

Promoting Sustainable Workplace Travel





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1 Introduction

DBFL Consulting Engineers is one of Ireland's leading civil, structural and transportation engineering consultancies. For over 35 years, DBFL has been providing technical consultancy services across residential, commercial, retail, hotels, education, infrastructure, sustainable transportation, and industrial/logistics sectors.

DBFL provide a high level of personal service to both public and private clients in each of the three disciplines across Ireland, UK, and Europe. DBFL have a workforce of approximately 180 dedicated staff across offices in Dublin, Waterford, Cork and Galway.

Over our time in operation, we have gained substantial experience of developing travel plans on a wide variety of projects, from large towns to educational institutes, commercial and residential developments. This diversity of experience in the transport planning space has given us unique expertise to implement demand management and modal shift initiatives within our own organisation.

In November 2021, DBFL committed to the Association of Consulting Engineers of Ireland's Pledge to Net Zero, a partner to the United Nations' Race to Zero Campaign. By registering for this commitment, DBFL joined the group of leaders in the civil, structural and transportation engineering sectors taking strong actions to mitigate the most significant impacts of climate change and agreeing to deliver upon three commitments as set out in Figure 1-1.



Figure 1-1 Pledge to Net Zero Commitment

With ACEI support, DBFL's aim is to achieve NetZero in operational GHG emissions by 2030. DBFL, working with the ACEI, will establish the route to reducing operational emissions and ultimately achieving Net Zero.

Through this report, DBFL hope to share some of our knowledge and experience with implementing sustainable travel measures and developing our own sustainable travel policies to



aid other organisations with their sustainable travel goals, as part of the overarching aim of the Pledge to Net Zero.

Section 2 of this report will provide detail on the sustainable travel measures that DBFL have implemented across our offices to date along with the awards and accreditations we have earned in recognition of our efforts to encourage sustainable commuting within our organisation.

Section 3 will provide detail on our annual staff travel survey including the results of our most recent survey, undertaken in November 2023.

Section 4 will discuss our methodology for quantifying the annual emissions associated with commuting to our offices, including our estimate for 2023.

Section 5 will then present an overview of the challenges we have faced as an organisation with reducing the emissions associated with our staff commuting to our various office locations along with a number of opportunities that we have identified to tackle these challenges in 2024.

A summary of the report will be provided in Section 6.

2 Measures to Promote Sustainable Travel within DBFL

2.1 Introduction

The following sections provide details on the wide variety of measures and initiatives that DBFL have implemented across our offices to promote sustainable commuting patterns among our staff. These measures cover all areas of sustainable travel, including walking, cycling and public transport use.

Details are also provided on the behavioural change programs that DBFL participate in and the awards and accreditations we have gathered in recognition of our work to promote sustainable commuting habits throughout our organisation.

2.2 Smarter Travel Workplaces & Smarter Travel Mark

DBFL has been active participant in the Smarter Travel Workplaces behavioural change programme which is run by Transport for Ireland (TFI) overseen by the National Transport Authority (NTA) since 2018.

As part of the programme, DBFL engage in a number of behavioural change initiatives such as the Marchathon and Walktober steps challenges where employees form teams of 3 to 6 people and compete with organisations nationally to get their steps up.

DBFL also organises a number of events throughout the year to promote cycling such as free bike servicing for employees, bike maintenance workshops and a biannual breakfast to celebrate our regular cyclists and welcome those interested in cycling to work.



Figure 2-1 DBFL Bike Servicing in Dublin and Bicycle Maintenance Workshop in Waterford



Figure 2-2 Bike Breakfast for Bike Week 2023

In September 2023, DBFL was awarded the Gold Smarter Travel Mark for our work in promoting sustainable travel throughout the company. The Gold Mark is awarded by the NTA where “*the organisation has outstanding measures in place that support sustainable and active commuting and is committed to long term investment and leadership in Smarter Travel.*” DBFL was one of the first twenty organisations nationally to receive the Smarter Travel Mark.



Figure 2-3 DBFL Receiving the Gold Smarter Travel Mark

2.3 Cycle Friendly Employer Accreditation

The cycle-friendly employer certification scheme was developed to establish a European standard for cycle friendly companies. The certification is intended to help European companies to improve the situation for employees that cycle to work. As an acknowledgement for their effort these companies receive the certificate “cycle-friendly employer.”

