

Respect Your River

The Lower Bann is a busy river, both with people involved in recreational activities and with abundance of local wildlife and quality habitats. It is at its busiest during the summer months when more people are enjoying boating and shore related activities along the natural river corridor. More people, more boats and more wildlife can result in management issues relating to personal safety and environmental disturbance. It is becoming more apparent that inappropriate boating activity in the tidal stretch of the river is having a detrimental impact on the natural environment and on other legitimate estuary users. As a result, an information leaflet has been published to highlight best practice and appropriate codes of conduct with regard to safety and showing consideration for other users. Whilst the leaflet is focused on activity in the tidal stretches of the river, the vast majority of the advice applies to activity on the whole river. This leaflet is being distributed at marinas and other access points along the tidal stretches of the river. Copies of the leaflet are available from Sperrin House, or can be downloaded from www.loughneagh.com.

All users of powered craft, particularly those launching from marinas in the estuary and from Portstewart Beach are requested to register their craft with the Council, marina owner or National Trust staff, carry third party insurance, display a registration number on both sides of the craft and adhere to the codes of conduct and good practice when on the water. Failure to comply may result in exclusion from launching sites.

The water Based Recreation, Environmental and Navigational Codes of Good Practice can be summarised as follows:

- Respect other river users and local wildlife and use the Countryside code.
- Keep clear of and avoid disturbing/damaging banks, boats, wildlife and other users.
- Slow down/keep wash and wake to a minimum when passing small craft and boats/people at jetties and slipways.
- Wear a buoyancy aid appropriate to activity.
- Use a kill cord/cut-out switch on sports boats.
- When skiing, have an observer or wing mirror.
- Use proper access points, channels and paths and respect all designated Zones.

(Continued on page 4)

High Spirits at Pogue's Entry

Alexander Irvine's Cottage at Pogue's Entry in Antrim was the venue for demonstrations of the skills and trades of a bygone era. The Antrim Borough Council organised event attracted many people to see the art of the cobbling, butter making, quilt making, Arran knitting and basket weaving.

This historic corner of Antrim town contains the childhood home of Alexander Irvine, who became a missionary in New York's Bowery and eventually pastor of the church 'Church of the Ascension' fifth avenue. His book 'My Lady of the Chimney Corner' recalls his boyhood years in Pogue's Entry.

If you are visiting Lough Neagh from water at Lough shore Park, Pogue's Entry is about a twenty minute walk into the centre of Antrim.

Check with staff at Clotworthy Arts Centre for the seasonal opening hours and further details on **028 9442 8000**.

The Vikings return to Lough Neagh

The Vikings return to Lough Neagh at Lough Shore Park Antrim, on Saturday 14 August 2004 at 2.00pm.

Their arrival is part of the Viking Long Boat Challenge organised by Action MS. As well as displays of Viking battle tactics and living history, two ten meter long boats, powered by ten oarsmen from many teams, will race on Lough Neagh. Each team will initially race against the clock with the winner being decided in a grand final.

This participant and spectator event is supported by Antrim Borough Council. The entry fee is £50 per person and Action MS can help teams to fundraise the entry fee by supplying a sponsor book and ballot tickets. Whilst the event will be fantastic fun for spectators and participants alike, Action MS Appeals Executive, Jillian Thompson, invites companies and friends to enter teams.

For further information and to enter a team please contact Jillian Thompson, Action MS, 70a Union Street, Coleraine, BT52 1QB. Tel: (028) 7032 6868 or Karen Craig at Antrim Borough Council, Tel: **028 9446 3113**.

21st Century Kinnego

Craigavon Borough Council plans to start building new on-shore facilities at Kinnego Marina in the autumn. Construction work should be complete by late spring 2005. The building, located close to the berths, will include a reception area, staff and public changing, a vending area, toilets, showers, store room, café/restaurant, Harbour Master's office and full conference facilities. The building will have disabled access and facilities. It will also use renewable energy, produced by a dedicated wind turbine, with access electricity being sold to Northern Ireland Electricity.

The building will be a much needed asset to Kinnego Marina. It will take the marina complex into the 21st century and will also complement the facilities managed by, the Council at the Discovery Centre and within the Oxford Island National Nature reserve.

Congratulations also go to Craigavon Borough Council, in particular the staff at Kinnego Marina, for receiving 'The Charles Thompson Award' in recognition of the work done to promote water safety.

For further information on Kinnego, contact Paddy Prunty at paddy.prunty@craigavon.gov.uk.

