

Inland Waterways News

Waterways News

Safety regulations (RoI)

Regulations made by the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, which is the regulatory authority for marine safety, have been in force since 1 July 2001:

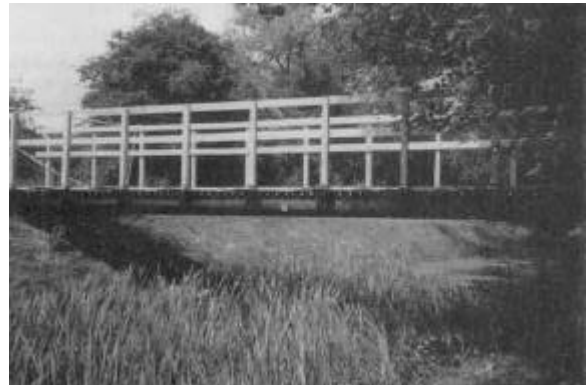
- **lifejackets:** a mechanically propelled boat must have enough lifejackets or buoyancy aids for everyone on board. They must be worn while on a jetski or being towed eg on bananas
- **young people:** under-12s may not operate boats with more than 5hp (3.7kW); under-16s may not operate jetskis or fast power craft; under-16s must wear lifejackets or buoyancy aids when in open powered craft or on deck of other powered craft (except when tied to shore)
- **alcohol and drugs:** consumption is not allowed while on a fast power craft or jetski if it could "create a disturbance, affect safety or cause a nuisance"; it's not allowed at all while being towed by a jetski or fast boat; you can't operate or try to operate a fast power craft or jetski "while under the influence of alcohol or drugs to such an extent as to be incapable of having proper control of the craft."

There is provision for on-the-spot fines. The department is now to "design legislative provisions" covering insurance and registration of recreational craft and training and competence of users. [*I would welcome reports of the enforcement of these regulations or of practical benefits arising therefrom. Ed.*]

A bridge too low

Brian Cassells

Banbridge District Council, the lead partner in the project to re-open the Newry Canal, has ignored all attempts made by the NI Branch to re-design the low level foot bridge to the rear of Scarva visitors centre. They have proceeded despite being lobbied by many groups interested in preserving our rich built environment. They chose to ignore the statement made by Minister McGimpsey, that obstacles should not be constructed in such a way that would impinge on efforts to re-open our inland waterway system.



Scarva Bridge

IWAI had requested the Council to re-design the footbridge, making it arched so it would be in keeping with the other bridges on the canal; instead they have proceeded and installed a makeshift structure based on three telephone poles from bank to bank. This structure is of no architectural merit. This sends out the totally wrong message to the public at large; now local farmers may well decide to erect similar structures over the banks to enable easier access. The Council have stated the bridge is a temporary construction despite its hefty price tag of £9000.00. One has to question whether such a body should indeed have the responsibility for this historic waterway, the first summit canal in the United Kingdom. This Council is the lead for a partnership between Craigavon, Armagh and Newry & Mourne District Councils.

Monitor

A new jetty for Spencer Harbour on Lough Allen ... on the Barrow, Levitstown Cut cleaned and weeded; the lifting bridge repaired so it's easier to operate; channel between Milford and Rathvindon deepened and widened ... Waterways Ireland proposes new harbour below Lanesborough (with floating pontoons) but Friends of the Irish Environment object; private marina proposed above the bridge ... pontoons planned for above bridge at Shannonbridge ... Marine Institute report suggests spatial planning guidelines for marinas in Waterford Estuary (including, inter alia, Dunmore East and New Ross) to stimulate marine tourism and leisure activity and overcome the current shortage of facilities ... at Ringsend Basin the old graving docks are being restored ... new marina planned at entrance to Scarriff River and lots of other private marinas proposed elsewhere [*info to Editor, please*] ... objections lodged to proposed extension of Scarriff Harbour because of inadequate provision for large boats and small boats, solid finger jetties as in Boyle, no toilet block ... **Stop Press** Waterways Ireland has announced the temporary closure of the Royal Canal at the Ryewater Aqueduct from 17 September 2001 until further notice "to facilitate investigative works."

