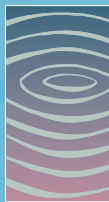


THE HERITAGE COUNCIL



Proposing Policies and Priorities
for the National Heritage

INTEGRATING POLICIES
FOR IRELAND'S
INLAND WATERWAYS

August 2005

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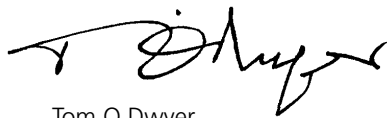
Overall aim for Ireland's inland waterways

Heritage Council

May 2005

FOREWORD

Since the Heritage Council brought out its first policy paper on Ireland's inland waterways in 1999, many changes have taken place in relation to this aspect of our heritage. Waterways Ireland has been set up, and their environmental unit established. Four waterway corridor studies have been carried out and a fifth is under way. However, the vision expressed in 1999 is as valid today as it was then: "The inland waterways and their corridors should be managed in an integrated broad-based way, conserving their built and archaeological heritage features, and protecting their landscape and biodiversity. Recognising that the inland waterways are a unique part of our heritage, but which today are fulfilling a new role not envisaged for them originally, we aim to enhance the enjoyment and appreciation of them as living heritage both for this generation and for future generations." We must keep in mind that it is not only the navigable waterways but the derelict and disused waterways and associated sites that must be included in this vision, and this document focuses clearly on these elements. Protection and enjoyment of our waterways heritage through imaginative reuse and interpretation are themes that are promoted strongly by the Heritage Council in this document. Inland waterways are living heritage and they should enhance the quality of life of those communities living in their corridors as well as of those who use them. This policy paper is based on the Council's own research and consultation with a wide range of waterways users and communities, and promotes the continuing involvement of all these groups into the future.



Tom O Dwyer

Chairperson Heritage Council

July 2005





ABBREVIATIONS

CIE	Coras Iompair Eireann	SAC	Special Area of Conservation
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	NDP	National Development Plan
ESB	Electricity Supply Board	NHA	Natural Heritage Area
DCAL	Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (NI)	RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
IWAI	Inland Waterways Association of Ireland	RPS	Record of Protected Structures
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage	WFD	Water Framework Directive
SPA	Special Protection Area	WI	Waterways Ireland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy paper has been written in the light of heritage policy developments (the *National Heritage Plan* and the *National Biodiversity Plan*) and the establishment of Waterways Ireland. Notwithstanding these welcome developments, Ireland's inland waterways and their corridors still urgently need a strategic approach. Waterways Ireland's remit covers most of Ireland's waterways although some, in particular several disused navigations, are not clearly the responsibility of any agency. This document proposes a possible direction for a concerted and co-ordinated effort to ensure that the heritage, social, and economic value of all of Ireland's waterways is enhanced.

- i. Inland waterways are an integral part of Ireland's transport and industrial heritage, and are themselves made up of different aspects of heritage. The conservation and enhancement of this heritage is vital to the long-term attraction of Ireland's waterways. Resources should be dedicated to this. Notwithstanding the establishment of Waterways Ireland, the multiplicity of government departments and agencies that have some role in the management of the waterways resource leads to a lack of co-ordination and integration in relation to heritage issues.
- ii. A strategic approach to waterways is needed to ensure that their integrity is not compromised, and that enjoyment of them is increased. Efforts should be redoubled to promote this strategic approach to waterways management. This should involve government departments and agencies with an interest in all inland waterways, navigable and disused.
- iii. The Waterway Corridor Studies model, championed by the Heritage Council, presents one way of addressing the need for sustainable management. Experience from studies completed to date shows that partnership between Waterways Ireland, local authorities, and the Heritage Council is an effective way of ensuring better co-ordination and integrated management.
- iv. Communication with, and participation in management planning by recreational users of the inland waterways should be increased as should awareness-raising activities and interpretation of waterways heritage.

- v. Funding is allocated to Waterways Ireland by the Dept of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for inland waterways under its remit; monies for infrastructural projects are provided from the National Development Plan. Individual local authorities allocate to waterways projects out of their own annual budgets. Levels of funding should be maintained.
- vi. It is the responsibility of the local authorities to ensure that disused and derelict waterways not under the remit of Waterways Ireland are protected.
- vii. The long-term future expansion and development of the network requires consideration, in particular from a heritage perspective, and recommendations on this are made in sections 12,13 and 14 of this document.

The Heritage Council makes a series of recommendations throughout the document which are summarised below under broad headings: management, corridor studies as a management tool, funding, heritage, users and expansion of the system.

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

The inland waterways and their corridors should be managed in an integrated broad-based way as living heritage for this generation and for future generations.

MANAGEMENT

To ensure a strategic approach to the management of the navigable waterways, the Heritage Council recommends that all the navigable inland waterways on the island of Ireland should be the responsibility of Waterways Ireland.

Responsibility for a strategic approach to the remaining derelict waterways should be accepted by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government as the department responsible for built and natural heritage.

CORRIDOR STUDIES AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL

Greater co-ordination between the many agencies involved in waterways management is needed, along with a strategic approach to the management of waterways. In the first instance, interaction between county development plans and Waterways Ireland's plans is needed.

Waterway Corridor Studies and River Basin District Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive should be considered as effective tools to achieve this aim. In the Heritage Council's policy paper *Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways*, the importance of linking the management of the inland waterways to their corridors was highlighted, and the National Heritage Plan contains an action on waterway corridors as a catalyst for local development

Corridor studies had already been carried out of the Greater Dublin sections of the Grand Canal and the Royal Canal in 1994 and 1995 respectively. In 2001, the Heritage Council decided to implement a programme of further studies, working in partnership with Waterways Ireland and the relevant local authorities. Studies completed to date are as follows:

- The Shannon Navigation from Shannonbridge to Meelick and the Grand Canal from the Shannon to Ballycommon (2001-2)
- The Shannon Navigation from Lanesborough to Shannonbridge (which includes Lough Ree and the Suck Navigation) (2003-4)
- The Shannon Navigation from Roosky to Lanesborough, the Royal Canal Main Line to Thomastown, and the Longford Branch of the Royal Canal (2003-4)
- The Shannon Navigation, including Boyle River Navigation, from Lough Allen and Lough Key to Roosky (2004-5)

Recommendations in the completed corridor studies should be incorporated into County Development Plans, and the studies themselves should be reviewed and up-dated every ten years.

Corridor studies should be completed for the entire waterways system. The Heritage Council intends to monitor the effect of the studies and to continue, either directly or indirectly, the studies along the inland waterways of Ireland.

FUNDING

Adequate infrastructural, maintenance, and management funding for Waterways Ireland should be continued. Future national development plans should continue to include provision for major infrastructural projects and on-going restoration projects.

Funding should also be provided to local authorities for the care and enhancement of those waterways and waterways heritage sites not within the remit of Waterways Ireland.

