

Evaluation of Waterways Corridor Studies

Final report to the Heritage Council

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1. Executive summary

In 2007, the Heritage Council commissioned an evaluation of the five waterways corridor studies it has carried out to date. The studies cover the entire length of the Shannon Navigation and sections of the Grand and Royal Canals. The studies document in detail the special heritage and socio-economic aspects of the waterway corridor, and propose policies and actions through which sustainable development can be achieved.

This evaluation examined the effectiveness of the methodologies used to conduct the studies, their use by project partners and others, the level of dissemination of the studies, and how they can inform future studies. The evaluation included a facilitated discussion with the original steering groups and wide consultation with stakeholders.

One of the main aims of the studies is to promote integrated, coordinated development along the entire Shannon waterway corridor. This demanding goal is a long way from being achieved, but some elements which will underpin progress include the vision for the entire waterway, detailed baseline information, comprehensive recommendations, and the involvement of all the relevant local authorities and other public bodies, and the engagement of user groups.

The results of the evaluation show that the studies are not well known outside those of the project partners. They need to be better promoted to inform, and gain support from, a wider constituency. Summaries should be produced and distributed widely, and a promotional campaign should be conducted by the relevant county heritage officers. This will need to be supported by a dedicated web site, where the information in the studies can be accessed more easily and can be revised and updated when necessary. The remaining sections of the Grand and Royal canals and the Barrow canal and navigation should be the focus of future studies.

The studies have had some positive influence on the approach and practices of local authorities. A number of county development plans and plan reviews have been informed by the studies. However, this does not always translate into practice when planning decisions are made. Pressure for development, exacerbated by the Pilot Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon, continues to impact on the special heritage of the corridor. Irrespective of improvements in policies, local authorities still act mostly in isolation from one another and cross-border communication needs to be improved considerably.

The report contains a series of recommendations for promotion and revision of the studies and on policies and actions to be advanced, among which are: ministerial guidelines on planning and development in waterway corridors; revision of the guidelines for landscape character assessment; and the creation of an advisory group for Waterways Ireland to improve communication with user groups.



Albert Lock, River Shannon (Photo by David Hickie)

2. Introduction

2.1. Project brief

The Heritage Council commissioned David Hickie, Charles Stanley-Smith and Mide Gerrard to carry out this evaluation of the effectiveness of the four waterways corridor studies completed between 2002 and 2005. Our evaluation also includes a critique of the development of the concept of waterways corridor studies, which embraces the Waterways Corridor Study of the Lower Shannon, 2006, published in 2007.

2.1.1. The four corridor studies included in our full evaluation are:

Waterways Corridor Study (Pilot) 2002: the Grand Canal from Ballycommon to Shannon Harbour, and the Shannon from Shannonbridge to Meelick

Waterways Corridor study 2004: Lanesborough to Shannonbridge (taking in Lough Ree)

Waterways Corridor study 2004: Royal Canal from Thomastown to Cloondara and River Shannon from Roosky to Lanesborough.

Waterways Corridor study 2005: Upper Shannon down to Roosky including the Boyle River, L. Allen, L. Key and the Carnadoe waters.

The Waterways Corridor Study 2006: The Lower Shannon Navigation, including Lough Derg, from Meelick, Co. Galway to Limerick City, was also included in the project brief, but this was only published in 2007. Consequently, its effectiveness can only be gauged in part rather than in full.

2.1.2. The purpose of this review is to provide the Heritage Council with an overview of:

- The effectiveness of the methodologies used to conduct the studies;
- The application and usage of the corridor studies by project partners and other organisations;
- The level of dissemination of the reports and their contents; and
- Revisions to recommendations (if required).

The Heritage Council wishes that this evaluation be used to inform future corridor studies that it may conduct, as well as forming part of a wider process to make the waterways corridor studies more accessible.

2.1.3. The evaluation is based on the following criteria:

a) The content of the corridor studies

- Examination of the study areas selected, their geographic selection, corridor delineation, etc.
- Relevance and accessibility of the information in the main documents and appendices;
- Initiation or implementation of the policies and recommended actions;
- Identification of policies and actions that could be the focus of future initiatives.

b) The impact of the corridor studies

- Use the studies by project partners (e.g. inclusion in county development plans or other plans, such as tourism strategies);
- Awareness of the studies in the wider community within the catchment areas;
- Availability of the studies in local libraries?
- Use by non-government organisations;
- Awareness of the studies within other local authorities or agencies, not directly located within a corridor study area and possible interest in adopting the corridor study approach.

c) The wider impact of the corridor studies

- Integration with national landscape initiatives;
- Integration with the implementation of Water Framework Directive;
- Use of the studies by any organisation or individuals not originally anticipated in the project brief.

2.1.4. Evaluation process

We were required to perform the following tasks:

- Facilitated discussion with project partners (Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland, and relevant local authority personnel).
- Identification of policies and issues where action could be advanced.
- Discussions with the wider community linked to the waterways, including NGOs, community groups and user groups.
- Evaluation of policies, including the reasons for implementation and non-implementation.
- Evaluation of dissemination of the corridor studies (print copies, CD versions, and web site).
- Evaluation of the wider impact of the corridor studies.

2.1.5. Outputs

We were required to report on the status and application of the four studies, including:

- Evaluation of the current performance of the studies;
- Evaluation on the corridor study concept, taking into account the 2006 study;
- Recommendations for future studies;
- Initiation of a process to implement or revise policies and actions in the studies.

2.2. Background to the evaluation and role of the Heritage Council

In 1999, the Heritage Council produced its policy paper, "The Future of Ireland's Inland Waterways" (Heritage Council, 1999), following extensive consultation. Among the most important issues emerging was the need for an overall strategic plan for Ireland's waterways and their corridors. This paper was followed by "Integrating Policies for Ireland's Waterways" (Heritage Council, 2005a), which reviewed and updated the 1999 paper.

The main themes of the Heritage Council's 2005 position paper are:

- A strategic, coordinated and integrated approach to Ireland's inland waterways.
- The Waterways Corridor Studies model as a way of ensuring better coordination and integrated management.
- Involvement of recreational users in management-planning, awareness-raising and interpretation.
- Funding.
- Protection of disused and derelict waterways.
- The long-term expansion and development of the network.

The Heritage Council's main proposals are:

- All navigable inland waterways should be under the remit of Waterways Ireland.
- Corridor studies should be used as a tool for coordinated, integrated management, and applied to the entire inland waterways system.
- Adequate funding should be made available to Waterways Ireland, including funding for major infrastructure and ongoing restoration projects.

- Heritage items within corridors should be considered within the context of the Irish landscape.
- There should be greater communication between users, other stakeholders and management authorities.
- The waterways network should be expanded, dependent on available funding.

3. Literature Review



Carnadoe Waters (photo by David Hickie)

3.1. Previous Irish waterways corridor studies

The Grand Canal Corridor Study, carried out by Brady Shipman Martin in 1994 (Government of Ireland, 1994), was the first such study in Ireland. This was followed by the Royal Canal Corridor Study in 1995 (Government of Ireland, 1995). Both studies were commissioned by the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht and undertaken by consultants Brady Shipman Martin. The Grand Canal Study covered the section from Grand Canal Dock to Lucan Road Bridge, where the canal re-joins the River Liffey. The Royal Canal Corridor Study examined the section from Spencer Dock, where the canal opens to the River Liffey estuary near the Custom House, to Allen Bridge, Kilcock, Co. Meath. Both of these early corridor studies dealt with areas that were mainly urban or suburban in character. The broad aim of both studies was to provide a physical planning framework for the revitalisation of the canal corridors. The documents presented a vision for the future, identified opportunities and set out broad strategies and guiding principles

for the achievement of the vision. The studies also included a number of proposals for actions and the measures that would be required.

The terms of reference of both of the above studies included the concept of collaboration between the statutory bodies with responsibility for the canal and private sector and community interests. While the specific aims of the Grand Canal Corridor Study did not mention consultation, the Royal Canal Corridor Study did include this element, which became a central part of the project briefs for 2002-2006 studies.

These earlier canal corridor studies differed from the 2002-2006 Heritage Council studies because they dealt with (mainly) urban areas and their focus was comparatively narrow, while the later studies are of mainly rural areas and include the River Shannon navigation, a waterway where the corridor is much broader and more difficult to define. The main theme of the earlier studies was architectural/urban regeneration, while the later studies are more concerned with tourism, recreation and heritage conservation. However, both sets of studies have one broad aim in common: to present a vision for the future of Ireland's navigable waterways in which the heritage, social and economic elements are inseparable and are addressed in an integrated and co-ordinated way.

In the earlier canal corridor studies, the corridor was defined as the area lying within the visual zone of influence of the canal and towpath, with additional links to adjacent facilities. This approach formed the basis for the methodology of the later studies.

3.2. Waterways corridor studies abroad

Few waterways corridor studies have been carried out in other countries and the five studies of the Shannon system to date are arguably the most detailed and comprehensive of their kind in Europe. The Heritage Council's approach to these studies was informed by the study carried out for the Rideau Canal in Canada.

3.2.1. The Rideau Canal, Ontario, Canada

The Rideau Canal, opened in 1832, connects Kingston, on Lake Ontario, to Ottawa, Canada's capital city. The canal is 202 kms in length, and incorporates sections of several natural rivers. The canal is now used purely for recreational boating, similar to the Shannon Navigation.

In 1993, a waterways corridor study was commissioned by the Canadian Government's heritage authority, Parks Canada. The study was based on an earlier study which warned of the negative impact of rapid urban development along the canal, eroding its rural character and heritage. The Cultural Landscape of the Rideau Canal Corridor Phase II Study (Stovel, 1998) describes and evaluates the corridor's cultural landscapes and recommends actions which should be taken to manage and preserve significant landscapes. This study is directed to municipalities, heritage interests and private landowners to identify and protect the cultural landscape of the Rideau Canal corridor.

The Rideau Canal has been inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007 (UNESCO, 2007).

3.2.2. Thames Waterway Plan, England

The Thames Waterway Plan 2006-2011 (Environment Agency, December 2005) was produced by the Environment Agency on behalf of the River Thames Alliance, a partnership consisting of 65 public and private sector organisations. The plan provides an as-yet uncosted strategic framework for the river and its corridor. The main aim is to reinvigorate leisure and tourism along the navigation in a sustainable way. The plan describes the various activities and facilities along the navigation and proposes actions to improve the situation. At this stage, these actions are aspirational. The Thames Alliance hopes that individual members of the alliance (e.g. local authorities) will modify their own policies to reflect the plan's vision and proposed actions. The methodology for the definition of the corridor is not described. The Thames Waterway Plan, like the Heritage Council corridor studies, shares an emphasis on partnership with a number of relevant organisations (i.e. stakeholders) together with wide-ranging consultation. The plan is being led by an official from the UK Environment Agency.

4. Stakeholder consultation



Fishing, Carnadoe Waters (photo by David Hickie)

4.1. Approach and methods

Public consultation by State agencies is now normal practice. The process of consultation not only informs the people undertaking the study but also engages the stakeholders. Consultation was a central element of the five waterways corridor studies to date, and is central to our evaluation.

4.1.1. Discussion forum

The project brief required that the original steering groups for all the studies be re-assembled. The aim was to assemble the people with the most knowledge of, and involvement with, the studies. A discussion forum was convened in Tullamore in June 2007 for this purpose. Agencies represented included Waterways Ireland, and local authority officials from North Tipperary, Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath and Offaly, and a consultant from Cunnane Stratton Reynolds, one of the two firms of consultants

which carried out the studies. The feedback we received from the forum is included in Section 4.2 below.

4.1.2. Wider consultation

Our consultations were conducted in person with members of the original project steering groups, some of whom did not attend the discussion forum, and other key officials and elected members. If meetings were not possible, phone interviews were made. Other consultations were conducted using questionnaires, which were completed by a number of the respondents. The discussion forum provided a good starting point for the general consultations, helping us to better focus our enquiries towards the issues which were relevant to the evaluation.

The following themes were chosen:

- **Methodology**
- **Readability and accessibility of information**
- **Consultation**
- **Policies and actions**
- **Critique**
- **The future**

This allowed us to achieve a moderate uniformity within the different consultations. Questions under these themes are listed below.

Methodology

1. Do you think the waterway corridor (in your administrative area/in total) has been defined adequately?
2. Do you think there is a better way to define the waterway corridor?

Readability and accessibility of information

3. How would you rate the studies to understand and to follow?
4. How would you rate the studies to extract relevant information (e.g. facts, recommendations)?

Consultation

5. In your opinion, was there sufficient consultation during the studies?

Policies and actions

6. Have local authorities recognised the studies in official documents (CDP, Draft CDP, County Development Board, Local Area Plans, etc)?
7. Are the studies sufficiently well known or disseminated?
8. Has County Council policy been influenced by the studies?
9. Have you made use of the Waterway Corridor Studies?

10. If yes, in what way? (E.g. in strategic planning; determining planning applications; projects or publications.)
11. Can you think of any significant planning decisions where the studies were influential? (e.g. in relation to applications which were eligible for the Rural Renewal Scheme)

Critique

12. What if any criticisms do you have?

The future

13. Do you have any comments on how the studies might be improved in the future?
14. Should the studies' profile be raised?

Further broad questions and topics included:

- How effective were the methods used to conduct the Waterway Corridor Studies?
- How useful have the Waterway Corridor Studies been to decision-makers and stakeholders?
- How well-known are the Waterway Corridor Studies and how can they be made more accessible?
- Is there anything that should be changed in the way the Studies are conducted if such Studies are to be undertaken in the future?
- The geographical extent of the Shannon Waterway Corridor.
- Links with other heritage-related policies, such as, for example, the Water Framework Directive, river basin management planning, landscape character assessment and regional and local planning and development.

A list of people and organisations consulted is provided in Appendix 1.

Since some members of the original steering committees could not attend due to changes in personnel and other reasons, significant individuals within the authorities, agencies and organisations were sought who either had replaced key people or had relevant knowledge of the studies. These comprised:

Stewart Burt, Forward Planning Section, Offaly Co. Council
Tracy Davis, Forward Planning Section, Roscommon Co. Council
Strategic Policy Committee, Environment and Planning, Roscommon Co. Council
John Connor, Chair, Roscommon Co. Council
John Cunningham, Director of Services, Roscommon Co. Council
Terry McCague, Senior Planner, Westmeath Co. Council
Strategic Policy Committee, Environment and Planning, Westmeath Co. Council.

