

**PRESENTATION TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE
ON
ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta The Heritage Council
March 9th 2010**



The Heritage Council (HC) has a statutory function to propose policies and priorities for Ireland's inland waterways, that is navigable rivers, canals and lakes, and is also involved in the River Basin Districts under the Water Framework Directive. In its exercise of this role, the Heritage Council has, over the past decade, taken several initiatives including researching and publishing various policy papers, Waterway Corridor studies, and holding seminars and other public awareness events. The Council also carried out a review of the "Pilot" Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon Area, in 2005 which was submitted to the Dept of Finance as part of their overall evaluation of the Tax Incentive Schemes.

Going back to 1999 and the publication of our first report on inland waterways, we have been concerned that there is a need for an overall strategic plan for Ireland's waterways and their corridors. In fact, the Council carried out a consultation process with agencies, Government Departments, the local authorities, and the general public, at that time (1998-9), where the lack of such a plan was identified as a major deficit.

Our concern at the need for a co-ordinating agency was also spelled out very clearly in our 2005 policy paper on inland waterways called "*Integrating Policies for Ireland's Inland Waterways*". In that report we stated: "The HC 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."

Unfortunately, the consequences of this lack of coordination was brought home acutely by last November's flooding events, where no agency or Department took a leadership role, causing great frustration among the various communities around the country affected by the floods. This happened despite the fact that the Flood Policy Review Group, set up by the then Minister of State, Tom Parlon, in OPW in 2003 recommended an integrated, river-basin based approach, and that a Protocol on flood emergencies was drawn up in 2008 by DEHLG and OPW.

Following the adoption of the Flood Policy Review Group's report in 2004, the OPW was charged with the major responsibility of coordinating flood risk management, *which is not the same as co-ordinating the response to flood events*. From the April 2008 "*A guide to flood emergencies*" (DEHLG website), this appears to be a role given to individual local authorities with advice from OPW.

So, how can we ensure greater co-ordination by the various agencies involved in the management of our rivers, lakes and canals, and that there is also a clearly defined and agreed leadership role being exercised? Our experience at the Heritage Council suggests that effective co-ordination

requires the allocation of resources, including time and money, by all parties involved, in addition to leadership from the co-ordinating body. Formal structures are required too to facilitate good working relations, clear channels of communication and trust between all the parties involved. It is not sufficient to expect an ad-hoc working structure to evolve of its own accord.

The Heritage Council has extensive experience of bringing various organisations and groups together to tackle complex and conflicting issues. Indeed the Council is charged by the Heritage Act, 1995, to “promote the coordination of all activities relating to the functions of the Council”. We have put this into practice in many projects, including the Waterway Corridor Studies (2002-2007), and other examples include the development of the Wicklow Uplands Council, the Bere Island Conservation Plan, the Burren Life Initiative, the Beara Breifne Way, the Village Design Programme 11, and the Tara-Skryne landscape project.

In all these situations, we at the Heritage Council facilitated the coming together of community groups, individual landowners, Government Departments and agencies, local authorities and NGOs to work together on agreed aims. And these projects also demonstrated that co-ordination is effective, should be strived for, and makes a critical difference to the successful implementation of plans

We also have practical experience of bringing parties together to work on our waterways, and the River Shannon in particular. Since 2002 five Shannon waterway corridor studies (WCS) have been led by the Heritage Council in partnership with the relevant local authorities, Waterways Ireland and Shannon Development. Consultation with individuals, organisations, and state agencies in the area was also a key component of the studies. Each study resulted in a series of recommendations which can be accessed from our website, and a sample of the recommendations is included in the handout including an update on the status of their implementation.

All the parties engaged in those studies experienced the benefits and difficulties of bringing people together and coping with a natural landscape feature: for example the Shannon had to be examined in five parts, rather than as a whole to ensure local issues could be examined in detail. One of the main challenges in achieving implementation of the WCS recommendations has been the sheer number of recommendations, which runs to about 150 in all. However the benefits to be gained from shared knowledge, experience and agreed decisions outweigh this constraint.

The main linking objective of all the studies is the recognition of the Shannon as a national asset which should be managed as an attractive place to live and work. This should be balanced with the need to preserve the waterway, its landscapes and heritage for future generations.

Specific recommendations include:

- Identification of the waterway corridor area within County Development Plans
- Development of framework plans for local areas
- Protection of floodplains from inappropriate development
- A recreational and interpretation strategy for the Lower Shannon area
- A non-statutory regional park for Lough Ree
- An assessment of the carrying capacity of the Upper Shannon for additional recreational boating
- Linking the waterways to existing and new walking and cycling trails

Local authorities and Waterways Ireland are in the process of implementing several of these proposals. However, we need to be clear that none of these would have overcome the problem, but better protection of floodplains, and clearly defined structures for working together across the river (i.e on opposite banks of the river) and around the lakes could have improved the response. We should also point out that while the HC's expertise in this area is focused on the country's longest river, the Shannon, the lessons about agency co-ordination and leadership apply equally to all our other rivers.

Hitherto, local authority personnel were only concerned with their section of the river bank, and were unaware of the complexity of issues relating either to their stretch of the river, or the river as a whole. The Shannon, like all rivers, needs to be managed as a single entity, rather than as a series of detached administrative units if communities and their heritage are to benefit. In the case of local authorities, only Leitrim has the luxury of managing both banks of the river in its county for example.

