

Inland Waterways News

Scarriff Harbour

In the last issue of IWA News we read about people's impressions and comments on the new facilities opened in Ballinasloe, Limerick and Boyle. The following letter from Gerry Burke is about the proposed extension of the harbour in Scarriff.

The town of Scarriff is up the winding Scarriff river from the western arm of Lough Derg. It contains the temporary offices of Waterways Ireland's Western Region; permanent offices are planned. The photo shows the current layout of the harbour. Ed.



Dear Editor,

Last August, quite by chance, I found out that Waterways Ireland had plans to extend the harbour in Scarriff as part of the development of its new regional offices. As a local, I was interested to see what they proposed doing, so I visited the Clare County Council offices and had a look at the plans.

Yes folks, you guessed it right, Waterways Ireland want to build us another U-boat pen, with eleven solid finger jetties. They have ignored any lessons they should have learned from the harbours of this design built in the 1980s. Here are the main problems with the plans for Scarriff.

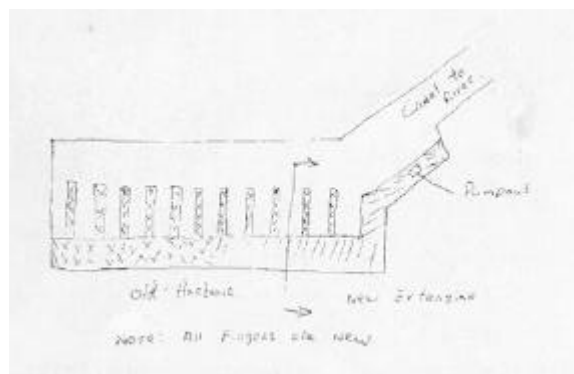
Catering for users

Waterways Ireland has again (as in Boyle) ignored whole sections of waterways users as they designed this development only for cruisers. They ignored other users, especially local people: fishermen with lake boats, dinghy sailors, canoeists etc. There is no provision for small boats, as the solid jetties proposed are too high for access to smaller craft and there is no slipway. There is no provision for people with impaired mobility.

Why is Waterways Ireland ignoring local users in favour of tourists on 10m hire boats? What has Waterways Ireland done on the Shannon System over the last few years for the fishermen, small boat users, sailing dinghies etc?

Solid -v- floating fingers

The eleven solid fingers are designed to bring berthing from a current eight boats to twenty-two. But solid finger jetties are not user friendly; boaters prefer to use floating jetties. I proposed reducing the number of finger jetties from eleven to a maximum of eight: three or four solid fingers and four floating. The remaining space would then be available for mooring alongside (if the harbour isn't busy) or stern on if the harbour is full — and assuming the bollards are in the right places.



Besides adding user-friendly jetties for cruisers, the floating jetties would be accessible to smaller craft. It would be cheaper and faster to construct — and would make any redesign of the harbour, if it's required in future years, easier and cheaper to carry out.

Services block

Waterways Ireland have no plans to put in a services block. Services and facilities attract people to mooring places. Not including them, as part of such a big redevelopment scheme, is not acceptable. In Boyle and in Ballinasloe, Waterways Ireland built service blocks as part of the development. So why not at Scarriff? According to Waterways Ireland, the provision of service blocks is not their responsibility; it lies solely with the local authority.

But you built them in Boyle & Ballinasloe?

Yes, we did it in Ballinasloe because we were asked to do it by the local authority, who also paid for it. (I understand that local authorities get a 100% grant from the Department of the Environment for such facilities.)

So what about Boyle?

Well, we don't know what happened there. We just built it as part of the development.

Water, light and power

As a visitor to Limerick this summer, I admired the excellent service bollards on the jetties there. The provision of such service bollards should be included on any new developments from here on, so why put them in Limerick and not in Scarriff?

Objection

What did waterways users and the people of East Clare do to deserve such an ill-thought-out development? This harbour extension is part of an overall development encompassing the new regional office of Waterways Ireland. Minister deValera, who is responsible for Waterways Ireland, also happens to represent the people of East Clare. Surely in this case Waterways Ireland would have an interest in providing the best possible facilities in Scarriff.

In the meantime objection seems to be the only process open to users, as Waterways Ireland did not consult with the users of the proposed facilities. The consultative process is important: the users of harbours should have an input at the early design stage.

Gerry Burke