HERITAGE

While the inland waterways are accepted as an important part of our national heritage, they also contain within themselves individual heritage items which fall into other heritage areas: architecture, wildlife, and both underwater and industrial archaeology. Waterways should also be considered within the context of the Irish landscape of which they are a key element.

Disused and derelict waterways should be protected through the Record of Monuments and Places and/or the Record of Protected Structures, as well as by finding alternative uses for them, such as walking routes or greenways.

Awareness of the importance and value of inland waterways heritage should be continue to promoted through appropriate interpretation and recreational activities.

USERS

Greater communication is needed between users, other stakeholders, and management authorities. The establishment of user forums should be considered.

Access for all should be the ultimate goal. Facilities and programmes should be devised by all involved in waterways management to achieve this end.

EXPANSION OF THE SYSTEM

Management strategies for the waterways should include policies on the expansion of the waterway system depending on the availability of funding. The plans should also ensure that adequate funding is directed towards upkeep, improving facilities, and operation of the navigations.



I N T R O D U C T I O N

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The development of road and rail networks over the past two hundred years made the primary transport function of Ireland's inland waterways redundant. Today, a new role has been found for them as a tourism and amenity resource. It is important, however, that this significant part of our heritage is managed in such a way that the built and natural heritage elements are not lost. We are responsible for using and enjoying our waterway heritage so that future generations will have the same opportunities and options as we have had. This is of international concern and was reflected in the theme of the 2001 World Canals Conference, 'Living Heritage'. A sensitive balance between the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – should be ensured.

BACKGROUND

- 1.2 In 1999 the Heritage Council published a policy paper, *The Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways*, addressed to the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. This was the result of a wide ranging consultation process during 1998, involving a consultation document¹ and a feedback seminar.



¹ Consultation document on the Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways, Heritage Council. August 1998.

Three issues that emerged from the original consultation process in 1998 are still of great relevance today:

- i. While the inland waterways are accepted as an important part of our national heritage, they also contain within themselves individual heritage items which fall into other heritage areas such as architecture, wildlife, and both underwater and industrial archaeology.
- ii. There is a need for an overall strategic plan for the waterways and their corridors. During the 1998 consultation this issue was identified by many. In particular the local authorities saw a role for themselves in the formulation and implementation of such a plan.
- iii. Much emphasis was placed on the importance of the heritage aspects of the waterways in the light of their role as recreational and tourist amenities. Although the built heritage aspect was stressed by some respondents, the natural heritage gave the greatest cause for concern. Sustainable tourist and recreational development involves the protection of the resource which it is seeking to exploit and need not be at odds with economic growth. It was also indicated that the conservation of the natural heritage was not sufficiently prioritised in waterway restoration projects.



- 1.3 The Heritage Council considers that it is now time to review the 1999 policy paper, The Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways. In the light of the establishment of Waterways Ireland, and other policy developments outlined further on, it is time to evaluate whether this important part of our heritage is being managed in a sustainable way.
- 1.4 The Heritage Council is addressing this policy paper to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government under its statutory role, and this paper covers all waterways and waterway heritage sites in Ireland. It does not take into consideration the waterways of Northern Ireland.
- 1.5 Under the arrangements set up under the Good Friday Agreement, the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is designated as the minister in the Republic responsible for Waterways Ireland, shared with the Minister for Culture Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland.

2 INLAND WATERWAY HERITAGE – DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE

- 2.1 In the Heritage Act, 1995, the term ‘inland waterways’ means canals, canalised sections of rivers and lakes, navigation channels in rivers and lakes, and their associated navigational features. In this document we build on that definition to mean any waterway, including tidal waterways that carried commercial traffic in the eighteenth – twentieth centuries. Feeder tributaries and streams are also of importance to the navigable system, particularly regarding the quality, good or bad, of their waters.
- 2.2 Inland waterways and their associated structures are an important part of our transport and industrial heritage. Their history and construction are tangible links to our past in areas of business, technology, and trade. They are physical markers of Ireland’s economic and social development that deserve our recognition and merit preservation for future generations. They are of cultural value, places where people lived and worked over generations. They are made up of habitats for many forms of wildlife. Inland waterways also hold aesthetic, recreational, and spiritual value, offering spaces where people can relax and enjoy their surroundings. They add to the quality of life of those living in their vicinity and of visitors, both Irish or foreign.

Inland waterways are also of economic value acting as a stimulus for commercial and tourism activities including the private boat sector, boat maintenance, boat hire, fishing, accommodation, and services associated with land-based activities in both rural and urban areas. They can also contribute to an enhanced environment attractive to businesses seeking relocation.

3 OVERALL AIM

- 3.1 The inland waterways and their corridors should be managed in an integrated broad-based way, conserving their built and archaeological heritage features, and protecting their landscape and biodiversity. Recognising that the inland waterways are a unique part of our heritage, but which today are fulfilling a new role not envisaged for them originally, we aim to enhance the enjoyment and appreciation of them as living heritage both for this generation and for future generations.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In December 1998 the establishment of one of the North/South cross-border bodies, Waterways Ireland, was announced. This placed most of the navigable waterways of the island of Ireland under one administration (Lough Corrib and Lough Neagh, for example, were not included). Since then Waterways Ireland has been established progressively, operating through the North/South Council and answering to a nominated minister in both jurisdictions: the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs; and the Minister for Culture, Arts & Leisure Northern Ireland. Its activities have to be approved in both jurisdictions. During the suspension of the NI Assembly, the responsibility of the Minister for Culture Arts and Leisure has been taken up by the Minister appointed by Westminster. In Northern Ireland, waterways that are not currently navigable are managed by the Rivers Agency, DCAL, while natural and built heritage issues are within the remit of the Department of the Environment. In the Republic of Ireland, while natural and built heritage issues are within the remit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, there is a lack of clarity as to who holds overall responsibility for waterways outside the remit of Waterways Ireland.
- 4.2 There is a myriad of government departments, state agencies, and local authorities whose responsibilities include an aspect of the inland waterways or whose policies impact on them. These include: Dept of Environment, Heritage & Local Government; Dept of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; Dept of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources; Dept of Agriculture and Food; Marine Institute; Central Fisheries Board and regional fisheries boards; ESB; Bord na Mona; EPA; as well as the relevant local authorities.
- 4.3 The National Heritage Plan and National Biodiversity Plan were published in April 2002 by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. Both plans contain many actions relating to inland waterways heritage: its identification, management, and protection, and, importantly, its promotion. The National Heritage Plan places great importance on increasing local involvement and access, in line with other policies in the plan. Unfortunately the funding sought for both has not been forthcoming; however, the plans remain government policy and create a policy framework within which this document and other waterway strategies function.

