

Employees representing 57 workplaces take part in 2014 cross-border cycle challenge

More than 22,000 bike rides were accumulated in this annual event that encourages regular cyclists to team up with a novice cyclist and clock up points over a three week period. Participants from around the island of Ireland were awarded points for social and leisure cycles with extra points awarded for cycling on the commute.

This year's Challenge coincided with the Giro d'Italia and to mark the event, a distance prize category was included each week. The three distance winners clocked up an impressive 1,360 kilometres between them. The Challenge was organised by the National Transport Authority in partnership with Travelwise Northern Ireland, as part of the Smarter Travel Workplaces programme.

Prize-winners came from workplaces in both the Republic and Northern Ireland, with the overall Challenge winners being the 'Goodbye to Gridlocks' team from Dublin City Council. The winning team clocked up an average of 143 journeys each over the course of the three week Challenge. The team 'Les Miserables' from Intel picked up the Smarter Travel Workplaces top prize, and the 'Digital Donkeys' from Belfast City Council won the Travelwise Northern Ireland top prize.

Participating workplaces included Accenture, Allergan, Belfast City Hospital, Central Bank of Ireland, Dublin City Council, Eirgrid, ebay Inc., FINEOS, The National University of Ireland, Takeda, Queens University Belfast and Seagate Technology.

'Novice cyclist' Máire Jones from Trinity College Dublin commented, *'This Challenge has enabled me to change my default mode of transport for shorter 4km-5km journeys from the car to the bike. For the last 8 years I have driven to Skerries to watch the finish of the Round Ireland Rás. This year I went on my bike. As a result of the Challenge, I have cycled over 300km, I have more money in my pocket, a much better level of fitness, and I am several kilos lighter.'*

Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive of the National Transport Authority commented: *"The National Transport Authority is pleased to see such enthusiasm for this event from both seasoned and novice cyclists. Cycling on the commute and for leisure, even a few times weekly can result in a significant positive impact on employees' health. Congratulations to all who participated, particularly those getting back on their bike after a lapse. We hope you continue to be active as you travel and enjoy it as you go."*

Michael Lindsay, Travelwise Northern Ireland commented: *"Once again Travelwise Northern Ireland and its partner organisations in Northern Ireland have been delighted to participate with Smarter Travel Workplaces in the 10 Minute Cycle Challenge. Travelwise Northern Ireland recognises the link between supporting employees to increase activity levels, using smarter modes of transport, and their health and wellbeing. We would like to congratulate all participants from right across the island and to thank the staff in the National Transport Authority on behalf of our partner organisations for the opportunity to participate and the support they have provided. We look forward to further collaborations in the future."*

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Editor's Notes:

The National Transport Authority's **Smarter Travel Workplaces Programme** is a Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport-funded programme for large employers (over 250 employees) seeking to develop a Workplace Travel Plan. Workplace Travel Plans have been shown internationally to reduce single occupancy car use on the commute by between 10 and 24%. Workplace Travel Plans also impact on costs associated with parking, business travel, fleet, CO2 emissions, absenteeism, and access issues. Further information on the programme and Partners can be found at www.smartertravelworkplaces.ie.

Travelwise Northern Ireland is an initiative within Northern Ireland's Department for Regional Development tasked with the promotion of sustainable modes of travel. It works with three main target groups, namely schools, commuters and employers to encourage walking, cycling, use of public transport and car-sharing. It works closely with employers across Northern Ireland to help them develop Workplace Travel Plans that will encourage sustainable travel modes. For more information on the work of Travelwise Northern Ireland visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/travelwiseni.

Further information on the **Cycle Challenge 2014** can be found here – www.cyclechallenge.ie

Smarter Travel Workplaces participating workplaces:

Accenture, AECOM, Airtricity, Allergan, Aramark, ARUP, Atkins, Central Bank of Ireland, Cook Medical, Covidien, Department of Communications Energy & Natural Resources, Dublin Airport Authority, Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, eBay Inc., Eirgrid (Republic of Ireland), Elavon, ESB Networks, FINEOS, Galway City Council, GlaxoSmithKline, Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo, Intel, Irish Air Corps, Irish Prisons Service, Limerick City and County Council, Mary Immaculate College Limerick, Meath County Council, Microsoft, National Transport Authority, National University of Ireland Galway, National University of Ireland Maynooth Oracle EMEA, Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, Railway Procurement Agency, Roughan & O'Donovan, St. John's Hospital, Symantec, Takeda Ireland Limited, Trinity College Dublin University College Dublin, University Hospitals Galway, Westport Smarter Travel.

Travelwise Northern Ireland Participating Workplaces

Altnagelvin Hospital, Belfast City Hospital, Department for Regional Development – Clarence Court, Department of Environment, Community & Local Government, Department of Justice, DHSSPS, DOE/NI Environment Agency, Mater Hospital Northern Ireland, NI Assembly, Northern Health Trust, Queens University Belfast, Seagate Technology.