Unfortunately, current flood risk management policy could perpetuate the weaknesses arising from the multiplicity of administrative units. While the recent guidelines from DEHLG and OPW on the planning system and flood risk management are to be lauded on many counts, they do not support a co-ordinated response to flood events along the Shannon. Responsibility for co-ordinating flood risk management policies between local authorities is given to the regional authorities (Section 4.10 of the guidelines), which may make reasonable sense from a land-based perspective. However, this structure carves up the Shannon into four different regional authorities (see map below) and undermines the management of the river as a coherent entity. It also runs counter to an integrated river basin approach advocated in the 2003 Flood Policy Review Report.



Map of the regional authorities

Despite the claims of several organisations, it is not possible to manage a river solely from the perspective of your own section of the riverbank; up and downstream impacts must be considered. For example, masonry flood defences along one section of the river are likely to cause erosion and flooding elsewhere downstream.

Much discussion has centred around the statutory role of the ESB in controlling water levels on the Shannon lakes. However, simply 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. As stated in the 2003 Floods Review Report, "flooding is a natural phenomenon and we must learn to live with flood events".

An important part of learning to live with flood events means that we have to ensure new houses are not built in areas at risk from flooding, and that we ensure there is sufficient space for excess water to go – in other words, by protecting our wetlands and flood plains. The guidance on the planning system and flood risk management from DEHLG and OPW gives clear direction on this.

To protect communities in the future, we need to be sure this guidance is followed strictly and in a uniform manner in each planning authority area. To ensure this happens, planning authorities need adequate resources. We found in the review of the Rural Renewal Scheme on the Upper Shannon that despite the great increase in planning applications, the local authorities of Leitrim and Roscommon were not given additional resources or funding for development management and enforcement. Allocation of such resources would have allowed more effective consideration of applications and resulting developments, (in terms of development management and forward planning).

In the April 2008 *“Guide to flood emergencies”* (DEHLG/OPW) the local authorities are identified as the co-ordination authority in flood events, using OPW advice. However, these administrative divisions perpetuate a fragmented approach in relation to a major river like the Shannon.

There is another initiative already in existence which merits consideration as a model for co-ordination. The Shannon River Basin District and its Plan, which is currently being finalised by the River Basin District team comprising all relevant agencies and local authorities, treats the river as a single entity, and has a structure involving all relevant agencies, including Waterways Ireland, Shannon Fisheries Board, ESB, OPW, EPA, NPWS, Marine Institute, as well as all 18 local authorities. It may be cumbersome but it is in existence. Moreover, the plan has a statutory basis and involves all the relevant agencies.

The Heritage Council recommends that resources be allocated to co-ordinate the role of the various agencies in the effective management of the waterways. This will help ensure a coherent, managed response at time of crises, e.g. flooding, and can also deliver the best outcomes for the sustainable development of the waterways and their hinterlands. This includes spatial planning to take account of appropriate tourism development, infrastructure, transport and recreational activities to support sustainable communities and employment. Proper co-ordination by all the bodies involved can optimise the socio-economic value of a river, which is primarily based on its natural and cultural values.

Public support is likely for the allocation of adequate resources for this purpose. Research on attitudes to heritage (*Valuing Heritage in Ireland*, 2007, a HC study) shows that rivers and waterways are rated very highly by the general public, who would favour additional expenditure in these areas of heritage above others (see Table 1 below).

We know too from our recent joint report with Fáilte Ireland (*Climate Change, Heritage And Tourism: Implications For Ireland's Coasts And Inland Waterways*) that extreme weather events like that of November last may become more frequent. It is essential therefore that we provide an administrative structure that can react coherently, rapidly and effectively to such events for the benefit of the people living and working along our waterways.

As we can see, there is no shortage of plans, blueprints and recommendations. Given the multiplicity of agencies that have different stakes in the physical planning of the country, the management of our waterways, and the operation of various plants and infrastructure that impact our rivers, lakes and estuaries, it is tempting to demand that some super-agency supplants them all and, almost magically, puts things to right.

Unfortunately, the situation is complex, and tempting though it is to seek out an Iron Chancellor-type figure to do everything, the various agencies, and their various remits, cannot be simply wished away. From our local authorities to Waterways Ireland, from the ESB to Failte Ireland, from farmers to anglers, from the OPW to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and many, many more besides, there is a range of entirely legitimate interests that have to be taken into account.

However, the lesson of recent times is definitely the need for far greater clarity not only about who does what, but who is responsible for what, and for proper accountability to be rendered by the different agencies if and when their performance comes under scrutiny. In other words, clear identification of leadership roles among the agencies and local authorities at a scale appropriate for the relevant activity. A leadership role is more than just overall responsibility – it implies a proactive, dynamic approach. Alongside leadership goes co-ordination, and all organisations need to be given the skills and resources to take part effectively. For example the provision of community liaison officers within the relevant agencies, to ensure a top-down, bottom up approach.

We need to find a balance between thinking we can “engineer” ourselves out of this problem and ensuring the inherent economic, social and environmental values of the Shannon are retained for those communities who live and work along side it, and those who visit it.

The Heritage Council for its part will continue to work with all communities and agencies towards achieving that objective.

