

BANN ESTUARY

A SPECIAL PLACE

Environment and Heritage Service has recently declared the extensive dune systems and river margins within the Bann Estuary as an Area of Special Scientific Interest.

Not only do the dune systems record physical history but archaeological finds show that the area has been used by people since Neolithic times. Dune types vary from small, frontal dunes that often reform each Spring to the older, stable dunes (known as grey dunes) at Grangemore.

Sediments underlying the dunes have been dated and show that estuarine clay was deposited during a period of high sea-level around 6,000 years ago. Buried soils within the dunes show that the dunes stabilised at various periods in their history, while dated shells in gravel beds record stormy conditions during Medieval times. These deposits are important because they help in the understanding of soil development as well as the progress of environmental change since the last Ice Age.

The diverse form of the dunes and their variable chemical composition, together with tidal flooding, have produced a complex mosaic of habitats and associated vegetation communities. The small frontal dunes and fore-dunes, where the sand is still being deposited, have Sand Couch and Marram communities, but grade rapidly into more species rich vegetation in dune hollows. Moving farther inland, the dunes become more stable and the drier southwest facing slopes are very herb rich, with frequent Lady's Bedstraw, Wild Pansy and Fairy Flax. North facing banks are dominated by mosses, whilst flatter areas within these grey dunes support herb and orchid species.

Sea Buckthorn, planted early last century to stabilise parts of the dune system, forms dense thickets that are still expanding. This introduced species may need to be controlled in order to maintain the natural diversity of the area.

At the Grangemore dune system, a short grazed grassland sward, with occasional Burnet Rose, grades into an area dominated with Sand Sedge. This area also supports the rare Shepherd's Cress.

Within the estuary itself, much of the river is fringed by saltmarsh, a scarce habitat in Northern Ireland. Typical species include Sea Clubrush and the notable Whorled Caraway. The saltmarsh frequently grades into drier grassland where the rare Seaside Centaury can be found. The saltmarsh grades into fen to the east of the Pottagh River, supporting a diverse herb flora that includes Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil, Bogbean and

Cuckooflower. Mudflats at Grangemore, the habitat of the rare Beaked Tasselweed, are also the only location for Dwarf Spike-rush in Northern Ireland. Further upstream, the river is fringed by swamp communities. Common species here are Bulrush, Common Reed and Reed Canary-grass.

Woodland at Kilcranny is locally significant. Ash and Alder dominate the canopy above a Hawthorn shrub layer. The ground flora is characterised by Meadowsweet and Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage.

Several locally distributed invertebrates are found within the site, all well as a nationally rare rove beetle. The site supports a range of breeding and wintering birds. Breeding species include Shellduck and the nationally declining Redshank, Snipe and Lapwing.

The diversity of this site means that many features contribute to the area's special appeal. Certain activities have been identified as potentially damaging to the site. Environment and Heritage Service is keen to liaise closely with all land owners and occupiers to maintain and enhance the Bann Estuary ASSI and hopes to produce conservation/management objectives by Spring 2001.

WATERWAYS IRELAND

The new cross border body for inland navigations

Waterways Ireland was established on 2 December 1999. Its immediate responsibility was the Shannon Erne Waterway. On 1 April 2000 the new body was assigned responsibility for the Erne System, the Lower Bann Navigation, the Shannon, the Grand and Royal Canals and the Barrow Navigation. At present these amount to approximately 1000kms of navigable waterways. Waterways Ireland's remit is the management, maintenance, development, and restoration of these inland navigations, principally for recreational purposes.

The main thrust of management activity since the establishment of the new body was:

1. The creation of an interim organisational structure using seconded staff from the Northern Ireland and Irish Civil Service.
2. The establishment of Headquarters and Regional Offices in Enniskillen, Carrick-on-Shannon, Scarriff and Dublin.
3. Progressing the works and maintenance programmes approved for the navigations North and South.
4. The development of proposals for the permanent organisational structure. These were approved by the NSMC on 21 June 2001.

5. Taking forward further studies to examine the feasibility of re-opening the Ulster Canal. A consultancy was awarded to ESBI/Ferguson McIlveen and their report is due shortly with Waterways Ireland.
6. Taking over responsibility for Shannon Erne Waterway Promotions Limited.
7. Working with the hire boat sector, Bord Failte and the NI Tourist Board on the development of a Strategy for the generic marketing and promotion of boating as a niche market.
8. Reviewing the Bye-laws North and South with a view to possible harmonisation across the navigations.
9. Progressing the selection of the permanent Chief Executive. Interviews of short-listed candidates were held on 8 December.