In 2021, DBFL became a Cycle Friendly Employer (CFE) with our head office at Ormond Quay in Dublin obtaining the European Gold Standard Accreditation. In 2023, our Cork office at South Mall followed, also obtaining the Gold Standard Accreditation. Each year DBFL undertake an evaluation to confirm that the required CFE action fields (measures to improve the conditions for cyclists as per the CFE requirements) were undertaken to meet the CFE standards (Gold, Silver or Bronze). As part of our CFE accreditation, our employees benefit from discounted Cycling Ireland membership.



Figure 2-4 DBFL Dublin Office Receiving the Gold Cycle Friendly Employer Accreditation

2.4 Brompton Folding Bike Scheme

As a benefit of our CFE accreditation, in 2023 DBFL were able to work with CFE and Brompton Ireland set up our own Brompton folding bike scheme where 4 employees have been given a folding bike to use as part of their daily commute to the office. After a six-month period, these employees will be interviewed to understand if having access to a Brompton Bike has influenced them to change their daily commuting habits. In addition to the employee Brompton Bike scheme, DBFL has acquired two folding bikes that staff can use for business trips, one regular Brompton

Bike and one electric. Working with CFE and Brompton Ireland has made the implementation of this scheme easy on us as an organisation, as CFE cover the insurance cost and maintenance of the bikes as part of the fee for the scheme.



Figure 2-5 Launch of the DBFL Brompton Pilot Scheme, September 2023

2.5 Bike to Work Scheme

DBFL participates in the bike to work scheme and allows all employees to participate in the scheme. Under the scheme, DBFL will pay for a new bicycle and safety equipment for the employee who then repays the company over a six-month period. These repayments are taken out of an employee's gross pay and are therefore not subject to tax. Employees can use the scheme to purchase a regular bike up to the value of €1,250 or an electric bike up to the value of €1,500.

2.6 Facilities for Cyclists

The DBFL Dublin office is located at Ormond House, Ormond Quay, Dublin 7. Here, 45 no. cycle parking spaces are available in our basement car park, where we removed 3 no. car parking spaces to accommodate the cycle parking. Staff cycling to work can access this cycle parking via the external side lane, through a locked gate. The gate can only be unlocked by DBFL employees using their fob key, ensuring any parked bikes remain secure. Shower facilities are also available for cyclists to use at Ormond House.

We have installed a bicycle repair stand adjacent to the cycle parking in the basement of Ormond House. The stand is available to all staff members and contains a number of tools including a bike pump, a set of Allen keys, tyre levers, wrenches, screwdrivers and a spanner.

Recently, we removed an additional car parking space from the basement car park of our Dublin office to make room for three drying cabinets. These cabinets can be used by cyclists to dry off any gear they are wearing that gets wet on their cycle into the office, so it is dry for the journey home that evening.



Figure 2-6 Cycle Parking at Ormond House



Figure 2-7 Bicycle Repair Stand and Drying Cabinets at Ormond House

DBFL has also set up a group forum using Microsoft Teams where those who regularly cycle to the office can ask for advice from other cyclists, tell others of problems they have cycling around the city and organise group bike rides. The company has also created an information board for current cyclists and those interesting in cycling on their internal SharePoint. Here, employees can access



information about upcoming cycling events, local and national cycling campaigns as well as facilities for cyclists at the office.

At our Cork office, there is room to park 2 no. bikes securely and shower facilities are available for cyclists.

2.7 Tax Saver Public Transport Tickets

DBFL currently offers the Tax Saver scheme to all employees. Tax Saver tickets are designed to reduce the cost of public transport for commuting to and from work. The scheme operates across all public transport operators as well as many private transport companies. Once employees choose the ticket they would like, the cost is deducted from their gross pay and is not subject to tax. In addition to participating in the Tax Saver scheme, DBFL provides staff with leap cards if they wish to use public transport for business travel. As discussed further in Section 5, we have seen a decline in the number of employees availing of the TaxSaver scheme since the onset of the covid-19 pandemic and roll out of a hybrid working model. TaxSaver tickets can only be purchased for a full month or year, with no flexible options for those only commuting 2 or 3 days per week.



