

# Consultative Document on the Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways

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## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** The Heritage Council was established under the Heritage Act, 1995. It is an independent body which has a statutory responsibility to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage.

National heritage is defined as including: monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks, inland waterways. The Heritage Council has four statutory committees, one of which is devoted to inland waterways.

**1.2** The Heritage Council views the inland waterways as an important part of the national heritage, embracing elements of built and natural heritage in urban and rural areas. Inland waterways are an important element of living heritage with recreation and tourism functions. They also have the potential to bring substantial socio-economic benefits to their surrounding regions. The Council is committed to the idea of sustainable development as expressed in Agenda 21 and believes that the inland waterways offer opportunities for developments in line with these principles.

**1.3** The Council recognises that this is a critical time in the history of the inland waterways, in which they are undergoing a change from their former function as commercial navigations to a recreational and tourist role.

**1.4** While this document was in preparation, the Belfast-Dublin Agreement was signed in Belfast on 10 April 1998. In the Annex to Strand Two, in relation to the proposed North/South Ministerial Council, it is suggested that one of the areas for North/South co-operation and implementation might be Inland Waterways. This could have far reaching implications for the future administration of the waterways throughout the whole of Ireland, and the Heritage Council considers that the consultation process on which it has embarked can play a useful role in helping to develop policy for the future of the waterways.

**1.5** The Heritage Council looks to the future in which the waterways and their surrounds will be developed in an integrated broad-based way, so as to preserve their living heritage qualities, facilitate the enjoyment and appreciation of their heritage now and for future generations.

**1.6** The Council is committed to working with all agencies and interested individuals for this goal.

## 2. Purpose of this Consultation Document

**2.1** In 1997 the Council produced The Plan 1997-2000 which outlines its priority actions for the next four years. In The Plan, under its third theme, Proposing Policy And Providing Advice, the Council has set out as its objective:

To promote an integrated approach to the development and implementation of policy on the national heritage by improving the quality and effectiveness of its input into Government policy. A specific action has been identified under this theme, "Advising on the development of inland waterways".

**2.2** This consultation document is the first stage in the Council's process of proposing an integrated policy for Ireland's inland waterways to government that incorporates a co-ordinated strategic approach to their future development. With the changing function of the waterways from commercial navigations to recreational use, the Council sees the need to promote a broad based approach to the management of this aspect of our heritage resource. In order to inform our policy we want to present our views and conclusions to as wide a public as possible for debate and discussion.

**2.3** The document falls in to four sections:

- Identification of the waterways resource and their legislative context
- Organisational management options
- Resource management options
- Usage management options

Each section contains detailed examination of each element accompanied by options, and the presentation and explanation of the Council's preference. The Council's views are highlighted in bold type, except in the sections concerned with the expansion of the waterways system which consists entirely of the Council's views.

**2.4** This document is being circulated over the summer months and it is proposed to hold a seminar in early November to discuss the issues concerning the future development of waterways. We are seeking feed back on our proposed policies, and a response framework has been enclosed at the end of this document to assist you in your response and to indicate specific areas on which we would greatly appreciate your comments. We would be grateful if you could return your observations by 25 September 1998.

### **3. Identification of the Waterways Resource and their Legislative Context**

#### **What is the inland waterways system?**

**3.1** Inland waterways are defined in the Heritage Act, 1995, as "canals, canalised sections of rivers and lakes, navigation channels in rivers and lakes, and their associated navigational features."

**3.2** While the waterways systems for the entire island of Ireland are shown on the map, (Map to be inserted) this consultation document is confined to the inland waterways of the Republic of Ireland and those parts of the cross- border waterways which lie within the State.

**3.3** Most of the existing operational waterways form part of a connected network with access to the sea at three points: the River Liffey in Dublin, the Shannon Estuary through Limerick and the Barrow Estuary. In addition there is the Corrib Navigation which no longer has access to the sea through Galway.

#### **Administration of the inland waterways**

**3.4** The entire "connected network" of inland waterways in the Republic, including the Royal Canal, the River Suck Navigation and other navigations where work is in progress, is under the direct control of the waterways section of Dúchas - the Heritage Service in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. Other isolated stretches of waterway such as the Rivers Suir, Blackwater, Barrow and Slaney, all of which are tidal, come under the jurisdiction of other authorities, mostly the appropriate Harbour or Port Commissioners. The Corrib Navigation is administered by the Corrib Navigation Trustees. These isolated navigations comprise less than a quarter of the total operational system.

**3.5** In 1992 a strategic document on inland waterways was published, commissioned by the Waterways Service of the Office of Public Works (OPW) from Brady Shipman and Martin , "National Canals & Waterways Strategy".(BSM Strategy Document). It was widely acclaimed as a well thought out and workable strategy plan for the waterways. This document will be referred to through out this consultation document to assess the changes on the waterways since 1992. (See appendix one for summary)

**3.6** The BSM Strategy identified four categories of the overall waterways system in Ireland:

- the existing operational waterways, about 800 km in the Republic of Ireland, excluding tidal river navigations and estuarine waters
- waterway developments in progress, planned or subject to feasibility studies
- derelict and abandoned waterways, including some which were commenced and never operational possible new waterway schemes.

The BSM Strategy excludes all tidal river navigations which currently are administered by the appropriate port & harbour authorities.

**3.7 The Heritage Council sees the BSM categories as a useful tool for analysing the waterways system but believes that the exclusion of all tidal navigations may need to be**

**examined in view of the increasing movement of boats to and from the inland waterways into tidal waters.**

**3.8** The BSM Strategy draws attention to the changing role of the waterways system in Ireland from commercial to recreational and tourist use. The change of use has also shifted the emphasis from the limited element of the navigation channel to the wider waterway corridor. This underlines the need for a broad based integrated policy for waterways.

### **Legislation concerning inland waterways**

**3.9** The functions and responsibilities of Dúchas - Waterways within the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands are set out in the relevant legislation relating to navigations (Canals Act 1986, Shannon Navigation Act 1990). Legislation has now been put in place to clarify and extend the functions of the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands in relation to all inland waterways including the power to acquire waterways (Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands (Powers and Functions) Act 1997).

**3.10** Other departments such as the Department of Environment and Local Government, and the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources also include inland waterways in their remit. Other agencies with involvement in inland waterways include the Fisheries Boards, the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), local authorities, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Heritage Council, the Marine Institute.

**The Council believes that it is important for Dúchas - Waterways to achieve a high level of co-ordination with all these departments and agencies.**

### **Heritage Legislation**

**3.11** Different elements of heritage along or in waterways have been accorded protection under law or international convention. These regulations must be taken account of when promoting any developments along on in waterways and should influence waterway management.

