To whom it may concern,

I urge the department to give all due consideration to the role cycling can play across all of the department’s areas: Transport, tourism and sport.

As a participant sport, cycling is far more likely than competitive team sports to become a lifelong pursuit, and thereby can be most beneficial to the health and well-being of the citizenry.

As a commuting option, we have seen growth in recent years but unfortunately we have also seen a huge fall-off in commuting by bicycle for school children. In most secondary schools now more students drive themselves to school than cycle.

As a tourist attraction we have some of the most beautiful and easily accessed roads and routes for cycling in Europe, although road conditions are rarely up to European standards. Projects like the Dublin-Galway cycle way, the Dungarvan Greenway etc should be developed and expanded around the country.

While there is no doubt that some great strides have been made in the uptake of recreational and commuting cycling, there are many factors that restrict cycling in Ireland.

Among these are:

Poorly designed, implemented and maintained cycling infrastructure, (cycle lanes are often more dangerous to use than main traffic lanes): please endeavour to have engineers knowledgeable of cyclists’ needs and concerns involved in the planning and construction of cycling infrastructure.

Driver behaviour: speeding, mobile phone usage, reckless overtaking and generally aggressive behaviour towards cyclists is very common. Awareness campaigns should continue (some excellent tv ads have been broadcast recently). Please support the introduction of a law requiring a minimum of 1.5m clearance when overtaking slower moving road users including pedestrians and cyclists. More stringent enforcement of penalties for obstructing cycling infrastructure (parking in cycling lanes for example) and other offences that pose increased risk to cyclists would be welcome. Poor and/or aggressive driver behaviour is the reason most often cited by non-cyclists for a) not cycling themselves and b) for not permitting their children to cycle on our roads.

Road conditions: the generally poor condition of many parts of our secondary and tertiary road network would appear to be a hangover of the economic crisis. There were, at the outset of the crisis two particularly extreme winters and while improvements have been seen in recent years, many secondary roads are still in very poor repair. Many of these roads are of incredible scenic
beauty and particularly attractive options for cyclists and for cyclo-tourists. However poor road surfaces are a major disincentive to their use as the enjoyment to be had in exploring our countryside is diminished and of course, such road surfaces are dangerous for cyclists. The upgrading of our secondary road network must be a big priority. For foreigners visiting our shores and travelling on such roads whether by car or on bicycles, these poor roads create a very poor image of Ireland as a backward under-developed country rather than the modern vibrant image we should seek to portray and embrace.

I urge your department to continue to support the roll-out of well-designed and implemented cycling specific infrastructure, to maintain or perhaps even enhance the tax benefits available on the cycle to work scheme, and to put the needs of cycling and cyclists at the centre of planning, legislative and developmental decision-making.

With kind regards
Paul Glynn