3 Travel Survey 2023

3.1 Introduction

DBFL undertook our first staff travel survey in 2019 in conjunction with the NTA as part of the Smarter Travel Workplaces initiative. As a company, we felt that the data gathered as part of this survey was not detailed enough to allow us to fully understand the way our employees travel, and the data gathered did not allow us to estimate the emissions generated as a result of our commuting behaviour. It also only provided us with data for the company as a whole and did not allow us to analyse how behaviour varied among staff based at our regional office locations.

As such, we now run our own in-house travel survey on an annual basis. We first undertook this survey in November 2022 when we felt that travel behaviour was beginning to normalise after the covid-19 pandemic. The survey now runs each November and allows us to gather data on our commuting modal split, the distance travelled to our offices, the number of days employees attend the office and employee behaviours regarding business travel. The survey also allows us to gather feedback from our employees on what interventions with relation to sustainable travel are working and what areas need improvement or what challenges and barriers they face in making sustainable travel choices. Running our own survey also allows us to collect data for the company as a whole and by regional office location.

The following chapter presents an overview of the overall company modal split and distance that staff commute to work, as determined via the most recent staff travel survey, conducted in November 2023. The survey had a response rate of 69%. This information is later combined with data collected on the number of days each staff member attends the office to estimate our emissions from commuting.

3.2 Modal Split

In 2023, the most popular way to travel to work was cycling at 33%. In total, 48% of our staff travel to work by active travel modes. A total of 36% of DBFL staff travel to the office by public transport. Bus is the most popular public transport option followed by rail and the Luas. Of the remaining staff, 12% drive to work, 2% travel to work as a car passenger and 2% travel by motorbike.

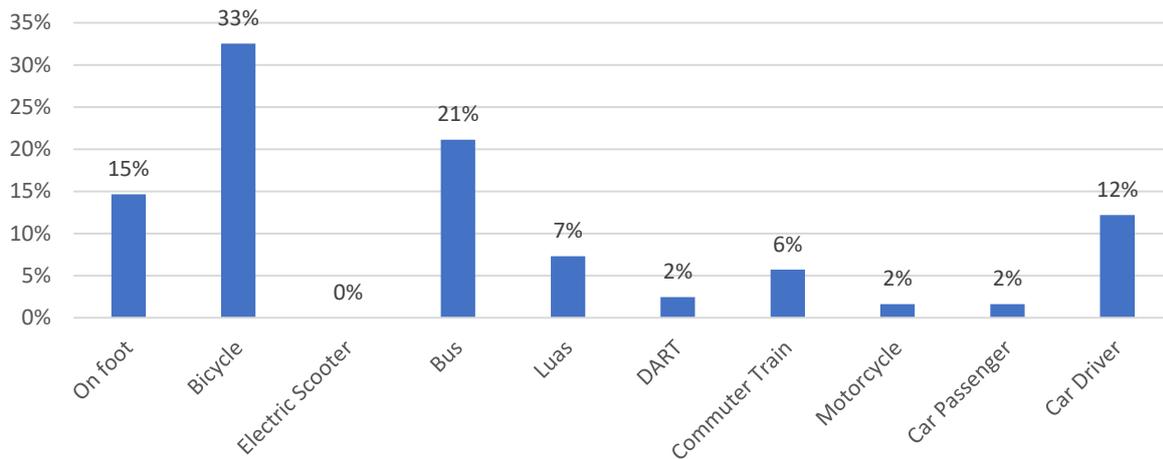


Figure 3-1 DBFL Overall Company Modal Split 2023

Since our last travel survey in 2022, there has been a 2% increase in the proportion of employees who walk to work while the proportion of employees cycling to work has remained stable. There has been an overall 2% decrease in the proportion of staff taking public transport to get to work with 4.6% less employees taking the train to work and a 1% decrease in the proportion of employees taking the bus to work. However, the proportion of those taking the Luas has increased by 3%. With regard to employees driving to work, the proportion has remained steady since 2022. From the survey, it was discovered that 3.4% of staff have changed their mode for commuting in the past year due to sustainable travel promotions in the workplace.