**3.12** The Record of Monuments protects archaeological sites under the National Monuments Acts. Lists of the recorded land-based sites are being published, while the underwater record of archaeological sites will be published by the end of 1998. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage is being carried out by Dúchas - The Heritage Service, and Dúchas - Waterways is commencing an inventory of the built features of the Royal and Grand Canals in association with the National Inventory. Legislation to protect architectural heritage is pending.

**3.13** There are existing and impending Directives and Conventions which offer protection to environmental heritage. Many sites along waterways are designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive, e.g. the Shannon Callows. Other are identified as proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs), the latter a requirement under the Habitats Directive. Other sites of high ecological value may not have been formally recognised and full surveys will be necessary to identify these. Considerable sections are proposed for designation as Natura 2000 conservation sites, either through the Birds Directive or the Habitats Directive. There are also existing directives on nitrates, fish life and drinking water. The drafting of a "Water Framework Directive" is at an advanced stage and will have implications for the management of water catchment areas. Ireland has also ratified the Ramsar Convention which promotes the "concept of wide use" of the wetland resource.

**3.14** In addition to heritage legislation, fiscal policy can affect inland waterways. Under the terms of the Finance Act, 1998, the Upper Shannon corridor (the width of the corridor is defined as extending approximately 5 miles on either side of the river) is being used as a pilot area for rural regeneration by offering tax designation for certain developments. This is in response to a submission by the Western Development Commission. The submission also stated that a co-ordinating committee would be required to ensure the integration of development plans so as to achieve a balance between proposals and to ensure that development takes place in a sensitive and sustainable way in this important waterway corridor. **The Heritage Council would agree with this sentiment.**

## 4. Organisational Management Options

**4.1** The Waterways Division of the OPW, was transferred along with the other heritage divisions, to the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht in 1995, thus demonstrating the recognition that the waterway system is no longer a transport concern but an integral part of the national heritage with a new function for recreation and tourism. This was reiterated by the establishment of a statutory committee on inland waterways in the Heritage Council, and again in the main source of funding for recent waterways projects - the Operational Programme for Tourism 1994-99.

**4.2** In 1992, the BSM Strategy recommended (6.5) the rationalisation of the situation so as to bring all amenity waterways, used primarily for tourism, leisure and recreation, under one authority, i.e. the Waterways Service. Much progress has been made since inland waterways were transferred to the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands in the administration of the waterways for their new role. Greater consideration is now being given to water quality, wildlife, the wider environment and the protection of heritage structures. New bridges and buildings, access to towpaths and control of encroachments are all much more carefully monitored. Formal liaison and consultation have been established with local authorities and local community groups in the Dublin area and along the length of the Royal Canal for the environmental enhancement of the canals. The angling potential of the canals has been developed in certain locations with the co-operation of the Fisheries Boards and there has been limited encouragement of commercial tourism craft.

**4.3** However, the Heritage Council feels that there are still matters which need to be addressed in view of the changing function of waterways and the increased and diversified usage of waterways, and development pressures put on this resource as a side effect of Ireland's recent economic successes.

**4.4** The previous government drafted a bill in 1996 for the establishment of an Inland Waterways Authority as a successor to the Waterways Service. The Standing Committee on Inland Waterways of the Heritage Council made recommendations at the time and welcomed this proposal because it appeared to address some of the current difficulties that were being experienced within the Waterways Service. These difficulties had arisen as a result of the way in which it had evolved over the years from the original "engineering-driven" navigation service and which were rendering it inadequate to meet its changing role. In particular, owing to the system of promotion within the Civil Service, the personnel often changed, and there was an imbalance between the administrative and technical staff required. The changing role of the inland waterways had created the need for additional specialist professional staff. For example a section was needed for planning and development to safeguard the waterway corridors from inappropriate developments, to liaise with the many other government agencies involved and to co-ordinate private sector development and community partnership schemes to the enhancement of the waterways. The planned legislation appeared to open the way towards a dedicated staff of administrators and professional officers and, by distancing the Authority from the Department, would make it easier to increase a partnership approach with the various agencies and users.

**4.5** The Heritage Council would support the setting up of an Inland Waterways Authority with its own staff and budget because such an authority would have the flexibility to deal with:

- **the changed function of inland waterways,**
- **the increased and diversified usage of the waterways,**

- the realisation of the potential for understanding and enjoyment of all aspects of heritage along the waterways,
- the realisation of the socio-economic benefits of developing inland waterways, and conflict management between conservation of heritage, usage of the waterways and between users, and development pressures.
- liaison and creation of partnerships with other agencies and bodies
- liaison and creation of partnerships between private, voluntary and community sectors
- alternative funding mechanisms
- strategic planning for the future development of the inland waterways resource
- the possible establishment of a North-South Inland Waterways cross border body
- manage the inland waterways system in the context of river catchment management (see next section for clarification)

## 5. Resource Management Options

**5.1** This section is concerned with different aspects of the management of the resource itself, that is Ireland's system of inland waterways. It deals with the management of rivers on a catchment basis, the funding of the inland waterways system, the maintenance of the inland waterways, and the future expansion of the system.

**5.2** The Heritage Council believes that a long-term strategy plan is required for the management of inland waterways to ensure a co-ordinated, sustainable approach to development.

### River catchment management

**5.3** Many of the inland waterways are river navigations and, as is widely recognised, rivers are best managed as catchments. A high degree of co-ordination is required between Dúchas- Waterways and the agencies managing river catchments.

**5.4** The Heritage Council considers that river navigations cannot be managed in isolation from their catchments. However, the Council does not consider that it would be beneficial to create separate authorities for navigable rivers which would assume management of all elements of the river including navigation. This would lead to the separation of some of the navigable inland waterways under different authorities, a situation which for so long in the past made their development difficult and uneven and which government inquiries over the years identified as one of the principal impediments to progress.

### Water Quality and Water Levels

**5.5** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), local authorities and the fishery boards have a role in monitoring water quality along the inland waterways. The Marine Institute's remit also includes undertaking studies and surveys of non-tidal waters and freshwater fisheries. Some of the relevant local authorities have recognised the need to monitor entire catchment areas and surveys have been commissioned of the Shannon and Erne catchments.

**5.6** The Council considers that the function of water quality monitoring is best carried by these agencies rather than Dúchas - Waterways and that a high degree of co-operation is required between Dúchas - Waterways and these agencies to ensure adequate water monitoring is carried out.

**5.7** The ESB has a statutory right to control water levels on the River Shannon for its hydro-electric scheme at Ardnacrusha and there is a high level of co-operation between Dúchas- Waterways and the ESB on a daily basis regarding water levels.