- 4.4 In 2002 the Water Framework Directive was transposed into Irish law, (SI722/2003), promoting an integrated approach to water quality and management on a catchment basis. A critical piece of environmental legislation, it requires that all waters be maintained at 'good ecological status' or higher, through the implementation of River Basin Plans, and also provides for the protection of aquatic habitats, and terrestrial habitats that rely on water. It will benefit many aspects of inland waterways heritage through the protection of habitats, improvement of water quality, and the promotion of a co-ordinated approach to the management of river basins.
- 4.5 Since 2001, the Heritage Council has conducted four corridor studies in partnership with Waterways Ireland, and local authorities. The corridor studies methodology is a tool to manage the waterways in an integrated way, and the completed studies offer ideas on the management of specific aspects of waterways heritage.
- 4.6 The Heritage Council, in partnership with local authorities, has set up a scheme placing heritage officers in local authorities. The heritage officers are currently setting up county heritage forums, and drawing up county heritage plans that provide for the protection and enhancement of specific waterways.

5 MANAGEMENT OF THE WATERWAYS RESOURCE

- 5.1 There is no overall management body for inland waterways in Ireland. Waterways Ireland manages the largest portfolio of waterways on the island of Ireland². In addition, there are other river navigation authorities in the Republic of Ireland. These include the Corrib Navigation Trustees, and harbour commissioners in tidal stretches. Some disused navigations, like parts of the Mountmellick branch of the Grand Canal, are still in the ownership of CIE; others are managed by local authorities within the context of county development plans. Some are managed by NGOs: the Boyne Canal is partly owned by An Taisce and a large portion of the Ulster Canal within the Republic of Ireland is still in state ownership. In other situations, sections of disused waterways have reverted to the ownership of the surrounding land owner. In all cases, the relevant local authorities, and the Dept of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, are responsible for the protection of the heritage. Other bodies such as the ESB, Bord na Mona, EPA, regional fishery boards, and local authorities, are involved in some aspect of management of the waterways, e.g., fish stocks, water quality, or water levels.

² These include the Shannon Navigation, Royal and Grand Canals, Barrow Navigation, Shannon –Erne Waterway, Erne System, Lower Bann.

- 5.2 The Heritage Council is concerned that there is no agency charged with co-ordinating all the bodies involved in the management of the waterways and their corridors to ensure coherent overall management. The future River Basin Plans required by the WFD will integrate water management within catchments, and will cover water and ecological quality. Waterways Ireland has a specific responsibility to manage, maintain, and develop the waterways in their remit principally for recreational purposes, but it does not have a co-ordinating role. Its projects on any waterway require approval from both jurisdictions, and it does not get involved in land use planning issues unless there are direct implications for its navigations. The local authorities do take the inland waterway corridors into account in their county development plans on an individual basis but rarely co-ordinate with neighbouring authorities. As a result, integrated planning for inland waterways and their corridors is not straightforward and the onus of responsibility to safeguard the built and natural heritage of the waterways devolves on the relevant local authorities.
- 5.3 Much discussion has centred around the statutory role of the ESB in controlling water levels on the Shannon lakes. It is widely accepted that transferring the control of lake water levels to another body is not going to solve the problem of the Shannon flooding. This is caused by a topographical inability to cope with the volume of water when it reaches abnormal levels, as happens in severe weather conditions. However, management of levels on the lakes is also important in dry spells to avoid the unnecessary lowering of water levels, which affects navigation and causes damage to boats. In this case, unlike in flood conditions, co-ordinated management of the water levels may achieve results. The Heritage Council recommends that the ESB and Waterways Ireland liaise on this matter. With regard to the possibility of works on the Shannon, it is generally accepted that any works carried out to improve run-off in flood conditions would not only be costly but would have unacceptable environmental impact implications; it is also doubtful whether they would be effective.
- 5.4 Thus it is clear that the management of the waterways and their corridors requires greater co-operation between all the stakeholders. The following recommendations are made as ways to improve co-ordination:

- i. There should be greater interaction between the local authority development plans and plans drawn up by Waterways Ireland. The Waterways Corridor Study approach (see section 7 below) could be used as a template for this.
- ii. Sufficient resources should be allocated for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, including public participation measures. The Heritage Council believes that full implementation of the WFD will lead to better management of the water resource by improving water quality and addressing management issues such as water abstraction. Successful implementation of the directive will require a high degree of co-ordination among the statutory authorities and a greater level of public participation in the management process than in the past.
- iii. Accurate flood plain maps should be drawn up to control inappropriate development in affected areas.

6 FUNDING

- 6.1 In the last ten years, major funding has been allocated for inland waterways infrastructure under the Operational Fund for Tourism 1994-1999, and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2001-06. This funding was allocated to works being carried out by the inland waterways sections of the heritage service (Dúchas Waterways) and then subsequently by Waterways Ireland; for example, the NDP has an allocation for the completion of the Royal Canal. It should be ensured that major infrastructure funding is continued in future national plans.
- 6.2 In addition to infrastructure funding, financial support towards the ongoing maintenance and management of inland waterways should be retained and increased. Waterways Ireland should be given adequate funds to carry out all its day-to-day functions and to ensure the protection of the built and natural heritage so that the integrity of the heritage aspects of the inland waterways is not diminished.
- 6.3 The Heritage Council is concerned that there is no provision in current budget allocations for those waterways and waterway heritage sites not under Waterways Ireland's remit. It is strongly recommended that future national plans and tourism funds contain allocations to be availed of, as appropriate, by local authorities, local development associations, and voluntary groups.

- 6.4 Partnership between Waterways Ireland, the local authorities, and the private sector can also be used as a means to raise funds for amenity works alongside waterways. Private sector developments which meet sustainable development criteria should be encouraged.

7 THE CORRIDOR STUDY CONCEPT – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL & OPPORTUNITIES

- 7.1 In the Heritage Council's policy paper *Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways*, the importance of linking the management of the inland waterways to their corridors was highlighted. The *National Heritage Plan* also contains an action on waterway corridors as a catalyst for local development. Corridor studies had already been carried out on the Greater Dublin sections of the Grand Canal and the Royal Canal in 1994 and 1995 respectively. In 2001, the Heritage Council, working in partnership with Waterways Ireland and the relevant local authorities, decided to implement a programme of further studies. Studies completed to date are as follows:

- The Shannon Navigation from Shannonbridge to Meelick, and the Grand Canal from the Shannon to Ballycommon (2001-2)
- The Shannon Navigation from Lanesborough to Shannonbridge (which includes Lough Ree and the Suck Navigation) (2003-4)
- The Shannon Navigation from Roosky to Lanesborough, the Royal Canal Main Line to Thomastown, and the Longford Branch of the Royal Canal (2003-4)
- The Shannon Navigation from Lough Allen and Lough Key to Roosky (2004-5)

Further studies are planned for the near future:

- The Shannon Navigation from Meelick to Limerick (including Lough Derg)
- The Grand Canal from Ballycommon to Lucan, the Barrow Line to Athy, and the Royal Canal from Thomastown to Kilcock
- The Barrow, Nore and Suir Navigations

Others will be needed to cover the entire system.