Advisory Committee Review Nearing Completion

The Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Co-ordinating Committees, other wise referred to as the 'management Structure', were established in 1995 to provide advice on the conservation of the natural and man-made heritage, drainage and navigation and the management and development of land and water based recreation.

As Government departments must account for all funding allocations and ensure that they are receiving value for money, in March 2004, Environment & Heritage service, in partnership with the department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, commissioned Capita Consulting to conduct a review of the current Management Structure. To date Capita has assessed:-

- The extent to which the existing management structure has fulfilled its objective of providing cross sectional advice to government,
- The cost-effectiveness of the structure,
- The effectiveness and relationships between the existing management Structure and the new Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Partnership and,
- The Level of support for and suggested revisions for a revised management structure.

In early June 2004, following consultation with over 30 stakeholders, 17 meetings, 6 telephone discussions, 4 written responses and 3 emailed responses, Capita presented its findings. The main findings can be summarised as follows:

- The Advisory Committees, and in particular the issue based working groups, have been effective in fulfilling their cross-sectoral role, and to date have provided value for money.
- The effectiveness of the Co-ordinating Committees is directly related to that of the respective Advisory Committee and there is concern that advice provided by each Advisory Committee is not always acted upon.
- The Liaison Officer's post and the ability to be flexible and reactive are pivotal to the success of the structure and the current Liaison Officer is valued and is operating at capacity.
- The current structure is unwieldy, communication with the new Partnerships should be improved and apathy amongst some stake-holders must be addressed to ensure the structure's effectiveness.

Following the further discussion, the following were agreed:-

- A framework for activity will be developed in the form of a business/operational plan against which progress can be monitored.
- Maximum effort will be made to ensure full and correct representational attendance by all key stakeholders.
- The two Co-ordinating Committees will be amalgamated and the issue-based method of working will be utilised where appropriate and as much as possible by the Advisory Committees.
- There will be formal representation of the partnerships on the Co-ordinating and both the advisory committees.
- Issues forwarded to Government and statutory bodies should be of sufficient weight and strategic importance.

Capita Consulting is currently preparing the economic appraisal, business plan and completing the funding applications.

Meanwhile EHS and DCAL will be seeking nominations from membership organisations for the revised Advisory Committees.

The Liaison Office has been ticking over without the formal management structure since January. It is anticipated that the revised Advisory committees will have their first meetings of a new three-year term in the early autumn. If you have any questions relating to the review or would like a copy of the review report, please contact Sperrin House.

(Respect your river) continued from page 1).

The basic rules of navigation can be summarised as follows:

- Keep well clear when passing or overtaking.
- Make your intentions clear by early and distinct action.
- Give way to craft converging from the right.
- Give way to craft going down stream at bridges and channels.
- Give way to bigger, less manoeuvrable craft.
- Power gives way to sail, oar and paddle.
- Do not cross the bows of oncoming craft.

The Lower Bann Advisory Committee is committed both to conserving the natural environment and to providing opportunities for quality outdoor recreation. Please show respect for the indigenous wildlife, other river users and safety considerations – **YOUR LIFE MAY DEPEND ON IT.**

CARLISLE BRIDGE REMOVED

The Carlisle Railway Bridge, built in 1856 to facilitate trains crossing the Lower Bann River, on their way to Cookstown, has been removed. Whilst the bridge was used by road traffic during the construction of the town bridge at Toome, it has not been used by trains since the line was abandoned in 1959. TIDAL, the local community group in Toome, explored various regeneration schemes involving the bridge, but it was decided that complete removal would be the best option. Roads Service employed a firm of contractors to demolish the structure both above and below the water. This has been carried out successfully apart from a small underwater section, towards the east bank, which is marked by a buoy. As well as removing a platform for poachers, the removal of the railway bridge has created a vista from the Toome village road bridge looking southwards towards Lough Neagh. It is now possible to see the difference between the water level in Lough Neagh and that in Lower Bann, the fish pass and the sluice gates that Rivers Agency use to control water drainage in Lough Neagh. Work is almost complete to create a small local amenity area on the east bank of the River where the stone buttresses of the railway bridge rose to create the navigation arch into the canal. This part of the demolition project has been designed and funded by Waterways Ireland, the navigation authority on the Lower Bann River.

