



IWAI Press Release 2 Election 2016 Good cross party support emerging for Canal Bill Pledge

Election Candidates nationwide have been contacting the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) to pledge their support for an IWAI call for provision to be made for new canal bye-laws via a dedicated Canal Bill during the next Dáil.

This campaign allows Candidates an opportunity to publically demonstrate their support for the Canals and their Communities and their efforts to encourage the use and growth of the canals with legislation that is centred on the communities, users and tourism.

The pledge to date is receiving good cross party support. The IWAI web team will be updating local and national media next week on candidates supporting the pledge.

The pledge:

"IWAI request election candidates to pledge their support for an IWAI call for provision to be made for new canal bye-laws via a dedicated Canal Bill during the next Dáil when possible rather than including any future legislation in a joint Bill such as the Heritage bill 2016.

Furthermore in developing The Canal (Amendment) Bill 2017 that recognition be given to the canal users, canal communities and Local Authorities adjoining the canals by way of pre-legislative consultation and scrutiny. This approach would be in line with Government reform and best practice."

Background

With no advance notice or consultation with the inland waterways stakeholders & canal communities the Heritage Bill 2016 was published on 4 January 2016.

IWAI advised that while it would welcome and support proper regulations the proposed Bill did not put user requirements, local communities or tourism at the centre of the regulations. Rather the now lapsed bill is a heavy handed approach that will result in lower boat traffic on the canals.

Prior to the 2016 Bill, in January 2014 Waterways Ireland brought forward proposals for amendments to the Canal Byelaws 1988 under the Canals Act 1986 & Maritime Safety Act 2005.

IWAI campaigned vigorously during the minimal consultation period of 21 days. Public discussion in 2014 on the matter included - the Canals and Barrow as a tourism resource; queries raised in the Seanad and the Dail; County Councils input; public meetings; national and local press articles; television and radio interviews; community websites; blogs and facebook pages. These all reflected the reservations of users, communities and public representatives as to the significant impact of the draconian suggestions in the proposed bye-laws.

The IWAI campaign resulted in an invite to appear before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht.

Feedback from members of this cross party Committee who met on 25 March 2014 included:

- *“I am fearful that proposals will be implemented without further recommendations” - Senator Cait Keane. Fine Gael Labour Panel.*
- *“I am of the view that Waterways Ireland must return to the beginning and reconsider this matter from a very practical viewpoint. What is proposed is going to lead to the closure of the Canal” - Deputy James Bannon. Fine Gael Longford - Westmeath*
- *“People should not feel pushed out of an activity they have grown up with, love and wish to pass on to other generations and the community to help local economies with the tourism income it can provide” - Deputy Barry Cowen. Fianna Fail Laois - Offaly*
- *“The Bye-laws will impact heavily on a small number of people” - Deputy Catherine Murphy. Independent Kildare North*
- *“The huge increase in some fees is unacceptable and there is serious concern that the proposed fees will damage tourism and drive people from the waterways” Deputy Sandra McLellan. Sinn Fein Cork East*
- *“The new bye-laws will make exacting demands on users of the Canal” - Deputy Seamus Kirk. Fianna Fail. Louth*
- *“The five day rule, which I believe is completely unworkable” - Deputy Ann Phelan. Labour Carlow-Kilkenny*

The 2014 proposed byelaws if passed would not have had any validity as noted this year on the Waterways Ireland website *“The Minister was subsequently advised by the Office of the Attorney General that amendments to the primary legislation governing the bye-laws (the Canals Act 1986) would be necessary to ensure that the new bye-laws would not be ultra vires.”* The proposed invalid bye-laws were published with no prior consultation and a short public consultation period of just 21 days, resulted in over 2300 submissions on the issue.

[The current position](#)

Two years later and it seems no lessons have been learned on how to communicate with the customer and communities along the canals.

The powers proposed within the new Act will affect those on the waterways of Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Meath, Offaly and Westmeath.

The bill had Stage 2 approval in the Seanad, but is now lapsed due to the dissolution of the Dáil this month.

[Future Outlook](#)

Politically, this is now a very big issue. It is going to feature highly as candidates face into elections this spring. The IWAI have gained the interest of local, regional and national politicians on this matter to date, who on behalf of their constituents, want to develop, not constrict, canal use.

Who to contact for further information

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Notes to Editor – the IWAI

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) is a voluntary body representing over three thousand five hundred enthusiasts, with 22 branches across the island of Ireland.

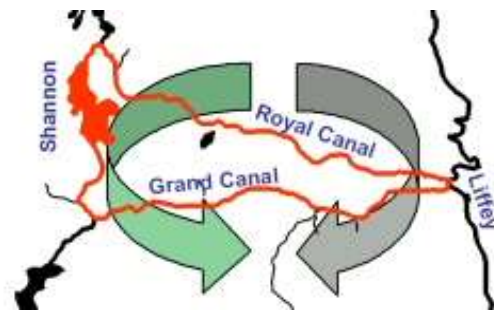
The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) is an energetic, fun, voluntary organisation with members from all corners of the Island of Ireland, all sharing a keen and passionate enthusiasm for the waterways of Ireland.

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.



Green and Silver Route - Dublin.iwai.ie

National Website Details www.iwai.ie www.facebook.com/IWAICanals.