



**Opening statement to Dail Committee on Housing, Local Gov and Heritage.  
Tuesday Jan 30 th 2024 @ 3pm.**

IRBOA would like to thank the Chair and the members of the committee, for giving us the opportunity to speak here today.

Waterways Ireland does not know how many Liveaboard boats there are on the Canals and Barrow.

It does not know how many people live on those boats, consequently it does not know how many of those people are families with young children, single parent families, senior citizens, disabled people or vulnerable people.

So when It says "Waterways Ireland does not believe the proposed changes will lead to homelessness."

IRBOA says "You don't know what you're talking about."

Yearly Permit price increases of €1000,€2000 or €4000 increasing to €7500 depending on location, would be difficult for any household in the state to absorb and for many, in our community, impossible.

Personally, I'm very proud to hear mentioned the idea that seems to have arisen organically in our communities and can best be summed up as, "If my neighbor can't afford a permit, how could I, in good conscience, buy one."

Waterways Ireland's proposed changes to the permitting system and the writing of Navigation Restrictions into the bye-laws will create Dead Zones in Kildare and Dublin on both the Royal and Grand Canals.

47% of the boats currently moored in Hazelhatch and Sallins, being leisure boats, will no longer be eligible to buy a permit for these areas.

The same applies to 29% of boats moored at Grand Canal Dock, Castleknock and Confey. Where will they go?

Waterways Ireland's proposed changes will effectively close the Canals to through Navigation and ghettoized Liveaboard communities.



The contention that,

"Waterways Ireland acknowledges the submissions in relation to the mooring restrictions between the 12th and 16th locks on the Royal and Grand Canals but deem this necessary to manage the congestion of boats in the Greater Dublin area."

Is nonsense, simply put, there is no congestion!

It should also be noted that Waterways Ireland has a monopoly on moorings on the Canals and Barrow.

This combined with its power to issue, or not, permits listed in the Schedule of Tolls and Charges and to issue and charge money for permits not listed in the Schedule( see briefing notes on Extended Mooring Permits, and Service charge in GCD), places the people they refer to as customers in a completely dysfunctional market place, devoid of any independent oversight.

The idea of Waterways Ireland Rangers patrolling the Canals and Barrow is frightening. The Inspector of Navigations' response to IWA Offaly Branch's question on the training of Authorized Officers (Inland Waterways News, Aug. 2023).

....."However, where necessary, the Inspectorate Section staff in Waterways Ireland have extensive experience in the enforcement of bye laws on Waterways Ireland's navigations."

Shows a failure to recognise the great responsibility that comes with the powers that Waterways Ireland wish to have conferred on it. Again, without any independent oversight.

We respectfully ask the committee to recommend that the Minister for housing reject these proposed bye-laws that will lead to homelessness for traditional Canal boat dwellers who cannot afford these unprecedented fee increases, that will break up established communities and criminalizes law abiding citizens for newly defined boating offences, bringing them before the courts with no independent appeals process in advance of legal proceedings.

Thank you for listening.



Mr. Chairman, Committee members, firstly let thank you all here today for giving us this opportunity to have this serious issue debated. Without your intervention these By-Laws may have been a done deal by now.

While welcoming some changes to the draft we also believe that major issues for many boaters still remain.

The annual Registration fee of €200 is a red line for most boaters, it's seen as a tax on boaters, an afloat charge, regardless of whether you use your boat one day a year or all year long. It's targeting a small number of people, while exempting other users who probably use the Waterways more than anyone. Also as an all-Ireland body, people in Northern Ireland will be exempt with no plans to introduce such a charge there.

60 day Visitor pass, basically a 32 county entity attempting to establish a hard border on our Island where the people of Northern Ireland will be charged to visit our waterways, how objectionable is that. One of the first and biggest cross border initiatives post the Good Friday agreement was the reopening of the Shannon Erne Waterways to try to reconnect the peoples on both sides of the border, now Waterways Ireland are trying to curtail that movement with these charges. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Waterways Ireland view themselves as a property management company rather than as a custodian of our waterways, with responsibility to manage the waterways on behalf of the citizens of Ireland.

Waterways Ireland states the waterways generate 600 million for Ireland annually. This generates a huge tax take for the exchequer. Profit generated from the waterways represents an extremely good return for the Irish state's investment in Waterways Ireland. It is incumbent on Waterways Ireland to preserve and increase this income by creating favorable conditions for all waterway users and businesses, through these byelaws. By their own admission, the introduction of these new charges to boaters and businesses will reduce boat numbers on Ireland's waterways, thus Waterways Ireland, by creating additional income for themselves will reduce income for waterside businesses and the state alike.



Irish Residential Boat Owners Association

[www.irboa.ie](http://www.irboa.ie)

As this is an opening statement I will finish now with the hope of having time to discuss the many major issues we have with some of these By-Laws including Equality in Law, Commercial operators fears, Appeals system, and the many elephants in the room concerning Waterways Ireland governance, or lack of same and its operations.

Thank you