In the main the benefits that will flow from the new arrangements will arise in the medium to long term. However, there is evidence that the creation of Waterways Ireland already raised the level of awareness of the value and potential of inland navigations throughout the Island as a whole. This is evidenced by the growing contacts being made with Waterways Ireland by individuals and groups in recent months.

There is also a renewed focus on the Waterways in Northern Ireland, particularly the Ulster and Newry canals and the Lagan Navigation. Above all the all-island dimension has communicated the potential for an integrated system of navigable waterways.

Future benefits will be wide-ranging, and will be social, economic, recreational, cultural, educational and environmental in nature. For example, increased visitors to the navigations will bring economic and social benefits to communities through increased revenue and employment leading to rural regeneration as well as broadening cultural and educational horizons through interaction with visitors from abroad.

For further information contact Waterways Ireland at 028 6632 3004 (Northern Ireland) or 00 353 4995 26603 (Southern Ireland).

GOOD NEWS

MAID OF ANTRIM

The Maid of Antrim was auctioned on 24th November 2000. The new owners intend to restore the boat to passenger carrying standard and bring it back into use on the Lower Bann and Lough Neagh as soon as possible. In the meantime it will remain in McGarry's boatyard until repairs have been completed and a home base is established.

BALLYRONAN BOAT CLUB REVIVAL

Ballyronan Boat Club was first formed in 1971, when Ballyronan was a major centre for sailing on Lough Neagh. The Boat Club hosted numerous championships, open meetings and regattas with visitors from all over Ireland.

Now, with renewed interest in boating on the Lough and new facilities ashore, the Boat Club has been revived and intends to provide a meeting point for all those, young and old, interested in all forms of water sport and craft from canoe to yacht, sail board to motor boat.

Anyone interested should contact the Commodore, Ricky Butler on 867 62148 (day) or secretary, John McRobert on 796 32603 (evening).

THE LOUGH NEAGH CYCLE WAY

Over the past number of years, a wide range of statutory bodies, voluntary and community groups have been working on the Lough Neagh Cycle Way project. The aim of the project is to create a circular 120 mile safe cycling route which can help highlight what the shores of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg have to offer.

For the most part the route will use the network of quiet country public roads, however it will also include some shorter "off road sections". Bi-directional signage will be placed at key junctions and at regular intervals along the route to help guide cyclists and the cycle way is likely to be classified as a relatively easy route in that it involves relatively few hills and inclines to tax the legs of users. Also known and marketed as Route 94 of the National Cycle Network (NCN) it will link directly to other NCN routes within Northern Ireland as well as to select local satellite routes adjacent to the main Lough Neagh Cycle Way such as Peatlands Park in Dungannon district.

The route may be viewed as easier in terms of cycling ability but this certainly does not hold true in terms of its development and implementation. The route itself passes through the lands of a variety of landowners and likewise through seven local authority areas. It will involve the construction of a cycle/footbridge over the River Blackwater at Maghery while in the longer term it is planned to develop a similar bridge to cross the Upper Bann. Problems have been encountered in developing safe cycle routes through busy villages and towns like Toome and Antrim. To this effect Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network the project promoter has employed a full time officer for the past several months to help oversee the implementation of the route and help plan for the marketing and management of the same. A Loughshores cycling brand name is also currently being developed to help market the route.

The cycle way will pass through or in close proximity to a variety of sites of interest, attractions and facilities that border Lough Neagh and Lough Beg.

These include well known attractions such as the Ardboe Cross or Oxford Island, but will also include sites such as Gort Moss in the Cookstown district, the proposed Lagan towpath, the art gallery and formal gardens at Clotworthy House Antrim, and the new community centres at Castle Bay, Brocagh, and at Ballyronan. Other notable sites include Mountjoy Castle, Cranfield Church, the Randalstown Viaduct and the natural amenities such as Reas Wood, Portglenone Forest and Crumlin Glen.

While the cycle way will cater for a wide variety of cycling types, it will be specifically targeted at a number of groupings. These include local people such as families out for a short weekend cycle, day trippers from other parts of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland; and lastly independent cycling tourists who will want to cycle the whole route and enjoy the local landscapes, culture and wildlife. The last group would be particularly vital in that they would use the B&Bs, the local restaurants and the nightlife, and in so doing play their part in inputting to local regeneration. Unlike package tourists or those travelling by car, cycling tourists are prized because they stay and spend in the locality – tourists in a car could eat their breakfast in the North Coast, visit the Lough and eat their dinner and stay in Sligo. This benefit of such cycling visitors has been shown with other cycle trails such as the Kingfisher Trail in Fermanagh and the many successful cycle routes down south and in England and Scotland. The trail is unlikely to appeal to local racing bike cyclists who tend to prefer the main roads and would cycle round the Lough in a matter of hours.

