



The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland

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News Release - Immediate

RBLNA is Making a Difference for World Wetlands Day

The River Bann and Lough Neagh Association (RBLNA), a branch of The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) and a charity registered with CCNI, will celebrate World Wetlands Day this Saturday January 28th with a Litter Lift event on Ram's Island Lough Neagh. This is an activity that the RBLNA has been engaged in since the Ram's Island Heritage Project was launched in 2003.



Michael Savage of the RBLNA explains; *'At the beginning we were filling skips provided by Antrim Borough Council with litter from the Island, with up to 5 litter lifts per year. Now we have 2 litter lifts per year, one at the end of October (Halloween) and the one for World Wetlands Day. It has to be stressed that most of the litter on the Island is brought by floods and not by visitors. Volunteers come from all over Co Antrim and further afield to participate in the Litter Lifts. Some have been coming since the project*

started'.

World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February 2nd, marking the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The aim of World Wetlands Day is to raise public awareness to the importance of wetlands as both amenities and habitats. The Theme for World Wetlands Day 2017 is 'Disaster Risk Reduction', a theme that brings poignant reminders of the flooding of recent years and the important role that Lough Neagh plays in absorbing large amounts of rainfall.

Rams Island and Lough Neagh are designated as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), a Special Protection Area and a Ramsar site for the years 1976, 1992 and 1996 respectively. The Lough Neagh wetlands provide breeding habitat for a multitude of water birds, numerous employment opportunities and is a source of drinking water for Belfast, Craigavon and other parts of the Ulster. Removal of litter helps to maintain a clean and safe environment for all users of Lough Neagh.

More information about the RBLNA & Ram's Island can be obtained by logging on to:

<http://riverbannloughneagh.org/>

<http://www.ramsisland.org/index.htm>



More photos available on request. Please email pro@iwai.ie for more information.

Inland Waterways Association of Ireland



Notes to Editor – the IWAI

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) is a voluntary body representing over three thousand five hundred enthusiasts, with 23 branches across the island of Ireland.

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) is an energetic, fun, voluntary organisation with members from all corners of the Island of Ireland, all sharing a keen and passionate enthusiasm for the waterways of Ireland.

The IWAI advocates the navigation, use, maintenance, protection, restoration and improvement of the inland waterways of Ireland. It was formed in 1954 to promote the development, use and maintenance of Ireland's navigable rivers and canals.

When the Shannon was almost totally undeveloped for pleasure boating, the IWAI campaigned against the building of low bridges, thus ensuring the development of the river as a national asset. In the 1960s IWAI successfully campaigned to stop plans to close the Circular Line of the Grand Canal in Dublin. Later the Association campaigned for the re-opening of what is now the Shannon - Erne Waterway (formerly the Ballinamore & Ballyconnell Canal) and the Naas Line of the Grand Canal.

IWAI played its part in the restoration campaign for the re-opening of the Royal Canal between Dublin and the Shannon in recent years. IWAI assistance to the campaign to re-open the Ulster Canal has also borne fruit with the announcement that work is to begin on re-opening the section from the Erne to Clones. Currently, IWAI members are active in restoration projects on the Boyne, Newry and Lagan Canals.

IWAI Branches hold approximately 200 events each year across inland navigations with the wider communities in many locations. These events include Boat Rallies, Harbour Festivals, Walks, Social Gatherings, Heritage Activities; Family activities and Youth focused events.



Ram's Island, Lough Neagh

National Website Details www.iwai.ie