However, given the limited role of Ardnacrusha Power Station in supplying the national grid, the Council believes that reconsideration of this whole situation may be needed.

## Funding

**5.8** Since 1994 the Waterways Service has been in receipt of EU structural funding under the Operational Programme for Tourism 1994-1999 which has resulted in the undertaking of major capital works. This funding is conditional on increasing the numbers of tourists on the waterways system.

*The following amounts were allocated as an Operational Programme 1994-1999 for Inland Waterways under the EU Structural Funds Operational Programme for Tourism 1994-1999.*

	£, 000
Barrow Navigation	2,300
Boyle Extension	550
Boyne Navigation	2,000
Corrib Navigation	1,100
Tralee Ship Canal	1,000
Limerick Navigation	1,100
Environmental Landscaping and canal mooring	1,800
Fisheries development on canals	500
Grand Canal	2,900
Grange Pier	300
Lanesboro Pier	450
Suck Extension	1,000
Royal Canal	7,000

Lough Allen	250
Shannonbridge quay	<u>400</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,650</b>

**5.9** Four criteria for new works were emphasised in the BSM strategy in 1992:

- the development of the "connected network"
- the opening up of access to the sea.
- the opening of new destinations, especially urban ones
- the need for "concomitant commitment" from other bodies including the private sector.

**5.10** In comparing these criteria against the works listed in the Operational Plan, the following observations can be made. The Tralee Canal, the Boyne Navigation and the Corrib navigation are not part of the connected network. However, the proposals for the Boyne Navigation and a marina in Galway did not proceed. Attempts are being made to open up access to the sea with the work on navigation through Limerick. The completion of the Shannon Erne Waterway has opened up new destinations, and the River Suck Navigation will open up a new urban destination.

**5.11** For further work to be undertaken in the future, a reappraisal may need to be carried out and alternative sources of funding explored such as through partnerships with other agencies, the private and voluntary sectors. It is clear that other sources would certainly need to be secured if projects of the magnitude of the restoration of the Ulster Canal are to be brought to fruition.

### **Maintenance of the waterways system**

**5.12** Maintaining the integrity and safety of the waterways system and the day to day operational management involves considerable expense, which will increase as new and restored waterways are brought into use over the next few years. The BSM strategy (4.13, 4.14, 4.15) drew attention to the fact that the direct revenue receipts fall far short of current expenditure, the difference having to be made good by departmental funding; this situation is unlikely to change in the immediate future.

**5.13** The waterways network is an asset of national importance and funding must be adequate to cover expenditure on ongoing maintenance and management. Experience shows the long-term costs of inadequate maintenance: since the transfer of the Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation from CIE to OPW in 1986 it has taken more than ten years to overcome the backlog of maintenance work. The Council considers that in view of the limited budget available it is important that the greatest proportion of these funds is directed towards the upkeep and operation of the navigations.

**5.14** As pointed out earlier difficult decisions may have to be made in the allocation of resources. This raises two questions:

- whether it is more important to carry out small-scale infrastructural developments rather than pursuing further restoration?
- whether resources should be allocated to the improvement of navigation works where the greatest pressure exists, as for example on the Shannon and Erne navigations, or be used to upgrade under used waterways to encourage their greater use?

## Expansion of the Waterways System

**5.15** The expansion of the waterways system involves the restoration of abandoned waterways and, in some cases, the development of entirely new navigations. The BSM Strategy addressed the options in some detail and suggested a programme of action (section 5 and 7). The BSM Strategy (5.41) states that the navigation authority (now the Waterways Service) should "concentrate on waterways which are currently, or will eventually be, used for navigation". The Report (5.53) further states that, "In considering the possibility of extending or further developing the inland waterways system of the country, and in allocating priority, an important criterion is the relationship of the waterways under consideration to the 'connected network'".

**5.16** The Heritage Council believes that where the construction or restoration of a waterway is concerned, three important criteria must be taken into account:

- whether boats are likely to use the waterway
- whether the waterway extends the "connected network"
- whether the development would impact negatively on heritage, e.g., wildlife, architecture, archaeology etc.

**5.17** Using these criteria, the Heritage Council has made a detailed reassessment of the priorities accorded to the several projects included in the BSM Strategy and of other projects brought to its attention. The priorities arrived at are set out as a baseline for discussion and take into consideration the criteria referred to in the BSM document. Other considerations and observations by the Heritage Council are noted too.

**5.18** The first priority is the completion of work in progress:

- The River Suck Navigation
- The Boyle River extension towards Boyle
- The Limerick Navigation
- The Royal Canal: Main line and Longford branch
- The Tralee Ship Canal

**5.19** The River Suck and the Boyle River are extensions to the connected network and add to destinations (BSM Strategy 3.48).

## The Limerick Navigation

**5.20** The work is aimed to increase the tidal "window" between Baal's Bridge and Mathew Bridge and thus considerably improve access to the sea and safety of navigation through Limerick.

## **The Royal Canal: Main Line & Longford Branch**

**5.21** When restored, re-connection of the Royal Canal to the existing network will increase the latter by 154 km and there is no doubt that it will be extensively used by boats, leading 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. Already two hire-boat companies have been established on the 75 km landlocked Blanchardstown-Mullingar restored section. However, without the development of non-tidal access to the canal, its potential is unlikely to be developed especially in relation to the hire business. The failure to include the full restoration of Spencer Dock (see 5.1 below) in the current programme of works will inevitably preclude the movement of hire craft between the two canals in Dublin.

## **The Tralee Ship Canal**

**5. 22** This canal is not part of the connected network . A sum of £1 million was allocated to this work in the Operational Programme 1994-1999 which falls into 3 phases:

- the excavation of the channel
- the restoration of the lock and replacement of the opening bridge
- the excavation of the harbour

Should the funding allocated prove inadequate to complete all three phases, the possibility of raising funds from sources outside the Dúchas could be explored, given that the canal is being restored largely as a local amenity.

## **5.23 Prioritisation of further works**

- Royal Canal: Restoration of non-tidal access from the Liffey through Spencer Dock, Dublin.
- Ulster Canal
- River Shannon- Wineport (Inner lakes, Lough Ree) to Glassan
- Grand Canal-Kilbeggan branch
- River Erne extension to Lough Oughter
- Grand Canal extension of Naas Branch to Corbally Harbour
- Grand Canal: Milltown Feeder
- Boyne Navigation
- Grand Canal, Mountmellick Branch: from Monasterevin to Portarlington

## **Royal Canal: Restoration of full non-tidal access through Spencer Dock, Dublin**

**5.24** Work in progress on the restoration of the Royal Canal does not include the restoration of the sea lock at the entrance from the River Liffey nor the North Wall and Sheriff Street lifting bridges, for which no financial provision was made in the 1994-1999 Operational Programme. 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 must be given high priority.

