



Climate Action Unit,  
Áras an Chontae,  
Prospect Hill,  
Galway,  
H91 H6KX

Date: 11-12-23

**Re:** Galway County Council's Draft Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

To Whom it Concerns,

Green-Schools Travel welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the draft Local Authority Climate Action Plan.

### **Overview**

Green-Schools is a student-led behaviour change programme delivered in over 3,500 schools nationwide. The Green-Schools Programme is a thematic programme where schools focus on a specific theme for a minimum of two years. Themes include waste reduction, energy conservation, water conservation, transport and biodiversity. Each of the Green-Schools themes promote positive environmental actions which are directly linked to climate action. Green-Schools works closely with Environmental Awareness Officers within Local Authorities particularly for waste, water, energy and biodiversity themes. Further information on the programme is available from [www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org).

In 2023, Green-Schools was selected as a [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) Champion](#) by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) as a *'good practice example of how an organisation or group can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and integrate the SDGs into their work activities'*. SDG 13: Climate Action is a focus goal across all Green-Schools themes but is particularly relevant for transport themes in the programme.

At present, 202 mainstream schools are registered with the Green-Schools Programme in Co. Galway. This accounts for 86.7% of all primary, post-primary and special schools in Co. Galway. The programme also works with five non-mainstream education centres (adult education/creche/playschool) in the county. Green-Schools acknowledges its inclusion in Goal 4 – Communities and Partnership through Action CP 1.12 *'Support the Green-Schools initiative and enable an increase in the number of schools actively participating'* and would like to highlight our work in the area of sustainable travel.

This submission relates specifically to the Green-Schools Travel theme which focuses on the promotion of sustainable transport. This theme is funded by the Department of Transport and supported by the National Transport Authority. Green-Schools Travel is a behaviour change programme which aims to promote active modes such as walking, cycling, public bus transport and park & stride for schools. For this school year 2023-2024, 31 mainstream schools in Co. Galway are working on a travel theme with a dedicated travel officer.

### About the Green-Schools Travel theme

The Climate Action Plan asks the public to consider their own choices and to choose the sustainable mobility option first. This is a key function of the Green-Schools travel theme where we invite students to consider travel choices and opportunity in their school in addition to learning about climate change. Actions specific to this theme and relevant to Climate Action include;

- Promotion of walking/cycling/scooting/bus transport through national call to action events and individual school events
- Clean Air Campaigns such as no-idling outside schools.
- Climate Change workshops to raise awareness about carbon emissions and transport
- Climate Action Week
- Cycle Bus Schemes
- Walkability/Cycleability audits
- Speed Week/Road safety
- Green-Schools Travel also supports schools in the delivery of cycle right training in schools and provides fully funded **cycle and scooter parking** for participating schools.
- Get in Gear cycling courses for parents in participating schools

Green-Schools Travel would like to highlight that unlike other themes, schools engaging in Travel and Global Citizenship Travel themes are allocated a dedicated Green-Schools Travel Officer for a two-year period. In the Co. Galway region, three Green-Schools Travel Officers work directly with school communities to inform, motivate and support school communities to promote sustainable transport and develop partnerships. Each of these actions contribute to Strategic Goal 4 : Mobilise Climate Action in Local Communities cited in 'Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030. Green-Schools would welcome the opportunity to outline our work on the transport theme in detail to the GCC climate action office in the near future.

Green-Schools Travel would like to note the following relative to the 2024-2029 Galway County Council Climate Action Plan:

- Green-Schools Travel is a behaviour change programme that works to promote sustainable transport for school journeys across the country. The programme has been communicating the co-benefits of sustainable mobility to school communities since 2008 and can provide valuable insights relative to sustainable transport in schools from across the county. This links to Action TR 1.2.
- Climate Change workshops and initiatives are a key part of the travel theme (SDG 13: Climate Action is a focus goal for travel themes. This links to Action GL 4.1 cited in the GCC Plan. Green-Schools would welcome the opportunity to outline our work to the climate action team and support in any way that we can.
- Green-Schools Travel works with participating schools to complete walkability/cycleability audits with their dedicated travel officer. GST Audits invite the school community to investigate barriers to sustainable travel and identify solutions to promote walking/cycling. Recommendations generated from this activity stimulate action within the school community (no-idling campaigns, road safety campaigns) and can sometimes include simple road maintenance requests to Local Authorities. Opportunities for permeability to support sustainable travel are often part of the audit discussion. Green-Schools Travel would like to note that schools working on the theme can provide valuable insights to barriers to

sustainable travel at a local level. This work links to Action TR 1.4 *'Work with communities to identify potential active travel, greenway and public transport projects and support modal shift'* and supports Action TR 1.6 to *'Design and deliver new and improved road crossings, cycle lanes and walkways giving priority to disabled users, pedestrians and cyclists'* within the GCC LA CAP. In addition, walkability audits conducted by school communities as part of the theme can highlight road maintenance issues in the vicinity of schools. This links to Action T.R. 1.7 which is to *'ensure adequate road maintenance for active travel users'*. Green-Schools Travel has linked with the Active Travel office regarding audits but would like to make the Climate Action team aware of our work with school communities in Co. Galway.

**Recommendation:** Continue to seek to implement infrastructure requests from Walkability Audits and Cycleability audits carried out by Green-Schools and others.

- Safe Routes to School is coordinated by An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit, alongside Green-Schools, and works with a specific list of schools for each local authority.

**Recommendation:** In order to increase the reach of the climate action plan in your local authority, it would be important to also include Green-Schools Travel engagement into Action TR 1.8 of the plan.

- Every opportunity to reduce carbon emissions needs to be examined. No-idling is a key initiative for the Green-Schools Travel programme which is actively promoted nationwide as part of school travel plans and Clean Air Week. The promotion of no-idling also aligns with the National Clean Air Strategy which states that *'more attention needs to be given to the development of localised measures which help improve air quality in urban areas that have suffered from increased congestion and localised transport related emissions'*. These include reference to *'measures to reduce emissions from idling vehicles'*. According to the SEAI 0.2-3L of fuel is wasted per hour of idling. It is estimated that for each litre of fuel consumed 2.3-2.4kg of carbon dioxide is emitted.

**Recommendation:** Green-Schools Travel is in a position to support the development of no-idling campaigns in the public realm and would welcome an opportunity to collaborate with Galway County Council for no-idling campaigns for schools.

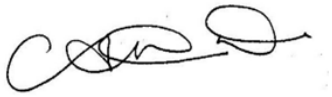
- Dispersed rural settlement patterns sees car ownership and individual trips/journeys dominate transport trends in the county. Green-Schools Travel champions 'Park & Stride' (driving some of the way and walking the rest) initiatives across our network as a means to reduce traffic congestion and emissions outside schools. In urban areas where there is a greater concentration of schools, Green-Schools Travel has worked with several local authorities including Galway County Council to develop urban Park & Stride initiatives, e.g. Oranmore Park'n'Stride.

**Recommendation:** Green-Schools Travel would welcome further opportunities to roll out additional Park 'n' Stride schemes in collaboration with Galway County Council.

Green-Schools Travel welcomes the development of the Galway Local Authority Climate Action Plans and commends Galway Council on its work to bring it to fruition.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information,

Regards



Ciara Norton

**Green-Schools Travel, Programme Manager**

An Taisce EEU (Environmental Education Unit),

**T:** +353 (0)87 - 0533587

**E:** [cnorton@eeu.antaisce.org](mailto:cnorton@eeu.antaisce.org)

**W:** [www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org)