

SPECIAL MARINE NOTICE

No. 1 of 2012

Registration of Vessels

All vessels using the Shannon Navigation and the Erne System must be registered. Only open undecked boats with an engine of 15 horsepower or less, on the Shannon Navigation, and vessels of 10 horsepower or less, on the Erne System, are exempt.

Canal Permits

All vessels using the Grand and Royal Canals and the Barrow Navigation must have a current valid Permit displayed before being navigated or moored.

Events Held on the Waterways

All organised events taking place on the waterways must have the prior approval of Waterways Ireland. Application forms for this approval and the associated indemnity form may be had from the Inspectorate offices.

Berthing in Public Harbours

On the Shannon Navigation and the Shannon-Erne Waterway craft may berth in public harbours for five consecutive days or a total of seven days in any one month during the period 1 April to 31 October. This also applies in Clondara / Richmond Harbour on the Royal Canal and in Shannon Harbour and the Tullamore Spur Line on the Grand Canal.

On the Erne System no vessel may berth at a public mooring for more than 48 hours without a four hour intermission.

Pump Out Berths

Masters of vessels should note that it is not permitted to berth at pump out stations.

Smart Cards

Waterways Ireland smart cards are used to operate certain locks, to access the service blocks and to use the pump-outs along the navigations. Electrical Power is also available using smart cards at a limited number of public mooring locations, including Scarriff, Shannonbridge, Garrykennedy, Carrick and Ballina (Tipperary). Operating instructions are displayed in English, French and German.

Passenger Vessel Berths

Masters of vessels should not berth on passenger vessel berths where it is indicated that an arrival is imminent. Passenger vessels plying the navigations generally only occupy the berths to embark and disembark passengers and rarely remain on the berths for extended periods or overnight.

Lock Lead-in Jetties

Lead-in jetties adjacent to the upstream and downstream gates at lock chambers are solely for the purpose of craft waiting to use the lock and should not be used for long term berthing.

Vessel Wash

Vessel wash, that is, the wave generated by the passage of the boat through the water, can sometimes be large, powerful and destructive depending on the hull shape and engine power of the vessel. This wash can be detrimental to other users of the navigation when it strikes their craft or inundates the shoreline or riverbank. Masters are requested to frequently look behind and check the effect of their wash particularly when passing moored vessels, on entering harbours and approaching jetties and to be aware of people fishing or recreating on the riverbank.

Speed Restriction

A vessel or boat shall not be navigated on the Shannon Navigation at a speed in excess of 5 kph when within 200 metres of a bridge, quay, jetty or wharf, when in a harbour or canal or when passing within 100 metres of a moored vessel or boat.

Vessels navigating the Shannon-Erne Waterway should observe the general 5 kph speed limit which applies along the waterway. This is necessary in order to prevent damage to the banks caused by excessive wash from vessels.

Vessels navigating the Erne System should observe the statutory 5 kt / 6mph/10kph speed limit areas.

Bank Erosion

Narrow sections of all the navigations are particularly prone to bank erosion due to the large wash generated by some craft. Masters are requested to be vigilant and to slow down to a speed sufficient to maintain steerage when they observe the wash of their craft inundating the river banks.

Unusual Waterborne Activity

Unusual waterborne vessels may be encountered from time to time, such as, hovercraft or amphibious aircraft / seaplanes. Masters of such craft are reminded to apply the normal "Rule of the Road" when they meet conventional craft on the water and to allow extra room to manoeuvre in the interest of safety.

Sailing Activity

Mariners will encounter large numbers of sailing dinghies from late June to August in the vicinity of Lough Derg, Lough Ree and Lower Lough Erne. Vessels should proceed at slow speed and with due caution and observe the rules of navigation when passing these fleets, as many of the participants are junior sailors under training.

Rowing

Mariners should expect to meet canoes and vessels under oars on any part of the navigations, either recreating, in training or in competition but more so in the vicinity of Athlone, Carrick-on-Shannon, Coleraine, Enniskillen and Limerick. Masters are reminded to proceed at slow speed and especially to reduce their wash to a minimum when passing these craft as they can be easily upset and swamped due to their very low freeboard and always be prepared to give way in any given traffic situation.

Canoeing

Canoeing is an adventure sport and participants are strongly recommended to seek the advice of the sport's governing bodies i.e The Irish Canoe Union and the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland, before venturing onto the navigations.

Persons in charge of canoes are reminded of the inherent danger to these craft associated with operating close to weirs, sluice gates, locks and other infrastructure particularly when rivers are in flood and large volumes of water are moving through the navigations due to general flood conditions or very heavy localised precipitation e.g. turbulent and broken water, stopper waves. Shooting weirs is prohibited without prior permission of Waterways Ireland.

Portage is required at all locks, however, a heavily laden canoe may be put through a lock unmanned provided it is attended with a head and stern line.

Fast Powerboats and Personal Watercraft (Jet Skis)

Masters of Fast Powerboats (speed greater than 17kts) and Personal Watercraft (e.g. Jet Skis) are reminded of the inherent dangers associated with high speed on the water and especially in the confines of small bays and narrow sections of the navigations. Keeping a proper look-out, making early alterations to course and /or reducing speed will avoid conflict with slower vessels using the navigation.