## **The Ulster Canal**

**5.25** The Ulster Canal has recently been the subject of a full feasibility study undertaken on behalf of the Waterways Service and the Rivers Agency N.I. by ESBI and Ferguson and McIlveen.

Restoration of the Ulster Canal will involve a major cross-border initiative but with enormous potential benefits. It would attract considerable boat use if reconstructed to the gauge of linking waterways (e.g. the Shannon Erne waterway). In addition it would link Lough Neagh and the Upper and Lower Bann navigations to the connected network with an outlet to the sea at Coleraine. Applications for funding have been made to restore the Coalisland Canal from Lough Neagh to Coalisland and the Newry Canal from Lough Neagh to Newry, and feasibility studies have been made of the restoration of the Lagan Navigation from Lough Neagh to Belfast.

### **River Shannon, Wineport to Glassan**

**5.26** This is a comparatively small scheme to enlarge an existing stream from the Inner Lakes, Lough Ree, a short distance up to the village of Glassan which would provide a very useful new destination on this lake providing safe moorings and good facilities in the village with a number of restaurants, shops and pubs.

### **Grand Canal, Kilbeggan Branch**

**5.27** Since the publication of the BSM Strategy, the canal stores and harbour in Kilbeggan have been restored by voluntary effort. Dúchas - Waterways is committed to carrying out an engineering survey of the line to establish the extent of the problem of making it staunch. Re-opening the 13 km lock-free canal would provide an additional destination on the Grand Canal and significantly increase the time spent by boats in this area of the midlands. Moreover, the possibility also exists of significantly extending the operational waterways system in the region by linking the Grand Canal at Kilbeggan with the Royal Canal at Mullingar via the River Brosna and Lough Ennell (see 6.3 below).

### **River Erne extension to Lough Oughter**

**5.28** The BSM Strategy recommended this extension as a short-to-medium term project. It would consolidate and strengthen 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 would seem to indicate that this would be an extremely costly project involving amongst other works, a new lock and weir together with considerable dredging to create a channel. This project, as with the Ulster Canal restoration, would therefore have to be undertaken with special funding.

### **Grand Canal extension of Naas Branch to Corbally**

**5.29** It is recognised that the short Naas Branch of the Grand Canal is under used by boats. This is partly attributed to the need to pass up through the flight of five locks in a distance of 4 km to reach Naas harbour. Unfortunately, a culverted road crossing on the outskirts of Naas prevents access to a very attractive 8 km lock-free stretch of rural waterway to the harbour at Corbally. The Corbally extension is in-water and used as a feeder channel and all that is required to extend the navigation is to replace the culverted road crossing.

### **Grand Canal, Milltown Feeder**

**5.30** 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 x 1.8m headroom at Pluckerstown Bridge. Increasing the draft

and headroom on the bridge would provide an alternative route for the Robertstown passenger boats and render access to the botanically rich Pollardstown Fen area.

### **River Boyne, Navan to Drogheda**

**5.31** The Boyne Navigation is not part of the connected network but was accorded high priority in the BSM 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 from Dublin
- it is largely owned by An Taisce, which should lead to an easier resolution of many of the legal problems which restoration can pose.

**5.32** For these reasons, the Council considers that this project should continue to be accorded a high priority among waterways which do not form part of the connected network. However consideration could be given to a phased restoration with priority being accorded to linking the new visitor centre at Donore with (a) Slane & (b) Drogheda and finally extending 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.

### **Grand Canal, Mountmellick Branch from Monasterevin to Portarlinton**

**5.33** The BSM Strategy (7.12) states that full restoration of the Mountmellick Branch of the Grand Canal could not be justified economically, but it makes a case for the partial restoration between the junction with the Barrow Line at Monasterevin and Portarlinton, a distance of 8 km with one lock (extant). According to the BSM Strategy (7.12) this "would further expand the still water canal cruising "use-zone", add another urban destination to the network, one with an interesting industrial heritage complementing that of Monasterevin, and enhance Monasterevin as a major canal centre".

**5.34** The BSM Strategy's suggestion that only a partial restoration would be justified 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 2.5 km. 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 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.

### **Further long term projects**

**5.35** Further long-term projects, the priority accorded to which would have to be subject to feasibility and engineering studies:

- Corrib Navigation, extension into Lough Mask
- Grand Canal Blackwood Feeder
- Grand Canal-Royal Canal Link
- River Boyne - Royal Canal link
- Tidal Navigations of the South and South East, inland extensions

## **Corrib Navigation, extension into Lough Mask**

**5.36** The BSM Strategy stated that concern was expressed over the impact of motor vessels on fishing and wildlife on Lough Mask and 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 this system its relative priority, full consideration will need to be given to all of the factors involved, not least to the feasibility of using the disused Cong Canal to connect the two lakes. The restoration of the link with the sea through Galway via the Eglinton Canal has been rendered very difficult by the erection of a number of fixed bridges.

## **Grand Canal Blackwood Feeder**

**5.37** This once navigable feeder is four miles in length and was supplied from a storage reservoir at Ballynafagh Lake, entering the Grand Canal Main Line one mile east of Robertstown. Recent studies suggest the feeder could be restored without adversely affecting the ecology of the lake. As well as supplementing the water supply to the summit level of the canal, it would provide an additional lock-free destination for tour boats from Robertstown. It is understood that ownership of the feeder was transferred by C.I.E. to Kildare County Council.

## **Grand Canal-Royal Canal Link, Kilbeggan to Mullingar via River Brosna and Lough Ennell**

**5.38** Various possibilities for a midlands link between the Grand and Royal canals have been discussed. The BSM Strategy (7.17) gave such a link a low priority. It seems that BSM may have underestimated the potential of such a link to increase the boat traffic on both canals and extend the connected network by some 24 km. This priority could be reviewed following a feasibility study.

## **River Boyne - Royal Canal link by extending the Boyne Navigation to Longwood**

**5.39** The potential means of linking the Boyne Navigation to the connected network has been suggested by the Boyne Branch of 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 could 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, and also provide an additional access to the sea from the connected network at Drogheda.

## **Tidal Navigations of the South and South East, inland extensions**

**5.40** There has been a major increase in pleasure boating activity in the Barrow Estuary, which may mean the assessment of the marking in the Estuary to ensure safe boating. The extension of the Suir to Clonmel and the Nore to Kilkenny are worthy of investigation as is the restoration of the Lismore Canal to extend the Blackwater Navigation.