4.2. Results of consultations with local authorities

The studies were supervised by the Heritage Council Standing Committee on Inland Waterways and steering groups composed of representatives of the Heritage Council, the relevant local authorities and Waterways Ireland. Feedback from the members of the steering groups is considered central to our evaluation

We have endeavoured to record comments from those consulted by theme and by study under the six themes above.

4.2.1. Waterways Corridor Study (Pilot) 2002

The Grand Canal from Ballycommon to Shannon Harbour, and the Shannon from Shannonbridge to Meelick.

Consultation on 16th July 2007

Amanda Pedlow

Stuart Burt

Vincent Hussey

Methodology

River and Canal Protection Zones were cited as examples which were useful to the planners. They clearly define the zone where there is a presumption against development, and the zones were more generous than those in the County Development Plan. The quality of the visual presentation, including the immediate zone of influence and the outer zone of influence, was also commended. (See pages 40 and 41, Section 3.4 Waterway Protection Zone, and Figure 4. Canal Assessment Zone in the study).

Readability and accessibility of information

The studies were considered useful because there is "never enough information for forward planning". The studies were also used by planners in development control, who view access to and from the tow path as important. The best attribute of the study is its information content, which stimulated ideas and gave a focus for the Grand Canal hitherto not available.

Succinct information is required to cater for a high turnover of planners in Offaly County Council, as no full study of the Grand Canal had been carried out by the Council. The information in the study stimulates professional planners and is useful as summary information for the areas under examination. The study was also viewed as reinforcing the planning policy in the County Development Plan. An example was cited where the Council refused an application for a quad bike course near the canal, which was upheld on appeal.

Because of the high turnover of planners due to people leaving and retiring, vital

information regarding certain areas can be lost, or becomes difficult to retrieve. The former senior planner, Vincent Hussey, was given as an example of an experienced person with detailed information about the study area and a valuable resource for the planning office but who had now retired. However, the studies remain useful and help to bridge the gap left when key staff leave or retire.

Dissemination was considered unsatisfactory and copies should have been available in libraries.

Consultation

The consultees were disappointed that there was only one seminar during the 2002 study and more thorough consultation was suggested for future studies.

The 2002 Study became part of the database for the enquiry informing the Variation of the Tullamore Town Plan.

Policies and actions

The studies are well-informed background documents and are historically important. The 2002 study informed the village design statement for Pollagh village and raised awareness of the various issues involved.

The study supported Offaly County Council's efforts to protect the canal corridor for tourism. Offaly has few tourist areas, and the Council is protective of these. However, tourist use of the canal in recent years appears static, with relatively low visitor numbers.

The consultees referred to the lack of sufficient interpretative boards at various rural locations. The study recommended 'interpretative signage' for Ballycowan castle. The consultees pointed out that this structure is in private ownership.

Also mentioned was interconnectivity between both sides of the canal. Pedestrian bridges where the canal flows through a settlement would allow more to be achieved with the resource, so that the local community would assume 'ownership'. Communities needed to face the canal. In towns, visual and passive areas need to be overlooked, offering more safety.

Critique

Among the criticisms were that the layout was too confusing, the font size was too small, and there are too many sections, making it difficult to follow. Some sections could have been useful as a 'pull out' from the main document.

Those consulted commented that there was no committee to select the top ten ideas in the study and co-ordinate their implementation.

The Future

Few people have read the documents and there was no specific body to deliver the recommendations. This issue was highlighted by a Tullamore Town Councillor, John

Flanagan. [Consultants' note: the local authority is jointly responsible for implementation, along with Waterways Ireland]. The study resembles a business plan or a work programme that needs a person to do the work.

There is a need for a canal/river coordination officer. The nine local authorities along the Shannon and canals waterways would need to identify adequate policy measures to propose to the Heritage Council for funding for such an officer.

The consultees remarked that, should future studies become too large, they would be less useful.

4.2.2. Waterways Corridor Study 2004

Royal Canal from Thomastown to Cloondara and River Shannon from Roosky to Lanesborough with reference to Waterways Corridor study 2004 Lanesborough to Shannonbridge (taking in Lough Ree)

30th July: Terry McCague, Senior Planner, Westmeath Co. Council and Westmeath Special Policy Committee (Note: this consultation refers only to areas in Westmeath.)

Methodology

The definition of the canal in the review of the County Development plan was taken directly from the study and the canal corridor was seen as an entity.

Readability and accessibility of information

The studies are regarded as policy guidance by the council. The canal network centres round the town of Mullingar, and through the studies and with links to national policy the 40 acres of canal can be addressed in a focused way through policy, funding, and promotion. The canal at Athlone brings special benefits to boaters, allowing them to reach Big Meadows.

Consultation

Adequate consultation was carried out. The then Heritage Officer, Bernie Guest, was a steering committee member, which ensured an ongoing consultation with the County Council.

Policies and actions

The studies have been influential in Westmeath and, as an example, the landscape character assessment for the county had regard to the studies. Planners referred to the studies, for example, in Ballinacarrigy, where an application for industrial development within the 500m band of the canal was refused on appeal, and in which the water corridor study was cited. Notwithstanding the above, the studies were not well known to the strategic policy committee (SPC).

Critique

The loss of the Heritage Officer from the Council was unfortunate, as she had been a driving force in publicising and promoting the corridor concept within the Council. The SPC recommended that there should be cycle ways on the canal tow paths. They would like to see more tourist promotion. Their vision for the area stressed the need for monitoring within the urban areas, and they viewed the rural areas as not being at risk. They suggested that boat wash needs to be managed by trailing skirts on boats.

The future

Westmeath SPC would like to see a short synopsis of each of the studies. They suggested that summaries of the studies should be produced and published on the web, that the planning authorities should be the first to disseminate information in the studies, and that the studies should be in libraries.

The loss of the County Heritage Officer in 2007 meant there was no-one to promote the studies [consultants' note: in the absence of a Heritage Officer, a dedicated PR company or other temporary person could promote the studies.]

4.2.3. Waterways Corridor Study 2004

Lanesborough to Shannonbridge (taking in Lough Ree) with reference to Waterways Corridor study 2004 Royal Canal from Thomastown to Cloondara and River Shannon from Roosky to Lanesborough

Nollaig McKeon Heritage Officer, Roscommon Co. Council

Tracy Davis Forward Planning, Roscommon Co. Council

Frank Flanagan Senior Planner, Roscommon Co. Council

Ciaran Tracy senior Planner, Leitrim Co. Council 15th August

Methodology

Planning staff in Roscommon County Council have had continuous involvement with three of the studies for four years

The presentation of geographical information and the delineation of the corridor were considered useful. However, the economic corridor definition by DED (District Electoral Division) was regarded as problematic because DEDs are not directly comparable with the waterway corridor or designations in development plans.

Readability and accessibility of information

Those consulted felt that information was well-presented for the general reader, but hope to see this presented as a series of bullet points which could be incorporated into a County Development Plan or a Heritage Plan. Planning staff tried to 'cut and paste' sections from all three studies into the CDP Review, but there were too many actions to be included. As a result, the phrase "to have regard to" the studies was used in the strategic context of chapters 7 and 8 of the draft Roscommon CDP.

Consultation

The Heritage officer was on the steering committee and felt that consultation had been adequate.

Policies and actions

Planning control staff found the studies useful in their assessment of planning applications, but regretted that the information could not be used as reasons for refusal when recommending decisions to the Council.

Dissemination of the published studies was largely to officials. They were too large for the County Council website but CDs were sent out to schools.

The Rural Renewal Scheme was regarded as the economic driver for the area, but North Roscommon was not included in the scheme and significant development had occurred in the region prior to the 2004 and 2005 studies. An objective of the draft Roscommon CDP is to prepare local areas plans and village design statements for settlements along the waterway. More resources have been allocated to compiling the record of protected structures. The planning staff asked that comprehensive management guidelines for rivers and lakes for local authorities should be in place to guide officials.

References to tourism facilities in the studies were included in the draft CDP, since tourism in the region is river-based. Chapter 3 of the draft CDP refers to the protection of the flood plain and Chapter 10 refers to Lough Key.

Biodiversity Plans allow for co-operation between the local authorities but this co-operation does not extend to the various CDPs. Roosky is an example of where this co-operation should be in evidence, as it spans Roscommon and Leitrim, but this is not the case in practice.

Critique

The suggestion was made that it would be useful if the studies were web-based and available in GIS form.

The public consultations carried out during the preparation of the Roscommon Heritage Plan indicated a strong desire to protect access to the shoreline as part of new developments. An 'access audit' was suggested for the entire length of the Shannon system. The Boyle River walk was given as a good example of a well-managed walkway.

The future

Where there are new developments, opportunities to create access for public use should be sought. Related to this, the recommendation was made that all interpretative displays should be standardised for all the local authorities concerned.

Consultation with Roscommon Special Policy Committee

The chairman of Roscommon Strategic Policy Committee noted that the county oversaw 112 kms of river and lake shoreline, and was disappointed that flooding was not part of the study brief, since flooding has detrimental impacts on the development of the county.

The studies were generally not well-known to the elected members and did not have a major impact of the development of policy, but they would now take note of them when considering the planning strategy for the Shannon, following this presentation.

In relation to Coothall and Knockvickar, referred to in the 2005 study, one of the members of the SPC requested that the council should 'have regard to' the recommendations in so far as plans are needed to protect water quality from sewerage from new development. The director of services, in response, stated that the Rural Renewal Scheme drove development. Strokestown, Roosky and Elfin had local area plans and village design statements but the County Council was playing catch-up on the provision of town plans.

The elected members felt that water quality and water abstraction could have been included in the studies. Local farmers are concerned about flooding in the area. The director of services stated that flood levels are controlled by the ESB but this could be a major cause of flooding in the Northern Shannon.

The River Suck was included in the study, but SPC members had major reservations about issues such as the lack of holding tanks in boats, and speed boats and jet skis. It was noted by the director of services that a sewerage scheme had been commissioned for Lecarrow, which already had proper pump-out facilities.

The meeting concluded with a general call for balanced development over the whole of the Shannon and that another Tax Incentive Scheme was needed for the northern part of the Shannon.

4.2.4. Waterways Corridor study 2005

Upper Shannon down to Roosky including the Boyle River, L Allen L. Key and the Carnadoe waters.

Nollaig McKeon, Heritage Officer, Roscommon Co. Council

Tracy Davis Forward Planning Roscommon Co. Council

Frank Flanagan, Senior Planner, Roscommon Co. Council

Ciaran Tracey, Senior Planner, Leitrim Co. Council

Methodology

The Planning Officer for Leitrim County Council endorsed the work of the original consultants, the vision of the studies, and their form and scope. He approved of the geographical delineation and the corridor concept.

Readability and accessibility of information

The 2004 and 2005 studies were brought to the attention of the elected members in Leitrim and the studies have been seen by them as a catalyst for the economic development of the area. The result is more pro-active than negative in directing where development should go. The layout of the studies was excellent and he particularly liked the maps in the 2005 study. Taking the two studies together, it is recognised by the Council that tourism development is an economic necessity in the region. The re-opening of the Shannon Erne Waterway had a beneficial influence on the development of Carrick-on-Shannon.

Consultation

The planning officer was satisfied with the consultations carried out during the studies and felt that the council had been well involved with the studies from the outset.

Policies and actions

The studies were felt to be too complicated to use in the Leitrim County Development Plan, but the documents are considered an invaluable resource for the Planning Office and the Council generally. Dissemination of the studies was not thorough, even though the launch in Carrick-on-Shannon generated much interest.

In Leitrim in 2004, over 1,000 planning applications were submitted to avail of the Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon. In Co. Leitrim there is a 30% vacancy in new housing units as a result of the scheme.

Leitrim County Council is currently reviewing the County Development Plan 2003-2009. The key recommendations of the 2005 waterways corridor study are being incorporated into the review. The concept: “extent of visual influence”, incorporated into the review, was taken directly from the study. The Landscape Character Designation document for Leitrim has been completed and this was also informed by the 2005 study.

Leitrim County Council made a submission to the National Roads Authority on the issue of reduced headroom on the navigation of the River Rinn, crossed by M4 by-pass near Newtown Forbes; this arose because of recommendations in the 2004 study, and resulted in a new bridge being included in the next phase of this road development which is now being built (as of August 2007).

Other areas informed by the studies include the key recommendations of the Economic Study of Lough Allen by Colin Buchanan being included in the review of the CDP; Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in Leitrim are being revised and expanded, for inclusion in the draft CDP, for example the SAC at Bunbeg and Bollinbrach; and the completed landscape character assessment.

Critique

One of the contentious issues arising was that foreshore licences issued by Waterways Ireland are weak and are failing to protect vulnerable areas. There are no licence applications for swing moorings, and Waterways Ireland were considered not to be taking

this problem seriously. Moorings built onto the river are contentious. There is no fixed policy in the CDP and unsuitable mooring applications are refused on landscape grounds. The Carnadoe area has been seriously damaged by uncontrolled moorings.

The future

The council look forward to the results Government policy of decentralisation which it is hoped will bring jobs to the area, and which will, resulting from active CDP policy protecting the county's natural resources continue to attract industry.

4.3. Results of consultations with other national agencies, non-governmental organisations and user groups

4.3.1. Shannon Development

Shannon Development stressed that, unless there was recognition of both the environmental importance of the river corridor and its economic value, Lough Derg would be lost to development. The organisation also stated that there were no economic data in the 2002 study but had insisted that such data be included in the 2006 study. The agency expressed its difficulty in putting forward the economic viewpoint, and would like to see economic data included in any revisions of earlier studies. It also wished to see an economic corridor included in any future studies. It stressed that recommendations must be realistically achievable, rather than aspirational. Finally, Shannon Development would like to see a statutory body, such as a Shannon River Authority, to pull all the organisations involved together.

4.3.2. Royal Canal Amenity Group

The Royal Canal Amenity Group (RCAG) was formed in 1974 with the aim of promoting the amenity potential of the Royal Canal. The work of the RCAG was pivotal in bringing the importance of the waterway to the attention of government. One of the main concerns was the importance of dialogue with the responsible authorities, which it felt was lacking. The Group also felt that the consultation which took place during the study did not translate into appropriate acknowledgement of its role in the published study (2004 study: Shannon River and Royal Canal).