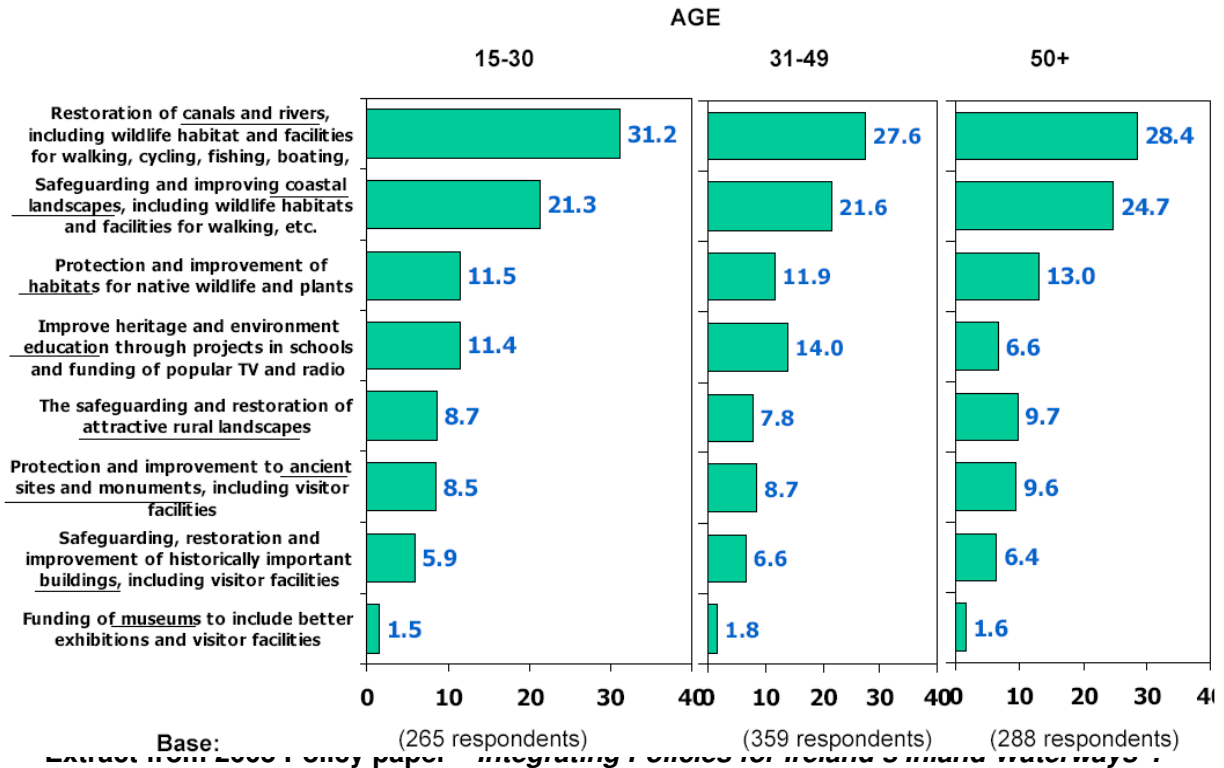
Michael Starrett – Chief Executive

Beatrice Kelly – Head of Policy and Research

March 2010

Table 1: Protection, Preservation & Restoration of the country's heritage-how best to spend allocated tax revenue by age

(Valuing Heritage in Ireland, report by K Simpson Ass. Lansdowne Market Research, Optimize Consultants: for the Heritage Council 2007 www.heritagecouncil.ie)



Section 5.3 (P17)

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.

Recommendations taken from the Waterway Corridor studies on County Development Plans and Local Area Plans

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
|-------|---------------|-------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| 2006 | 2006/0389 | | In the interest of balanced, sustainable development, application of the plan-led approach to development throughout the waterway corridor. | <p>Pursuit of the 'plan-led' approach to certain development types in the waterway corridor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning authorities, through the statutory development planning process and / or other structures, continue to broaden and refine the plan-led approach to development in the waterway corridor. • The LAPs could be broadened in terms of issues addressed, for example the inclusion of recreation (land- and water-based) and tourism facilities provision (such as the quantity, location and quality of vessel berthing - see 6.4.3 below), landscape, natural and cultural heritage management, etc. • A mechanism could be identified to allow for planning of the process of rural land use diversification (e.g. based on land capability, the planning/facilitation of agricultural intensification, alternative crops, agri-tourism, etc.). • As proposed in 6.2.3 above, there would be coordination of pre-agreed policy areas between the LAPs and CDPs of the various local authorities in the waterway corridor. | 2006 Study Shannon Overarching Recommendations | <p>Limerick County Council</p> <p>Clare County Council</p> <p>North Tipperary County Council</p> <p>Galway County Council</p> | Galway, Clare and North Tipp CoCo's state Yes, see Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational & Tourism Development Study, Clare, Galway and North Tipperary County Councils and Shannon Development October 2008. Galway CoCo also involved with the Lough Ree and Mid Shannon Waterways Study. |

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|-------|---------------|-------------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| 2006 | 2006/0389 | | In the interest of balanced, sustainable development, application of the plan-led approach to development throughout the waterway corridor. | <p>Preparation of siting and design guidelines for development in the waterway corridor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is proposed that as the plan-led approach is pursued through the broadening and revision of LAPs, a greater degree of prescription / guidance for various types of development would be provided. This would form part of the statutory development plans (CDPs and LAPs), or would take the form of stand-alone documents. Siting and design guidelines could be prepared by the local authorities (jointly or individually) to cover the entire waterway corridor for the following development types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rural Housing ○ Housing Estates ○ Navigation infrastructure (marinas, harbours, jetties, vessel maintenance facilities, etc) ○ On-land recreation facilities (building on the Lough Derg International Water Park Design Guide) ○ Forestry | 2006 Study Shannon Overarching Recommendations | Limerick County Council Clare County Council North Tipperary County Council Galway County Council Coillte Waterways Ireland Shannon Development Ireland West Tourism | Clare states that there are no specific House Design Guidelines etc for the Waterway Corridor, however they have been seeking funding (not successful to date) to develop Best Practice Guidelines for Marina Development. Galway CoCo states that there are no design guidelines etc for the Waterway Corridor but their CDP Policy ED46 deals with restricting development. Also Policy HL56 deals with it in a general manner. North Tipp states that there are no design guidelines for the waterway. Waterways Ireland states that they treat each proposal for navigational infrastructure on a case by case basis. This is essential to ensure there is no impact to the navigation. Also site specific ecological requirements need to be taken into account to minimise impacts to the surrounding environment. |