## Access from the sea

**5.41** As stated earlier in this document there are only three points of access to the sea from the connected network: Shannon Estuary, the River Liffey, the Barrow Estuary.

Improvement work on the navigation through Limerick is due to commence in 1998.

In view of the restoration of the Royal Canal, the increasing use of the Ringsend Basin of the Grand Canal and the development of the Docklands area of the Liffey, the Council feels that there may be a need to improve access to the Grand and Royal Canals from the sea. The increase in the movement of boats between the Barrow estuary and the Barrow, Nore and Suir navigations illustrates that access is not problematic for boat users in this area.

**5.42** The Royal Canal restoration project has highlighted the fact that the major cost of restoration of abandoned and derelict canals arises from the need to provide new road bridges to replace the low-cost, non-navigable culverted crossings constructed by local authorities in the course of road re-alignment schemes. Alternative sources of funding could be explored such as joint funding of bridges between the local authorities, the National Roads Authority, and Dúchas - Waterways.

## Waterway Corridors

**5.43** Many of our inland waterways and their immediate surroundings have a character all of their own, offering an escape from the noise and anxiety associated with the roads and other "stressful" environments. These waterway corridors possess a wide range of buildings and other structures some dating back for over two hundred years. This creates a heritage and recreational environment of extraordinary richness and variety which deserves to be preserved from intrusive, out of character, developments. Much of the system passes through attractive countryside, in many places of great beauty, and invariably of considerable ecological diversity and importance in national terms. As noted in the BSM Strategy (2.31) in relation to the waterways of the midlands, the scenery of the area can be better appreciated from the water than from the adjoining roads, partly because of the isolation of the waterways from the roads, but also because of the slower pace of water travel.

### The question of a zone management for inland waterways corridors.

**5.44** Given the recent spate of ribbon development along many of our inland waterways which detracts from the visual amenity of the waterways from the users point of view, as well as being a pollution threat, it is worth asking how this can be controlled and whether the corridors need to be specially designated in order to do so.

**5.45** There are principally two types of development against which the waterway corridors need to be protected:

- Ribbon residential development close to the waterways which detract incrementally from the visual amenity of the corridor and may result in effluent being disposed of in the waterway.
- Large industrial or commercial developments which may have a significant impact on the visual amenity of the corridors and may also pose a threat of pollution.

**5.46** At present, the waterways cannot be effectively protected from the former, although limited protection exists against the latter in the form of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), depending on the size of the development. The Heritage Council believes that a form of zone management is

required which will recognise the corridor as an area of special amenity and which seeks to preserve that amenity for waterway users through the assessment of applications for planning permission for development along the corridors. The objective of the designations should not, however, be to prohibit or limit all development.

## Designations

**5.47** There are three main options:

**5.48** To create a special designation for inland waterways which would require that a statutory instrument be signed by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government under the 1963 Planning Act. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, in particular the Waterways Service, could be appointed as the responsible authority. All planning authorities could then be obliged by statute to designate all inland waterway corridors as specially protected areas within which normal re-zoning would not be permitted.

**5.49** To use an existing environmental designation such as a Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO). SAAOs are proposed by the local authority, approved by the Minister of the Environment and Local Government and enforced by the local authorities. It is a powerful designation as it prevents any development which would be detrimental to the objective of the designation and normal re-zoning is not permitted. Only two Special Amenity Areas have been designated to date.

**5.50** To use an Area of Special Control management in Local Authority Development Plans. The waterway corridors could be zoned for amenity use (i.e. a given distance on either side of the waterway) which would preclude residential development. This designation has no direct statutory basis, does not provide for control over exempted developments (most agricultural activities) and is enforced by the local authorities, also re-zoning is permitted.

**5.51** The decision to designate lies ultimately with the local authority.

**5.52** The Council believes that Option 3 is the most flexible and most practical designation for the following reasons:

- it would achieve the objective of preserving the amenity of the waterway corridors.
- it allows for participation and involvement by the local authorities and the public in the management of the corridors. The preservation of amenity would be an objective in the local authority development plan.
- it allows for the discretion by the local authorities as to whether or not development should take place, depending on the effect a proposal is likely to have on the visual or amenity qualities of the corridor. it does not add to the plethora of environmental and amenity designations which already exists.

**5.53** This designation could be open to misinterpretation by local authority officials which other amenity designations are subject to. The only recourse to this is the appeals process.

## Necessary resources

**5.54** A designation is useless unless it can be effectively enforced. Such a designation as that proposed will have resource implications for both the local authorities, the Waterways Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and the Heritage Council:

## Local authorities

**5.55** Extra staff may possibly be required to assess, in association with Dúchas, which sections of the corridors need to be designated, or if a blanket designation is required. and also to carry out preliminary assessment of the planning applications received for development within the corridors. The position of professional planners within local authorities is still far from satisfactory as demonstrated by a survey published in November 1996 by the Irish Planning Institute. It is the planner to whom, by default, the responsibility for conservation falls with the local authority. This is an issue which must be addressed before the matter of conservation officers for local authorities is considered.

## Waterways Service

**5.56** At present, the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands is a statutory consultee in the planning process for the built and natural heritage. Due to lack of resources, the Waterways Service is unable to exercise the necessary degree of control over new development in the waterway corridors that is needed to ensure their preservation as areas of outstanding quietude and beauty. At present, if a development is planned along the waterways, the Waterways Service must be consulted if any of the works are on the foreshore or below the waterline. Dúchas inspects the plans and grants or withholds a licence to proceed based on the impact if any on the navigation. It is the local authority who then approves or refuses permission for the development. The Council feels that the Waterways Service should have a greater role in the co-ordination of structured and sustainable development in consultation with the local authorities and other agencies in order to meet the needs of the varied users of the waterways. The Waterways Service would require additional staffing resources to fulfil this function.

## Heritage Council

**5.57** The Heritage Council, in accordance with its review in the planning process and the proposal to adopt a strategic role in this regard, will have to provide advice to local authorities on the designation of waterway corridors and the formulation of policies for their protection to be included in the development plans.

## Practical example

**5.58** Two important pilot corridor studies were undertaken by consultants for the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht on the Grand and Royal canals in Dublin City and the greater Dublin area. A Grand & Royal Canal Task Force was set up to implement the recommendations in these studies. This has proved very successful in bringing together the various government departments, agencies and local communities, and could provide a model for other regions on the waterways. In particular it has helped to focus the attention of the local authorities on the potential of the canals and the need to allow for the development of the corridors in a sensitive manner when drafting development plans.

## **6. Usage Management Options**

**6.1** There are many different users of the inland waterway system, water-based and land-based, with different requirements. This section examines the different sectors and discusses ways to avoid use conflict. Recreational and conservation issues are discussed too, followed by opportunities that could be exploited in a sustainable way.