As part of the travel survey, employees are asked why they commute to work by their chosen mode. The top three reasons our employees cycle to work were that it was the cheapest, quickest and most reliable mode. For those who drive, the top three reasons for taking the car were that it was also the quickest and most reliable and many had no practical alternative.

3.3 Distance Travelled to Work

The distance that staff travel to work is presented in Figure 3-2. In 2023, 55.3% of DBFL staff lived within 10km of their office. The location where staff overall live closest to the office is Cork, where 85% of staff live within 10km. By contrast, the proportion of staff in Dublin living within 10km of the office mirrors the average at 55%. In Waterford, two thirds of staff live within 10km of the office.

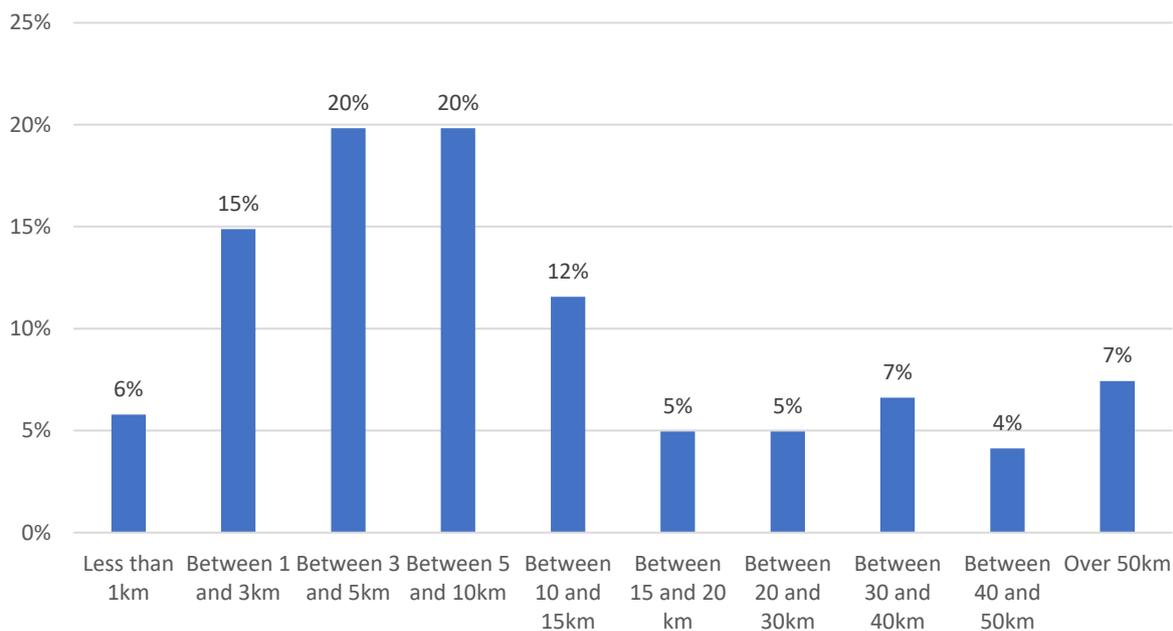


Figure 3-2 Distance Travelled to the Office by DBFL Staff 2023

Compared to 2022, there has been a small decrease of 1% in the overall proportion of staff living within 10km of the office. In Dublin, there has been a 4% decrease in the proportion of staff living within 10km of the office, while in Cork, there has been a 10% increase in the proportion of staff living within 10km. In Waterford, there has been a 7% decrease in the proportion of staff living within 10km.



4 Scope 3 Emissions from Commuting

4.1 Introduction

As part of our annual staff travel survey, we collect data on the number of days a week those with a hybrid working arrangement typically attend the office. This data is combined with the mode of travel and distance travelled, as discussed in Chapter 3, to estimate the overall emissions generated by commuting to our offices across Ireland. The following sections present an overview of the estimated emissions generated by staff travelling to all of our office locations in 2023.

