit of the route last summer and submitted it to the Director of Physical Development in July 2020. Has the report been reviewed and if so, are their plans proposed to further enhance the route?

Reply:

The Three Bridges Walking Route is indeed a fabulous amenity in the heart of Limerick. The temporary cycle facility on Shannon Bridge has proved very successful and the Council hope to shortly commence consultation on making a cycle facility a long-term inclusion on the bridge. It is also hoped to widen the upstream footpath to allow more space for the many pedestrians using this route, including those doing the Three Bridges walk. Design works on the improvements to Active Travel measures along the Quays linking to Arthur's Quay are also ongoing at the moment and it is hoped to bring these proposals to consultation later this year.

Limerick City and County Council acknowledge the very good work done by the Limerick Pedestrian Network in producing an audit of the Three Bridges Route. The recommendations of this audit form a very useful tool to consider as the various Active Travel Schemes effecting this city centre route develop. Indeed, the imminent consultation for Shannon Bridge, followed by the South Quays, will take into account this audit. A further scheme, looking at Active Travel Crossing points for the Abbey River will also consider some of issues raised in the audit, as will all other developing schemes in the area.

It is important to note that any improvements made must be consistent with a considered investment plan for Active Travel in the city centre. Limerick City and County Council are actively developing a very intensive 5-year roll-out plan, consistent with the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS). All schemes and improvements must be approved by the NTA who are fully funding sustainable travel improvements. A planned considered approach, with appropriate consultation, for all works is necessary to ensure long term viability of investment in the city centre. In this context, the recommendations of the Limerick Pedestrian Network audit is a valuable toolkit for our designers who will give due consideration to the audit proposals in developing the emerging schemes.


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