- 7.2 The studies carried out to date defined waterway corridors, identified the built and natural heritage elements in the corridors, and proposed actions for heritage protection

and the sustainable development of the corridors over a ten year period. The studies were carried out through deskwork, field work, and consultation both with key organisations and with the general public. Arising from them, a number of recommendations are made in relation to development control and opportunities:

- i. The studies should now become an important element in the relevant county development process with the proposed policies and priorities included in the county development plans. The studies should, where appropriate, enhance co-ordination between these plans and those of Waterways Ireland for the navigations.
- ii. One issue which emerged strongly in the public consultation process was the need to include local communities to a greater extent in the strategic planning for the corridors. Not only do they feel excluded but they find it difficult to access information and there is a need for much wider communication. The local authorities, working with Waterways Ireland where appropriate, should encourage local communities, the voluntary sector, and non-governmental organisations to continue their important involvement.
- iii. There is a need to realise the socio-economic benefits of developing the inland waterways. This requires accepting responsibility for delivering such benefits. It is also necessary to manage effectively tensions and conflicts between conservation of the heritage and usage of the waterways, and between users and development pressures. The social, economic, and environmental aspects of the waterways are interrelated and are not mutually exclusive. Again, this requires co-ordination, particularly between the local authorities working in partnership with Waterways Ireland and other stakeholders.
- iv. Policies and guidelines for development and tourism-related projects along waterways need to be developed to avoid potential adverse effects and to encourage sensitive development for the benefit of all.
- v. In line with the principles of Local Agenda 21, encouragement and guidance should be given by the local authorities to fishery boards, the private sector, and voluntary and community groups to carry out appropriate development work on the waterways and their corridors.

8 HERITAGE – CONSERVATION, ENHANCEMENT AND ENJOYMENT

- 8.1 The heritage of the waterways forms the main part of their attraction, whether on a brief visit to a lakeside or on a multi-day boat trip. As waterways heritage encompasses a wide range of heritage aspects, an integrated approach to its conservation and enhancement is vital to ensure its survival into the future. Waterways heritage can be damaged or reduced in value through inappropriate developments and user behaviour.
- 8.2 To ensure an integrated approach between the needs of society and heritage conservation, it is useful to consider inland waterways within the context of the Irish landscape, of which they are a key element. The Heritage Council's vision for Irish landscape is of a dynamic place that accommodates the physical and spiritual needs of society with the needs of nature in a harmonious manner, and where an integrated approach to rural and urban landscapes is promoted³. Waterway Corridor Studies are a useful tool for an integrated, landscape-based approach to the management of waterway heritage. Each study has included a landscape character assessment of the corridor, and proposes policies for its protection and enhancement.

AWARENESS RAISING AND INTERPRETATION

- 8.3 Inland waterways heritage is not as well-known and enjoyed as it deserves to be. Increased awareness of the heritage should lead to greater understanding and appreciation, and hence to its protection and enhancement. The individual aspects of built and natural heritage along the waterways also merit a higher profile. While some of our waterways heritage is under threat from over-use, other aspects are suffering from neglect and a lack of appreciation. Site-specific strategies are required to cope with these two extremes: to manage visitors to honey-pot sites; and to enhance and raise awareness of the lesser-known places. Awareness of the importance and value of inland waterways heritage should be promoted through appropriate interpretation and recreational activities.
- 8.4 Many heritage sites, built and natural, along the waterways require increased interpretation to enhance the experience of the user or visitor; in particular, underwater archaeology and derelict waterways would benefit from greater interpretation. The highest standards of interpretation should be aspired to and new media considered.

³ 'The Irish landscape will be a dynamic landscape; one that accommodates the physical and spiritual needs of society with the needs of nature in a harmonious manner, and as a result brings benefits to both.' *Integrating Policies for Ireland's landscape*. p13. Heritage Council. May 2002.

- 8.5 While awareness-raising activities are being undertaken by the Marketing & Communications division of Waterways Ireland, and by the Heritage Council's *Heritage in Schools* programme, additional awareness raising activities are needed. The programme carried out with Offaly Kildare Waterways and Waterways Ireland has demonstrated the potential benefits, such as a reduction in litter in the Grand Canal. Further encouragement should be given to locally-based awareness activities. The County Heritage Plans may offer an additional opportunity for awareness raising projects.

ADVICE

- 8.6 There is a need for advice both on heritage issues and on preserving the balance between conservation and development throughout the waterways and their corridors in an integrated way. The relevant local authorities are tackling these issues in different ways through their Development Plans and by employing heritage officers (an initiative of the Heritage Council). Waterways Ireland has set up an Environmental Section within its Technical Services division consisting of a senior environmental officer, two environmental officers, and clerical support. Nevertheless, despite these welcome provisions, the need for specialist advice still exists in particular situations.



MONITORING

- 8.7 Monitoring heritage allows us to assess the impact of national or county policies and strategies on heritage, as well as allowing us to gauge the effectiveness of protection and enhancement policies for heritage. We are obliged to carry out monitoring on our biodiversity under the Convention on Biodiversity, and on our water under the WFD. Adequate staffing and financial resources should be allocated to ensure this monitoring will be carried out.
- 8.8 The Waterway Corridor Studies have produced policies and actions for the integrated management of the aspects of heritage along and within the corridors; indicators have been identified by which to measure progress on these. The detailed appendices to the studies provide a useful tool for identifying heritage aspects and issues. These appendices could also form a baseline from which changes can be monitored over time. However, the studies do not cover the full waterways system yet, and other bodies and agencies should fulfil their monitoring obligations too.
- 8.9 Indicators should be identified to assess the overall sustainability of our waterways, and their capacity for development. Issues such as the carrying capacity of the navigations could be examined under this heading.

PROTECTION OF DISUSED AND DERELICT WATERWAYS

- 8.10 Disused waterways fall into two categories: those that can be restored, and those that will never be restored. A list of these is enclosed at the end of this document. However, both categories of disused waterways are important heritage sites and require multiple measures for their long-term protection covering: legal protection, physical protection, and the raising and enhancement of awareness. All disused sites should be identified and included on the Record of Monuments and Places, or the Record of Protected Structures. The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, supported by the Heritage Council, is carrying out a survey of these sites to establish ownership and encourage plans to be made for their preservation. County heritage forums and the county heritage plans also have important roles in protecting and enhancing disused waterways.



- 8.11 When restoration of waterways is undertaken the following issue may arise: how much intervention should be permitted on the original works to provide a viable recreational waterway as opposed to its original role as a transport artery? (See 14.1 in relation to the proposed restoration of the Ulster Canal). The Heritage Council believes that each case should be considered on an individual basis, reflecting the concept of living heritage outlined at the start of this document. Restoring a canal to dimensions that are known to be inappropriate for modern needs is unlikely to guarantee its survival into the future. In addition, un-restored canals can be very vulnerable to accidental and deliberate damage, development pressures, and the forces of nature.
- 8.12 Those that could be restored in the future should be protected from any activity or development that would prevent this future restoration by the relevant local authorities and waterway management authorities. The *National Heritage Plan* also identifies the need to protect the lines of disused navigations for future restoration.
- 8.13 Derelict inland waterways with no potential for restoration are particularly vulnerable, and need site-specific strategies for their protection and enhancement. Their potential as recreational areas or heritage attractions should be examined.
- 8.14 Another way of protecting the lines of disused waterways is to find alternative uses for these linear transport infrastructures. Walking routes or shared-use routes such as greenways are often appropriate ways to conserve disused waterways. Examples of this can be seen along the Newry Canal in Northern Ireland, and in Kilkenny City.

