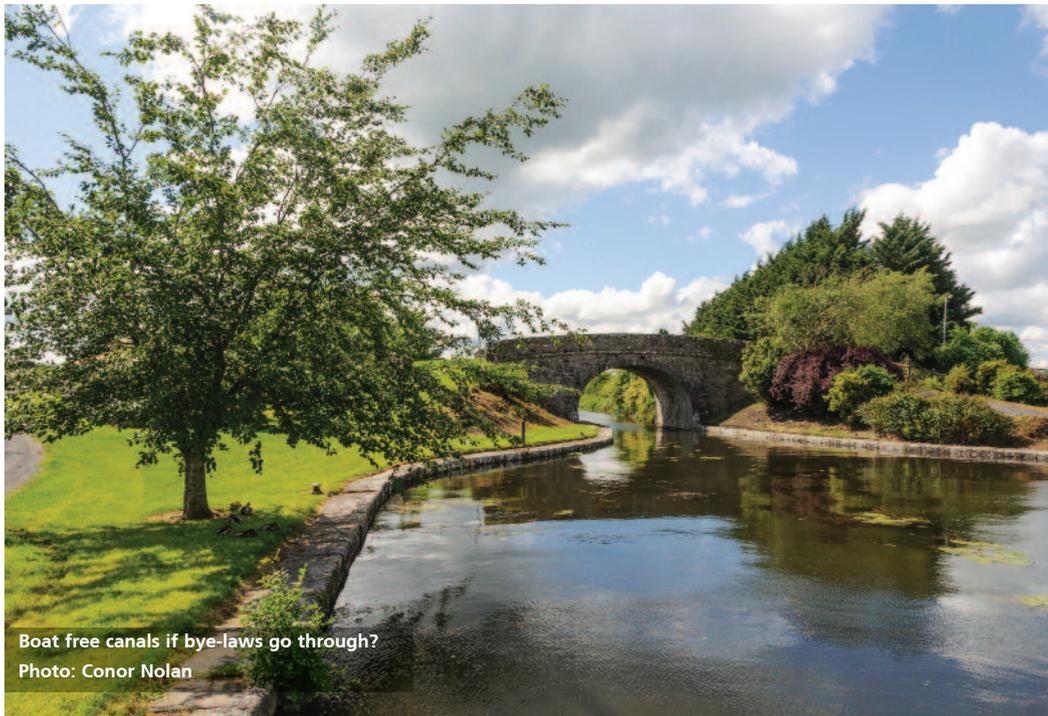


IWAI AT WORK

BYE-LAW CAMPAIGN 2014



Boat free canals if bye-laws go through?
Photo: Conor Nolan

For the last couple of months IWAI has led a campaign against the proposed amendments to the canal bye-laws. IWAI President Carmel Meegan explains what has been happening.

Dear Members,

As you know, the IWAI raised serious alarm at the proposals by Waterways Ireland for the Canal Bye-Laws. The story to date is as follows.

Concerns about possible changes to the bye-laws had been expressed by branches and members in the recent past. The Canal Action Group (CAG), a sub-committee of the IWAI Executive, was formed late in 2013 to co-ordinate the IWAI response to the proposed changes. On 30 December last, Waterways Ireland issued the draft bye-laws to IWAI, advising they would be formally published on 6 January. A quick review of the draft indicated that immediate action would be required. Strategies and plans were drawn up over 1 & 2 January and the CAG and some others met on 4 January to finalise planning the campaign. The IWAI made its first press release on 6 January, welcoming the public consultation period.

From the date of release of the proposed bye-laws, many IWAI members started to express their opinions on the IWAI forum and elsewhere.

A key item in the IWAI plan was the development of an information campaign for communities adjoining the waterways. Those communities along the Grand Canal, Royal Canal and River Barrow will be hugely affected by of the loss of the economic, tourism and social benefits that would result from a decline in boating activity triggered by the new bye-laws.

The IWAI Executive agreed CAG proposals. A meeting for branch officers was held to advise the structure and system of information planned for the next few weeks. Arrangements were made for public meetings for communities. These IWAI consultations resulted in hundreds of letters of support starting to roll in to the IWAI. The politicians at national and local level realised the seriousness of the issue. An invitation to send information on the matter to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment, Transport, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was taken up by the IWAI. Mr. Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Culture

and the Gaeltacht was questioned in the Seanad and the Dail. Questions from politicians further increased Oireachtas exposure on the matter.

IWAI met with Waterways Ireland for a full and frank discussion; where we outlined the concerns of our members, and the IWAI view of the impact of these bye-laws.