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
|-------|----------------|-------------------|---|---|---|---|--------|
| 2006 | 2006/47 129 | | Employment of the architectural heritage in the waterway corridor as a driver of rural, village and urban regeneration. | <p>Use of architectural conservation grants schemes as a means of rural, village and urban renewal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The local authorities identify structures requiring and qualifying for refurbishment under the available grants schemes. The owners of the structures could be made aware of the opportunities, assisted in making applications for grants and undertaking the conservation works. | 2006 Study Shannon Overarching Recommendations | <p>Limerick County Council</p> <p>Clare County Council</p> <p>North Tipperary County Council</p> <p>Galway County Council</p> | |
| | | | | <p>Implementation of Heritage Council recommendations with regards to financial support for architectural conservation in Ireland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is proposed that the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government revisit the recommendations of the Heritage Council report Financial Support for Architectural Conservation in Ireland and seek to implement the 15 recommendations. | 2006 Study Shannon Overarching Recommendations | Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government | |

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|-------|---------------|-------------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| 2005 | 3 95 | Local Area Plans | Support the growth and development of local communities within the waterway corridor whilst maintaining their distinctive character. (This should be applicable to the full Waterway - A general call for Local Area Plans and Village Design Statements.) | Prepare local area plans / village design statements to encourage consolidated and appropriate development within existing settlements, particularly in Cootehall and Knockvicar. These local area plans should focus on the carrying capacity of villages to accommodate development and on appropriate design standards for rural villages. | Cootehall Co Roscommon Knockvicar Co Roscommon | Roscommon County Council Leitrim County Council Waterways Ireland | Roscommon states that this objective is in draft CDP. |
| | | | | Instigate the preparation of a Waterways Corridor Local Area Plan addressing settlements along the corridor and issues of design, managed growth and associated infrastructure whilst having regard to the proposed Socio-Economic Framework outlined in Section 6.3 of this study | Lough Allen Co Leitrim | Leitrim County Council | |
| | | | | Prepare a combined Local Area Plan for Dowra to direct investment and regeneration in the village having regard to the possibility of strengthening links with Lough Allen. | Dowra Co Cavan | Leitrim County Council Cavan County Council | |
| | | | | Prepare a detailed Local Area Plan for Cootehall, having regard to the sensitive nature of the village and associated development pressures, with particular emphasis on preserving the form, layout, function and character of the village. | Cootehall Co Roscommon | Roscommon County Council | Roscommon reports no progress as yet, but this objective has been included in the draft CDP. |

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
|-------|---------------|---------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| 2005 | 5 97 | Protect Floodplains | Protect the floodplains of the River Shannon from inappropriate development whilst allowing landowners to continue existing agricultural activities and providing access for land based users of the waterway. (This should be applicable to the full Waterway) | Roscommon and Leitrim Co. Councils should define floodplain boundaries so that flood plains can be zoned accurately in County Development Plans for ecological protection and to discourage unsuitable development. | 2005 Study Overarching Recommendations | Roscommon County Council Leitrim County Council Cavan County Council Office of Public Works Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government | In Roscommon, it is an objective in the draft County Development Plan 2008-2014. The Roscommon CDP review map shows areas prone to flooding. OPW in conjunction with the DoEHLG, has developed guidelines for planners that is intended to prevent inappropriate development in floodplains. OPW launched a website in 2007 that shows information on areas at risk from flooding as an aid to planners, developers and the public. |
| | | | | Feasibility studies should be undertaken on the possibility of protecting parts of the floodplain that are not included in any conservation designation but which may have areas of sufficient interest to warrant designation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood zones of Lough Allen • Cloongownagh (additional floodplain area of Drumharlow) • Inishmucker/Rinnacurreen/Cloonfeacle (Shannon floodplain areas on fen peat south of Carrick-on- Shannon) • Coraughrim • The Doon at Corgullion/Cuiltyconway | 2005 Study Overarching Recommendations | Roscommon County Council Leitrim County Council Cavan County Council Office of Public Works Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government | In Roscommon it is an objective in the draft CDP. The Roscommon CDP review map showing areas prone to flooding. OPW is carrying out of catchment-level studies to identify areas of significant risk of flooding and to produce for these areas a plan of prioritised measures to address this risk. Several studies are underway and programme should be completed by 2015. |

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|-------|---------------|---------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 2005 | 5 97 | Protect Floodplains | | Under Article 3 of the Ramsar Convention, signatories (of which Ireland is one) are obliged to include wetland conservation considerations in national land use planning and to promote as far as possible the wise use of wetlands. Floodplains act as natural reservoirs for flood water and should remain as natural storage mechanisms and not be seen as development land, thus preventing flooding further downstream. | 2005 Study Overarching Recommendations | Roscommon County Council Leitrim County Council Cavan County Council Office of Public Works Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government | In Roscommon it is an objective in the draft CDP. |
| 2005 | 37 127 | | Recognise the economic value of the waterways corridor and its contribution to the local, regional and national economy. | Conduct an environmental economic analysis of the waterways to ensure the resource is not being undervalued in terms of its natural, architectural, archaeological and built heritage, thus ensuring adequate management of this finite resource | 2005 Study Overarching Recommendations | Waterways Ireland Leitrim County Council Roscommon County Council Cavan County Council Heritage Council | Roscommon report no progress. This would require a partnership approach which Waterways Ireland would actively participate in. |