HERITAGE AND TRADITIONAL BOATS

- 8.15 The Heritage Council believes that attention should be paid to protecting, conserving, and interpreting the heritage that exists in the fleet of old boats on the inland waterways. The fleet includes old trading boats, many now converted to pleasure boats, vintage pleasure boats, and a wide range of open boats used for fishing, rowing, and sailing.

BIODIVERSITY AND WATER QUALITY

- 8.16 One of the most important aspects of our inland waterways is the biodiversity that they support. Species of birds, insects, mammals, as well as a spectrum of important habitats ranging from callows to lakes, are found in the inland waterways system. Man-made canals have created corridors along which water-based and terrestrial flora and fauna move, creating a particular and unique ecology. Inland water ecosystems are threatened by a wide range of issues including pollution, drainage, alien species, peat extraction, acidification, gravel extraction, and erosion due to over-grazing.
- 8.17 The *National Biodiversity Plan* (April 2002) promotes a catchment approach to protecting and improving water quality and management in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. Water quality is integral to the health of the inland waterways environment, as well as affecting visitors and users. The improvement and maintenance of good or high quality water status, and of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, as stated in the WFD and National Biodiversity Plan, should be attained through the support of the forthcoming River Basin District Plans and the Nitrates Action Programme.
- 8.18 The *National Biodiversity Plan* also requires local authorities and other agencies such as Waterways Ireland, ESB, and Bord na Mona, to draw up their own biodiversity plans, all of which will contribute to the protection of the biodiversity of our waterways. Resources will be required to implement and monitor the actions in these county and sectoral plans.
- 8.19 Many areas of our waterways are designated sites under the Birds and Habitats Directives (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation) and the Wildlife Act 2000 (Natural Heritage Areas). The management plans for these areas should be drawn up in consultation with the landowners affected, and adequate resources provided to implement them. The involvement of landowners and local communities in the management of designated areas is vital to their long-term protection.
- 8.20 While it is important to protect the sites designated under the Birds and Habitats Directives the biodiversity found in areas located outside these sites requires our attention too. The Waterway Corridor Studies contain policies and actions for specific

areas, as well as listing in the appendices the habitats and species requiring special attention. It is necessary for the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Dept of Environment, Heritage & Local Government to carry out baseline surveys and to monitor these aspects of heritage.

- 8.21 While many sites identified under the Ramsar Convention and as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are already in the list of sites designated under Birds and Habitats Directives (SPAs, SACs), efforts should be made to ensure all RAMSAR sites and IBAs are given appropriate statutory protection. Steps should be taken to realise the commitment by Ramsar contracting parties, of which Ireland is one, "to formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory" (Ramsar Convention Article 3.1). The convention defines wise use of wetland as, "their sustainable utilization for the benefit of mankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem"⁴.
- 8.22 An increase in the uptake of the revised Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS 3) would also be beneficial to the natural heritage along the waterways, whether designated or not. In addition to the obligatory measures protecting water bodies and retaining wildlife habitat, several of the supplementary measures in this scheme will be relevant to lands along inland waterways. These include the Corncrake Habitat Measure, the Traditional Hay Meadow, and Species Rich Grassland Option. However, the requirement to fence watercourses will have a negative impact on the landscape of the waterways, public access to the waterways, and in some cases on the ecology of the water edge habitats.

UNDERWATER AND INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

- 8.23 The importance of building up data bases and inventories of the unique industrial heritage and architectural features of the waterways is identified in the National Heritage Plan. The inventories and databases contained in the appendices of the Waterway Corridor Studies are an important step in building a national picture; this information should be included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, the



⁴ Davis, T.J., ed, 1994. The Ramsar Convention Manual : A guide to the convention on wetlands of international importance especially as wildfowl habitat. Ramsar Convention Bureau. pp207



Record of Protected Structures, and the Record of Monuments and Places by the local authorities and the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

- 8.24 An increasing number of underwater sites are being identified on our river navigations, e.g., the bridge at Clonmacnoise. Areas with high potential for underwater archaeology should be identified and surveyed by the Underwater Archaeological Unit of the Dept of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, and included in the Record of Monuments and Places. Adequate resources should be allocated to the Underwater Archaeological Unit to carry out this survey work.

TOWPATHS

- 8.25 Towpaths are an integral part of inland waterways heritage. While they provide a facility by which many people access the waterways, the management and maintenance of towpaths should take their heritage value into account. Resurfacing works should be appropriate for the surrounding context, be it urban, rural or suburban.

9 USER MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 Usage of the waterways either on water or on land is the principal way that people experience and enjoy inland waterways heritage. However, there are many ways to enjoy the waterways and conflicts may arise between the different users. These conflicts can be resolved and avoided through good user communication and management.

The following recommendations address current issues relating to usage of the waterways:

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN USERS, AND BETWEEN USERS AND AGENCIES

- 9.2 The establishment of regional waterway user forums, convening on a regular basis, would improve communication and help address issues of concern between users, and between users and the managing agencies.

- 9.3 It is important that there are strong links and clearly identified lines of communication between the users and the various agencies involved in the management of waterways. A complaint frequently expressed at consultation meetings for the water corridor studies is that people do not know who to contact on particular issues. It is recommended that each agency nominate a staff member to liaise directly with the public on waterway issues.

BYLAWS

- 9.4 The existing navigation bylaws, which are currently being redrafted by Waterways Ireland with a view to standardisation, need to be more rigorously enforced. The increase in staff levels within Waterways Ireland should enable this to be achieved.
- 9.5 Voluntary codes of conduct should be produced by different user groups and their relevant governing bodies, in consultation with waterway management authorities.

ACCESS FOR ALL

- 9.6 The local authorities, Waterways Ireland, and the local communities should continue to work in partnership to improve infrastructure and facilities, and to draw up programmes for all waterway users. Efforts should be made to increase usage among those who might have been excluded due to barriers presented by physical or mental disabilities, and economic and social restraints.

'NO WAKE' ZONES

- 9.7 It is strongly recommended that the designation of 'no wake' zones be considered, and appropriate signage added to the current speed limit signs to identify these zones. The amount of wake generated is not necessarily related to speed and depends on a number of factors such as hull shape. Also, many boats are not equipped with speedometers. 'No wake' zones have proved to be a satisfactory way to handle this issue on inland waterways throughout the world. At the same time, a public awareness campaign is needed to place greater emphasis on the damage caused by excessive wake not only to other boat users but also to wildlife. The Heritage Council intends to carry out a study on the impact of wake on heritage in Ireland.

