



IWAI Press Release 3 Election 2016 Cross party support for Canal Bill Pledge rises steadily

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) is reporting a steady rise in the number of election candidates pledging 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.

Speaking on the matter, IWAI President Carmel Meegan stated

'We are receiving support from across the political spectrum and this is very encouraging. It indicates that there is recognition among politicians for the urgent need for a common sense approach by Government to the development of new legislation governing Ireland's canals. All the IWAI are asking for is meaningful consultation to help shape legislation that puts, canal users, communities and tourism at the centre of the regulations.'

The subject of canal bye-laws and regulation changes was first raised back in 2013. Evidence of the concern of waterways communities is the consistent support of the IWAI campaign from several TDs and Senators, all of whom are now currently supporting the Canal Bill Pledge.

Some of the support IWAI received includes;

'We should be encouraging people and voluntary organisations such as inland waterways associations to use the canals, to develop them for the benefit of local communities, for leisure craft users and to develop tourism. A period of 21 days is far too short and I urge the Minister to meet me half-way on this, to use his good offices and influence to have this period extended so that some outstanding areas of concern can be addressed in a constructive manner to everyone's benefit'

Senator John Whelan of the Labour Party

'the proposed legislation shows an appalling lack of understanding of the indigenous users - both residential and amenity - of our inland waterways.'

Seán O Fearghail TD of Fianna Fail

'the extent to which he has monitored the situation in respect of canal dwellers and the ongoing dialogue between Waterways Ireland and canal dwellers and users with particular reference to the need to meet the reasonable requirements of recreational users and canal dwellers'.

Bernard Durkan TD of Fine Gael

A full list of candidates who have pledged their support to the IWAI call for a dedicated Canals Bill is available at http://www.iwai.ie/press/IWAI_Canal_Bill_Pledges1.pdf

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."

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.

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