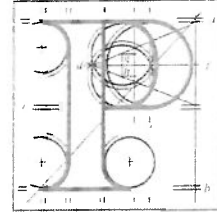


Our Case Number: ABP-320164-24

Planning Authority Reference Number:



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Kevin Enright
Ivy Lodge
Coolfore
Monasterboice
Co. Louth
A92 T265

Date: 06 November 2024

Re: DART + Coastal North Railway Order 2024 - Northern Line between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda including the Howth Branch
Dublin City Centre and Drogheda, located in counties Dublin, Meath and Louth

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent letter in relation to the above mentioned case. The contents of your letter have been noted. Please accept this letter as a receipt for the fee of €50 that you have paid.

More detailed information in relation to strategic infrastructure development can be viewed on the Board's website: www.pleanala.ie.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Board at laps@pleanala.ie

Please quote the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,



Aisling Reilly
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737131

RA03

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23 October 2024

**Submission to An Bord Pleanála
NA29N.320164
DART + Coastal North Railway Order 2024 - Northern Line between Dublin City Centre and
Drogheda including the Howth Branch**

While very welcome and long over-due, the DART+ Coastal North proposal in its current form has two negative consequences: Firstly, the planned increase in the number of suburban DART services will significantly slow up Intercity trains from Belfast/Dundalk/Drogheda such as the Enterprise. This service currently takes approximately 23 minutes to travel from Malahide to Connolly and typically takes at least 2 hours 15 from Belfast. This was the same journey time when introduced in 1947 and hauled by steam. Irish Rail have acknowledged that DART+ will negatively affect Enterprise services during peak hours but have not quantified these. Journey times are likely to increase to 2 hours 30 minutes and probably much more. This contradicts the current Dept of Transport aspiration to create “higher speed” Intercity rail services. 25 years on from the Good Friday Agreement, it is baffling why the Enterprise service linking Ireland’s two largest cities has been so neglected. Secondly, the service on the Howth branch will be downgraded to a “shuttle service”. Passengers at peak times will have to get off at Howth Junction, change platform and wait for a northern line service. These trains will probably only have standing room at that point. It will also add 5-10 minutes to Howth branch journey time.

Irish Rail introduced timetable changes to the Northern line in September 2024 to facilitate future hourly Enterprise services. This resulted in a dramatic deterioration in punctuality. The following month these changes were largely reversed while still attempting to make provision for a more frequent Dublin-Belfast service. Delayed services remain a very significant problem. An hourly Enterprise service is scheduled to be introduced on 29 October 2024 with 15 services per day in each direction. It remains to be seen how this will be achieved without even worse disruption. As matters stand, there is no resilience in the existing rail infrastructure on this line.

The solution to this problem is to increase the number of tracks from 2 to 4 on the Connolly to Malahide stretch of line (and make **provision in land use planning** for 4 tracks all the way to Drogheda). However, as this is a longer term project, new passing loops are required at a number of locations as part of the DART+ Coastal North Project, e.g.,

- a) Skerries. This could be facilitated by building two new tracks to the west of the down platform with a new down platform on the west side. The existing down platform would then become an island platform. This could be installed with minimum disruption to services. The larger station is also justified by the increasing population of the area.
- b) Mosney and/or Gormanstown.
- c) Malahide. This could be facilitated to the south of the station (where space is available and is in Irish Rail ownership) with two new platforms serving the loop tracks. This would give Malahide four platforms.
- d) Passing loops between Dublin and Howth Junction. The most practical solution would be to relocate some existing stations to either the north or south end of their current positions with new platforms serving the loop tracks. The new stations could be built while keeping the existing station and line in operation.

None of the above are simple or easy but in principle they are the only solution to current congestion and would be required in any case for four-tracking in the future. Additional track, signalling and platform infrastructure are also required in the Connolly-Grand Canal Dock area.

In addition to enabling the DART+ Coastal North services, the above projects would facilitate:

1. Resolution of the “Howth shuttle” controversy on that branch.
2. Higher speed services on the Intercity Belfast Enterprise service supporting economic, cultural and political links with Northern Ireland.
3. Dundalk commuter journey times of 45 minutes or less by allowing these trains to run non-stop between Drogheda and Connolly.
4. Additional train services to allow for the re-opening of Castlebellingham and Dunleer stations (and possibly new stations at Dundalk South and Drogheda North).
5. A mainline connection to Dublin Airport in the future (which is required under the EU Trans-European Transport Network policy).
6. An increase in freight traffic on the Northern Line without affecting passenger services.

This would also be prudent capital expenditure in support of Ireland’s climate change objectives. Four-tracking on the Malahide/Connolly line is challenging and doesn’t have to be implemented immediately. It does however need to be firmly included in current public transport strategies and **land use planning**.