TOWPATH-BASED ACTIVITIES

- 9.8 Walking and cycling holidays are central to Irish tourism and walking is now an important established use of canal towpaths, with a number of waymarked ways running along them. In order to broaden the usage of waterways, a survey should be carried out to establish which tow paths are of sufficient width to accommodate multiple usage such as cycling, horse riding, and angling.
- 9.9 Once sections of the towpaths are identified as sufficiently wide, horse riding should be permitted only on towpaths under special licence in designated areas as it is recognised as not compatible with some other users.
- 9.10 The existing bylaws relating to shooting on the towpaths of the Grand and Royal Canals and the Barrow Navigation should be retained for safety reasons.

HOUSE BOATS

- 9.11 Waterways management authorities should establish a number of serviced sites for boats that are inhabited all the year round.

10 PROMOTION & MARKETING

- 10.1 Successful promotion and marketing of the waterways is dependant on the creation and maintenance of a high quality product, thus the conservation of heritage and sustainable development in the surrounding corridor are vital in maintaining the inland waterways as an attraction.
- 10.2 The marketing and promotion of integrated inland waterway holidays needs to be encouraged, with the development of cluster patterns of water-based leisure activities including fishing and walking.
- 10.3 The creation of attractive land-based waterway visitor sites to attract family and day-visitors should be a priority. Consideration should be given to the use of redundant and disused waterways heritage sites as centres of interest.
- 10.4 There is a clear distinction between the marketing of recreational boating and the promotion of the waterways; this is recognised by Waterways Ireland and direct

marketing is left to the boat hire sector. Nevertheless, as the fastest growing sector in recreational boating, there is a need to recognise that private boating customers are equally important on the inland waterways in relation to the formulation of marketing and promotion plans. It is important to understand their needs to ensure that these are being met.

- 10.5 The Marketing Division of Waterways Ireland should work with the private sectors and with its own environmental department to ensure that the product that is being promoted and marketed is subject at all times to the principles of protection, conservation, and enhancement of heritage.

11 EXPANSION OF THE WATERWAYS SYSTEM

The expansion of the waterways system should be seen in the light of the remit of Waterways Ireland. Although all capital works undertaken by Waterways Ireland in the Republic of Ireland are funded by the Irish State, the administration of the waterways under its control through the Good Friday Agreement is funded on the basis of navigation mileage within each state. Any increase in the system therefore should not be allowed to impact unfairly on either country. The Dept of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs is responsible for Waterways Ireland, but there is no designated government department, as such, which has the responsibility for the preservation and restoration of those disused waterways outside the remit of Waterways Ireland (see sections 4 and 8). Some of the local authorities are showing an interest in the disused waterways in their areas and this should be encouraged.

- 11.1 Management strategies for the waterways should include policies on the expansion of the waterway system depending on the availability of funding. The plans should also ensure that adequate funding is directed towards upkeep, improving facilities and operation of the new navigations.
- 11.2 The following criteria have been identified as having the greatest relevance:
- How the projected expansion of the system would impact on the built and natural heritage

- Whether the project extends the 'connected network'
 - Whether the project improves access to the sea
 - Whether the project opens up new destinations
 - Whether it has the ability to attract users
- 11.3 As with the EU structural funding under the *Operational Plan for Tourism* 1994-9, the success or otherwise of schemes is frequently measured solely in tourism-related and economic terms, without taking into account the importance of conserving the natural and built heritage which the schemes represent. Moreover, recognition of the local and recreational amenity value of our waterways has increased greatly in recent years and is further justification for their restoration.
- 11.4 The Heritage Council has arranged potential projects into four groups; projects that are included in the first group, *Completion of Works in Progress*, are accorded highest priority. If strong local authority and community support exists for a project, this should increase its priority rating.
- 11.5 The *National Canals and Waterways Strategy* drawn up by Brady Shipman and Martin in 1992 for the Office of Public Works is an important source of information for this section. The strategy focused on disused sections of the waterways system, and made recommendations for the long-term development and expansion of the national network.

12 COMPLETION OF WORKS IN PROGRESS

Royal Canal Main Line & Longford Branch including the restoration of non-tidal access from the River Liffey through Spencer Dock.

- 12.1 Work in progress by Waterways Ireland and funded by the National Development Plan 2000-2006, excludes the restoration of Spencer Dock. Whilst Spencer Dock remains tidal it is most likely to preclude the passage of hire craft between the Grand and Royal canals in Dublin because of the difficulties and time delays involved in working tidal access. For this reason restoring the non-tidal navigation through Spencer Dock should be given a high priority. This matter is currently being addressed by the Dublin

Docklands Development Authority and Waterways Ireland in consultation with the other relevant authorities.

- 12.2 When restored, re-connection of the Royal Canal to the existing network will increase the latter by 154km and there is no doubt that it will be extensively used by boats. This will lead to an increased use of the eastern end of the Grand Canal by boats passing through Dublin to enter the Royal Canal or moving from the Royal Canal to return to the Shannon via the Grand Canal. There is already a well-established boat hire company on the 112km restored section between Dublin and Abbeyshrule. However, without the development of non-tidal access to the canal its full potential, even following restoration of the final 33km to the Shannon, is unlikely to be developed especially in relation to the hire business. This potential would be much further enhanced, moreover, by the restoration of the Longford Branch including Longford Harbour. This was also not included in the National Development Plan 2000-2006, and would also provide an important additional urban destination for Shannon-based craft.

12.3 **Tralee Ship Canal**

Restoration of this canal is been completed and the canal is now in the ownership of Tralee Town Council.





12.4 **All Existing Navigations**

There remains an on-going need for increased mooring facilities and infrastructural improvements. This requires co-operation between Waterways Ireland and the local authorities, and should take into account the increasing difficulty in identifying suitable sites. Waterways Ireland current plans include: the improving of existing harbours on Lough Derg at Garrykennedy and on Lough Ree at Portrunny; and investigation of the extension of the Shannon Navigation at the northern end of Lough Allen up the Shannon to near Dowra. In all cases, a detailed evaluation of the impact on built and natural heritage should be carried out in advance. Plans for infrastructural improvements should include actions to mitigate any negative impact on heritage, and to enhance aspects of heritage where possible.



12.5 **River Shannon, Wineport, Inner Lakes, Lough Ree to Glassan**

Given the sensitivity of the Inner Lakes, and their designation under the Birds and Habitats Directives, the impact of creating navigation to the village using the existing small stream or parallel canal requires careful environmental assessment and evaluation as negative impacts on the ecology of the area must be avoided. Other options, such as a signed greenway, should be investigated to assist in the promotion of Glassan as a new destination.

13 FURTHER WORKS

13.1 Ulster Canal

The Ulster Canal has been the subject of a full feasibility study undertaken on behalf of the Waterways Service, Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, and the Rivers Agency, Department of Agriculture, NI in 1997. This was updated in 2001 by the consultants for Waterways Ireland. They concluded that restoration was feasible, and provided costings and restoration options.