Harbour Commissioners Acquire Tug

Coleraine Harbour Commissioners, the navigational authority down stream of Coleraine, have purchased a small tug to carry out seabed levelling duties at the Barmouth. The vessel, currently the 'Plym Echo' and previously owned by Cattewater Harbour Commissioners in Plymouth, is expected to arrive at Coleraine in mid August. It will be renamed to reflect her new area of service. The tug's main role will be seabed levelling in order to provide adequate navigational depths at the Barmouth.

Following the sale of the Commissioners' own dredger, the 'Bar Maid' in 2000, this function has been carried out by a vessel hired from Londonderry Port. In addition to dredging and other duties at Coleraine it is anticipated that the new tug will gain useful employment at other locations around the coast.

Plym echo is a small tug/workboat of 40 gross tonnes, 15.75 metres length, 5 metres beam and with a draft of 1.8 metres. Built in 1984 by the Dutch Delta Shipyard the vessel develops a pull equivalent to 11 tonnes from her two 450 hp Detroit diesel engines. She is fitted with an "A" Frame to support the 3 metre wide ploughing device as well as a standard towing winch. Normal operations will require a crew of two. Following essential dry docking and survey work the vessel is expected to be sailed from Plymouth to Coleraine by Captains Pat McKeegan and Robert Anderson.

LOUGH NEAGH STRATEGIC FUND UPDATE

First round of projects are in!

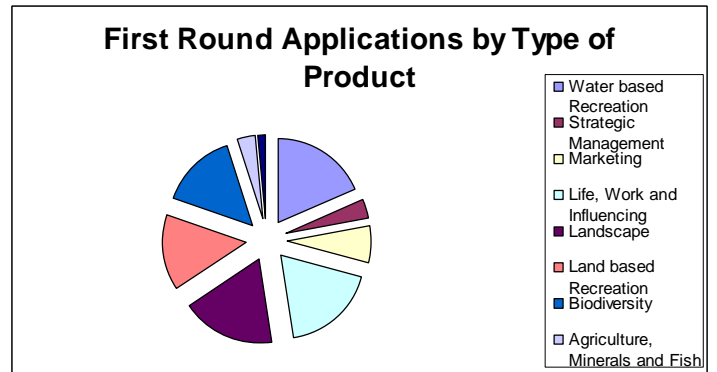
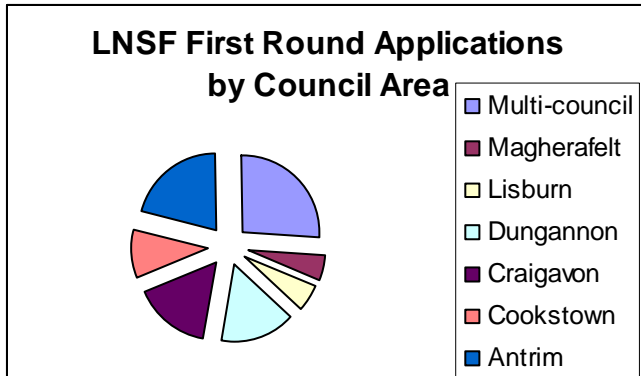
The Lough Neagh Partnership began to operate in August 2003. It has a wide remit, but two of its main objectives are to encourage strategic conservation and promote the sustainable development of the Lough Neagh Wetlands. One of the main tools it received to carry out these tasks was a 3.2 million sustainable development fund from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, known as the 'Lough Neagh Strategic Fund' (LNSF).

The first round of LNSF, which has now closed, attracted a substantial amount interest from a wide range of people and organisations around the Lough. Demand for grant assistance to implement projects within the Wetlands was very high with over 89 applications received, requesting a total grant assistance of 3.4 million. The partnership was also very pleased to note that demand for assistance from the LNSF was fairly evenly spread around the Lough. Applications have been received for all of the nine themes identified in the original LNSF Action plan. These include projects for new marinas and visitor sites, Wetland's restoration and biodiversity improvement, water and land based activity, built and industrial heritage preservation, navigational improvement and local fishing and other small businesses. The Partnership itself also hopes to receive funding to market and promote the Lough.

Gerry Darby, the Manager of the Lough Neagh Strategic Fund is pleased that things appear to be moving well and is optimistic about the future of the Lough. Gerry says "People are now clearly looking towards the Lough as a major resource, and demand for Projects has been very strong. I have no doubt that the Lough Neagh Strategic Fund will make a significant contribution to developing the Lough in a positive, sustainable way and I look forward to continuing to work with people around the Lough to achieve real positive change".