4.3.3. Inland Waterways Association of Ireland

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland is a more all-embracing group which has campaigned for the conservation and development of Ireland's waterways. The IWAI echoed the views of the RCAG concerning dialogue with the responsible authorities. Both organisations felt that better communication was necessary. In particular, the IWAI suggested that there is a need for an advisory committee to Waterways Ireland, perhaps along the lines of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committee, which is reported to work well, or the Inland Waterways Advisory Committee (IWAC) in the UK,

established in 2007. The lack of satisfactory channels of communication was an impediment to the proper management and use of the navigation, it felt. Among the more specific views expressed, the IWAI felt that the studies have not been used as effectively as they should be by local authorities, and in particular, Roscommon County Council had ignored many of the studies' recommendations. Reference was made to Lough Key, which it felt could have been developed more sensitively. Insensitive development was also referred to in relation to Tullamore, where the full relationship between the town and the canal has not been exploited.

The IWAI wants the waterways to be addressed at strategic level. For example, there is no overarching governmental direction given to local authorities on their treatment of the Shannon waterways corridor.

The presentation of the studies was commented on, and it was felt that the latest study of the Lower Shannon in 2006 was particularly well laid-out as a heritage information guide.

The IWAI also informed us of its presentation to the Midland Regional Authority in 2004, in which a Midland Waterways Navigational Ring was proposed. This would involve re-watering the Kilbeggan branch of the Grand Canal from Ballycommon, and creating a navigation along the River Brosna and Lough Ennel to Mullingar, connecting with the Royal Canal. A 1 km stretch of new canal would be needed between Lough Ennel and Mullingar. This ambitious project was conceived to revitalise tourism in the Midlands.

4.3.4. Shannon Regional Fisheries Board

The Shannon Regional Fisheries Board mentioned that point source discharges are still a threat to water quality, both from new developments and local authority wastewater treatment facilities. Other aspects which affect water quality include the run-off from the many building sites (possibly increased by the Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon) impacting on tributaries and the lack of pump-out facilities for cruisers. More action is needed in this area from local authorities, both in maintenance of existing facilities and the provision of new facilities. It appears that in some instances new boating facilities are given planning permission in advance of adequate pump-out facilities.

We found that very few statutory bodies outside those of the steering groups use the corridor studies to any significant extent, and these include the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG. An Taisce, one of the main non-government heritage organisations, uses the studies when making submissions to local authorities.

4.3.5. Waterways Ireland

The representatives of Waterways Ireland considered all the studies important documents which facilitate interaction between Waterways Ireland and the Heritage Council. The objectives of the studies were in line with Waterways Ireland's plans and this was facilitated because its representatives were on the steering committees.

Waterways Ireland and local authorities

There are ongoing discussions between Waterways Ireland and the Heritage Council standing committee. The studies assist and support their approaches to local authorities. They aim to put information in place for planning issues. Waterways Ireland feels that it is "pushing at an open door" because the local authorities have taken the studies on board. Reference was made to its submissions as stakeholders to Strategic Development Zones. Several examples were cited: the Pelletstown development, where Waterways Ireland influenced the development by requiring hubs for the marina; the Castlethorn Development, where a new frontage was provided; and Dublin City Council's pilot studies for Portobello, Charleville Mall and Bins Bridge.

Need for updating of studies

The earlier Brady Shipman Martin and RPS Cairns studies need to be updated as a result of rapid urban development and land use changes. With regard to promoting the studies, Cormac McCarthy suggested that all the studies should be web-based. The information is not easily accessible in its present form, especially the supplementary information. If web-based, it would then be much more accessible, taking account of the many different users. Different parts of the documents such as those dealing with the natural environment or alien species could then be accessed more easily and downloaded as necessary. Also, planning authorities should be the first port of call to disseminate the information in the studies. They should also be in public libraries. The documents could be released in a smaller document form.

In response to calls for a Royal Canal Development Council, Waterways Ireland commented that it was deemed premature.

Some consultees remarked on the inadequacy of pump-out facilities in certain locations. Waterways Ireland's response was that pump-out stations can be a problem because the County Councils are selling the user cards, and this was felt to be unsatisfactory. In addition, there is a shortage of money to maintain them.

On the subject of the number of boat users on the Shannon and canals and the incidence of queues for certain locks at peak times, it was stated that there has been a fall-off in the numbers using rental boats, but privately-owned boats have increased in number, especially on the lakes. Generally, the facilities are behind demand: the boat numbers quoted in the studies have more than doubled, to the current number of 6,200 registered vessels (2007 figures).

4.4. Discussion and conclusions

In this section, we highlight the main themes and issues arising from our consultations.

4.4.1. Studies not well known outside project partners and steering groups

It is clear from our consultations that the studies are not well known outside the relevant local authorities and Waterways Ireland. However, these are the most important bodies from the viewpoint of putting policy into practice in the waterway corridor. The lack of awareness beyond that of the project partners and the steering groups reflects the focus and approach of the studies. Engaging the wider community more fully requires a different approach in which complex issues can be simplified and communicated by a specialised person or persons through a sustained information campaign (as in the case of the River Thames Alliance; see 2.2.2). As far as non-statutory stakeholders are concerned, it is perhaps also a reflection of the nature of Irish society, where local communities have yet to fully assume a common 'ownership' of the resource. Responsibility follows from ownership, and responsibility brings a greater understanding of, and sympathy with, the duties of ownership. It is only when this happens that the wider public can be fully engaged with the corridor approach and vision. Perhaps another problem in this regard is the lack of a sufficient number of committed community leaders in Ireland: Community participation needs continuity and good organisation if it is to be effective.

4.4.2. Waterways Ireland uses studies to good effect

The studies are used to good effect by Waterways Ireland as a companion to its work programme. The agency was involved in the steering groups of all the studies. It is encouraging to see a good working relationship between Waterways Ireland and the Heritage Council.

4.4.3. Need for summaries and updates

A number of local authorities felt that summary documents were needed, since it is not always easy to extract information from the studies. Some consultees remarked that there were too many actions/recommendations. The recommendations need to be updated and revised to be relevant to the current situation. The web provides the best means by which to do this, since it is more flexible than hard copy, which can rapidly become out of date.

One local authority proposed a dedicated waterways officer to promote and publicise the issues and actions raised by the studies.

If the studies are to continue to be useful, they will need to be summarised so that they can inform not just a wider audience, but also the elected members of local authorities,

some of whom were not that familiar with the studies. It is revealing that members of one Special Policy Committee proposed inclusion of some recommendations of the studies following our consultation.

4.4.4. Studies are useful tools for local authorities in planning strategy and control

The studies have been useful for several local authorities, by providing much-needed survey information and recommendations for strategic planning, and to inform individual planning decisions.

4.4.5. Non-statutory nature of studies is a problem

The non-statutory nature of the studies, mentioned as a shortcoming by several local authorities, ought not limit their effectiveness in providing information for forward planning. However, some of the recommendations may be difficult to transfer directly from the studies to CDPs, unless supported by a directive from central government, i.e. unless they have statutory backing. In one instance, elected members objected to the studies being included in the development plan because they are non-statutory.

4.4.6. Lack of policy coordination across administrative boundaries

Although the studies have had a beneficial influence on a number of the relevant local authorities, the lack of policy coordination across administrative boundaries remains an obstacle to progress. Waterways Ireland treats the Shannon and canals in an integrated and coordinated way. While this is encouraging, its brief limits its influence to the navigation channel. Therefore, responsibility for planning and management of the wider waterway corridor rests not just with Waterways Ireland, but with local authorities, several government departments and private landowners.

4.4.7. The Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon

It is clear that this tax incentive scheme was the main engine for development in the Upper Shannon region. In our opinion, the scheme was poorly designed and should have included guidelines to direct development towards sites which were less sensitive, and overall design guidelines for new structures. The lack of such guidelines made it difficult for local authorities to refuse applications, even if they were insensitive or inappropriate to the surroundings. This situation shows how the policies proposed in the non-statutory waterways corridor studies, lacking Government support, were unable to 'compete' with a statutory scheme with strong Government support. However, we note that the discussion documents relating to the proposed Tourism Incentive Scheme for the Mid-Shannon Corridor specifically refer to the waterways corridor studies (Government of Ireland, 2007). (See also Section 6.8.2).

4.4.8. The need for formal lines of communication between official bodies and non-statutory stakeholders

We believe that non-statutory organisations have much to contribute to the vision and the proper development and management of the waterway corridor. The messages we received indicated emphatically that their voices were not being heard properly. We conclude that formal lines of communication must be opened between users groups such as the IWAI and the RCAG and statutory bodies, including local authorities, Waterways Ireland and Shannon Development.

5. Methodology, readability and accessibility of information



Grand Canal at Ferbane (photo Charles Stanley-Smith)

The five waterways corridor studies to date form an impressive body of work. Survey information — the basis of the studies — should be in itself very valuable for a range of organisations and individuals, hopefully for many years to come. The studies contain much detailed information on the landscape and amenities, the social and economic background, and the cultural, historic and ecological heritage of the Shannon system and the canals. This information has been interpreted and presented in an integrated form. Social and economic issues have been integrated with the heritage because it is recognised that sustainable development can only proceed with the recognition that these three aspects are equally important.

We recognise the workload and creativity of the consultants who prepared the studies and the contribution made by the Steering Groups. We also recognise that each study was a learning process, where techniques and approaches of earlier studies were refined and applied to later studies. It would be easy to criticise aspects of the studies with the benefit of hindsight, but our critique aims to be constructive in order to inform future studies and to provide guidelines for possible revisions and updates to existing studies.

This section of the evaluation is the result of our own observations and those of the steering group members, and is to some extent academic. The effectiveness of the studies in practice is revealed through our consultations with stakeholders (see Section 3), and in the incorporation of the studies' survey information and recommendations into the published policies and practices of the implementing bodies (see Section 5).

The studies are evaluated section by section and in chronological order, below.

5.1. Grand Canal and Shannonbridge to Meelick (2002)

5.1.1. General

The dense text and the small font size do not make for easy reading. There is not enough separation and highlighting of the text. Each section would have benefited from a list of sub-sections at the beginning. The sections themselves are not sufficiently distinct from one another. On a positive note, the high quality of the publication has ensured its survival in hard copy form.

5.1.2. Section 2. Waterway Corridor Definition

The Canal Waterway Corridor is defined and illustrated in terms of the *waterway corridor itself* (the part which is in the remit of Waterways Ireland); the *zone of immediate influence* either side of the channel, where any changes could have a profound effect; and the *outer zone of influence*, which is primarily visual and where changes may have a more subtle effect. The concept is well-explained and easily understood.

The study area is well-described in terms of its ecology, built heritage and landscape. These three areas should perhaps have been grouped into a separate Section.

5.1.3. Section 3. Issues and opportunities

The following observations apply to this section:

- The text is too dense and not easily accessible
- The section is not well laid out and is quite difficult to follow
- The issues and opportunities are not addressed specifically to the responsible bodies
- The recommendations are not concise
- There are too many themes and issues to be comprehended properly.
- There are two separate sub-sections in Section 3, but which are not immediately distinct:
 - Themes/Issues and associated opportunities; and
 - Policies for planning and development, referenced to the Themes/Issues and Opportunities

The references of each policy for planning and development to the previous section's Themes/Issues and Opportunities (A1, B1, etc.) takes some effort.

Ideally, this chapter should have been re-written in a simpler, more direct way. This is a real challenge for any report writer, but it has to be done for ease of comprehension. Each theme/issue should be addressed to a specific policy-making or implementing agency or group of individuals. There should be fewer themes, issues and opportunities listed because there is only so much that people can take in. In attempting to be comprehensive (e.g. by making qualifications and explanations in recommendations), clarity and brevity have been lost.

5.1.4. Section 4. Character areas of the waterway corridor

The detailed description of the corridor is good. The corridor is divided into ten sections and each of these ten areas is well-defined in inset maps. Photographs accompany each character area, giving snapshots of its defining features or characteristics. We like the systematic treatment of each character area because it is easy to follow. We could envisage using this section as a 'pull out' field guide.

Map 4: Landscape Character Assessment (Page 31) should have been re-inserted at the beginning of Section 4 because it provides a natural lead-in to this section.

Section 4 is a useful reference for planners. However, the number of recommendations for each character area are still bewildering in number. They might better be grouped into categories (e.g. general; location-specific; cooperative across administrative boundaries, etc.).

A number of recommendations are repeated for each character area, and this repetition detracts from the impact each recommendation should have. This is not helped by the lack of focus of some recommendations. The recommendations of this study in particular need urgent revision and updating.

5.1.5. Section 5. Conclusions

The conclusions contain too much text and the key points are not sufficiently well-highlighted.

5.2. River Shannon between Lanesborough and Shannonbridge, incl. Lough Ree (2004)

5.2.1. Section 3. Defining the corridor

One illustrative map showing the entire corridor from Lanesborough to Shannonbridge should have been presented on the opening page (p.14). It could be separated into the three sub-areas, as introduced on Page 15.

The map on Page 16 suffers from having too much information. It is too cluttered and bewildering in its complexity. The legend's typeface is too small. Clearly, this has been reduced from a larger scale in order to fit the page.

The map introducing Section 3.2 Lough Ree, illustrating the corridor, is elegant and effective. It 'lifts' the corridor away from the surrounding landscape and one can see immediately its geographical extent.

Section 3.2 Lough Ree, 3.3 River Shannon and 3.4 River Suck is not readily comprehensible. The authors have defined three corridors:

- landscape and visual,
- Cultural and historic, and
- ecological

for each of these three sections, adding to the difficulty in interpretation. In addition, the three sections are not well-separated - it is difficult to distinguish where each section begins and ends.

5.2.2. Section 4. Robustness and sensitivity

This section should first list those areas or features of particular sensitivity and those which are more robust. It could be accompanied by a map. This would have allowed planners and other responsible bodies to refer more easily to such lists in the process of decision-making or inclusion in forward planning documents. This section is not readily accessible in terms of extracting important or useful information.

5.2.3. Section 5. Achieving the Vision

This includes a range of recommended actions from local to corridor-wide, with a suggested timescale for completion. The recommendations are too lengthy. Each action should be under the heading of a particular agency since, on reading this document, each agency will look for areas that are within its remit: Their task in searching for recommendations which apply to them is made quite difficult.

Section 5.4 of the study, which proposes a new model regional park for Lough Ree, is well-presented and relevant. The consultants have presented a process through which such a park might be set up. Even if the mechanisms suggested might not be suitable for Ireland, it provides a starting point for discussion.