### **Private Boating - figures awaited from the Waterways Service**

**6.2** There has been a large increase in the number of private boats on the inland waterways in the past five years. While the increase is largely evident on the Shannon and Erne systems, there has also been an increase on the Grand Canal system and in particular in the lower reaches of the Barrow Navigation.

**6.3** As in 1992, private boats tend to be concentrated at certain locations on the waterways system. This is principally because of the increasing incidence of vandalism and break-ins to boats when not in use. However a number of new marinas are being constructed which in turn is leading to a greater spread of private boats around the system. It is important to recognise that the growth in the number of private boats represents a growth in what the strategy plan accepted is "an acceptable form of domestic tourism" contributing to a distribution in spending throughout the waterways system.

### **Boat Rental**

The detailed analysis carried out for the 1992 BSM strategy plan is still very relevant in assessing the boat rental sector. The changes which have occurred in this sector are partly influenced by the opening of the Shannon Erne Waterway with two of the larger firms, Emerald Star and Carrick Craft opening up bases on the Erne and offering one way trips up or down the Shannon. However, it is a sector which still has room for expansion.

### **Commercial pleasure craft**

**6.6** While this sector still represents a very small fraction of the cruising business, it is increasing. There is a larger number of venues at which day trips are available in 1997 compared to 1991; (need figures) this is a sector which offers opportunities for expansion.

## Level and pattern of boating use

**6.7** The greatest change in patterns of boating use has been brought about by the opening of the Shannon Erne Waterway which has shifted the centre of gravity from the lower to the upper Shannon area as anticipated. The number of boats passing through the Shannon locks recorded by Dúchas - Waterways for 1992 and 1997 are as follows:

	Number of boats 1992	Number of boats 1997
Portumna Bridge	6, 897	8,902
Victoria Lock	8, 676	10,020
Athlone	8, 788	
Tarmonbarry Lock	6,622	7,745
Clondra Lock	787	1,354
Rooskey Lock	7, 975	9,798
Albert Lock	9, 137	12, 076
Clarendon Lock	6, 713	7,479
Battlebridge Lock, L. Allen Canal	1, 209	2, 182
Drumleague Lock, L. Allen Canal	1, 209	2,100
Drumshambo Lock, L. Allen Canal		1,315

**6.8** There has been an increase in the use of watersport boats on the Shannon, and activities such as jet skis, water ski-ing, as well as an increase in number of boats of high horse power. Different types of craft for rowing and canoeing have also increased in recent years, as well as in sailing activities such as sail boarding along the Shannon Navigation. (Figures awaited from the Waterways Service). There also has been an increase in boat use on the lower Barrow Navigation.

### **6.9 Zoning of different boat types**

The Heritage Council believes that in order to avoid conflict or accidents through the different usage of boat types on the lakes, there should be consideration of taking the following steps:

- Zoning of areas for different boat types and different craft type
- The establishment of speed limits on the lakes in the vicinity of harbours
- The licensing of certain types and size of boats and sports craft

### **Small-scale infrastructural developments**

**6.10** Facilities, including harbours, moorings and jetties, have not increased in proportion to boat use. Pump out facilities are being installed by the local authorities but it is anticipated that the number of pump out stations will need to be increased in certain locations.

**6.11** The BSM Strategy pointed to the need to increase boat traffic on the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal and the Barrow Navigation in order to offset a concentration of development in the northwest of the country and to justify ongoing investment in these navigations. To achieve this aim a number of low cost developments could be undertaken in the short term in conjunction with local development groups and local authorities. Part of the premise is that conventional cruising, whether the boat is hired or privately owned, excludes a lot of potential users because they cannot afford it.

**6.12** The Council makes the following suggestions to improve the infrastructure along the canals system:

- Simple landing stages should be provided above and below all locks.
- Low level landing stages and portage paths should be provided at each lock to facilitate canoes and small boats. Facilities on the Shannon Erne Waterway are a model.
- Simple camping grounds should be provided for walkers and small boat users at approximately 15 km intervals.
- Urban communities such as Edenderry, Tullamore, Monasterevin, Athy, Carlow and Mullingar should be encouraged to explore how they can create "safe haven" moorings to attract boats and the economic activity that they generate.
- House boat communities should be encouraged at properly regulated and serviced places.
- Along the Shannon and Erne systems, there is an ever increasing demand for more mooring places and mooring buoys should be provided to improve access to heritage sites.

**6.13** The participation of the private sector should be encouraged in relation to the provision of off-line moorings and fully serviced marinas, the development of hire boat bases, boat repair facilities and other commercial enterprises including hotel boats, trip boats, water buses and floating restaurants. Grant aid or tax incentives may be needed to enable such projects to become established on newly opened waterways, such as the Royal Canal. Such aid could be channelled through local tourism initiatives but Dúchas - Waterways does have an important role in ensuring that development is properly structured within a clearly defined long term strategy plan.

#### **Other recreational activities**

**6.14** There has been a significant increase in the use of the waterways for recreational activities other than boating.

#### **Walking**

**6.15** There has been a marked increase in the development of walking routes throughout the country in the past six years and the development of walking routes along the waterways has been proceeding well, some of them tying in with the country-wide network of way-marked ways, e.g., the Grand Canal Way, the Lough Derg Way, the East Clare Way, the Royal Canal Way, The Leitrim Way. Dúchas - Waterways has now taken over the publication of the waterway guides from the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland and these are designed to be useful to the walker, providing information about access, accommodation and other services.

#### **Fishing**

**6.16** Close collaboration has been ongoing between Dúchas - Waterways and the Central and Regional Fisheries Board over the last five years. Fishing is becoming an important activity on the inland waterways for tourism and leisure. To date in Ireland conflict between angling and boating has been minimal because of the extent of our cruising waters and the limited number of craft using them. With the steady increase in boat numbers, this could become a contentious issue along the Grand and Royal Canals, and the Barrow navigation. While conflicts between boating and fishing interests can always occur, good consultation and co-operation have kept these to a minimum. It is recognised that the passage of boats can in fact enhance the fishing if the boats proceed past the angler at slow speed. A voluntary code of conduct drawn up after consultation between boating and angling bodies could be the best way to avoid conflict.

#### **Cycling**

**6.17** Cycling is also under review by the Waterways Service with the creation of designated cycleways being investigated as a possibility. In Britain it has been stated that there are some urban sections of canal and navigable rivers where sufficiently wide pathways can be created without detriment to the waterway landscape. British Waterways has suggested to the government that they be granted additional funding to convert towing paths to cycling routes by the purchase of additional land or

construction at different levels, thereby expanding the towpath's normal function. Acknowledging that cycling could cause problems to other users such as walkers and anglers especially if numbers of cyclists using the towpaths increases, the creation of cycleways along towpaths should be considered, in particular in urban areas. Clearly designated cycle lanes could be created and separated from the walkable towpath as a way to avoid conflict.