In 2002-3 Pricewaterhouse, on the instructions of Waterways Ireland, undertook a study of possible funding options for the restoration of the canal. The report concluded that the scale of funding required would make it difficult to find any immediately available public sources, and that the most likely potential source of funding would be the INTERREG programme covering the period 2006-12. It was also suggested that a non-profit-making trust would be a useful vehicle to maintain momentum, increase awareness, and support and develop appropriate partnerships.

Since then, the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWA) has made a number of unsuccessful applications for funding to begin restoration work at the western end of the canal. The IWA and local groups are also undertaking a number of clean-up and landscaping projects.

The Heritage Council believes that, given current funding constraints, restoration will most likely take place on a phased basis. Every encouragement should be given to voluntary and community groups involved in this work, as this restoration would have enormous potential benefits for the waterways, waterway users, and the surrounding communities. The Council believes that the canal should be restored to dimensions compatible with the Shannon-Erne Waterway and that special efforts should be made to conserve and interpret the remaining built heritage.

The three options for restoration in the feasibility study are:

- i.** To restore the waterway, preserving the line intact and the locks at 11 foot 6 inches in width.

- ii. To restore the waterway preserving the locks at 11 foot 6 inches but altering the line at both ends to avoid extensive bridge obstructions.
- iii. To restore the waterways enlarging the locks to correspond with the dimensions on the Shannon Erne Waterway, and altering the line at both ends to avoid extensive bridge obstructions.

The Heritage Council believes that the third option is the one to pursue, as:

- i. The narrow gauge of the locks on the Ulster Canal is widely recognised as being a major factor in its decline⁵. From the earliest days, it was necessary to tranship cargo from the canal boats into wider beam vessels suitable for crossing the lakes. There is no reason to repeat the mistakes of the early builders when restoring a canal. Restoring the canal to Shannon-Erne Waterway dimensions would ensure that a large majority of current vessels could use the canal. Restoring to original dimensions would seriously restrict the number of boats that could use the canal and thus severely impact the economic return that the project would otherwise enjoy.
- ii. Narrow beam boats are less suitable for the wave conditions likely to be encountered on the open lakes.

This plan would leave a number of original locks to be conserved at their original dimensions at either end.

13.2 **Grand Canal, Kilbeggan Branch**

Re-opening this 13km lock-free canal would provide an additional destination and significantly increase the number of boats in this area of the midlands. The voluntary effort that has led to the restoration of the canal stores and the harbour at Kilbeggan deserves acknowledgment but there are major engineering difficulties involved in re-watering the canal.

13.3 **Grand Canal, Naas Branch extension to Corbally**

It is well recognised that the short Naas Branch is under-used by boats. This is partly due to the need to progress through a flight of five locks in a distance of 4km to reach Naas

⁵ Shuttleworth Commission on Inland Waterways 1906

Harbour, and also to the absence of security at the harbour itself. A culverted road crossing on the outskirts of Naas prevents access to a very attractive 8km lock-free stretch of rural waterway to the harbour at Corbally. The bypass has now taken much of the traffic away from the old main road; if the culvert was replaced and this stretch opened up it would make the Naas Branch a much more attractive option to visit. The extension is kept in water because it is a water supply channel and a rich water-based flora and fauna has become established. The environmental impact of restoring the waterway would need to be sensitively assessed but it would be wrong to rule out the re-opening to navigation which would in turn create its own ecology. The condition of the line between Naas Harbour and the main road, which is full of litter and rubbish, is due in no small degree to the fact that it is disused. There are some canal buildings at Corbally Harbour which could be restored. However, restoring the navigation would have a considerable environmental impact and this would need to be carefully assessed.

13.4 **Grand Canal, Milltown Feeder**

This is the main supply to the summit level of the canal and is navigable to Milltown Bridge but navigation is limited to 0.75m depth and 1.8m headroom at Pluckerstown Bridge. Increasing the draft and headroom on the bridge would provide an alternative route for passenger boats, giving access to Milltown village. A turning point should be made at Milltown Bridge, which should be the limit of navigation in order to protect Pollardstown fen.

13.5 **Grand Canal, Blackwood Feeder**

This once navigable feeder is c.6.5 in length and was supplied from a storage reservoir at Ballynafagh Lake, entering the Grand Canal Main Line one mile east of Robertstown; it was closed in 1952. The feeder is presently the subject of an INTERREG funded project which is looking at options for the long-term management of the site.

13.6 **Grand Canal, Mountmellick Branch: Phase 1 to Portarlinton**

The *National Canals & Waterways Strategy* drawn up by Brady Shipman Martin states that full restoration of the Mountmellick Branch of the Grand Canal could not be justified economically (see 14.3 below) but a case is made for partial restoration between the junction with the Barrow Branch at Monasterevin and Portarlinton, a distance of 8km with one lock (extant). According to the strategy this 'would further expand the still water canal cruising "use-zone", add another destination to the network, one with an interesting industrial heritage complementing that of Monasterevin, and enhance Monasterevin as a major canal centre'. This line was not transferred to the Office of Public Works in 1986. Some parts are owned by CIE and other parts are in private ownership; CIE has given a commitment to Waterways Ireland that no further sections of this part of the canal will be sold.

13.7 **Boyne Navigation**

The Boyne Navigation is not part of the connected network but was accorded high priority in the *National Canals and Waterways Strategy* for the following reasons:

- It passes through an important tourist area which has now been accorded World Heritage Site designation



- There is easy access to Dublin
- It is largely owned by An Taisce, which could lead to an easier resolution of the many legal problems that restoration can pose

The Boyne Navigation should therefore be included, possibly on a phased approach. If the proposed Battle of the Boyne Centre goes ahead in the future, the navigation could be restored linking this centre with the Brú na Boinne Centre at Donore. A further phase could link the Brú na Boinne Centre, with Slane and Drogheda and finally extend the navigation upstream to Navan. The fact that it may prove feasible to form a link between the Boyne Navigation and the Royal Canal, which is part of the connected network, should also be taken into account.

13.8 Tidal Navigations of the South and South East

These tidal navigations had works carried out in the past to improve the navigation:

- **Slaney Navigation:** 31km from the sea to Enniscorthy
- **Bridgetown Canal:** from Ballyteigue Bay to Duncormick
- **Castlebridge Canal:** from River Slaney to Castlebridge and River Sow to Poulisack
- **Ballybrennan & Drinagh Canal:** 6.4km from River Slaney to Ballybrennan and Drinagh
- **Suir Navigation Carrick-on-Suir to Clonmel:** navigation upstream of Carrick impractical but original quays exist at Clonmel
- **Clodiagh Navigation, River Suir:** short tidal navigation to Portlaw

Local authorities in this region have expressed interest in exploring their potential. The Heritage Council recommends that policies for the protection of these navigations are included in the relevant County Development Plans, and that, where possible, navigational features are included in the Record of Monuments and Places.