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|-------|---------------|-------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| 2004 | 1 67 | Lough Ree | Recognise the wealth and range of associative, cultural, natural, aesthetic and economic values that Lough Ree presents, and conserve its integrity through integrated/partnership management for future generations. | That the potential and feasibility for Lough Ree and its environs to become Ireland's first non-statutory regional park is examined. A feasibility study for the park should look at models of collaborative management from abroad and those proposed by the IUCN. The study should look at the extent of the environs area that should be included within the Park. | Lough Ree | Heritage Council Westmeath County Council Roscommon County Council National Parks and Wildlife Service | Lough Ree Management Plan being developed by Failte Ireland, Westmeath County Council. The Heritage Council states that there is no legislation to back a Regional Park and that they are advancing a National Landscape Strategy instead. In addition, they made proposals on joined up management of the waterways in a submission to the Review of the Regional Planning Guidelines in Spring 2009. Parks designation is not a function of Waterways Ireland. |
| 2004 | 8 72 | Local Economy | Sustain and diversify the local economic base, in line with the quality of the environment and international profile of the waterway. (Applicable to full Waterway) | County Development Boards should build in programmes for economic development in advance of cessation of operations of both ESB and Bord na Mona. | Shannonbridge Co Offaly | Offaly County Council Longford County Council Galway County Council Roscommon County Council Westmeath County Council Electricity Supply Board Bord na Mona | ESB plans to establish a visitor centre in Shannonbridge in the future. West Offaly Enterprise fund in place to assist |

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|-------|---------------|-------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 2004 | 8 72 | Local Economy | Sustain and diversify the local economic base, in line with the quality of the environment and international profile of the waterway. (Applicable to full Waterway) | Promote the locality for eco-tourism. | 2004A Study Overarching Recommendations | Offaly County Council Longford County Council Galway County Council Roscommon County Council Westmeath County Council Electricity Supply Board Bord na Mona | Bord na Mona is developing rehabilitation plans for all of the bogs within its IPCC Licensed area. The main aim of all rehabilitation plans will be stabilisation of bare peat and mitigation of silt run-off. This is achieved largely through natural colonisation which occurs rapidly once peat production ceases. The natural processes coupled with targeted rehabilitation measures will allow the production areas to blend with the surrounding areas of semi-natural habitat, and thereby enhance habitats along waterways. Habitats along the Shannon corridor will comprise wetland areas interspersed with scrub and dryland communities in gravity drained areas. The final plans will be agreed with the EPA to be implemented upon completion of peat production: in most instances this will be over a period of 10 to 15years. |

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| 2004 | 8 72 | Local Economy | Sustain and diversify the local economic base, in line with the quality of the environment and international profile of the waterway. (Applicable to full Waterway) | County Development Boards should build in programmes for economic development in advance of cessation of operations of both ESB and Bord na Mona. | Shannonbridge Co Offaly | Offaly County Council Longford County Council Galway County Council Roscommon County Council Westmeath County Council Electricity Supply Board Bord na Mona | ESB plans to establish a visitor centre in Shannonbridge in the future. West Offaly Enterprise fund in place to assist |
| | | | | Promote the locality for eco-tourism. | 2004A Study Overarching Recommendations | Offaly County Council Longford County Council Galway County Council Roscommon County Council Westmeath County Council Electricity Supply Board Bord na Mona | Bord na Mona is developing rehabilitation plans for all of the bogs within its IPCC Licensed area. The main aim of all rehabilitation plans will be stabilisation of bare peat and mitigation of silt run-off. This is achieved largely through natural colonisation which occurs rapidly once peat production ceases. The natural processes coupled with targeted rehabilitation measures will allow the production areas to blend with the surrounding areas of semi-natural habitat, and thereby enhance habitats along waterways. Habitats along the Shannon corridor will comprise wetland areas interspersed with scrub and dryland communities in gravity drained areas. The final plans will be agreed with the EPA to be |

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| 2004 | 3 95 | Local Area Plans | Support the growth and development of local communities within the waterway corridor whilst maintaining their distinctive character. (This should be applicable to the full Waterway - A general call for Local Area Plans and Village Design Statements.) | Prepare Combined Local Area Plan for Lanesboro/Ballyleague to direct development and regeneration in the village. The plan must address access to the waterway, recreation and tourism, and the provision of suitable infrastructure to enable development. | Lanesborough Co Longford Ballyleague Co Roscommon | Roscommon County Council Longford County Council | Longford states that a new Local Area Plan is being prepared in 2009 for Lanesboro. |
| | | | | Instigate the preparation of Village Design Statements (followed by Village Plans) for Glassan and Ballykeeran. | Glassan Co Westmeath Ballykeeran Westmeath | Westmeath County Council | Westmeath reports Local Area Plans being prepared. |
| | | | | Prepare Village Design Statements/Village Plans for Knockcroghery, Portrunny and Lecarrow to address issues of design, managed growth and associated infrastructure. | Knockcroghery Co Roscommon Portrunny Co Roscommon Lecarrow Co Roscommon | Roscommon County Council | Roscommon reports that the objective is incorporated into draft CDP. |