4.2 Emissions from Commuting in 2023

In order to calculate our emissions from commuting in 2023, we first gathered data on the mode and distance each employee travels to the office as well as the number of days they attend the office if they have a hybrid working arrangement. This information was then used to determine the total distance travelled by each mode over the full year, based on 225 working days in 2023 when annual leave is taken into account.

Once the total distance travelled by each mode was determined, this was multiplied by an appropriate emissions factor to estimate our emissions from commuting in 2023. These emissions factors were gathered from Irish Rail, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Emisia, who is the company responsible for developing COPERT, the industry standard emissions calculator in the EU.

In 2023, our estimated emissions from commuting were 58.76 tCO₂e. The unit tCO₂e (tonnes of CO₂ equivalent) allows for the comparison of emissions made up of various greenhouse gases based on their Global Warming Potential, by converting the amount of each greenhouse gas to the equivalent amount of CO₂ with the same Global Warming Potential.

4.3 Emissions from Commuting 2022 vs 2023

In 2022, our total estimated emissions from commuting were 52.02 tCO₂e. This results in 6.74 tCO₂e increase in emissions from commuting in 2023 compared to 2022. The primary reason behind this increase is an increase in the overall distance driven by the small proportion of our staff who drive to the office.



As a company, we have faced challenges over the past year with reducing our emissions from commuting as travel behaviour has returned to normal since the covid-19 pandemic and a greater proportion of staff have returned to the office. Despite the disappointing increase in our commuting emissions, we have identified a number of opportunities to improve upon the work we are already undertaking to promote sustainable commuting to all of our staff. An outline of these challenges and opportunities is presented in the next chapter.



5 Challenges and Opportunities

As discussed in Section 4, we have faced a number of challenges over the past year with reducing the emissions generated by our employees commuting to the office. Although many of these challenges are not in our direct control, we have identified a number of opportunities that we can engage with as a company over the coming year to build upon the extensive work we are already undertaking to promote sustainable commuting and minimise our commuting emissions. These challenges and opportunities are discussed below.

Challenges

- **Rigid Tax Saver Ticketing System** – During the covid-19 pandemic we implemented a hybrid working system for our senior staff with the majority working 3 days in the office and 2 days at home. Since implementing this system, we have seen a 70% decrease in the number of staff availing of the Tax Saver public transport ticket scheme. As it stands, Tax Saver tickets must be purchased on a full weekly or monthly basis with no flexible options for those operating under a hybrid model. This can make the cost of public transportation unattractive, particularly in our regional offices where the cost of local parking is extremely cheap, and parking spaces are readily available nearby.
- **Providing Cycle Facilities in Rented Buildings** – As a company, we rent all of our office space and as such any facilities we wish to provide for cyclists must be approved by the relevant landlord. These discussions with landlords have been successful in Dublin and Cork where cyclists can avail of secure cycle parking and showers but less successful in Waterford. There are currently no cycle parking facilities or showers in our Waterford office, with those currently cycling to work reliant on public cycle parking or securing their bike to the railing outside the building.

Opportunities

- **Lobby the NTA to introduce a Flexible Tax Saver Ticket** – Through our work in the transport planning sector and our active participation in the Smarter Travel Workplaces initiative, we have built up a strong relationship with the NTA which we may be able to use to lobby for the introduction of a flexible TaxSaver ticket system for public transport. We believe this would encourage more of our employees who have a hybrid working arrangement to use public transport for the days they attend the office. We are aware of private operators such as Matthews Coach operating in Louth and East Meath who have



implemented their own flexible tickets under the TaxSaver programme. There is an additional opportunity for DBFL to investigate if other private operators have similar TaxSaver arrangements and publicise this to our employees.