### **Horse riding**

**6.18** Like cycling the use of the canal towpaths for horse riding has the potential to clash with other users and landowners especially in heavily frequented areas. Solutions such as the designation of lengths of the towpaths as suitable for horse riding, and voluntary codes of conduct should be investigated.

### **Shooting**

**6.19** Shooting is still not permitted on the Barrow and other waterways under the navigation byelaws. The Council believes that given the increased recreational usage of the waterways for safety reasons, the same rules that apply to shooting on and around public roads should apply to navigable waterways.

**6.20** In general, potential user conflict can be defused through dialogue and consultation between all users of the waterways and the relevant organisations. This may best be achieved by establishing structures to facilitate co-ordination and consultation with waterway users on a regular basis. The Lough Erne and Lough Neagh Advisory Councils provide one model of how this could be achieved.

### **Heritage conservation / usage conflict management**

**6.21** The Heritage Council is committed to increasing appreciation and understanding of all aspects of heritage of the inland waterways in order to help conserve this heritage while enhancing people's enjoyment of the waterways.

**6.22** The inland waterways unite many areas of heritage - built heritage, archaeology (underwater and terrestrial), wildlife and habitats, landscape. With increased appreciation and understanding of the more fragile aspects of the waterways heritage, potential conflict between recreational user and heritage conservation should be overcome.

**6.23** Navigation has the potential to impact negatively on water quality and cause disturbance to wildlife. There should be a recognition that certain parts of river systems are of high conservation value which adds to the overall worth of the inland waterways system. The enforcement of the Directives and Conventions concerned with the environment may conflict with present use and management and steps will be needed to resolve these issues.

**6.24** Likewise, aspects of our underwater heritage is adversely affected by boating activities such as the dropping anchors in sensitive areas such as former fording places

or early harbours. Alternatives such as carefully positioned mooring buoys and zoned areas must be considered.

**6.25** In relation to the restoration of closed navigations, consideration must be taken of the need to preserve the old while meeting the needs of the new. Locks and bridges must be able to cope with larger modern boats, and canals must be of a depth to allow passage of modern boats. A restored waterway must be open to a large range of boats. However, this need not mean the obliteration of all features of the smaller, older locks. For example, on the Ulster Canal, the feasibility of enlarging on only one side of the locks is being considered, rather than on both, leaving the original brick work in situ on one side of the lock.

**6.26** Other aspects of the built heritage - lock houses, canal stores, military fortifications - are of vital interest to those making use of the inland waterways system. The Council believes that development of these features must be carried out with due consideration and sensitivity to their heritage value and in line with principles of best conservation practise.

**6.27** A balance will have to be struck between heritage conservation and recreational use of heritage areas. In order to avoid conflict, exploration of options should be examined, such as codes of conduct which could be drawn up for certain user types and zones of restricted practices, similar to the ideas for overcoming user conflict. Again, these issues could be discussed in a forum-situation. In the case of changes in practise, these must be presented as adding to the experience of the waterways rather than limiting its usage.

#### **Opportunities for the development of inland waterways.**

**6.28** The inland waterways offer many opportunities for the recreational enjoyment and appreciation of heritage. The Heritage Council is committed to facilitating the increased understanding, appreciation, enjoyment and conservation of heritage. It recognises that the inland waterways offer people many unexplored opportunities to realise this objective.

**6.29** Socio-economic benefits to be derived from the existence of a navigable waterway, particularly in urban areas, need to be appreciated. A navigable waterway can make an area a more attractive place to live and can also enhance an area as a location for establishing businesses and enterprises. This is of particular significance in built up urban areas, such as the north and south inner city of Dublin through which both the Grand and Royal Canal pass. The Council believes that appropriate policies need to be developed to obtain the maximum advantage for the areas involved and use the waterway as a catalyst for development. Developments planned for urban waterways should give consideration to such benefits other than tourism in developing policy and strategy.

**6.30** There are many opportunities which meet the requirements for the sustainable development of the inland waterways, however the waterways system is a fragile resource and a careful balance has to be achieved between conservation and development. Waterfront development is much sought after but the potential negative effects on the waterways themselves are many. All development must take into account the potential adverse affects of tourism on the waterways and their heritage. Thorough assessment of the implications of all developments through the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system should be required in advance to minimalise damage by structures, level of activity, or insensitive alteration to existing stretches of waterways and their heritage features.

**6.31** In line with the principles of Local Agenda 21, the Council believes that development work along the waterways, not directly related to navigation, might be undertaken by local authorities and fishery boards and, where appropriate, voluntary organisations and local development groups under the guidance of the relevant authority. The works envisaged could include the upgrading of towpaths, providing facilities for walkers at convenient places, the development of amenity and recreational areas, access for the disabled and the provision of overnight moorings with associated facilities.

## **7. Principle Recommendations from the Heritage Council**

**7.1** The Heritage Council looks to the future in which the inland waterways and their corridors will be developed in an integrated broad-based way, conserving where possible their built heritage features and protecting their unique ecological systems, to facilitate the enjoyment and appreciation of this important part of our national heritage now and for future. The

Heritage Council recommends:

**7.2** that the exclusion of all tidal navigations may need to be examined in view of the increasing movement of boats to and from the inland waterways into tidal waters.

**7.3** that it is important for Dúchas - Waterways to achieve a high level of co-ordination with all these departments and agencies.

**7.4** that a co-ordinating committee would be essential to administer the tax designation scheme on the Upper Shannon.

**7.5** The Heritage Council would support the setting up of an Inland Waterways Authority with its own staff and budget because such an authority would have the flexibility to deal with:

- the changed function of inland waterways,
- the increased and diversified usage of the waterways,
- the realisation of the potential for understanding and enjoyment of all aspects of heritage along the waterways,
- the realisation of the socio-economic benefits of developing inland waterways, using conflict management between conservation of heritage, usage of the waterways and between users, and development pressures.
- liaison and creation of partnerships with other agencies and bodies
- liaison and creation of partnerships between private, voluntary and community sectors
- alternative funding mechanisms
- strategic planning for the future development of the inland waterways resource
- the proposed establishment of a North-South Inland Waterways cross border body
- the co-operation required with other agencies in the context of river catchment management

**The Heritage Council recommends:**

**7.6** that a long-term strategy plan is required for the management of inland waterways to ensure a co-ordinated, sustainable approach to the development of this resource.