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| 2004 | 3 95 | Local Area Plans | Support the growth and development of local communities within the waterway corridor whilst maintaining their distinctive character. (This should be applicable to the full Waterway - A general call for Local Area Plans and Village Design Statements.) | Instigate the preparation of a Village Design Statement for Shannonbridge taking in the principle for a Waterway Protection zone recommended in the Pilot Waterway Study 2002. | 2006 Study Shannon Overarching Recommendations | Limerick County Council Clare County Council North Tipperary County Council Galway County Council | Offaly CoCo states that this is a longterm objective. |
| 2002 | 3.3.6 38 | Design Guidelines | Prepare a design guide for developers and planning authorities to guide new development in the waterway corridor where not addressed by existing or other proposed guidance i.e. predominantly outside of settlements. There would generally be a presumption against such development - Ref. Policy 3.3.2. This is also applicable to the Royal Canal and the River Shannon. | Design guidelines for rural buildings need to take account of the limited capacity of this predominantly flat landscape lying lower than the canal. | 2002 Study Overarching recommendations | Offaly County Council | Rural Design Guidelines have been published by Offaly CoCo. |

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|-------|---------------|-------------------|------------|--|--|-----------------------|--|
| 2002 | 3.3.6 38 | Design Guidelines | | To be addressed by masterplan. Encourage quality new architecture which enhances corridor. | Tullamore Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that it needs planning survey to establish if recent decisions have been in accordance with good town planning and sympathy with canal. |
| | | | | Design guidelines for rural buildings need to take account of the limited capacity of this predominantly flat landscape of large fields. | 2002 Study Overarching recommendations | Offaly County Council | Rural Design Guidelines have been published by Offaly CoCo. |
| | | | | Encourage infill development adjacent to the south of the canal in the Pollagh village core, to compliment the existing built features to the north. | Pollagh Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that a planning survey is required to establish if recent decisions have been in accordance with good town planning and sympathy with canal. |
| | | | | Encourage infill development adjacent to the south of the canal east of Gallen Bridge, to compliment and strengthen the existing row of houses and further integrate the Canal into the town structure and layout. Investigate the potential refurbishment and re-use of several disused buildings at Gallen Bridge. | Gallen Bridge Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that it needs planning survey to establish if recent decisions have been in accordance with good town planning and sympathy with canal. |
| | | | | Disallow any development that compromises any of these sites or the character of the area around Belmont Bridge and the route from the bridge to the village, but encourage development that compliments them and provides access (e.g. appropriate accommodation). | Belmont Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that a planning survey is required to establish if recent decisions have been in accordance with good town planning and sympathy with canal. |

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| 2002 | 3.3.6 38 | Design Guidelines | | To be comprehensively addressed by an AAP. | Shannonharbour Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | AAP will cover this. |
| | | | | Although there is a presumption against development within the corridor outside of existing settlements design guidelines should explore options for structures which respond to the seasonal flooding or possibly of a minimum ecological footprint for provision of limited countryside accommodation outside of immediately protected areas. | Shannonbridge Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that Design Guidelines for the county have been produced. |
| | | | | Although there is a presumption against development within the corridor outside of existing settlements, design guidelines should explore options for structures which respond to the seasonal flooding or possibly of a minimum ecological footprint for provision of limited countryside accommodation outside of immediately protected areas. | Banagher Co Offaly Meelick Co Galway | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that it needs planning survey to establish if recent decisions have been in accordance with good town planning and sympathy with canal. |
| 2002 | 3.3.10 38 | Strengthen local Identity/Image | Develop a marketing strategy and investment support mechanisms for the regions through which the waterway passes to use the corridor and the vision for the corridor as a focus for strengthening local identity and image. | | | | |

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| 2002 | 3.3.10 38 | Strengthen local Identity/Image | Develop a marketing strategy and investment support mechanisms for the regions through which the waterway passes to use the corridor and the vision for the corridor as a focus for strengthening local identity and image. | Offaly Town Council develop a waterside identity for Tullamore, thus complementing its strong market town character and heritage features and adding to its visitor attractions. | Tullamore Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Failte Ireland developed 5 Discovery Days on the Canal in 09 raising awareness of Canal as part of marketing of Canals which is ongoing. |
| | | | | Offaly Co. Council should seek to strengthen Pollagh's identity and image as a focus for the Canal and adjacent wetlands and peatlands of high ecological value by means of a village design statement, as well as employing the settlement's proximity to Lough Boora and Turraun Bog. | Pollagh Co Offaly Turraun Bog Co Offaly Lough Boora Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that Pollagh-Lemanaghan Village Plan included in Offaly CDP 2009-2015 |
| | | | | Offaly Co. Council should seek to establish Ferbane's identity and image as a Canal-related settlement by means of a town plan. | Ferbane Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Offaly states that a town plan for Ferbane has been undertaken. |
| | | | | Offaly Co. Council should enhance Belmont's identity and image as a Canal-related settlement of substantial heritage value, including by means of a village design statement. | Belmont Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | Belmont Village Plan included in Offaly CDP 2009-2015 |
| | | | | Cultivate the image and status of the Thatch pub and environs as a means to strengthen local Canal-related identity. | Rahan Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | |

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| 2002 | 3.3.10 38 | Strengthen local Identity/Image | Develop a marketing strategy and investment support mechanisms for the regions through which the waterway passes to use the corridor and the vision for the corridor as a focus for strengthening local identity and image. | Shannon Harbour's original identity and status should be re-established by, for example, improving and developing ancillary facilities and services to navigation. | Shannonharbour Co Offaly | Offaly County Council Waterways Ireland | Shannon Harbour Village Plan in Offaly CDP 2003-2009 and in draft CDP 2009-2015. Waterways Ireland and Shannon Development are responsible for the Shannon Harbour Tourism Project, initiated in 2008, to improve berthing and other facilities. |
| | | | | Clonfert and its relationship with the river and the surrounding peatlands should be addressed under an East Galway Integrated Rural Plan and the Conservation Plan for Clonfert Cathedral. | Clonfert Co Galway | Galway County Council | |
| | | | | Banagher is the main urban settlement on the waterway and has the most capacity to service visitors. In Co.Galway, Eyrecourt has a tenuous relationship with the river, this relationship and opportunities should be addressed under the East Galway Integrated Rural Plan proposed in Section 3.3. | Banagher Co Offaly | Offaly County Council Galway County Council | |

Recommendations from the Waterway Corridor Studies on the Shannon Callows and East Galway

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
|-------|---------------|--------------------------------|--|--|----------------|--|---|
| 2002 | 3.3.11 38 | Develop wider Visitor Interest | Develop an integrated plan for increases in visitor numbers based on a broader range of activities in the corridor including cycling, walking, angling and rowing / canoeing. Develop facilities and associated accommodation in the waterway corridor and manage to ensure that excessive additional pressure does not cause conflict with the navigational character nor ecologically sensitive sites. See Section 3.5. Below. | <p>Although the Callows are particularly sensitive, controlled footpath access around the network of lanes on the Galway side of the river especially, needs to be planned for to benefit the local villages in this region - to be addressed in an East Galway Integrated Rural Plan.</p> <p>There is potential to link into the local bog railway and the potential for this to travel across the river and link to a similar project on the Offaly side of the river.</p> <p>There is potential to cross the river at Meelick / Victoria Lock to give access to the old canal infrastructure there.</p> <p>Such initiatives should be part of or complementary to the Greenways route currently in the planning stage of development.</p> | East Co Galway | <p>Waterways Ireland</p> <p>Offaly County Council</p> <p>Shannon Development</p> <p>Failte Ireland</p> | Waterways Ireland has worked on a number of partnership projects to open up walking routes, in addition to the Way Marked Ways. An example is a walk at Clonlara which was jointly funded with Shannon Development. |

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| 2002 | 3.3.13 39 | Integrated Rural Plan - East Galway | Develop an integrated rural plan for the East Galway area of the study involving the villages of Clonfert, Eyrecourt, Laurencetown and Meelick. The plan to address village improvements, development, countryside management, access to the Callows for walking, cycling, angling and small scale boating via the network of lanes currently through this area and in particular the development of an identity and image for this region complimentary to Banagher and focused on the Shannon. The plan to be a pilot for integrated local development and environmental management. Link to existing REVER / Greenway initiative between Portumna and Eyrecourt. | East Galway gains limited access or benefit from the Shannon yet it offers a unique land environment associated with the river including extensive peatlands due to become cutaway within the medium future interspersed by a network of lanes, cultural sites and villages. An integrated plan as a pilot project could look at innovative local development linked to sustainable use of environmental assets. This should link closely to the existing REVER / Greenway project. | East Co Galway | Galway County Council | 2002 |
| 2002 | 3.3.14 39 | Integration of environmental objectives with farming practices | Throughout the corridor area seek to integrate environmental objectives with local farming practices. | n/a (Callows managed in accordance with designated cSAC objectives). | Shannon Callows | | |

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
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| 2002 | 3.3.14 39 | Integration of environmental objectives with farming practices | | Link community fora/network to local farmers as residents, farming organisations and Teagasc advisors. Develop a landscape / environmental design statement as a simple guide to facilitate landowners' enhancement / improvement of the waterway corridor. | Shannonbridge Co Offaly East Co Galway | | Teagasc states that whilst no formal fora have been established to adopt common objectives for the resource and facilitate the enhancement / improvement of the waterway corridor by landowners, Teagasc advisers continue to integrate relevant environmental objectives with local farming practice within the corridor area especially in the SAC and in callows.High Nature Value Farming being studied by Heritage Council though not in this area.CFB states: Feeders or water supplies to the canals commonly pass through agricultural land. Occasional pollution events have been recorded, although these are relatively few and are rarely severe. |
| | | | | Link community fora/network to local farmers as residents, farming organisations and Teagasc advisors. Develop a landscape / environmental design statement as a simple guide to facilitate landowners' enhancement / improvement of the waterway corridor. | Banagher Co Offaly Meelick Co Galway | | Teagasc states that whilst no formal fora have been established to adopt common objectives for the resource and facilitate the enhancement / improvement of the waterway corridor by landowners, Teagasc advisers continue to integrate relevant environmental objectives with local farming practice within the corridor area especially in the SAC and in callows.High Nature Value Farming being studied by Heritage Council though not in this area. CFB states: Feeders or water supplies to the canals commonly pass through agricultural land. Occasional pollution events have been recorded, although these are relatively few and are rarely severe. |