13.9 Northern Ireland Waterways

These do not fall within the scope of this policy paper but the inland waterways of the

island of Ireland were constructed before the political division was created and the establishment of Waterways Ireland to administer most of the navigable inland waterways of Ireland is a recognition of this. Waterways Ireland administers the Erne Navigation and the Lower Bann but not the Lough Neagh system.

The other waterways of Northern Ireland: the Newry Canal, the Lagan Navigation, and the Coalisland Canal, which are currently not open to navigation, are administered by the Rivers Agency within the Department of Culture Arts & Leisure. Consideration of their heritage aspects in relation to any future restoration schemes is within the remit of the Department of the Environment. There is an increasing interest in restoration schemes and, once restored to navigation, the waterways could transfer to Waterways Ireland.

14 LONGER TERM WORKS, SOME OF WHICH HAVE NATURAL HERITAGE IMPLICATIONS REQUIRING CAREFUL ASSESSMENT

14.1 Erne Navigation extension to Lough Oughter

The *National Canals and Waterways Strategy* recommended this extension as a short-to-medium term project because it was seen as a means of consolidating and strengthening the Upper Erne Cruising Zone and the emerging node at Belturbet, in addition to providing a most attractive new destination at Killykeen Forest Park and further destinations at Killashandra and Butlersbridge. Preliminary studies undertaken by the Waterways Division of the Office of Public Works some years ago indicate that this would be an extremely costly project involving, among other works, a new lock and weir, together with extensive dredging to create a channel. The consequent possible adverse effects on the ecology of the system require that this tourism-related project – opening up a navigation where none existed before – be carefully assessed for its impact on the natural heritage.

14.2 River Shannon, Rinn River from Lough Forbes

The *National Canals and Waterways Strategy* highlighted the potential of extending the navigation of the River Rinn to Lough Rinn; subsequently Leitrim County Council retained these consultants to carry out a study (*Lough Rinn Navigation Pre-feasibility Study* 1997) which was included in the Leitrim County Development Plan 1991. The full environmental implications of this plan require serious consideration.

14.3 **Grand Canal, Mountmellick Branch: Phase 2 Portarlinton to Mountmellick**

The *National Canals and Waterways Strategy* included a suggestion that only a partial restoration would be justified (see 13.6 above). This is based on the fact that the Portarlinton ring road has been built along the line of the canal (between the R420 and R419 roads) over a distance of 2.5km. Thus, to reinstate the canal to the south of the town would be prohibitively expensive. However, a less costly alternative might be to make the River Barrow navigable through Portarlinton, with short links to the east and south west of the town. The feasibility of this option should be studied before the restoration to Mountmellick is finally ruled out. Because the Mountmellick Branch was not transferred to the Office of Public Works in 1986, and is now in multiple ownership, the line of this canal is much more vulnerable and needs to be safeguarded so that any attempt to restore it in the future is not rendered more difficult.

14.4 **Corrib Navigation, restoration of the Eglinton Canal and extension into Lough Mask**

The *National Canals and Waterways Strategy* stated that concern was expressed over the impact of motor vessels on fishing and wildlife on Lough Mask; for this reason no recommendations were made in respect of the extension of the Corrib Navigation into Lough Mask. Nevertheless, it was also stated that, viewed as a complete, fully navigable system, Loughs Corrib and Mask would provide a waterway system which would be an important tourist resource even though not part of the connected network. Prior to according the system its relative priority, full consideration should be given to all the factors involved in particular the environmental effects (e.g., the likely infestation of the lake by alien species such as Zebra Mussels), as well as the feasibility of using the uncompleted Cong Canal to connect the two lakes. The extension into Lough Mask and even the active promotion of further cruising on Lough Corrib are firmly resisted by fishing interests, and both Lough Corrib and Lough Mask are SPAs.

The restoration of the link with the sea through Galway via the Eglinton Canal has been rendered very difficult by the erection of fixed bridges.

14.5 **Grand Canal – Royal Canal Link**

The possibility exists of creating a midlands link between the Grand and Royal Canals and extending the operational waterways system by linking the Grand Canal at

Kilbeggan with the Royal Canal at Mullingar via the River Brosna and Lough Ennell. This would create a circular route that would avoid the passage through Lough Ree, which is not suitable for many of the boats using the canals. The *National Canals and Waterways Strategy* gave such a link low priority but Brady Shipman and Martin may have underestimated the potential of such a link to increase boat traffic on both canals and extend the network at the same time by some 20km. The project is supported by Westmeath Co. Council. This priority could be reviewed following a feasibility study.

14.6 River Boyne – Royal Canal Link by extending the Boyne Navigation to Longwood

The potential means of linking the Boyne Navigation, if this navigation is restored, to the connected network has been suggested by the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland. It would involve extending the original navigation from Navan via Trim to a junction with the Royal Canal near the Boyne Aqueduct at Longwood. The practicality of such a project arises mainly as a result of the extensive dredging work carried out along the river in implementing the Boyne arterial drainage scheme. The project would open up an extensive new area of the east midlands to waterways tourism with considerable potential economic and tourism benefits for the towns of Slane, Navan, and Trim, as well as several intermediate villages. It would also provide an additional access to the sea from the connect network at Drogheda. As with all schemes to create new navigations, the plan should be carefully assessed for its impact on the natural heritage.

15 DERELICT WATERWAYS WITH NO POTENTIAL FOR RESTORATION BUT IMPORTANT AS HERITAGE SITES

- 15.1 These navigations can never be restored as part of the navigable network, but the Heritage Council recommends their protection through inclusion on the Record of Monuments and Places and/or the Record of Protected Structures. Their potential as heritage attractions, greenways, walking routes, and recreational areas should be explored. Where possible county heritage plans, and county development plans should include policies for their protection and enhancement.

15.2 **Early Shannon Navigation Works**

- Roosky: old canal to west of river with locks dating back to the 1780s
- Athlone: old canal to west of river with one lock and a guard lock originally built in the 1750s but lock rebuilt in 1806
- Shannonbridge: Original lockhouse dating back to 1750s and some stone work of original lock
- Banagher: old canal west of river with harbour, lockhouse, and lock which was built in the 1750s and rebuilt in 1806
- Meelick: old canal to east of river with lockhouse and lock which was built in the 1750s and rebuilt in 1806
- Limerick to Killaloe Navigation: Original navigation (14km) with 11 locks; three canal sections linked by stretches of river. The hydroelectric works in the 1920s replaced the earlier works. The locks are of particular importance and vary in design. The downstream canal and locks from Limerick to Plassey are being restored

15.3 **OTHER NAVIGATIONS**

- Grand Canal Line to Ballinasloe: (22.5km) with two locks: access to Ballinasloe is now up the River Suck and much of the old canal has disappeared in bog workings although the lock chambers are extant
- Nore Navigation: some works were carried out including seven locks which were partially built in the 1750s between Inistioge and Kilkenny
- Lombardstown Canal, Munster Blackwater: 8km with two locks constructed in 1750s from Mallow towards Dromagh (never completed)
- Lismore Canal, Munster Blackwater: 2.4km with one lock constructed about 1814