- **Rent a car parking space in Waterford and install a bike bunker** – Restrictions on our ability to provide permanent secure cycle parking at our Waterford office has resulted in low uptake of cycle commuting among employees. Rather than focusing on providing cycle parking within the building, we can investigate the feasibility of renting an additional car parking space within the buildings enclosed car park and providing a bike bunker or other secure cycle parking system in this space.
- **Provision of shower facilities in Waterford** – Through renewed negotiations, DBFL have secured approval from our landlord in Waterford to install a shower facility for cyclists and active commuters. The budget for this facility has been secured but works have been delayed due to issues with securing the appropriate labour for the installation. In 2024 we will continue to engage with local tradespeople to ensure that this facility is completed within the year.
- **Remove all staff car parking** – At our Dublin office on Ormond Quay, a small basement car park houses our electric company fleet, with the remaining 4 no. spaces reserved for a small proportion of senior management. The right to park at our free office car park could be removed from these senior staff members to set an example of leadership in sustainable commuting to all staff. The 2 no. senior staff car parking spaces available at our Waterford office could also be removed.
- **Introduce a full fleet of electric bikes for business travel** – We are currently testing the viability of providing a company fleet of bikes for business travel purposes through our partnership with CFE and Brompton Ireland. Initial feedback suggests that our employees find these bikes awkward to use and difficult to carry when also carrying a large amount of PPE when traveling to site. There is an opportunity for DBFL to find a different bike fleet solution that would provide us with more robust ebikes with a further range available to our employees. If employees gain experience cycling through business travel, there is also potential that they will then consider cycling for their commute.
- **Review our hybrid and flexible working arrangements** – Like many other companies, DBFL introduced a hybrid working policy during the covid-19 pandemic. This policy currently only applies to senior staff members and has not been revised or updated since



2021. With the *Code of Practice on the Right to Request Remote Work* expected to be published by the Workplace Relations Commission in early 2024, there is an opportunity for DBFL to review our hybrid working policy and investigate the business implications of expanding the policy. Reducing the number of trips to the office would be expected to directly result in a reduction in the emissions our employees generate from commuting. In addition to reviewing our hybrid working policy, there is an opportunity for DBFL to implement a formal flexible working policy, such as flexitime, where staff can work the same number of hours over a reduced number of days. This would again reduce the overall number of trips to the office and likely have a direct impact on the emissions our employees generate commuting. We are conscious however, that this reduction in our company emissions may globally be offset by the increase in electricity that employees would use while working from home.



6 Summary and Conclusion

This report summarises how DBFL have approached the challenge of promoting and encouraging sustainable commuting among all of our employees. As a consultancy operating in the transport engineering and transport planning space, we have a strong cohort of employees who are passionate about creating a modal shift and making sustainable travel accessible for all.

As a company, DBFL have rolled out a number of initiatives to encourage sustainable travel within our organisation. These have included providing facilities for cyclists such as bike parking, drying lockers and showers as well as participating in behaviour change initiatives such as Smarter Travel Workplaces. We actively support and promote government tax incentive programs aimed at sustainable commuting including the TaxSaver and Bike to Work schemes. In recognition of our efforts in this space, we have received the gold accreditation as a Cycle Friendly Employer and the gold Smarter Travel Mark.

We run a staff travel survey in November each year to track our emissions from commuting and to gain an insight into why our employees chose their modes of travel. This survey generally sees a high level of response with the latest surveying being filled out by 69% of staff members. The results of the survey indicate that 48% of our employees travel to work by active modes, with 15% walking to work and 33% cycling. This is a 2% increase on 2022. Overall, in 2023, 85% of our employees travel to work by sustainable modes.

From our November 2023 survey, we have been able to estimate that commuting to our offices generated 58.76 tCO₂e. This represented a 6.74 tCO₂e increase on the previous year when emissions were estimated at 52.02 tCO₂e. Although we have not seen an increase in the number of employees driving to work, those that chose to drive are driving further this year than they did last year.

Despite all of our best efforts and recognition for promoting sustainable travel, DBFL has faced many challenges over the past few years in fully minimising our emissions from commuting. These have included national issues such as no tax saver public transport ticket available for hybrid workers and more local issues such as not having direct control over the provisions of cycle parking and shower facilities in the buildings we occupy.

To overcome these challenges, we have identified a number of opportunities that we can engage with to help us reduce our commuting emissions on the road to Net Zero. These opportunities



include lobbying for flexible public transport tickets, reviewing our current office accommodations in our regional offices and removing all remaining car parking for senior staff.

Although we have faced a number of challenges this year in reducing our commuting emissions, DBFL remains strongly committed to the goals we have set under the Pledge to Net Zero and will continue to do all that we can to minimise the impact that our business has on global warming and climate change.





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