Edenderry

The Eastern Regional Fisheries Board objected to a proposal for a huge commercial and housing development, with hotel, cinema and leisure centre, in Edenderry. The Board says that development should await the completion of a wastewater treatment plant for the town, saying that the existing sewage treatment plant is too small and that extra waste would pollute the Weaver stream and thus the River Boyne.. The proposed development would be a "material contravention" of the county development plan.

Monasterevan

A new sewerage scheme is planned for the town. Boats have been moored at the new development beside the recently-excavated Bell Harbour throughout most of the summer, thus adding to the attraction of the scene. However, the upperworks of the lifting bridge still lie in a field and the bridge, a waterways icon, looks incomplete. When will the upperworks be replaced?

Foot and mouth

According to Bord Fáilte, 60% of hire firms reported, at the start of the summer, that bookings were down because of foot and mouth — but 40% reported increased business. The later months did seem to see a recovery, and (after the initial panic had died down) Lough Neagh was the only waterway to be seriously affected.

However, boaters traversing the Shannon-Erne Waterway in May found the lock at Ballyconnell inoperable, with Gardaí confiscating food purchased in Northern Ireland.



Vast and trunkless

The regulations on <http://www.irlgov.ie:80/daff/Areasofl/FMD/ukban.HTM> did seem to empower Gardaí to do that, but they were largely incomprehensible to the ordinary citizen. A phone-call to the Department of Agriculture brought a promise that a clearer version would be produced, and that was duly done; later, all regulations were relaxed.

Erne

Two German tourists were drowned near Castle Archdale on Lower Lough Erne in May. The two were experienced hirers who had just started their holiday; their cruiser was found aground on Crevinishaughey Island. In the search for bodies, the new RNLI 21' RIB on Lower Lough Erne was called out even before its station was formally commissioned. A helicopter and an RUC boat were also involved in the search.

Peter Howard reports that TIRRAROE jetty is closed for repairs: " The planking from the centre section of the T is missing. Although the tips of the T are still intact, there are **No Mooring** signs posted on the jetty, and you wouldn't be able to get ashore without being an adept tightrope walker."

Floating Swiss Army knife

Waterways Ireland has acquired a Watermaster Classic II, an amazing machine that, according to www.aquamec.fi, is a combination of backhoe and suction dredger. It can deepen canals, rivers, lakes and marinas, drive piles, clean rivers, install metal sheeting and help with landscaping after dredging. It can work in tunnels and under bridges and can move itself around on water, in shallows and even ashore. Our photo shows the machine in Lanesborough during August when, it was said, crews were being trained to operate it.



There is no truth in the rumour that the Watermaster has a gadget specifically designed for taking stones out of horses' hooves.

Peat power?

ESB's peat-fired power stations at Shannonbridge, Lanesborough, Bellacorick and Rhode (all but Bellacorick are on the inland waterways) are expected to close in 2004 and 2005. Indeed Rhode is closed after an accident and the required repairs are so extensive that the station may not re-open.

These stations use milled peat ("pulverised fuel") from Bord na Móna's bogs; without them, employment on the bogs as well as in the power-stations would decline. A more efficient peat-fired station near Edenderry was opened in 2000 by the Finnish firm Fortum; it uses bubbling fluidised bed technology. ESB plans two new stations using this technology to replace the four that are to close.

The new stations will be at Shannonbridge and Lanesborough, and Offaly and Longford County Councils have granted planning permission for them. Their combined capacity will be 250MW. Bord na Móna is prepared to spend €22,000,000 on infrastructure to support the new stations,

but the ESB is hoping for compensation for using peat-fired stations; approval for such a Public Service Obligation must be granted by the European Commission.

Upper Bann

Michael Savage reports that the Upper Bann will be closed to navigation from 3 September 2001 until April 2002 to facilitate strengthening works at the M1 motorway bridge. The Roads Service says that this will not result in any loss of aircraft, currently 3 metres, but dismissed the suggestion that a navigation arch of 3.5 metres be provided for the Newry Canal.

Other winter closures

As we went to press, the list of winter closures was not yet available from Waterways Ireland. When it becomes available, it will be emailed to subscribers to the two IWAI mailing-lists (see Editorial on page 2) and posted on the IWAI website www.iwai.ie.