Age Restrictions

In the Republic of Ireland you have to be at least 16 years of age to operate a PWC e.g. Jetski and 12 years of age or over to operate a vessel with more than a 5 hp engine.

Prohibition on Swimming

Swimming in the navigable channel, particularly at bridges, is dangerous and is prohibited due to the risk of being run over by a vessel underway in the navigation.

Towing Waterskiers, Wakeboarders, Doughnuts etc

Masters of vessels engaged in any of these activities are reminded of the manoeuvring constraints imposed upon their vessel by the tow and of the added responsibilities that they have to the person(s) being towed. These activities should be conducted in areas which are clear of conflicting traffic. It is highly recommended that an person additional to the master be carried to act as a “look-out” to keep the tow under observation at all times.

Lifejackets and Personal Flotation Devices (PFD's)

Lifejackets and PFD's are the single most important items of personal protective equipment to be used on a vessel and should be worn especially when the vessel is being manoeuvred such as entering / departing a lock, anchoring, coming alongside or departing a jetty or quayside.

In the Republic of Ireland all persons on board any craft of less than 7m (23 ft) must wear a lifejacket or PFD while on board an open craft or on the deck of a decked craft that is not made fast to the shore. This requirement also applies to Personal Watercraft Craft and any vessel or object being towed e.g. waterskier, wakeboarder, doughnut, banana etc.

Danger Area

The attention of mariners is drawn to the Army Firing Range situated in the vicinity of buoys No's 2 and 3, on Lough Ree in the Shannon Navigation.

Shannon Navigation, Portumna Swing Bridge Tolls

No attempt should be made by Masters' of vessels to pay the bridge toll while making way through the bridge opening. Payment will only be taken by the Collector from Masters when they are secured alongside the jetties north and south of the bridge.

Shannon Navigation, Abbey River and Sarsfield Lock, Limerick

The attention of all users of this stretch of the Shannon Navigation is drawn to the published notices regarding navigation. Users are advised to contact the ESB Ardnacrusha Hydroelectric Power station before commencing their passage to ascertain how many turbines are currently running. It is advised NOT to undertake a voyage if more than one turbine is operating, due to the increased velocity of flow in the navigation, which can be dangerous. This situation may also arise when flood conditions prevail. Further, passage of Sarsfield Lock should be booked on 353-87-7972998, on the day prior to travel and it should be noted also that transit is not possible two hours either side of low water.

Lower Bann Navigation

The attention of all users is drawn to the “Users Code for the Lower Bann”, in particular to that section covering “Flow in the River” outlining the dangers for users both on the banks and in the navigation associated with high flow rates when the river is in spate. Canoeists should consult

and carry a copy of the “Lower Bann Canoe Trail” guide issued by the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland.

Overhead Power Lines (OHLP)

The attention of all is drawn to the dangers associated with overhead power lines in particular sailing vessels, sailing dinghys and workboats with cranes. Vigilance is required especially in the vicinity of slipways and dinghy parks, while voyage planning is a necessity in order to identify the location of overhead lines crossing the navigations. If the vessel or its equipment comes in contact with an OHLP, do NOT attempt to move the equipment or a person if either is still in contact with, or close to, the OHLP. The conductor may still be alive or re-energise automatically. Maintain a 5 m clearance, if possible, and prevent third parties from approaching you or your vessel because of the risk of arcing. Contact the Coast Guard for assistance. Fishermen are also reminded that a minimum ground distance of 30 metres should be maintained from overhead power lines when using rod and line.

Submarine Cables and Pipes

Masters of vessels are reminded not to anchor their vessels in the vicinity of submarine cables or pipes in case they foul their anchor or damage the cables or pipes

Aids to Navigation – Shannon Navigation - Recognition

Masters should consult Waterways Ireland Marine Notices to inform themselves of the roll-out of the change over from the colour black to green for starboard hand marks. Topmarks remain the same i.e square on starboard and circular on port marks. White arrows on markers indicate the safe water side of the mark.

Caution to be Used in Reliance upon Aids to Navigation

The aids to navigation depicted on the navigation guides comprise a system of fixed and floating aids to navigation with varying degrees of reliability. Therefore, prudent mariners will not rely solely on any single aid to navigation, particularly a floating aid to navigation. With respect to buoys, the buoy symbol is used to indicate the approximate position of the buoy body and the ground tackle which secures it to the lake or river bed. The approximate position is used because of the practical limitations in positioning and maintaining buoys in precise geographical locations. These limitations include, but are not limited to, prevailing atmospheric and lake/river conditions, the slope of and the material making up the lake/river bed, the fact that the buoys are moored to varying lengths of chain, and the fact that the buoy body and/or ground tackle positions are not under continuous surveillance. Due to the forces of nature, the position of the buoy body can be expected to shift inside and outside the charted symbol. Buoys and perches are also moved out of position by those mariners who use them to moor up to instead of anchoring. Further, a vessel attempting to pass close by always risks collision with a yawing buoy or with the obstruction that the buoy or beacon / perch marks.

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