5.3. River Shannon between Roosky and Lanesborough and the Royal Canal (2004)

5.3.1. Section 3. Waterways Corridor Description

The Shannon and Royal Canal are separated into four 20 km sections, and shown on Map 1. However, an indicative map should have been inserted in this first page to introduce the reader to the study area. The reader has to delve into the appendices to do this. When the reader has accessed Map 1, it is a reduction of the 1:50,000 map showing insets which are presented in subsequent maps. Map 1 could be more schematic, with less detail. A simpler graphic would have been more effective here.

The systematic treatment of each 20 km section of the corridor, with text accompanied by relevant photographs, is easy to follow, until the reader encounters a description of *three corridors* - socio-economic, cultural/historic and ecological - for *each of the four 20 km sections*. From then on, the document becomes somewhat harder to follow.

5.3.2. Section 4. Proposed Policy and Projects

The proposed policies and actions are listed for each of the four 20 km sections. Each issue is listed alongside the recommended policy and actions, the responsible bodies and the timeframe and indicators.

On first reading, this section appears too wordy. Each issue is described in too much detail. Consequently, it is difficult to extract the key points of the issue. Decision-makers need precision and brevity when following recommendations and they are more likely to take recommendations on board if they are directed specifically at them. This section has similar problems with accessibility of recommendations to the other 2004 Study.

5.3.3. Conclusions

Unlike the other 2004 Study, it lacks a Conclusion.

5.4. Upper Shannon to Roosky and Royal Canal (2005)

5.4.1. General

The layout and separation of sections is better than previous studies. This study differs from previous studies in having two additional sections: Section 3. Outcome of Consultations, and Section 7. Strategic Environmental Assessment

5.4.2. Section 3. Outcome of Consultations

Section 3 describes the user groups and stakeholder involvement and then lists a summary of the issues raised during consultations. This summary table is well-presented. The issues are described in detail, with an entire page dedicated to each issue. Each issue is listed alongside the consultants' response and recommended action(s) that should be taken. Section 3 is well-laid out and it is easy to extract useful information.

5.4.3. Section 4. Defining the Waterway Corridor

As in the previous studies, the corridor description is not that easy to follow because of the separation of the corridor into three distinct (but inextricably linked) corridors. This section would have benefited from a systematic approach, as in the previous studies. Photos of each significant feature or 'section' of the corridor should have been accompanied by photos of that feature or section, in a systematic manner, as in the 2002 study. Many of the photos, although quite artistic, are taken at sunset and lack the necessary detail to inform a planner or other decision-maker.

A schematic map should have been inserted at the beginning of this section to introduce the reader to the extent of coverage of the study and to give the reader a broad overview of the geographical area involved. The reader has to search for the relevant maps in the appendices, which is not ideal.

5.4.4. Section 5. Robustness and Sensitivity

This section is quite brief and lists the issues and threats. However, lists of areas or features of particular sensitivity or robustness would have been easier to access.

5.4.5. Section 6. Achieving the Vision

Section 6 is laid out as per the previous studies, but better presented. One page is dedicated to each objective, so it is easier to access and focus on each of the 37 objectives listed.

The number of objectives and recommendations could be reduced. For example, more general objectives such as Objective 1 and 2 might be discarded in favour of more focussed and specific objectives that decision-makers can grasp firmly. Once the number of objectives has been reduced, they could be accompanied by small inset photos or graphics.

The criticisms of this section are similar to those of the previous studies. The recommendations are not grouped into categories and they are not directed specifically towards the responsible authority or group.

The monitoring required (last column on each page) is quite well-described. Indicators are particularly difficult to design so as to be really useful and comparable across boundaries, but this is a good first attempt.

5.4.6. Section 6.4 Implementation and Monitoring

This section sets out how the recommendations will be implemented, emphasising the role of community participation and monitoring. This section contains much of relevance, including a table of Indicators and Targets/Methods. These indicators could be measured over time, depending on the investment of time and money in data-gathering of consistent quality by the responsible agencies.

5.4.7. Section 7. Strategic Environmental Assessment

This section is additional to the previous Studies. It contains two pages of explanation, followed by a two-page table in which each strategic aim of the Waterway Corridor Study is assessed. We assume that the consultants carried out this assessment but, to be objective, such an assessment might have been carried out independently. However, each of the ten strategic aims is very broad and thus the SEA is not as meaningful as it might otherwise be.

5.5. Lower Shannon from Meelick to Limerick City (2006)

5.5.1. Section 1. Introduction

The overview (Section 1.1) includes a very useful indicative map showing the entire Waterway Corridor covered in the study, as well as a graphic showing the location of the Lower Shannon Waterway Corridor in relation to the Shannon system as a whole. As with previous studies, the corridor is separated into distinct sections (four in all) for manageability and ease of comprehension.

The methodology is described in Section 1.3, again including some useful graphics. However, at this stage, the reader could be confused — as with previous studies — because the study introduces *several corridors*: in this case, the *heritage corridor* and the *socio-economic corridor*. Map 1 in the appendices shows the boundary of the waterway

corridor, but does not help to clarify matters, because the reader then looks for the boundary of the second, socio-economic corridor. We recognise that there may have been good methodological reasons why the boundaries of the two corridors do not coincide, but it makes the study somewhat harder to follow.

5.5.2. Section 2. Heritage Profile of the Waterway Corridor

There is much useful information in this section. We note that the corridor is separated into four sub-sections: Meelick-Portumna; Lough Derg; Ardnacrusha; and Limerick Metropolitan, so the consultants have presented the heritage in a systematic manner. Several consultees mentioned using the study as a companion guide while boating on this section of the navigation.

The summing-up in **Section 2.6** is useful.

5.5.3. Section 3. Socio-Economic Profile

This section details population change, settlement pattern, development pressure and land use (in terms of economic activity and employment). A summing-up is presented in 3.6.

Links between the heritage resource and the social and economic situation, although some have been made, need to be extracted from the body of the text and highlighted.

5.5.4. Section 4. Tourism, Recreation and Education

Section 4 presents information on the various recreational activities and markets, and transport access. It concludes that there is a need for one lead body to coordinate the multiplicity of tourism development and marketing organisations, with Shannon Development assuming this role.

5.5.5. Section 5. Consultation

As with the 2005 Study, the 2006 study describes and discusses the outcome of consultations. However, it is not as concise or as well laid-out as the 2005 study. The text is small and dense, and the description of the issues and the consultants' responses are too lengthy.

5.5.6. Section 6. Vision, Proposed Policy and Actions

This section is difficult to follow because the text is too small and dense. Each objective is given a separate page, which is helpful. However, the lengthy explanations and qualifications contribute to the difficulty in extracting the essence of the proposals. The equivalent section in the 2005 study is better-presented and more easily accessible.

5.5.7. Section 7. Strategic Environmental Assessment

The SEA is more comprehensive than that of the 2005 study, and is consequently somewhat more meaningful. As with the 2005 study, it would have been preferable if the SEA had been carried out independently.

5.6. Conclusions

- 5.6.1.** The method of defining the waterway corridor varies between the studies. This is understandable, since experience was gained and lessons learned from previous studies. It remains to be seen if this becomes an obstacle to the planning and management of the Shannon corridor as one entity. The addition of distinct 'heritage' and 'economic' corridors detracts from the focus. This is apparent especially in the 2006 study of the Lower Shannon.
- 5.6.2.** All five studies contain comprehensive information on the waterway corridor which has proved to be an invaluable reference for planning authorities and Waterways Ireland.
- 5.6.3.** We think that a systematic approach to the presentation of the survey information allows it to be accessed more easily, i.e. the approach used in the 2002 study.
- 5.6.4.** All the studies lack indexes, which are useful aids for reference. Indexes cannot now be added to the printed editions but they can be added to the online editions.
- 5.6.5.** In some cases, the appendices are not included or are not available, either in the printed or online editions.
- 5.6.6.** The consultations form a central part of the approach to the studies. The results of consultations were best presented in the 2005 Study of the Upper Shannon, where one page is devoted to each issue, and each issue is listed alongside the consultants' response and recommended actions that should be taken.
- 5.6.7.** The strategic aims and actions (i.e. recommendations) of all the studies are too comprehensive and wordy. In the 2005 study, the aims and actions are usefully summarised. In addition, the recommendations are not always grouped in terms of priority, nor are they always directed towards the specific responsible bodies. The responsible bodies need a set of policies and actions which can be readily taken on board and incorporated into their own policy documents. Many of the studies' recommendations are still valid, and they need to be re-worked for this purpose.

6. Effectiveness of waterways corridor studies in policy and practice



Jolly Mariner Development, Athlone (photo by Charles Stanley-Smith)

As we stated in the preamble to Section 4 (above), the effectiveness of the studies in practice is revealed through our consultations with stakeholders and in the incorporation of the studies' survey information and recommendations into the published policies and current practices of the implementing bodies.

In this section, we assess the recognition of the studies in official policy documents of the bodies responsible for implementing the recommendations of the studies. If the recommendations of the studies are incorporated into official policies, they should be easier to implement. We also examine some individual planning cases to illustrate the use of the studies in decision-making.

6.1. Recognition of waterways corridor studies by local authorities

To what extent do local authorities - project partners in the studies - refer to the waterways corridor studies in County Development Plans, CDP reviews, County Heritage Plans and other official documentation? This is the first step in assessing their effectiveness: If they are not referred to, we have to assume they have not yet had an influence on official thinking and they will not be used to inform planning decisions; on the other hand, if they are referred to, there should be evidence - documented or verbal - that they have been used in this way.

The following local authority forward planning documents were examined and our observations are set out below. The counties are those through which the River Shannon and canals flow. All of these counties were the Heritage Council's waterways corridor study project partners on at least one occasion since 2002.

6.1.1. Leitrim

Leitrim County Development Plan (2003-2009): No reference is made to the studies. The 2005 Waterways Corridor Study of the Upper Shannon was published after the CDP was adopted.

Leitrim County Heritage Plan (2003-2008)

One of the Plan's actions is "Undertake Waterways Corridor Studies for the River Shannon and associated lakes in conjunction with The Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland and other local authorities".

6.1.2. Roscommon

Roscommon County Development Plan (2002-2007): No reference is made to the studies in the current CDP, since the 2004 and 2005 Waterways Corridor Studies were published after the CDP was adopted. However, the CDP Review does refer to the Studies (see below).

Roscommon County Development Plan (2008-2014) Review Strategic Issues Paper for County Development Plan:

"The new County Development Plan will need to ensure protection for transport **corridors** such as canals, rivers, railways and roads. They provide linear networks of both natural and built heritage from different areas, each with its own character determined by ecological, socio economic and historical processes." (p.34)

"The new Plan will incorporate recommendations contained within the **Shannon Waterways Corridor Study**." (p.39)

Roscommon County Council has posted the three Waterways Corridor Studies (and excluding the 2002 Study from Shannonbridge to Meelick) on its web site. See <http://www.roscommoncoco.ie/services/heritage/heritage.html>

Lough Key Plan (2002)

The Lough Key Plan was adopted before the 2005 Waterways Corridor Study was completed, and does not refer to the 2005 Waterways Corridor Study. However, we mention it here because it is the only lake in the Shannon system which has a local authority strategic plan specific to it. The plan, which replaces the 1981 plan, discourages "sporadic and unplanned development" around the lakeshore. Some of the zonings around Lough Key are proposed for designation as Landscape Conservation Areas. Such designations have not been made in Ireland to date. The Lough Key Plan is closely linked to the Boyle Town Development Plan (2002).

Roosky Draft Local Area Plan (2004-2009)

The 2005 Waterways Corridor Study was in preparation when the Roosky plan was adopted, but is specifically mentioned. The plan also aims to:

"Facilitate with Leitrim County Council in the establishment of a sustainable development and planning strategy for the future development along the Shannon waterway during the period of the development plan."

The **Roscommon County Heritage Plan (2004-2008)** does not specifically mention the 2005 Study of the Upper Shannon: It was prepared before the study was published.

6.1.3. Westmeath

Westmeath County Development Plan (2002-2008): No reference is made to the studies. The 2004 Studies were adopted after the CDP was adopted. However, the CDP Review does refer to the Studies (see below).

Westmeath County Development Plan 2008-2014 Review: The CDP Review specifically refers to the Royal Canal and Lough Ree/Shannon Corridor in the text and accompanying map (Section 2.5.5. Landscape and Visual Amenity; Landscape Character Assessment Map (p. 129); Royal Canal Corridor (p.133); Lough Ree/Shannon Corridor (p.134).

Mullingar Draft Town Plan (Draft Development Plan 2008-2014)

In Section 3.1.8 Natural Heritage, the Royal Canal and the Brosna River are referred to as representing important corridors for wildlife, as does the railway line. Where natural features are compromised by development proposals, the Council will exercise its development management power to protect the environment. Even small stretches of hedgerow or individual trees can be important parts of the natural environment and should be protected.

Ballinacarrigy Draft Village Plan

Several statements complement the recommendations of the corridor studies:

"A site of some 8.5 acres has been identified...to the east of the village centre...as suitable for...small workshop/start-up units and medium-sized enterprises. The development of the land... will include a landscaped buffer to screen development from the Royal Canal."

"A site identified bordering the Royal Canal provides excellent opportunity for the development of harbour related uses including tourist related activities."

Westmeath County Heritage Plan 2003-2007

The Westmeath Heritage Plan "supports the preparation of a waterways corridor study for the Royal Canal" and aims to develop a county/government/NGO partnership to develop and maintain the network of waterways.

6.1.4. Longford

Current Longford County Development Plan (2003-2009)

Section 5.2.3 Policy and Objectives, states that the "broad zones of lakes, rivers and canals shall be protected from inappropriate development, i.e. development which adversely affects high amenity and landscape quality" illustrated in accompanying Map 5A-B. This includes the islands on lakes and rivers in Co. Longford. Development will not normally be permitted, including intensive agricultural development. This section of the CDP also supports the restoration of the Royal Canal navigation and the protection of its built heritage structures.

The above policies predate the 2004 waterways corridor study, so the studies are not referred to explicitly.

The landscape character assessment for Co. Longford is not yet complete.

Longford County Development Plan Review

The review is ongoing as of the time of writing (October 2007) and will be completed by 2008.