The Partnership should be ready to start allocating its resources in August 2004. It is likely that the LNSF will open again in the late autumn for a second round of applications, so watch this space.

In the meantime if you would like any further information about the LNSF in general or the application process, please visit www.loughneaghpартnership.com or contact the Lough Neagh Partnership directly by telephoning 028 7941 7941.



Marathon Row

On Saturday 19 June 2004 members of the Bann Rowing Club rowed the 28 miles from Newferry to Coleraine. The strong northerly wind resulted in a very eventful trip, with two crew members in the river at Hutchinson's Quay, a broken oar at Portna and near exhaustion at the finish line. The water was rough and progress was slow, unlike a previous occasion in 2003 when the flow on the river and a gentle southerly wind carried the oarsmen towards Coleraine in a much kindlier manner. The rousing welcome of the supporters and onlookers at the Bann Boathouse in Coleraine and the money raised for the 'Fields of Life' charity made all the effort seem worthwhile. There are plans for the marathon row to become an annual event. For further information on the Bann rowing Club, visit www.bannrowingclub.f9.co.uk.

Lough Stroll

A series of walks called 'Strolls in the Sperrins' will take place during the next few months. On Saturday, 18th September, there will be a guided tour of Ardboe Cross and Ballyronan Wood. For further information, contact Cookstown Tourist information centre on 028 86766727.

Ballyronan Triathlon

After the success of last year's event, Cookstown District Council is organising another triathlon and hoping to attract participants from all over Europe. The event will be focused around Ballyronan marina and will take place on Saturday, 14 August 2004. For further information contact Joanne at Cookstown Information Centre, Tel: **028 8676 6757**.

Eel Trap Upgrade

The two sets of eel traps, downstream of the sluice gates at Portna, have recently been replaced in order to make them more efficient at catching mature eels returning to the Sargasso Sea to spawn. The new steel grid and cage structure, which replaces the original wooden channelling arrangement, is more industrial in appearance and much more obtrusive in the rural setting. Heavy machinery, used to install the new traps has dramatically altered the river bed with knock on negative impacts on local angling. This work has taken place in the light of serious concern relating to the potential crash in European eel stocks and the probable introduction of serious reductions in silver eel fishing.

The Lower Bann Advisory Committee was not consulted by the Lough Neagh Fishermen' Co-op Society Ltd, the project promoters, and was therefore unable to offer collective advice relating to timing of in-river works, preferred methods, alleviation measures etc. It would appear that there was very little consultation with the statutory agencies, including Water management Unit, Planning Service, Fisheries Conservancy Board, DCAL Inland Fisheries or Rivers Agency.

Members of Kilrea Angling Club, who lease this angling beat from Bann System Limited, and who had recently carried out fishery enhancement work, are most aggrieved that the in-river work was done with little consideration for other river users' or for in-river wildlife.

If there had been an initial period of consultation and some more consideration for other people using the river, there would most probably be a much more satisfying outcome to this issue.

Hopefully the project promoters will reinstate the bed profile as near to the original as possible, but it is recognised that the unique and fascinating wooden eel traps are now lost to the system.

Craft Registration Scheme Expands

Seatons Marina, the National Trust and Coleraine Harbour Commissioners have recently joined the craft Registration Scheme that operates from Toome to the sea. To date, owners of boats launching from local authority managed slipways have had to complete a registration form, show proof of insurance and display registration numbers on their craft. Now owners of personal water craft, launching from Portstewart Beach, and boats, launching from Seatons Marina and Coleraine Harbour will also be requested to complete the registration process.

Following registration, owners are given instructions on the 'Code of Conduct' of the river. Anyone involved in unacceptable conduct may be excluded from using the launching facilities along the entire length of the river.

Waterways Ireland, the navigation authority from Coleraine to Toome, and Coleraine Harbour Commissioners, the navigation authority from Coleraine to the sea, have both initiated the process of introducing bylaws on the system. Implementation of these bylaws may result in compulsory registration for all craft that ply the water, not just those that use the launching points.

For further details on the craft registration system, contact Sperrin House.

Extended Rescue Cover for Lough

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency will be co-ordinating an extension of search and rescue cover for Lough Neagh with the intention of supporting the existing service provided by Lough Neagh Rescue.