**7.7** that the function of water quality enforcement and monitoring is best carried by these agencies but that a high degree of co-operation is required between them and Dúchas - Waterways.

**7.8** that given the limited role of Ardnacrusha Power Station in supplying the national grid, reconsideration of this whole situation may be needed.

**7.9** that in view of the limited budget available it is important that the greatest proportion of these funds is directed towards the upkeep and operation of the navigations.

**7.10** that where the construction or restoration of a waterway is concerned, three important criteria must be taken into account:

- whether boats are likely to use the waterway
- whether the waterway extends the "connected network"
- whether the development would impact negatively on heritage, e.g., wildlife, architecture, archaeology etc.

**7.11** that Areas of Special Control should be included in local authority development plans

**7.12** that Dúchas - Waterways should have a greater role in the co-ordination of structured and sustainable development in consultation with the local authorities and other agencies in order to meet the needs of the varied users of the waterways. Dúchas - Waterways would require additional staffing resources to fulfil this function.

**7.13** that in order to avoid accidents or conflict through the different usage of boat types on the lakes, zoning may become essential. This would require additional manpower resources for enforcement.

**7.14** that the infrastructure of the inland waterways system needs to be improved in partnership with local authorities, local communities, and the private sector. Dúchas - Waterways has an important role in ensuring that development is properly structured within a clearly defined long-term strategy plan.

**7.15** that a voluntary code of conduct should be drawn up after consultation between boating and angling bodies.

**7.16** that designated cycleways could be created particularly in urban areas, but should be clearly separated from the existing towpath.

**7.17** that horse riding should not be permitted on towpaths

**7.18** that given the increased recreational usage of the waterways for safety reasons, the same rules that apply to shooting on and around public roads should apply to navigable waterways.

**7.19** that carefully positioned mooring buoys and zoned areas may be needed to protect areas of underwater heritage.

**7.20** that development of these features must be carried out with due consideration and sensitivity to their heritage value and in line with principles of best conservation practise.

**7.21** that the potential in marketing of the inland waterways has not been fully realised.

**7.22** that all development concerning inland waterways must be carried out within a framework to avoid piecemeal development

**7.23** that appropriate policies need to be developed to obtain the maximum advantage for the areas involved and use the waterway as a catalyst for development.

**7.24** that all development must take into account the potential adverse effects of tourism on the waterways and their heritage.

**7.25** that in line with the principles of Local Agenda 21 development work along the waterways, not directly related to navigation, might be undertaken by local authorities and fishery boards and, where appropriate, voluntary organisations and local development groups under the guidance of the relevant authority.

**7.26** that the voluntary sector should be encouraged to continue this involvement and that non-governmental organisations should be recognised as important partners in the future by Dúchas-Waterways.

## 8. Response Framework

You are welcome to respond in your own manner to this document but it would assist us to analyse your response if

- comments were ordered in relation to the headings in the document and referred to the paragraph numbers when commenting on them.
- you used the questions below to frame your response:
  - a. Has the Heritage Council analysed the situation correctly?
  - b. Has the heritage Council identified the right issues?
  - c. To what extent do you agree with this analysis and proposals?
  - d. How workable are the ideas?

Specific points that we would like comment on:

- the creation of an Inland Waterways Authority
- the priorities for expansion of the network
- the proposals regarding the zoning of an inland waterways corridor
- the proposal regarding the zoning of areas of usage etc. on the system
- the alternative funding mechanisms
- the idea of a users forum
- the idea of a development framework plan for inland waterways

Submissions should be sent back by 25 September 1998 to:

Beatrice Kelly  
Inland Waterways Consultation Paper  
The Heritage Council  
Kilkenny

Tel: 056 70777  
Fax 056 70788

Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix

### BSM recommendations from 1992 report

**A.1** In addition to the specific actions recommended in respect of individual waterways to achieve the strategy outlined above, a number of general recommendations are made. The more important of these include:

**A.2** the Office of Public Works to be given responsibility for navigation on all inland waterways. Consideration should be given to extending this authority to those sections of navigable tidal waters which have no value for commercial use, including those which at present have no navigation authority;

**A.3** water supplies to be protected and conserved, including control of all forms of abstractions and discharges;

**A.4** the wildlife value of the waterways network to be retained and interpreted;

**A.5** the wider environment through which the waterways pass to be monitored; the variety of specialist structures along the waterways to be managed to conserve the integrity of the system;

**A.6** the variety of specialist structures along the waterways to be managed to conserve the integrity of the system;

**A.7** new structures, such as bridges, facilities adjacent to the waterways etc. to be controlled through formal liaison and consultation between the Office of Public Works, local authorities and other agencies;

**A.8** the control of access to towpaths, in particular the restriction of vehicular traffic, pony trekking, and grazing to be maintained;

**A.9** the control of encroachments;

**A.10** the selective development of towpaths for cycling;

**A.11** the investigation of property ownership and rights on waterways recommended for restoration;

**A.12** environmental enhancement directly by the Office of Public Works, and through formal liaison and consultation with local authorities;

**A.13** in the longer-term, the formulation of a single, system-wide set of bye-laws;

**A.14** the extension of registration to the full inland waterways system;

**A.15** the encouragement, but also control, of commercial tourism craft;

**A.16** the further investigation of individual waterways for angling potential and access;

**A.17** the encouragement of wider use of the waterways resource through publicity, the provision of information, liaison and cooperation with user groups, the appointment of a facilitator, and through interpretation; and

**A.18** the encouragement of the provision of facilities, and in places the involvement of the Office of Public Works in appropriate joint ventures.

**A.19** The realisation of the recommendations, and the achievement of the strategy, requires that the appropriate level of resources be made available to the Office of Public Works over a period of years on the basis of a phased programme. That programme will give rise to occasional demands for relatively large expenditure in particular years, to meet the costs of individual large infrastructural elements such as bridges etc., and this must be recognised. However, the maintenance, care and conservation of the system must have priority over development of new waterways.

**A.20** Legislation will also be required to realise the strategy, initially in the form of enabling legislation, to allow the Office of Public Works to extend its role as navigation authority, to take in charge additional waterways and canals, and to undertake compulsory purchase, where necessary. Amending legislation may also be required to ensure that the Office of Public Works be informed of planning applications, roads developments etc. that affect the navigable waterways system.

**A.21** Additional staff resources will be required by the Office of Public Works to allow for expansion in the extent and usage of the system, the carrying out of restoration and development works and the continuation of making up of the back-log of outstanding work, to achieve a higher level of liaison and consultation with other organisations as well as a higher level of day-to-day operational procedures and activities and to meet the needs of interpretation, education and promotion.