Longford County Heritage Plan (2004-2009)

The Longford County Heritage Plan supports the restoration of the Royal Canal and the disused link to Longford Town. Action 5.2 aims to "conduct 'corridor studies' of the rivers and canals to address the management of, and land use within, these corridors".

6.1.5. Galway

The **Galway County Development Plan (2003-2009)** includes Policy 150: "Have due regard to the aims, objectives and policies of the Waterways Corridor Study 2002..."

Reference is also made in the Supporting Documents: Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway.

6.1.6. Clare

The **Clare County Development Plan (2005-2011)** has no specific reference to the studies. The CDP was adopted before the 2006 Study of the Lower Shannon was published.

The **Clare County Heritage Plan (2003-2007)** lists as one its actions:
"Liaise with other local authorities and the Heritage Council to extend the Waterways Corridor Study 2002 to Lough Derg on the Shannon."

6.1.7. Offaly

Offaly County Development Plan (2003-2009)

Several statements refer to the corridor studies:

"It will be Council policy to investigate the possibility of providing a Linear Park based on the River Shannon from Banagher to Meelick, which take account of the sensitive ecological nature of the Callows area." (Section 2. Development Strategies and Policies, p.84)

"Offaly County Council will have regard to the Waterways Corridor Study 2002 in the development control process [of the Grand Canal]." (Section 2. Development Strategies and Policies p.84)

Offaly County Heritage Plan (2007-2011)

The previous Offaly County Heritage Plan mentioned the Waterways Corridor Study of 2004 Lanesborough to Shannonbridge and a number of initiatives in connection with the corridor. The current plan does not specifically mention the studies.

6.1.8. North Tipperary

Several statements in the **North Tipperary County Development Plan 2004-2010** refer directly or indirectly to the corridor studies:

"It is a policy of the Council to preserve an undisturbed edge or buffer adjacent to watercourses and to maintain the natural functions of existing ecosystems. In respect of Lough Derg, developments such as private harbours or jetties will only be considered where:

- (a) it is for a single boat;
- (b) is within the curtilage of an existing adjacent dwelling;
- (c) is designed to protect the character and appearance of the shoreline and
- (d) is not visibly intrusive". (4.2.3 Water Corridors Policy ENV 6: Water Corridors)

"It is a policy of the Council to conserve and enhance the amenity of the shoreline and County river corridors, including the landscape, water environment and wildlife

habitats and, where consistent with this, to encourage increased public access and water-related recreation opportunities". (4.2.3 Water Corridors Policy, ENV 7: Water Corridor Amenity)

The North Tipperary County Heritage Plan 2004-2008 lists as one its actions: "Support the preparation of a waterways corridor study on Lough Derg". The study has since been carried out and published.

6.1.9. Limerick

Limerick County Development Plan 2005-2011

No reference is made to the study, since the 2006 Waterways Corridor Study of the Lower Shannon was published after the CDP was adopted.

The Limerick County Heritage Plan could not be found on its web site.

6.2. Discussion

References to the waterways corridor studies made in the relevant county development plans (CDPs) and CDP reviews should be regarded as an acknowledgement by local government of the significance of the studies and there is a better chance that the recommended actions will be followed. In our consultations, it was mentioned on several occasions by officials that because the studies are not non-statutory, they cannot be incorporated into County Development Plans. It appears that, even though the studies have had some influence on local authority policies, their non-statutory nature has prevented their fuller recognition.

Some CDPs were adopted before the studies pertaining to their counties were published. These counties include Leitrim, Roscommon, Westmeath, Clare and Limerick. North Tipperary, Offaly and Galway — three out of nine counties — have referred to the studies in their CDPs to date. However, as part of their CDP reviews, Roscommon, Westmeath and Longford intend to incorporate some of the recommendations of the studies in their draft CDPs.

The studies have had some influence on local authority strategic planning but the fragmented approach, where each county makes plans and decisions in isolation from one another, remains in evidence. A more integrated approach to planning, where local authorities coordinate their strategic policies, may only be achieved by statutory guidelines. Such guidelines could be issued by the DoEHLG to provide a framework for a common approach to development planning in all waterway corridors.

6.3. Recognition of waterways corridor studies by other statutory agencies

6.3.1. Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is a project partner with the Heritage Council. Our consultations with Waterways Ireland reveal its close involvement with the Heritage Council during the studies. The recommended policies and actions specific to the navigation reflect this relationship.

Waterways Ireland does not currently have a detailed policy statement on heritage, so we could not assess the extent to which the studies' recommendations compare with the official position of Waterways Ireland. However, we understand they are an accurate reflection of Waterways Ireland's own policies.

6.3.2. Other statutory agencies

We found that the studies' recommendations were not incorporated, to any significant extent, in the published policies of other state agencies, state companies and government departments. The recognition of the studies is limited mainly to those of the project partners.

6.4. Reference to waterways corridor studies in development control

A further way to assess the effectiveness of the waterways corridor studies is to examine the extent to which planning decisions on the ground have been influenced by the studies - in other words, how policy is translated into decision-making. We conducted a planning search which revealed a number of cases which illustrate how the studies have been invoked in the process of determining planning applications. Four examples from four different counties have been included below.

6.4.1. Co. Westmeath (Ballinacarrigy, Royal Canal)

An appeal against the grant of permission by Westmeath Co. Council for an industrial unit at Ballinacarrigy, Co. Westmeath (PL 25M.207292, P.A. Reg. Ref.: 03/5429). The Inspector's report quoted the Waterways Corridor Study 2004 in the following context:

"The Council in conjunction with the Heritage Council and the Counties of Roscommon and Longford have undertaken Waterways Corridor Studies including the Royal Canal to better inform policy and decision-making in relation to the effects on our important inland waterways and natural heritage areas. The Draft of this document provides

guidance on how development should be considered in relation to the Canal. However, the emerging policy is suggesting that any development within 500 metres of the canal, unless it can show that it enhances the landscape in terms of siting, form, scale, design relevance to the landscape there will be a presumption against such development. Whilst there are definite plan objectives (2.7 vii) to allow for the facilitation and encouragement of business enterprises within and close to villages such as Ballynacarrigy, I do not believe in this instance they outweigh the concerns for the visual setting and overall amenity of the Royal Canal Natural Heritage Area (NHA) that the proposed building and use will undermine.”

An Bord Pleanála decision: Refuse permission 15/10/2004.

6.4.2. Co. Longford (Clondra)

An Bord Pleanála Inspector's report noted that a development of apartments at Richmond Mill, Clondra, Co. Longford (PL14.209118) was contrary to the recommendations of the Waterways Corridor Study:

"The Waterways Corridor Study noted the significance and uniqueness of Clondra. It suggests a presumption against development adjoining the canal unless there is an enhancement of the landscape based on a character assessment approach. The development is premature pending the completion of a development plan for the area. Although not a statutory document, the development is contrary to the policies of the Waterways Corridor Study."

Longford Co. Co commented in the appeal that the Waterways Corridor Study was not published at the date of decision on the application; the document is a non-statutory, advisory document..."As a sponsoring body of the study, the planning authority do not agree that the proposed development is contrary to its objectives or that it must be deemed to be premature".

It was mentioned by Longford Co. Council in support of its decision to grant permission that the developer had an opportunity to avail of tax incentives, which were due to expire in the area. This is significant, given the impact of tax incentive schemes on heritage, as documented by the Heritage Council's *'Pilot' Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon Area* (Heritage Council, 2005).

The Inspector in this case recommended that the decision of Longford Co. Co. to grant permission be upheld.

An Bord Pleanála decision: Grant permission 16/02/2005

6.4.3. Co. Leitrim (Dowra)

An Bord Pleanála Inspector's report recommended refusal for a development of 34 semi-detached dwellings near Dowra, Co. Leitrim (PL.19.219663; P.A Ref: 05/964). Leitrim Co. Co. granted permission. One of the grounds for appeal listed by the appellants was that the proposed development is premature pending the preparation of a development

plan for Dowra as recommended by the *Waterways Corridor Study 2005*. Refusal was recommended on the basis of amenity, flooding risk and inadequate sewerage.
An Bord Pleanála decision: Refuse permission 30/03/2007

6.4.4. Co. Roscommon (Cootehall)

An Bord Pleanála Inspectors report of an appeal made by An Taisce against Roscommon Co. Council's decision to grant permission for a boat repair facility at Cuilmore, Cootehall, Co. Roscommon (P.A 04/1872).

One of An Taisce's grounds of appeal was that "the Heritage Council Waterways Corridor Study identified Oakport Lough as a habitat for the wintering Bewick Swan which is an Annex 1 species under the Habitats Directive. The Heritage Council study also referred to the status of the lake as a buffer area for Lough Eden NHA."

The Inspector in this case recommended that permission be granted.
An Bord Pleanála decision: Grant permission 24/10/2006

6.5. The Pilot Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme for the Upper Shannon

The 'Pilot' Rural Renewal Scheme (Government of Ireland, 1998) was aimed at stimulating the construction sector and economic development generally in counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Longford. This tax incentive scheme operated from 1998 to 2006 (extended from 2004), and covered a large area which took in the Shannon waterway corridor from the river's source downstream to Lough Ree. This area was covered by the 2005 study of the Upper Shannon (downstream to Roosky), the 2004 study (Roosky to Lanesborough) and the 2004 study (Lanesborough to Shannonbridge).

A heritage appraisal carried out for the Heritage Council identified a number of impacts of the Rural Renewal Scheme, including:

- An increase in pressures for all types of housing including conversions, refurbishments, rebuilding and particularly new dwellings in the countryside;
- An erosion of character in both built and natural heritages, partly resulting from increased pressures to relax policies and partly from the inevitable pressures to use standard, low quality designs and to urbanise rural settlements;
- An increase in applications for groups of dwellings/multiple dwellings, both in situations where only one dwelling may have been proposed in the past but also in new situations where no dwellings would have been proposed;

- An increasing number of applications for development beyond the village boundaries, as landowners in outer areas try to advance the development potential of their land as intervening land is not released (leap-frogging).

Although the Rural Renewal Scheme was mentioned in the 2004 study (Roosky to Lanesborough), we could not find any reference to it in the recommendations. In the 2005 study of the Upper Shannon, the Rural Renewal Scheme was noted as contributing to an increase in development pressure in the towns of Carrick-on-Shannon, Roosky, Boyle, Leitrim village and Dromod. One of the objectives of the study is to "support, control and monitor the impact of the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme on the landscape and heritage resources of the area prior to the implementation of the new scheme" (Objective 4, page 84).

In 2005, the Heritage Council further examined the impacts of this scheme on the heritage of this section of the Shannon waterway corridor and produced a submission to the Department of Finance (Heritage Council, 2005b). The Department of Finance has still not responded formally to the Heritage Council's submission although the submission can be downloaded from the Department of Finance web site (<http://www.finance.gov.ie/documents/publications/other/re/heritagecouncil.pdf>). The submission stated that, in 2001, the Heritage Council had recommended a programme to monitor the impacts of the Scheme, and a series of meetings followed with the five local authorities and the three government departments involved, to agree the terms of the monitoring programme. This was never implemented.

Finally, we noted some relevant remarks made to us by German visitors to the Shannon, who expressed deep sadness at the loss of peaceful villages and quiet, tranquil waterways. These are the principal qualities which attract such visitors to the Shannon waterway.

6.6. Relationship between the studies and national landscape initiatives

6.6.1.

The Heritage Council has produced a number of documents on landscape policy. These include "Policy Paper on Ireland's Landscape and the National Heritage (2002), "Landscape Policy Development and the Establishment of a National Landscape Programme" (April 2006), and "Landscape Character Assessment in Ireland: Baseline Audit and Evaluation" (September 2006). The importance of integrated landscape policies is emphasised, as is the value of having a consistent and agreed methodology for landscape characterisation to allow effective monitoring of policies which impact on the landscape. A programme of national landscape characterisation, undertaken by a central agency, is recommended. The Heritage Council views the European Landscape Convention, which was ratified by the Government in March 2002, as an important foundation for national landscape policy.

The project brief required us to examine the relationship between the waterways corridor studies and national landscape initiatives.

6.6.2.

The only relevant government document is "Landscape and Landscape Assessment. Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoE, 2000). This document - which has remained in draft form for seven years - recommends that landscape character areas (LCAs) should be the principal spatial framework for landscape policy. However, only nineteen planning authorities have completed LCA. Furthermore, LCA is not well understood, since few officials have LCA training. Furthermore, a report commissioned by the Heritage Council (Julie Martin and Associates, 2006) states that the guidelines are inadequate and need to be re-written.

6.6.3.

Only the 2002 pilot study refers to the DoE draft guidelines directly. In the 2002 study, it is stated that "since the term waterway corridor refers to an essentially spatial or geographic concept, a landscape assessment-based approach was applied to the study area". The approach used the LCA process to delineate the physical units within the landscape through which the waterways flow. However, the consultants did not make any judgements about them subsequently, but remarked that the emerging landscape character areas would form the spatial framework for further study, description and eventually policy formulation. A qualified appraisal of the landscape of the water corridor character areas was carried out, giving each area a grade according to the attractiveness of each. However, as the consultants pointed out, it was a subjective

exercise and not to the rigorous standard required by the European Landscape Convention.

6.6.4.

The 2004 study (Shannon River and Royal Canal) makes no reference to the DoE draft guidelines, and states that the landscape of the waterways corridor is assessed in general and with reference to the socio-economic, cultural-historic and ecological corridors. The methodology used in the 2004 study could not be described as classical landscape assessment. LCA is recommended within the study to introduce a waterway corridor zone to the development process in order to reduce inappropriate development within the canal corridor.

6.6.5.

The 2004 study (Lanesborough to Shannonbridge) makes no reference to the draft DoE guidelines. It states that the approach and methodology adopted for corridor definition was based on that of the Pilot 2002 study. In each case, the standard characterisation of the landscape process is put in place, but no subsequent landscape assessment is made.

6.6.6.

The 2005 study (Upper Shannon navigation) makes no reference to the DoE draft guidelines. The study “sought to identify distinctive aspects of the waterway corridor and to assess their significance”. The corridor was divided into five distinct units and a statement of significance was drawn for each. Definition and illustration of the corridor area are found in section 4. No specific methodology was proposed for this exercise, except for observation and a subjective detailing of key points in relation to the built and natural heritage. The approach established the significance of the waterway corridor, identified constraint areas and established a waterway corridor zone. Section 7 of the study is a strategic environmental assessment (SEA), wherein the statement on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the water corridor study is based on methodologies developed for heritage appraisal and expanded to include social, economic and environmental aims. Landscape quality is stated to be an environmental aim against which the study is to be assessed. An example of the assessment’s results, “continue to provide and maintain addition facilities within the waterway corridor” (page 130, Strategic Aim 6.2.6), is assessed as having both positive and negative effects on the landscape quality of the corridor. However, SEA endeavours to ensure “full integration of relevant biophysical, economic, social and political considerations”. If a full LCA had been carried out, the full implications for landscape quality would have been assessed.