The Northern Ireland Fire Brigade, soon to be renamed the 'Fire and Rescue service' will provide search and rescue assistance from bases at Cookstown and Lurgan. Information gleaned from these 'on-the-ground' teams will be relayed to Lough Neagh Rescue, via the coastguard co-ordination centre, to assist their operations. This scheme will operate on a trial basis, but if successful, there are plans to expand on the services from all the local Fire Brigade stations close to the Lough. Paddy Prunty has been appointed as a local Coastguard officer for Lough Neagh. He will receive assistance from Auxiliary Coastguards Mr Michael Savage and Mr Sean McCann in the Kinnego area, will be setting up a team in the battery and will receive assistance from Belfast Coastguard full time staff. The involvement of Mountain Rescue Service is also being explored in order to assist more long term searches. Appropriate training is being provided to all personnel likely to be involved in Search and rescue.

This extended involvement by the Maritime and Coastguard agency can only be viewed as beneficial for all Lough users and Lough Neagh Rescue Volunteers.

The Ulster Canal – What’s Happening

An application for European funding, submitted by the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, is currently being appraised. A survey of landowners along the route has concluded that there does not appear to be any major difficulties. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has yet to be carried out. If funding is secured and the EIA is positive or neutral, the project would allow the Ulster Canal to be re-watered from Lough Erne to Castle Saunderson, although there are hopes to take it as far as Clones. An optimistic application to the Lough Neagh Strategic Fund has sought funding to create a cut at the side of the M1 motorway bridge over the river Blackwater. It is hoped that the raising of the bridge to Derrywarragh Island will begin in the autumn, thus allowing access to the Blackwater for craft with a greater air draft. For further details visit www.ulstercanal.org.

Coalisland Canal

The Coalisland branch of the IWAI is continuing to work towards the opening of the canal. DCAL and Dungannon and the south Tyrone Borough Council (DSTBC) have provided funding to upgrade the towpath from Dam Lock to Macks Bridge with a tarmac path, new seating and anti motorbike/moped barriers. In July DSTBC withdrew its offer to lease the canal Basin, in the centre of Coalisland, for a commercial car park and following dredging work by Rivers Agency, shallow draft small craft can now access the canal for a distance of approximately two kilometres from the Blackwater. For further information on the canal visit www.coalislandcanal.com.

EEL EXPRESS

Eel Express is produced by the Lough Neagh Advisory Committee and the Lower Bann Advisory Committee.

The role of the two committees is to:

- **Advise on the protection of the natural and man-made heritage;**
- **Advise on drainage and navigation;**
- **Advise on the management and development of countryside and open air recreation.**

Eel Express is targeted at people with an interest in Lough Neagh and the Lower Bann. Its aim is to keep people informed of the issues relating to the two areas and to encourage users and policy makers to express their views to the Advisory Committees.

Contributions are welcome. The next newsletter will be issued in January 2005.

Caroline Marshall
Liaison Officer
Sperrin House,
43, Queens Avenue,
Magherafelt, BT45 6BX.
Tel: 028 7930 1289
Fax: 028 7930 1287
e-mail: info@lnlb.or.uk
Website: www.loughneagh.com

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or the Advisory Committees.

If you would like to receive a copy of Eel Express or wish a copy to be sent to someone else fill in the coupon below and send it to us at the above address.

Please sendcopy/copies of
Eel Express to:

Name

Address

.....

.....

.....

Postcode

River Talks & Tours

Jennifer McLernon is a certified Tourist Guide and is keen to introduce visitors to the people and places of the Ulster countryside, its small towns and villages, particularly in lesser known areas such as Lough Neagh and the Lower Bann Valley. Jennifer is happy to prepare half day and whole day itineraries to suit guests.

Visit her website on...

www.jennifermclernon.co.uk

for further details.

Loughshore to Loughshore Health Walk

Explore the banks of the Six Mile Water, the shore of Lough Neagh and Antrim Castle Gardens during a guided walk on Wednesday 11th August 2004. Meet at the Loughshore Park in Antrim at 10.30am. For further details, phone Lesley Duff on 028 9446 3113 or Pete Young on 028 9446 4131.

A Watery Heritage

Water Heritage Day will be held on Saturday 11th September 2004. The purpose is to raise awareness of and highlight the importance of water as part of everyone's heritage. If you are planning an event along the river or close to the Lough, on or near this date, please give us a ring or email caroline@lnlb.org.uk with the details. Your information will be noted and forwarded to The Heritage Council, the main organisers of the event.

Antrim Boat Club

For information on Antrim Boat Club, its plans for a marina upgrade and forthcoming events, visit www.antrimboatclub.co.uk.