

## Quay Works Will Make Route Safer



Is slowing down traffic on The Quay, thus reducing the risk of accident, that bad a thing?

Knocking the local authority is a popular thing to do in this re-aligned City and County arrangement which staff and Councillors alike are slowly getting to grips with.

After all, the paint's still only drying on the door, so let's not condemn the merger from an immediate juncture and, let's face it, a largely ignorant context as things stand.

Something which City Hall has copped a great deal of flak since whispers of a merger first surfaced is the Green Route project on The Quay, which is reducing much of the route to single-lane traffic in either direction.

The new roundabout at the Keyser Street/GPO junction, from both a motoring and observational standpoint, no longer appears to be the dreadful impediment it was initially decreed to be.

The second roundabout to be added to the amended route, at the Gladstone Street junction, is currently taking shape, and quite how anyone can consider this addition to be a bad idea escapes me.

Let me explain: if you, as I have for the better part of 11 years, regularly driven up O'Connell Street and down Gladstone Street to turn right onto The Quay, one's been playing automotive roulette.

The first impediment? Well, crossing four lanes of traffic, two flowing against you initially, has been a unique driving experience for me in both an Irish and international context.

The second? The cars parked illegally to one's right outside Shaw's, blocking your view of the traffic heading towards Rice Bridge, thus making it difficult to judge when it was safe to turn in either direction.

The third? The startling speed that all too many motorists have sped up and down The Quay for years, and that's before I pause to consider the thundering HGVs which do not have deliveries to make in our city while passing through it.

In truth, it's only been late at night or in the early hours of a new day that I've ever felt truly safe turning from Gladstone Street and onto The Quay. But all that will soon change.

The Council is damned if it does and damned if it doesn't when it comes to infrastructural projects, but I have no hesitation in re-asserting my support for the Green Route project.

As someone who has worked on The Quay for 15 years, and in the vast majority of that time, parked alongside it on a daily basis, I've seen far too many near-misses for comfort, both from a motoring and pedestrian perspective.

Indeed, it's quite remarkable to think that, despite all the speeding, all the ludicrous overtaking manoeuvres and all the breaking of red lights, there has been just one fatality on The Quay this past decade.

Of course, one lost life is evidently one too many, but having almost been hit by cars three times myself (with the same motorist guilty on two of those occasions) while legally crossing the road, I'm flabbergasted that there hasn't been further death or serious injury.

It's important to state that those behind the wheel aren't exclusively to blame, with far too many pedestrians deciding they'll (a) ignore the red man at a legal crossing or (b) just cross wherever they see fit, potentially endangering all in their vicinity in so doing.

And when I see someone doing this while wheeling a buggy, thus putting their child or grandchild immediately into the 'line of fire' so to speak, I feel my blood slowly bubbling with rage.

Irish stupidity is exemplified on a daily basis when it comes to how we abuse the road traffic laws - and spare me the infantile suggestion that our basic flouting of the law can be somehow cited to 800 years of British oppression.

Yes, the invader repressed self-governance, our native language, the right to own our own land and the ability to practise a faith other than the one they so decreed, but they're not responsible for our crossing the road at inopportune times. That's all down to us.

City and County Manager Michael Walsh spoke of returning The Quays to the people of the city when outlining the initial plans for the Green Route, and one can see the logic in such an approach.

Of course, what would have made such an ambition all the easier and more practical to bring about would have entailed the freeing up of the South Quays from the preponderance of car parks that occupy our beautiful river front.

In December last, this newspaper learned of a plan to free (at least) the environs of the Clock Tower of cars and to create a new riverside attraction which could, in time, feature the decommissioned LE Aoife at its heart.

While no public utterances have yet been made on the project from City Hall, the idea of a tourist attraction akin in principle, though not in scale, to HMS Belfast near London's Tower Bridge, is a fantastic proposition. And it also ties into the notion of returning The Quay to the people, locals and visitors alike.

Of course, emergency vehicle access on The Quay is negatively impeded by the lane reduction, but ambulance drivers have long had to contend with the Dunmore Road, one of the busiest roads in Munster every weekday morning, for several decades.

If cars are moving slower, then the risk of death or serious injury is greatly diminished. Fact. And on the basis of my own personal experience on The Quay since the turn of the century, then the Green Route project on Europe's noblest such thoroughfare is no bad thing.