

Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Meeting on Tuesday 30th January 2024

OPENING STATEMENT from Royal Canal Amenity Group.

1. RCAG welcomes the new revisions made to the draft Bye-laws as a result of our earlier submission and those of other interested parties. The consultation process has been extensive and the decision by WI to extend it further was worthwhile. Hopefully, outstanding issues can now be resolved within a short period and we have a set of conditions and rules which all concerned with the future of our waterways can live with in future.

4. Construction and safety measures on boats.

(4) This is a new proposal (not mentioned in earlier drafts) requiring all boats using shore power (220/110 v) to fit 'a Marine Isolation Transformer'. As this will involve a substantial investment by boatowners we would request that a 'phase in' period of 2 years be granted before implementation.

4 (h) toilet systems are required 'to prevent polluting matter passing into the navigation'. We agreed that this is a necessary condition to protect our navigations. WI need to provide more facilities to assist boatowners comply with this vital requirement

NOTE; There is currently no pump-out facility for boat holding tanks on the Royal canal between Dublin and Mullingar (80 kms)

29 (1). Exemption to seeking permission for activities.

There are very good reasons to allow activities which are traditionally held on our waterway to be exempted from seeking permission for every event. We note that 3 named organisations are listed in the new drafts. As a group that has held events on the Royal Canal for almost 50 years we are surprised that we are not 'listed'. The intention of the rule clearly is to cut down on unnecessary administration but is it necessary to seem to favour some organisations over others ??

39 (12) Wi are now proposing that an Inspection report by a qualified Marine Surveyor be carried on boats every 5 years. Boat owners are already required to submit such boat survey reports by their insurers every 10 years but we feel this new requirement requires a 'phase in period' of 2 years.

44. Speed Limits.

While the proposal to drop general speed limits on towpaths and greenways is welcome we feel there are good reasons to retain the power to impose limits in local areas. In urban areas there is now

widespread use of electric bikes and scooters along our waterways and many of these are capable of speeds of 30km per hour. In the interest of public safety there should be some control exercised in areas designated as at risk.

While legislation is planned to place controls on scooters/ebikes this could apply to use on public roads only and may not apply to towpaths, greenways etc which could be seen as exempt. It is important therefore that WI retain power to enforce controls at some local areas as needed.