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| 2002 | 3.3.19 39 | Shannon Callows | Ensure appropriate interpretation of the Shannon Callows habitat. Work with state agencies and landowners to develop / map existing lane network sensitively as a local environmental asset. | At appropriate locations - locks, bridges or buildings in Shannon Harbour interpret the landscape, local agricultural practices and provide information on local habitats / vegetation. | Between Glyn Bridge Co Offaly and Shannon Harbour Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | |
| | | | | At appropriate locations in Shannonbridge and Clonfert interpret the landscape, local agricultural practices and provide information on local habitats and vegetation. | Shannonbridge Co Offaly Clonfert Co Galway | Offaly County Council | |
| | | | | At appropriate locations, e.g. at Victoria Lock, Meelick and Banagher harbour, interpret the landscape, local agricultural practices and provide information on local habitats and vegetation. | Victoria Lock Meelick Co Galway Banagher Co Offaly | Offaly County Council | |

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
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| 2004 | 21 77 | | Protect the Shannon and Suck Callows and broader flood plain from inappropriate development whilst allowing landowners to continue existing agricultural activities and providing access for land-based users of the waterway (e.g. anglers). | Have regard to the report prepared on Flooding in the Shannon by the OPW in 2003 and to continue the on-going study in the floodplains so that the floodplain boundaries can be defined and the area designated for protection | All Shannon | Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Office of Public Works Local Authorities (relevant) | OPW in conjunction with the DoEHLG, has developed guidelines for planners that is intended to prevent inappropriate development in floodplains. OPW is also carrying out catchment-level studies to identify areas of significant risk of flooding and to produce for these areas a plan of prioritised measures to address this risk. Several studies are underway and programme should be completed by 2015. OPW launched a website in 2007 that shows information on areas at risk from flooding as an aid to planners, developers and the public. Westmeath states that yes, this is established in Government policy and CDP. Offaly states that CDP deals with this. |
| | | | | Set up a dialogue with local landowners and prepare a Management Plan to ensure the protection of the Callows and their extensive wetland habitat. The Plan should set out the types and level of activities that would be deemed acceptable within this unique environment, for example traditional grazing regimes, cutting of hay and low intensity agriculture. | River Suck River Shannon Callows | Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Local Authorities (relevant) Waterways Ireland | This is being implemented to a certain extent through the actions of the NPWS in relation to the management of Special Protection Areas in the callows. Westmeath states that proposed as part of Clonmacnoise World Heritage Site Designation. Waterways Ireland states that they would offer assistance and cooperation, where possible on this. |

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
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| 2004 | 21 77 | | All applications for development within and adjacent to designated boundaries and the defined floodplain be referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG. | All Shannon | Local Authorities (relevant) National Parks and Wildlife Service Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Office of Public Works | Offaly states that CDP and planning process deals with this. Westmeath states that these are referred to Prescribed Bodies for comment. | All applications for development within and adjacent to designated boundaries and the defined floodplain be referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG. |
| 2004 | 2782 | | Conserve and enhance the substantial military heritage associated with Shannonbridge and recognise its links with the Shannon and Suck callows. | | Shannonbridge Co Offaly | Offaly County Council Roscommon County Council | Roscommon County Council are assisting landowners with this. |

| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
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| | | | | <p>Identify and protect all habitats and species of conservation value in the South Shannon Waterway Corridor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing data on designated areas in the corridor be updated through resurvey of cSAC, SPA and pNHA sites. The information would be employed in the ongoing preparation of Site Conservation Plans for designated areas and agreement of management programmes with land owners. Updated site synopses and Site Conservation Plans could be used by planning and other authorities to inform: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ their statutory functions such as implementation of the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997, which require that all SAC and SPA designated areas be protected from development or activities which threaten the integrity of the sites; ○ - an ecosystem-based management approach to the waterway corridor (see 6.5.2 below). • It is proposed that supplementary studies be carried out to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ - define the ecological functions of the waterway, specifically Lough Derg, in the context of the regional landscape/ecosystem; | <p>2006 Study Shannon Overarching Recommendations</p> <p>University of Limerick</p> | <p>National Parks and Wildlife Service</p> <p>Limerick County Council</p> <p>Clare County Council</p> <p>North Tipperary County Council</p> <p>Heritage Council</p> <p>Galway County Council</p> | <p>Outside of the current remit of the Heritage Council. Galway CoCo states that County Development Plan and Biodiversity Plan addresses these actions in a general manner. Clare CoCo states that in 2008, Clare Co Co completed over 70 kilometres square of Level III detailed Habitat Mapping on the shores of Lough Derg</p> |

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| Study | Policy & Page | Issue Description | Issue Text | Action Description | Location | Responsible | Update |
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| 2006 | 2006/34 116 | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identify sites, habitats and species that qualify for designation according to the selection criteria for NHA, SAC or SPA but which have been overlooked, or which do not qualify for designation but are nonetheless significant in terms of regional or local biodiversity, for example (as identified by consultees, in the corridor between Lough Derg and Limerick City): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a wide range of aquatic and emergent plants including the rare <i>Potamogeton friesii</i>, ▪ characteristic swamp vegetation, ▪ the many islets and larger vegetated islands, ▪ an area of unimproved wet grassland at World's End with a rich variety of plant species including <i>Sisyrinchium bermudiana</i> and <i>Carex pallescens</i> (both locally rare), and <i>Bromus commutatus</i> (nationally rare), ▪ areas of marsh west of Lisnagry, with the rare <i>Equisetum hyemale</i> present, ▪ riparian woodland between UL and the mouth of the Mulcear river where the alien species <i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i> and <i>Impatiens glandulifera</i> have been identified. ○ establish the status and trends in biodiversity in the callows, where farmers have reported a reduction in wildlife numbers (this requires scientific assessment); ○ determine the biodiversity value of islands in the waterway, many of which remain un-surveyed and un-recorded. | | | |