The IWAI campaign continued, raising increasing concerns as IWAI carefully examined each item in the proposed bye-laws. These concerns were outlined in a series of press releases, distributed from a specific IWAI email address and resulted in many media enquiries. The IWAI followed these up, resulting in radio interviews and press articles. To some of those press enquiries IWAI said 'no thanks', if their

interest was not on our main message. An IWAI Facebook page was set up. Other individuals and groups have undertaken similar activities with blogs, social media and petitions.

By a few days prior to the deadline of 3 February, the IWAI had nearly 1800 letters of support from communities (and members) and we knew of a few hundred other submissions being made. A 30 page IWAI submission was prepared detailing our concerns about the proposed changes and on your behalf, I delivered that directly to the CEO of Waterways Ireland on Monday 3 February.

Many thanks to all of you who contributed to the campaign to date. The waterways will benefit from your input. And there is more work to do. Those who attended the branch officers meeting on Sunday 9 February will know that the IWAI will be active on this for some time to come. This campaign will continue, and indeed it may be the fore-runner of other campaigns. For me, it has shown that we are at one on core values and that the IWAI is 'THE VOICE OF THE WATERWAYS'.

Yours, in boating,

**Carmel Meegan,
President, IWAI**



The President sends a message to Minister Deenihan
Photo: Noel Griffin



IWAI AT WORK

CANAL BYE-LAW CAMPAIGN - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?



Greg Whelan, chairman of the Canals Action Group briefly explains the association's position on the proposed changes to the canal bye-laws.

In 1988 bye-laws were introduced for the maintenance and control of the canals. These provided for a lock toll fee of 63 cents, a passage and mooring permit for €126 and one monthly mooring permits at €12.60 per month. There was a €10 charge for use of one of the locks in the Grand Canal Docks. Given the lack of private marinas on the canals, the tradition evolved that the Passage and Mooring Permit was sufficient and Waterways Ireland through lack of enforcement tacitly accepted this.

In 2013 Waterways Ireland began to enforce the 1988 bye-laws and introduced a new concept of a yearly Extended Mooring Permit. The monthly permit was discontinued. This new permit annualised at the monthly rate also had a €250 deposit. The IWAI's legal advice was that this lacked legislative support. In addition Waterways Ireland began to enforce the 5 day aspect of the passage permit. A new indemnity form was introduced for boaters to sign and again our legal advice on this and feedback from boat insurers was that it contained a numbers of risks and in addition, lacked fairness to the citizen.

In January 2014 Waterways Ireland launched a 21 day consultation period on revised and additional bye-laws. These included:

- A passage permit with a restriction of 5 day long mooring for €130
- A new free 30 day visitor permit
- An extended mooring permit for one particular location at a cost ranging from €160 to €1,600 An extended mooring permit for Grand Canal Dock to cost €2,500
- €25 lock toll at Grand Canal and Spencer Docks
- €25 fee for the lifting of the railway bridge at Newcomen Junction
- A €10 per day fee for mooring in Grand Canal and Spencer Docks after 5 days
- On the spot fines for failure to meet the above conditions at the rate of €150 per day
- Increased costs for use of WI Dry Docks
- New houseboat permits with a price range of €1,250 to €3,500 were also proposed.
- There were a number of other items proposed such as the Barrow licence at €50 per annum.

As the President has mentioned we set about a campaign to inform branches, particularly those most affected by the proposals. The IWAI also set about consulting with these branches so that a submission could be made.

- We would prefer to see an Annual Touring Permit that would allow boats to moor in designated locations for more than five days. We of course welcome the 30 day visitor

permit. In relation to the mooring permits we would like to see the following:

- That an independent system including arbitration be available on the designated long term mooring spaces including location and cost factors.
- That houseboat mooring permits be of sufficient duration given their designation as a home.
- A Winter Mooring Permit in line with current Shannon Navigation rates for mooring in the period 1 October to 31 March.
- The rationale for the imposition of a cash deposit, insurance and an indemnity needs to be clearly spelt out.

In commercial marinas only insurance is a requirement.

- An independent disputes resolution process should be put in place in cases where a deposit is being withheld.

On the spot fines at the rate of €150 per day are quite high. The IWAI is of the view that the authority to issue fines be at an appropriate senior and trained level within Waterways Ireland. Most importantly, the establishment of an independent appeals process other than bringing the matter to the District Courts should be in place.

For some vessels, particularly those of a significant heritage, the WI Dry Docks are their only option for repairs. A waiver for certain dry dock fees should be made for vessels over 50 years of ages.

As regards tolls we are of the view that these should not be exorbitant or a disincentive to canal usage .

NOTICE

of
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland will be held on Friday 25th April 2014 at 8pm in the Bush Hotel, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

- Kay Baxter, Hon Secretary



Bush Hotel special for AGM for IWAI Members:
 1x double room per night incl. breakfast €119.00
 1x single room per night incl. breakfast €79.00