New harbours

Three major extensions to the Shannon Navigation opened this year: Limerick, Boyle and Ballinasloe. Limerick is discussed on pages 12 and 13; here we look at the other two.

They are of two different types: Boyle is a concrete "submarine pen," like Portumna and Dromaan, whereas Ballinasloe uses floating pontoons. For some general views on design of harbours, see page 17.

Boyle

Some people like the location of the new harbour: "just the right distance from Boyle. It's within walking distance, but not so close that you're kept awake at night." Others think it's too far from the town but, as one person said, "It doesn't appear to be all that much closer to Boyle, but the ability to moor overnight is a big improvement." The service block was praised.

It seems that, at least in the early days, some boaters ignored speed limits: "I was up on the new Boyle Canal yesterday, and three guys (elderly) and a dog in a [...] speedboat zoomed past at 20 knots. The wash revealed the structure of the canal and will in time reveal the bare bones of the construction." A later incident attracted the Gardai and the offending speeder apologised.

The harbour's critics focus on the basic design (see page 17), making these points:

- the concrete fingers are too short for most boats, and it is too difficult to tie to the mooring dolphins (pillars) off the ends of the fingers
- there are not enough mooring bollards and many of them are in the wrong places
- the walls, the fingers and the dolphins are too high for many boats. It seems that the "relatively high freeboard of 1.4m" is intended to maximise the ground level near the harbour, but it makes it difficult to get on and off a lot of boats.

Ballinasloe

The harbour at Ballinasloe, with its floating pontoons, has been praised. One early visitor said "The marina can cater for about 30 boats of various sizes without having to double up. The floating jetties are well lit and the area around nice and tidy with a grassy area for picnics etc."

Another wrote "New marina is lovely, plenty of space and a long jetty for barges, with water and lights everywhere. Toilet and shower block immaculate." The harbour is very close to the centre of the town, which is well supplied with banks, shops and fast-food outlets.



Ballinasloe

In the early days, there were reports of stones being thrown at boats and at the windows in the service block. The local Gardai took the matter seriously and the stone-throwing seems to have died down. Declan Egan of Egan's pub has been both welcoming and helpful to many boaters and seems to take a fatherly interest in the harbour.

In August, the town water supply became contaminated with E-Coli, but there was no warning at the harbour. Les Saunders had filled with water before the local bakery alerted him to the problem and he discharged the water.

Later, a notice was placed on the service block (but not on the pontoons) and the lockkeepers gave notices to all boats going upstream.

The passage from Shannonbridge is scenic, with lots of cows and very few houses. Les Saunders wrote "Moderate flow on the river on the way in. No difficulties, but tricky at the first S bends. Very tight and narrow marked channel with many severe turns in the new navigation. Turn into lock at weir gives interesting results. Bow gets pushed away from weir as expected, but stern gets sucked towards weir. I assume there is a relatively deep undertow causing this."

At the sharp bends, there is a 5kph speed-limit — very wise — but as one boater wrote "The section at Coreen Ford is very tight: twisty and narrow [...] I would be nervous if a hire boat novice was coming the other direction."

There is one lock, at Pollboy. The keeper is David Coyne, tel 0905-44938; he sells smart cards that can be used for the service block. The lock chamber has ladders in it.

Les wrote "Jetty space below and above lock is limited to one barge length and nasty walls beyond these, so I suspect problems if a queue, since it is very hard to hold station in the river. Height gauge consists of a tape across the lock, which had been broken by the previous boat leaving."

The level and speed of the Suck both increase after rain. Les wrote "The flow had significantly increased, and I was flying even in reverse. I sent down a cruiser ahead to advise upcoming craft of my journey and to keep the tight sections free until I exited. (Thanks **Lotus Two**.)

There were shades of the Scarriff trip many moons ago at times. The new markers were brilliant as I could see which way to point before I got there (crucial to a barge without a bow thruster).

The only place I had severe difficulty was at the famous first S bend. I made the first turn but was flushed through with the flow and failed to get the stern clear of the rocks on the second turn.

This section needs about 20 feet taken out at the downstream side of the last downstream turn. The tiller was crucial: I would hate to have attempted the trip with a wheel, and I was knackered at the end."

Les advises ringing the lock to establish the flow before entering the new navigation, because you don't notice it downstream.