The strategic aims and policies which emerged from the vision proposed for the corridor would have been strengthened had LCA been used in the methodology throughout the study.

6.7. Relationship of studies to the Water Framework Directive

The implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive in Ireland is by means of River Basin District (RBD) management plans, which are made at catchment level. The Shannon River Basin District Project embraces the entire Shannon catchment, whereas the water corridor studies concentrate on the relatively narrow corridor through which the river flows. Water quality - the main theme of the directive - is dependent on the inputs from the entire catchment, not just the corridor, and planning and development must take account of this. Therefore, the studies have only a limited application to RBD planning. However, both are complementary, since the studies refer to the many of the issues which RBD planning aims to address. The RBD process involves, *inter alia*, a cooperative approach from all the local authorities within the catchment. The studies also recommend formal collaboration between the local authorities on planning and development issues, and in this context, there is also complementarity.

The Shannon River Basin District project coordinator would welcome a submission by the Heritage Council to the draft Shannon RBD plan in 2008.

6.8. Discussion and conclusions

6.8.1. Influence of studies on planning decisions

In all four cases cited in Section 5.4, above), the planning authority granted permission, while in two cases (Dowra and Ballinacarrigy), An Bord Pleanála overturned the grant of permission. The comment made by Longford County Council that the waterways corridor study is non-statutory, with the inference that it is not obliged to adhere to it, is supported by verbal comments of other local authorities during our consultations. It is significant that the opportunity to avail of tax incentives was mentioned by Longford County Council to support its decision to grant permission in the Clondra case (see 5.4.2). These planning cases form a small sample of the many hundreds of planning applications determining by local authorities each year within the Shannon and canals waterways corridor, for example, Longford received 1400 planning applications in 2004 and 1150 applications up to October 2007. If the above cases are representative, it is a cause for concern. Our consultations revealed that if the waterways corridor studies were quoted in planning reports, the planning staff were challenged by the elected members, on the basis that the studies were non-statutory.

The Heritage Council submission to the Department of Finance on the 'Pilot' Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon (Heritage Council, 2005b) presents a more in-depth picture of the pattern of planning decisions in the Upper Shannon area. The Heritage Council's submission is also critical of the Scheme's impact on heritage.

Have the waterways corridor studies had an influence on the Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon? In our opinion, they had little influence. The 2004 study mentioned the tax incentive scheme but did not make recommendations about it. The 2005 study of the Upper Shannon commented on the largely negative impact of the tax incentive scheme on heritage and made specific recommendations, but this probably came too late to influence the scheme, which by then had a year to run. Our consultations with local authorities (see Section 3) show that the Scheme was the engine for economic development in the region. It appears as if it was difficult for local authorities to refuse planning applications, even if they were in conflict with heritage objectives.

6.8.2. Proposed new tax incentive scheme for the Mid-Shannon corridor

The submission by the Heritage Council to the Department of Finance in 2005 may well have had some influence on the design of the proposed new tax incentive scheme, proposed in 2007 by the Department of Finance. The proposed 'Tourism Incentive Scheme for the Mid-Shannon Corridor' (Government of Ireland, 2007) will no longer subsidise one-off housing or other residential development irrespective of heritage sensitivity, and is likely to have stricter criteria for the protection of heritage attached to it. Residential development must be linked directly to tourism-related activities. Eligible activities include inland marinas, mooring and docking, water sports, training facilities

for adventure activities, educational tourism, including heritage, language, visitor attractions, and wellness centres. Details of the new scheme are not available at the time of writing. Broadly, the scheme would not apply to tourism accommodation except where the accommodation is an integral part of the operation of a new facility which is purpose-built for the carrying on of the eligible activity concerned. Investment in accommodation in hotels, guest houses, holiday cottages, apartments, would be specifically excluded.

6.8.3. Landscape

A central recommendation of the Heritage Council - a consistent and agreed methodology for landscape characterisation and a programme of national landscape characterisation, undertaken by a central agency - has not yet been addressed by Government. The DoE's Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines for Planning Authorities are still in draft form and need to be re-written. It is therefore unsurprising that the relationship between the approach to landscape in the studies and national landscape initiatives is unsatisfactory. The landscape character assessment process involves not only defining landscapes but also making subsequent judgements about them. Only one study (2002 Pilot study) contained an appraisal.

6.8.4. Water Framework Directive

Both the studies and River Basin District management planning are complementary, but the studies are limited to the water corridor whereas RBD is concerned with the entire catchment. The recommended collaboration between local authorities to ensure a consistency of approach to the Shannon water corridor is a central feature of RBD planning. If local authorities must collaborate on RBD planning, there is no reason why they cannot adopt a common approach and standards for planning and development with the water corridor (see also 6.2.4).

7. Policies and actions completed



Near Newtownforbes (photo by David Hickie)

The project brief required us to examine the policies and actions recommended in the waterways corridor studies. We determined if a particular action had been completed by desk study, consultation and/or personal observations. Databases of the recommendations directed at each responsible body were made, and submitted to each body for comment. In addition, Waterways Ireland agreed to examine each action which was directed specifically to it. There are a number of information gaps which could not be filled in the time available to us, but the results help to give an overall picture of the degree to which the recommendations have been followed.

The results are presented in tabulated form for each study. Each is cross-referenced to the Page and Reference number of the relevant study.

These are also available at <http://recommendations.r495.com>.

Legend for Tables 7.1 to 7.4

BnM	Bord na Mona
CFB	Central Fisheries Board
CN	Cavan County Council
DoEHLG	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
GY	Galway County Council
HC	Heritage Council
IWAI	Inland Waterways Association of Ireland
LD	Longford County Council
LM	Leitrim County Council
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OF	Offaly County Council
RN	Roscommon County Council
SRBMP	Shannon River Basin Management Plan
SRFB	Shannon Regional Fisheries Board
WI	Waterways Ireland
WM	Westmeath County Council

7.1. Grand Canal and River Shannon, 2002

*The Page Number and Reference point to where the original recommendation can be found in this study. Some recommendations are repeated for each of the areas of the study and thus appear on more than one page.

Ref	Page	Recommendation	Responsible	Completed	Comment
Area 1 3.3.1	47	Village Design Statement/Ballycommon	OF	No	
Area 1 3.3.21	47	Re-open Kilbeggan branch	OF	No	Kilbeggan Grand Canal Committee still actively lobbying for this.
Area 2 3.3.1	49	Framework Plan for eastward growth of Tullamore	OF	No	Planned but separate to study.
Area 3 3.3.1	51	Masterplan for canal corridor through Tullamore	OF	No	
Area 4 3.3.1	53	Village Design Statement/Rahan	OF	Yes	New Rahan Village Plan in Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009.
Area 5 3.3.1	55	Amend Ferbane Town Plan	OF	Yes	New Ferbane Town Plan in Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009. Not influenced by the study.
Area 5 3.3.7	55	Environmental integration of Bord na Mona peat lands	BnM	Ongoing	Overall policy and strategy for cutaway peatlands has yet to develop. Bord na Mona, like Coillte, can now sell off land for development. Some initiatives, e.g. Wetlands Wilderness Park, are at research stage.
Area 7 3.3.1	59	Village design statement/Belmont	OF	No	
Area 8 3.3.1	61	Shannon Harbour Action Plan	OF	Yes	Shannon Harbour Village Plan in the Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009. Not due to water corridor study.

Area 9 3.3.1	63	Masterplan/Shannonbridge	OF	Yes	Shannonbridge Village Plan in the Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009. Not due to water corridor study.
Area 9 3.3.2	63	Waterway Protection Zone to coincide with SAC/SPA	OF	No	
Area 10 3.3.1	65	Area Action Plan/Banagher harbour	OF	Yes	Banagher Town Plan in Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009. In hand as Carnegie - North Tipp and West Offaly pilot - separate to water corridor study.
All areas 3.3.2	47-65	Establish waterway Protection Zone	OF	No	
All areas 3.3.16	47-65	Manage rural areas of canal in accordance with ecological principles	OF	Ongoing	In 2008, Offaly Heritage Forum project will assess areas of sensitivity and agree management plan with Waterways Ireland.
All areas	47-65	Integration of canal-side towns and villages with canal/ sensitive development/ good town planning	OF	No	Needs planning survey to establish if recent decisions have been in accordance with good town planning and sympathy with canal.
All areas	47-65	Fora for community participation	OF	No	
All areas 3.3.11	47-65	Measures to increase visitor interest in canal	WI	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland has an extensive marketing and promotion strategy to for the waterways. WI worked on partnership projects to open up walking routes, in addition to the Way Marked Ways. WI assists local angling clubs by the provision of designated fishing

					<p>markings and stands and the publishing of dedicated angling guides.</p> <p>WI works with rowing and canoe clubs through maintaining navigation stretches weed free, sponsorship events, installation of slipways and amenity jetties.</p>
All areas 3.3.19	47-65	Upgrade interpretation and signage	OF	No	
All areas 3.1.18	47-65	Good practice guide for Waterways users	WI	Yes	Waterways Ireland has developed a Good Boaters Guide
All Areas 3.3.4	38	Heritage Protection	WI	Yes	<p>Waterways Ireland liaises closely with the local authorities in relation to works to protected structures.</p> <p>WI recently commissioned a built heritage inventory and survey to NIAH standards of the architectural, engineering and industrial heritage of the Royal and Grand Canals and the Shannon and Barrow Navigations.</p> <p>WI recently commissioned underwater archaeological surveys prior to works being undertaken e.g. assessment of RMP structure (old weir) at Ballina, Co. Tipperary and full assessment of potential underwater archaeological features at Annagh Upper in Co. Leitrim.</p>
All Areas 3.3.9	38	Protection of Habitats	WI	Ongoing	<p>Waterways Ireland currently developing internal code of practice to highlight environmental and heritage issues as well as advising on best practice.</p> <p>WI contracts Central Fisheries Board to monitor canal water quality and advise on management of aquatic plants and fish stocks.</p>

All Areas 3.1.16	39	Management Plan	WI	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland developing internal code of practice to highlight environmental and heritage issues as well as advising on current best practice.
All Areas 3.1.17	39	Hedgerow Management Plan	WI	Ongoing	
All Areas 3.1.21	39	Transport and Development story of the Waterways	WI	No	Waterways Ireland is sponsoring Ruth Delaney for her book on the Shannon Navigation and has provided access to heritage drawings for reference data.
All Areas 3.1.22	39	Landscape Interpretation	WI	Ongoing	

7.2. 2004 Lanesborough to Shannonbridge

*The Page Number and Reference are to where the original recommendation can be found in this study.

Ref	Page	Recommendation	Responsible	Completed	Comment
1	67	Feasibility study for L Ree Park	HC, WM, RN, NPWS	No	Not in Westmeath but a Lough Ree Management Plan recommended in CDP. Roscommon: no progress.
2	68	Measures to reduce artificial enrichment	RN, WM, OF, WI	No	Westmeath and Roscommon: no progress.
2	68	Reduce/eliminate boat effluent	WI, WM, RN, OF	Ongoing	Navigation byelaws enforced by the WI Inspectorate. WI agreed to responsibility of all pump-outs on Shannon Navigation, on a phased basis, to allow for maintenance and standards to be upheld. All new WI developments have a pump-out included in the design.
3	68	Management plan for L. Ree islands.	HC, WM, RN	No	At least three islands in Lough Ree have yet to be designated.
3	68	Designate all islands as NHAs etc	NPWS	No	
4	69	Protect aesthetic value of L Ree shore	WM, RN	Ongoing	Lough Ree Management Plan recommended in Westmeath CDP and draft Roscommon CDP. Planning decisions need to be monitored to see if this objective is achieved.
4	69	Design guidelines for buildings	WM, RN, OF	Ongoing	Canal Zone identified in draft Westmeath CDP. Offaly: draft has been prepared.

5	70	Enforce unlicensed jetties and harbours	WM, RN, OF, WI	Ongoing	Enforcement Section in Westmeath established. Roscommon states it is ongoing. Waterways Ireland commits extensive resources to investigating and regulating unlicensed developments. Recently, all local authority planning departments were contacted to remind them that Waterways Ireland were designated statutory consultees under the Planning and Development Act 2000. WI deals with encroachment queries on a case by case basis.
6	70	Study on impact of watercraft on wildlife	HC	No	
6	70	Good practice guide for watercraft	WI, IWA	Yes	Waterways Ireland Good Boating Guide - Operating craft on Waterways Ireland's Navigations.
7	71	Combined Local Area Plan/Lanesborough	RN, LD	No	
7	71	Village Design Statements/Glassan Ballykeen	WM	Ongoing	Local Area Plans being prepared.
7	71	Village design statements/Portrunny Lecarrow	RN	Ongoing	Objective in draft CDP.
7	71	Village Design Statement for Shannonbridge	OF	No	
8	72	Economic development before cessation of ESB	ESB, BnM	No	No information.
9	72	Cutaway bogs feasibility study	NPWS BnM	Ongoing	UCD Bogland project underway (http://www.ucd.ie/bogland).
10	73	Riverfront strategy/ Athlone	WM	Ongoing	Strategy proposed by Westmeath.

11	73	Shoreline access L. Ree	WM, RN, WI	Ongoing	In Westmeath proposed as part of recommended Lough Ree Management Plan. "A Heritage Access Audit for Co. Roscommon" should support this.
16	75	Upgrade Athlone canal	WM	Ongoing	Partially complete. Waterways Ireland: upgrading and maintenance of Athlone Canal will be undertaken, as resources permit. However the majority of the Athlone Canal is currently leased to the local authority.
17	75	Formal access to Clonfert from Shannon	GY, WI	No	
18	76	Greenway R. Suck	GY, RN	Ongoing	Roscommon: Beara Breifne Greenway ongoing.
18	76	Greenway Clonfert to Ballinasloe	GY, WI	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland approached by the Environmental Science Class of NUI Galway who are developing a nature trail in the area for Ballinasloe Town Council and Waterways Ireland have given approval, in principle, to allow the trail to access lands under its control.
19	76	Extend bog rail tour	BnM, GY, OF	No	
20	77	Enhance access to Clonmacnois	OF	No	
21	77	Floodplain protection	GY, RN, WM, NPWS	Ongoing	Westmeath: in CDP. Roscommon: policies and objectives in draft County Development Plan for floodplains. Roscommon CDP Review has map showing areas prone to flooding.
21	77	Management plan for callows	NPWS, WI, WM, RN	No	
22	77	Planning applications in designated sites	WM, RN, OF, GY, NPWS	Ongoing	In Westmeath, referred to Prescribed Bodies. Roscommon: ongoing. Offaly: ongoing..

23	78	Update baseline information on wildlife	NPWS	No	
24	79	Update protected structures lists	WM, RN, OF, GY	No	Westmeath: has been done to NIAH standards.
25	80	Protect archaeological sites	DoEHLG	Ongoing	
26	81	Upgrade heritage information	DoEHLG, WI, WM, RN, OF, GY	Ongoing	Westmeath: not a priority. Offaly: ongoing. Waterways Ireland signage design manual provides a cohesive approach to signage along the waterways.
27	82	Shannonbridge fort	OF	No	
27	82	Conserve military heritage Shannonbridge	OF	No	

7.3. 2004 Royal Canal and Lanesborough to Roosky

*The Page Number and Reference are to where the original recommendation can be found in this study.

Ref	Page	Recommendation	Responsible	Completed	Comment
4.1.2	53	Communication between non-statutory stakeholders and authorities	WI	Ongoing	<p>Non-statutory user groups want better communication with Waterways Ireland and local authorities. Need to appoint Advisory Council to Waterways Ireland so that users' views can be heard.</p> <p>Waterways Ireland holds annual meetings with the IWAI, also more regular meetings with individual branches and consultation meetings with Irish Boat Rental Association.</p> <p>WI has popular feedback and FAQ section at www.waterwaysireland.org and has a dedicated Environment and Heritage Section dealing with environmental issues.</p>
4.1.3	53	Local Authorities to designate Waterway Corridor Zone	WM, RN	Ongoing	Westmeath: Royal Canal Corridor included in Westmeath CDP Review. Roscommon: no progress.
4.1.4	54	Strategy for development of navigation	WI	No	
4.1.4	55	Assess carrying capacity of Shannon for recreation	WI	No	
4.1.4	55	Code of conduct for navigation users	WI	Yes	IWAI Code of Conduct (http://www.iwai.ie/boating/conduct). Waterways Ireland Good Boating Guide - Operating craft on Waterways Ireland's Navigations.

4.1.5	55	More moorings at all waterways centres	WI, WM, RN	Ongoing	<p>Westmeath: no action. Roscommon: new moorings have been erected at Kilglass Lake. Some are controversial (e.g. Dowra). Sometimes, the scale and design of moorings and other infrastructure are the problem.</p> <p>Roosky: concrete jetty intended as a short term facility.</p> <p>Lanesborough/Ballyleague: No justification for further mooring points, at present. Moorings provided north of harbour.</p>
4.1.6	57	Bord na Mona to control siltation in places	WI BnM	Ongoing	<p>Bord na Mona states "...not proven that peat works are cause of siltation" and refers to numerous other private peat extraction operations. BnM has been compliant, with 124 silt traps in Mountdillon.</p> <p>Waterways Ireland: some survey work undertaken and localised spots identified for future dredging. WI would participate in investigating sources of siltation and appropriate amelioration measures.</p>
4.1.7.1	58	Protection of underwater archaeology	WM, RN, WI	Ongoing	<p>Westmeath. Roscommon states "No planning applications have since come in which have required such a condition be attached".</p> <p>Waterways Ireland recently commissioned such surveys prior to works being undertaken</p>
4.1.7.2	58	List of historic/archaeological sites along navigation	WM, RN	No	
4.1.8.1	59	After-use of Bord na Mona bogs/protection of Shannon ecosystem	BnM	Ongoing	<p>The Shannon River Basin Management Plan is to be released for consultation in 2008 and published in 2009. It should include more stringent controls on peat harvesting.</p>

4.1.8.1	59	Support wetlands and wilderness park	WM, RN	Ongoing	Not in Westmeath. In Roscommon it is an included policy & objective in the County Development Plan. The Wetlands Wilderness Park is still in conceptual form only, but important research should become available in 2008. (See also Feehan, 2004).
4.1.8.2	59	Implementation of recommended measures to reduce nutrient enrichment	SRBMP	Ongoing	Westmeath it is covered by Environmental Protection. In Roscommon water quality monitoring ongoing. The EPA reports slight disimprovement in water quality of moderately polluted stretches in Shannon region.
4.1.8.4	60	Control of alien species	WM, RN WI	Ongoing	Not in Westmeath. In Roscommon there is a policy in draft County Development Plan to address this, and are guided by national policy. Waterways Ireland is actively involved in zebra mussel control groups, both in Northern and Southern Ireland.
4.1.8.5	60	Proposals for more NHAs	NPWS, RN, WM	No	Not in Westmeath. Not in Roscommon but they are awaiting response from NPWS.
4.2.1	61	Royal Canal Development Council	WI, WM, RN	Ongoing	Not in Westmeath. As the Royal Canal is currently not navigable beyond Ballymahon this is a future action. Waterways Ireland liaises closely with the RCAG. Basic facilities, e.g. jetties at locks, are being rolled out. WI: A 'Royal Canal Development Council' would require the approval of the Waterways Ireland Senior Management group and councillors within the County Councils.
4.2.2	61	Address poor use of canal by visitors and locals	WI, WM, RN	No	In Westmeath, consultation with Royal Canal Amenity Group.

4.2.3	62	Communication with non-statutory stakeholders	WI, WM, RN	Ongoing	In Westmeath, consultation with Royal Canal Amenity Group. The Public have been invited to "have their say" on water quality by SRBD. Issue of booklet detailing how to get involved. Need for Advisory Council in Waterways Ireland (see also 4.1.2 above).
4.2.5	63	Waterway Corridor Zone for Royal Canal	WM, RN	No	Westmeath has designated Corridor Zone in CDP Review, following Landscape Character Assessment
4.2.5	63	Detailed recommendations for Royal Canal facilities	WI, WM, RN	Ongoing	<p>Waterways Ireland: not sustainable to bring lighting and parking facilities, due to lack of access and space. Most jetties are supplied with water points.</p> <p>Area 2: The Royal Canal between Cloondara and Ballymahon, including the Longford Branch: A number of the actions are dependent on the navigation being fully reopened. The Royal Canal Way to be extended to the Shannon.</p> <p>Area 2: Longford Town: proposed feasibility study and preliminary design on this Branch by 2011 to allow a decision to be made to commence full design and construction in the event of available additional funding.</p> <p>Mullingar: Development/improvement to towpaths currently in discussion between Waterways Ireland and Westmeath County Council.</p>
4.2.7	67	Greenways/cycling and towpaths	WM, RN	Ongoing	Westmeath: Yes
4.2.8.1	69	Inclusion of sites in NIAH	LD, WM, RN	Ongoing	Completed in Westmeath but Appendix 2 of this Waterway Corridor Study not available.
4.2.8.2	70	Recognise Cloondara's heritage value	LD	No	

4.2.9.1	70	5-yearly canal habitat assessments	NPWS, WI	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland carries out ecological surveys, as appropriate, along the waterways.
4.2.9.3	70	Hedgerow guidelines	WI	Ongoing	An Environmental and Heritage Code of Practice is currently being developed by Waterways Ireland.
4.2.9.4	70	Grassland management	WI	Ongoing	See response to Action 4.2.9.3.
4.2.9.5	71	Bat survey/canal	WI NPWS	Ongoing	Surveys are undertaken prior to works, as appropriate. In addition, Waterways Ireland sponsors the All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Survey since its inception in 2006.
4.2.9.6	71	Canal management guidelines	WI	Ongoing	Along with the Code or Practice currently being developed; Waterways Ireland contracts the Central Fisheries Board to draw up annual aquatic weed management plans. Part of this work also includes developing new best practice and monitoring water quality.
4.2.9.7	71	Control of invasive exotic plants	WI	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland active members in zebra mussel control groups and have funded the Lough Derg Science Group to undertake an assessment of invasive plant species in the Shannon Navigation.
4.2.9.8	72	Indigenous fish/canal	WI, CFB	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland contracted fisheries management to the Central Fisheries Board. Policy to stock canals only with naturalised fish species.

7.4. 2005 Upper Shannon

*The Page Number and Reference are to where the original recommendation can be found in this study.

Ref	Page	Recommendation	Responsible	Completed	Comment
1	87	Identify Waterway Corridor Zone	LM, RN, WI	No	
2	88	Prepare design guidelines	RN	Ongoing	Roscommon: objective in draft CDP.
3	89	Prepare Local Area Plans/Village Design Statements	RN, LM,	Ongoing	Roscommon: objective in draft CDP
3	89	Waterways Corridor Local Area Plan	LM	No	
3	89	Local Area Plan/Dowra	LM, CN	No	
3	89	Local Area Plan/Cootehall	RN	Ongoing	Roscommon: no progress, but objective in draft CDP
4	90	Collect info on planning applications re Tax Incentive Scheme	RN, LM, CN	No	
4	90	Monitor impacts of scheme	RN, LM, CN	No	
5	91	Floodplain protection	RN, LM, CN, OPW, DoEHLG	Ongoing	Roscommon: objective in draft CDP and map showing areas prone to flooding.

6	92	Enforce unlicensed jetties	WI, RN, LM, CN	No	Ongoing in Roscommon. Waterways Ireland: unlicensed activities are followed up by Property and Legal Section.
7	93	Study on carrying capacity/boating	WI, HC	No	
8	94	Prevent eutrophication	EPA , WI	Ongoing	In Roscommon monitoring is ongoing. SRBMP to deliver management plan for public consultation by 2008.
8	94	Reduce/eliminate waste from boats	WI, RN, LM, CN	Ongoing	Roscommon: objective in draft CDP for pump-out facilities. Waterways Ireland: Inspectorate monitors requirements for holding tanks set out under the navigation bye laws. There is also a proposal in place for the systematic take over all local authority pump-outs to be under the jurisdiction of Waterways Ireland. If it is successful, this action will be addressed.
9	95	Identify sensitive catchment areas for forestry	RN, LM, CN, SRFB	Ongoing	Roscommon: under the Landscape Character Assessment as part of draft CDP
10	96	Shannon River Basin Management Plan/dredging	SRBMP, WI	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland to dredge only where necessary and only to the navigation depth.
10	96	Shannon water levels	ESB, WI	Ongoing	
11 (a)	97	Study of impacts of watercraft	HC	No	
11 (b)	97	Change bye laws/good practice guide for river users	WI, IWAI	Ongoing	IWAI Code of Conduct (http://www.iwai.ie/boating/conduct). Waterways Ireland: Navigation bye-laws are currently being reviewed. Also, Good Boating Guide - Operating craft on Waterways Ireland's Navigations.

12	98	Police waterways	WI	Ongoing	Regulatory measures are continually policed by the Waterways Ireland Navigation Inspectorate. In addition, seasonal patrol staff have been employed during peak season to allow for 7 day cover.
13	99	No kill policy/angling	SRFB	No	
14	100	Maintain informal access to riverbanks and lakeshores	WI, RN, LM, CN	No	
15	101	Enhance access	RN, LM, CN, WI and others	No	Roscommon: improved access to Kilglass lake. Waterways Ireland: Recreational route between Drumshanbo and Leitrim is currently in place through the Beara-Breifne Greenway (www.bbgreenway.org/maps/section5.htm). Provision of additional moorings on all the navigations to facilitate and encourage future use of the waterway resource outlined in the National Development Plan 2007-2013. Installation dependent on resources.
16	102	Riverfront strategy/Carrick-on-Shannon	RN, LM, WI	Yes	Roscommon: amenity area along river being upgraded. Waterways Ireland: 280m of public mooring and service block installed.
17	103	Conservation of lake islands	RN, LM, CN, HC	No	Roscommon awaiting response from NPWS.
31	115	Designate additional areas of lakeshore	NPWS	No	
32	116	Research/control/Zebra mussels	NPWS, WI	Ongoing	Waterways Ireland: active member of zebra mussel control groups and disseminates leaflets on zebra mussels to lock keepers to distribute to boat owners.
33	117	Study on effects of agriculture	NPWS	No	
34	118	Standardise archaeological policy and practice	DoEHLG	Ongoing	Roscommon: policies and objectives are in draft CDP.

35	119	Protect cultural and built heritage sites	RN, LM, CN	Ongoing	Roscommon: progress with RPS proposed additions.
36	120	Conservation Plan/Jamestown	LM	No	This requires a partnership approach in which Waterways Ireland would participate.
37	121	Environmental/Economic study of waterways	WI , LM, RN, CN, HC	No	

7.5. Discussion

It should be noted that progress in implementing the recommendations of the waterways corridor studies does not necessarily indicate that the studies have had a direct influence. Their influence may have been indirect or implementation may have followed from national and/or EU policies, or the influence of heritage officers in local authorities, etc. However, from our consultations and observations, we can give some indication of the influence of the studies and we can point to a number of main issues which have been addressed and those yet to be resolved.

7.5.1. Influence of studies on forward planning

The studies have had their greatest influence on the approach of local authorities to forward planning. The waterway corridor concept presented in the 2002 'Pilot' study is now included in the 'planning lexicon', both by local authorities and An Bord Pleanála. Whereas, prior to the studies, there was a lack of focus on the waterway and its surroundings, now this special importance is beginning to be recognised and incorporated into policy in a number of the relevant local authorities. The Heritage Council has also documented such progress in its report on the Rural Renewal Scheme (Heritage Council, 2005). Forthcoming county development plans in, for example, Westmeath, Roscommon, Longford, Leitrim and Offaly will include fuller recognition of the importance of the Shannon and canals. The studies recommend village design statements and local area plans for a number of settlements in the corridor, and these have been made or are being prepared, for example, in Rahan, Ferbane, Shannonbridge, and Shannonharbour. Glasson/Ballykeen and Portrunny/Lecarrow. These statements may not always refer directly to the corridor studies but most include recognition of the landscape, cultural heritage and ecology.

The non-statutory status of the studies, to which we have referred on a number of occasions, is a limitation when considering individual planning applications. Landscape character assessment is one statutory means by which local authorities can implement the recommendations of the studies. Such assessments have yet to be completed in counties Longford, North Tipperary and Roscommon (except for Lough Key). Galway, Offaly, Clare and Limerick have completed LCAs. Some LCAs have been informed by the studies and have been influential in a number of counties, e.g. Westmeath and Leitrim.

7.5.2. Gaps between policy and practice

Our findings indicate that there is still a gap between written policy and its practical application on the ground (see Section 5.4). This was also noted by the Heritage Council (Heritage Council, 2005b). It demonstrates that, where there is a strong economic incentive which is not balanced with clear heritage conservation guidelines, the landscape and ecology of the waterway corridor is threatened. It also indicates that the non-

statutory corridor studies cannot compete on a 'level playing pitch' with statutory policies which may be in conflict with the vision and approach of the studies.

7.5.3. Complementarity with policies of other official agencies

It is clear that the vision and recommendations of the studies complement the policies of a number of official bodies. The Shannon Regional Fisheries Board sees an urgent need to protect not only water quality but also the aquatic habitat bordering the waterway, i.e. the riparian zone. The conservation of aquatic and riparian habitat — where designated — is also the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG. The aims and objectives of both these official bodies will be advanced if the strategic approach to the waterway corridor is pursued. It may be worth trying to engage these two bodies more fully in future studies and in revising the recommendations of the existing studies.

7.5.4. Water quality issues

Water quality is mentioned as a priority in the recommendations of several of the studies. It is difficult to measure progress in this regard, since the River Basin District Plans have not yet been prepared. We can say that, while this approach is commendable, the Regional Fisheries Boards and the Environmental Protection Agency are still the only independent bodies that can enforce water quality standards. In relation to specific areas, upgraded sewage treatment works are planned for Mullingar and Carrick-on-Shannon, but it is not clear when these projects will begin.

River Basin District management planning should complement the vision of the studies, since the approach requires the cooperation of all local authorities with regard to water quality in the catchment. Among the key issues identified for risk assessment in the Shannon River Basin District Project are domestic sewage, septic tanks, agricultural practices, peat extraction and industry. In time, this approach may translate into common development control policies in the catchment (and by definition, in the waterway corridor), instead of the current fragmented approach, where each local authority acts in isolation from one another. For example, as a result of risk assessment, a number of local authorities may decide to implement common policies to restrict new developments along particular stretches of the corridor because the risk of excessive nutrient input is too great. This could in turn have a beneficial spin-off effect in protecting the landscape in the corridor from inappropriate development.

The fragmented and inconsistent approach to physical planning in the waterway corridor might be corrected by other means. Landscape character assessment, carried out on a county-by-county basis, could be one medium for 'cross-border' cooperation, if such assessments were coordinated by the DoEHLG. However, even in this area, problems remain. The Heritage Council report on landscape character assessment (Julie Martin and Associates, 2006) remarks that the ministerial guidelines are not only still in draft form but are unsatisfactory and need to be re-written.

One local authority felt that official guidelines for the management of rivers and lakes would be useful. We would expand on this: guidelines could be produced by the DoEHLG for development control in relation to all waterway corridors. This supports the recommendation already made by the Heritage Council in its 2005 policy paper (Heritage Council, 2005a).

7.5.5. The role of Heritage Officers

Our research and consultations indicate that progress in meeting some of the recommendations of the studies has been helped by the County Heritage Officers, for example in relation to access and interpretation. We are aware that a number of County Heritage Plans include the objective to 'heritage proof' county development plans, but we think that heritage officers' skills and experience should be better used, and they could be involved more directly with the planning sections of local authorities.

8. Dissemination and public awareness



Swan (photo by David Hickie)

The waterway corridor studies were originally printed in small quantities and distributed primarily to the project partners and the members of the steering groups. They have also been made available for download from the Heritage Council website.

Our consultations indicate that the lack of awareness of the studies outside the project steering groups is in part due to the small volumes of printed editions. It may also be in part due to the lack of a sustained campaign to promote them. We noted also that even the elected members of local authorities sometimes lacked awareness of the studies, indicating that better communication is needed between elected members and officials in some counties. This is a serious deficiency, since it is the duty of elected members to make county development plans in which it is hoped that the recommendations of the studies may be included.

The detailed nature of the studies and the high printing costs prevented a larger print run and thus a wider dissemination of the studies, but in any case, this might not have been a cost-effective option: many lay people find them too lengthy and complex. This is why

we recommend summarising the studies and distributing these more widely (see Section9. Recommendations).

The studies can be downloaded from the Heritage Council web site, which in theory means that they have been widely disseminated. However, our consultations indicate that not everyone is familiar with the Internet, and web-based material must be supported by printed copies in order to reach a wider audience. In addition, the studies are in PDF and are very large files which take time to download.

The entire body of work needs to be web-based. This will allow for interactive browsing and searching, but also updating and amending the original information. The main body of text would not need to be re-written but the recommendations would need revision and updating. This approach will allow different sectors or groups to access the information in a way that is relevant to themselves and their interests. It could be a sub-site for the Heritage Council website. Converting the text and images to HTML would address the problem of the excessive size of downloads in PDF, which is currently as a deterrent to potential readers.

The complexity of the studies makes it necessary for published material to be supported by someone who can communicate verbally with stakeholders and the wider public, both at meeting and in the media. This work could be accomplished by the relevant county heritage officers. We note, however, that some local authorities do not have heritage officers; for example, Westmeath County Council no longer has a heritage officer, as of 2007.

9. Recommendations arising from the evaluation



New Development, Tarmonbarry (photo by Charles Stanley-Smith)

We have grouped recommendations into three sections:

9.1 includes recommendations on promoting and following up the existing studies;

9.2 includes recommendations for future studies;

9.3 presents some major actions which should be pursued.

9.1. Recommendations for existing studies

We have made recommendations at a strategic level and at operational level. Our **priority recommendations** (in bold, large font) set out the strategic approach which should be taken by the Heritage Council, i.e. the general direction in which to proceed. The small text beneath each recommendation explains how these should be carried out. This is followed by some **detailed recommendations** which expand on aspects of how our approach should be achieved.

9.1.1. Promoting the waterways corridor studies: Priority recommendations

1. Produce an overview of all five studies to date, including revised recommendations, where needed.

The overview should explain the corridor concept and the approach, the extent of the survey and consultations, the overall vision, aims and objectives of the Heritage Council concerning the studies, this evaluation, and expectations and plans for the future, including any further corridor studies. Suggested length: 4 pages A4

2. Produce summaries of each study as separate but linked documents

The summaries should refer to the overview and link to the other studies. They should contain summaries of the survey, results of consultations and a shortened list of updated, revised recommendations. The studies should be written for the general public. Suggested length: 4-6 pages A4

3. The overview and summaries should be web-based and printed

Web-based publication means that the studies can be revised and updated as necessary, but printed editions are also important.

4. Update and revised the recommendations made in the studies

The studies' recommendations need to be updated and revised, where necessary, and incorporated into a searchable database on the Heritage Council website. This will allow the studies to keep pace with policy developments and will maintain their relevance.

5. The corridor concept and the studies need to be promoted through a sustained campaign by the relevant Heritage Officers, the Heritage Council and Waterways Ireland

The relevant County Heritage Officers should promote the studies by means of a sustained campaign. One dedicated person needs to be assigned to coordinate this campaign.

6. The studies should be used by the Heritage Council as a basis for making more focussed submissions to planning authorities and other agencies

These submissions should be directed to individual planning authorities and national bodies, using the studies' survey information and revised recommendations, as appropriate.

7. Future waterways corridor studies should include a) the remaining section of the Grand Canal and Naas Branch, the Barrow line to Athy and remaining section of the Royal Canal; b) the Barrow Navigation.

The findings of this evaluation should inform the project briefs for future studies. The changes we recommend should be at the level of corridor definition, presentation and organisation of the survey information, and presentation of the recommendations.

9.1.2. Detailed recommendations

The detailed recommendations set out in more detail aspects of how our approach should be achieved.

1. Revising and updating the corridor studies' recommendations:

- Some recommendations are statements of position rather than recommendations *per se*. They can be omitted but can be incorporated into a vision statement elsewhere.
- The recommendations should be **ranked** according to their strategic or operational nature and level of detail.
- The results of our evaluation should give a good indication of **what has been achieved** or not (see Section 6). This should be the starting point for revising the studies' recommendations.
- **Strategic recommendations** should be few in number and should be clearly set out in **bold type** in an **attractive layout**. This set of recommendations refers to the general approach and direction. Brevity and clarity are very important. They may be illustrated to add to their appeal.
- **Operational recommendations** can be included in smaller type, and should be as clear and concise as possible. We think a **smaller number of recommendations** would have more chance of attracting peoples' attention than an exhaustive list.
- An operational recommendation should refer to **one authority or group**, rather than addressing several groups simultaneously. The former method should convey specifically that which the authority or group should be doing and thus

should have more impact. More weight could then be added through follow-up by our suggested dedicated person overseeing the promotion of the studies.

- All the strategic recommendations and the most important operational recommendations should be included in the summary documents. Reference can be made to where to find a full list of recommendations (see next).
- A full list of updated and revised recommendations could be made available for download from the Heritage Council website.

9.2. Recommendations for future studies

The Heritage Council has stated that it may commission additional waterways corridor studies. We were asked to make recommendations for future studies.

9.2.1. Vision, scope, and methodology of future waterways corridor studies

- It is important to maintain a continuity between any future studies and those already completed. This includes the vision of Ireland's waterways corridors being managed in a coordinated, integrated way.
- The Barrow Navigation and its corridor, and the remaining sections of the Grand Canal (Ballycommon to Lucan) and Royal Canal (Thomastown to Allenbridge) should be the subjects of the next set of studies.
- The definition of the corridor for the remaining section of the Grand Canal should be similar to the 2002 study of the Grand Canal for the sake of consistency and because it is relatively simple and easily understood. There is a strong argument for the same corridor definition to be used for the Royal Canal and the Barrow Navigation.
- The studies should place emphasis on the location of appropriate developments which complement the heritage of the corridor, thus giving inspiration to local authorities and potential developers. This might help to prevent proposals for inappropriate developments or in unsuitable locations.
- The economic component of future studies could seek to highlight zones or nodes of possible economic expansion. For example, economic analysis may point to areas which are subject to pressure for suburban expansion and other areas where there is pressure from tourism.

- The presentation of a distinct 'socio-economic corridor', as in the 2006 study, is unnecessary and confusing, and should be avoided in future studies.

9.2.2. Presentation and layout

We refer to the critique of the studies, presented in Section 5.

- The corridor concept should be made as simple to understand as possible, to assist planning authorities to take the studies on board in forward planning and when examining individual planning applications.
- The systematic presentation of the corridor survey taken in the 2002 study of the Grand Canal can be used in the above-recommended future studies.
- Maps should, where possible, be included in the main document, not in appendices.
- Recommendations should be prioritised and grouped for ease of reference.
- Economy of text in recommendations makes them easy to identify and understand.
- Indicators should be kept as simple as possible and should only be chosen if there is reasonable confidence that there are sufficient resources to collect and process the necessary data. The consultants must discover this in the course of the corridor study.
- Objectives and recommended actions can be expansive (e.g. in the 2006 study) but must also be presented in summary form so that the reader can grasp clearly what is proposed.
- The studies are reference documents. As such, each future study in print form should include an index.
- Studies published on the web can include a dedicated search facility.

9.2.3. Stakeholder consultation

- The stakeholder consultation can be expanded to include web-based questionnaires and ongoing web-based feedback, in addition to on-the-ground personal communication.

A dedicated web site could be considered, with the Heritage Council logo or backing. This can be achieved through a sustained promotion of the studies.

9.2.4. Publicity, promotion and dissemination

Summary documents, supported by this sustained promotional campaign, coordinated by one person or small team should apply, as per our recommendations for the existing studies (see Section 8.1 above).

9.3. Policies and actions to be advanced

As can be seen in Section 6, the studies include many recommendations on actions to be taken in order to achieve sustainable development and protection of the special heritage in the Shannon waterway corridor. Four of the studies are now at least two or more years old and the recommendations will need to be examined and, if necessary, revised in the light of policy developments, regulatory changes and actions completed. This task is beyond the scope of this evaluation. Below, we have highlighted some major themes and issues which should be pursued.

9.3.1. Ministerial guidelines on planning in waterway corridors

The studies seek a coordinated and integrated approach to land use planning and management in the Shannon waterway corridor. We can observe the beginning of this approach through the participation of local authorities in the steering groups, the incorporation of certain policies and actions into strategic plans and the use of the studies to inform planning decisions at local level and by An Bord Pleanála. However, local authorities' policies and practices still differ, resulting in a fragmented approach. The non-statutory nature of the studies has also been identified as an obstacle to their full use by local authorities.

Guidelines for planning and development in waterway corridors could allow a more consistent approach to planning in the waterway corridor, while allowing each local authority some freedom of interpretation. Ministerial guidelines, based on the waterways corridor studies, would give the necessary 'weight' to local authorities to incorporate the studies' findings into development plans and enable them to be used more fully in making decisions on planning applications.

This action would fulfil one of the main recommendations of the Heritage Council in its 2005 policy paper on inland waterways (Heritage Council, 2005a).

9.3.2. Review of landscape character assessment

The Heritage Council has previously highlighted the deficiencies in landscape character assessment (Julie Martin Associates, 2006) and made recommendations for their revision. The Guidelines, which have remained in draft form since 2000, are unsatisfactory and need to be re-written.

9.3.3. Support for the River Basin District (RBD) management approach

Even though RBD management is concerned mainly with water quality, the spin-offs are much wider, and could influence planning in the waterway corridor. For example, there is a need to maintain the riparian zone of the river in order to protect the aquatic ecosystem. This could (and should) help to control inappropriate development along the waterway in contiguous local authority areas.

9.3.4. Stricter control over new boating facilities

The proliferation of jetties and marinas needs to be controlled more strictly, and especially those which are unauthorised. New marinas and jetties should not be given permission in advance of the provision of proper pump-out facilities.

9.3.5. Monitoring of proposed new Tourism Investment Scheme for the Mid-Shannon

This planned scheme needs to be monitored closely, drawing on the experience of the 'Pilot' Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon and the Heritage Council submission to the Department of Finance (Heritage Council, 2005b).

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11. Appendix 1. List of people and organisations consulted

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