It is hoped that certain sections of the Lough Neagh Cycle Way will be open to the public by late summer 2001 and the overall route put in place sometime in Autumn. By this time maps and details of the route will also be available and no doubt leisure and holiday cyclists will become a more regular feature in the locality.

Frank McGrogan

VIKING LONGBOATS FOR BROCAGH FIRST TIME ON LOUGH NEAGH SINCE THE VIKING ERA

The Castle Bay Centre and Quay at Brocagh will form the backdrop to the visit of two Viking Longboats in May this year. Not since the 800's AD have these ships been viewed on Lough Neagh and it promises to be a memorable sight when they sail into Brocagh harbour.

The visit to Brocagh coincides with the local community festival organised by the Brocagh and District Regeneration Group (BADGER). The Vikings will be in the Quay from Saturday night May 26 along with their fellow re-enactment group who will have their camp set-up on the centre grounds. Sunday May 27 will be the day of action as the Vikings demonstrate their rowing prowess and battle scenes are fought out on the grounds and shore. Local teams will also be competing in the Viking races and various activities such as long bow archery, boat trips, and a local historical exhibition on the Vikings will take place. Work is ongoing in regard to the programme of events and it certainly will be a festival with a difference.

The boats belong to and were built by the Ardglass Vikings who have travelled widely since their formation in 1996. They have taken their 'Dragon boats' to the Isle of Man, York (England), Isle of Arran (Scotland) and Salt Island, Delamont as well as throughout Ireland.

Aside from the recreational aspect of their activities the groups main objective is to help raise money for charities such as the Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association and the Children's Hospice.

Book the Bank Holiday weekend of May 26 to 28 into your diary now. If you also feel that you can form a team of ten to take part in the races, contact the Castle Bay Centre on 8773 8729. The races are for both male and female and rowing experience is not necessary. Past experience has shown that once your appetite is whetted you'll be back for more!

WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2001

2 February each year is **World Wetlands Day**. It marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The Lough Neagh Wetlands were designated as a wetland of world importance, or Ramsar site, in 1976.

This year World Wetlands Day on the Lough was celebrated through a range of activities, including a winter wildfowl watch, nest box building and guided walks and talks, at Oxford Island Discovery Centre, the RSPB reserve at Portmore and Ballyronan Marina Centre. Both young and old attended and are now wiser to the flora, fauna and the significance and importance of the Lough Neagh Wetlands. The Lough Neagh Advisory Committee plans to celebrate World Wetlands Day each year.

If you would like to borrow a set of wetland exhibition posters, find out more about the Lough Neagh Wetlands and World Wetlands Day in general or become involved in next year's celebration contact us in Sperrin House, or visit the Ramsar website at http://Ramsar.org/wwd2001_index.htm

LIVING HERITAGE

The World Canals Conference is coming to Ireland from 16th to 18th May this year.

The theme of the conference is “Living Heritage”. Presentations and workshops will consider different approaches to the restoration, management and development of waterways in light of the conflicting requirements of economic development and heritage protection. Dublin Castle, Belfast’s Waterfront Hall and Lisburn Civic Centre will all be used as conference venues. For further information and registration details: Tel. +353 1 667 7188, Fax. +353 1 664 3701 or e-mail: info@conferencepartners.ie

BANN BONANZA

Despite the high water levels and extreme water conditions the November-December Bann Bonanza was another huge success. Anglers from Ireland, England, France, Germany and Holland braved the fog, frost, and flood conditions to compete for prize money sponsored by Magherafelt District Council. The overall benefit to Magherafelt District Council Area was a total of 850 bed nights generated from the competitions.

There is also good news for the spring with 30 Dutch anglers returning for a competition on the Lower Bann.

RIVER CONSERVATION STRATEGY LAUNCH

Sam Foster MLA, Minister of the Environment will launch the Environment and Heritage Service River Conservation Strategy at a conference in Cookstown on World Wetlands Day, 2 February.

World Wetlands Day is promoted each year by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and this year EHS is taking the opportunity to celebrate it by launching the Strategy and holding a conference on river conservation. Booking details can be obtained from Sheelagh McCoskey at Tel: 028 9054 6557.

After the launch copies of EHS River Conservation Strategy will be available from the Information and Education Unit, Tel: 028 9054 6533 or it can be viewed on the website <http://www.ehsni.gov.uk>

The conference details will be published with summaries of the formal presentations and the outcomes of the workshops and discussion sessions and this too will be available at the above contact points.

LOWER BANN EROSION TRIALS UPDATE

The bank restoration trials carried out last spring have had some avoidable and unavoidable setbacks including ineffective stock exclusion fencing, infestation by leaf mining beetle and bank 'wash out' around the down stream end of the willow hurdles.

On a positive note the significantly reduced level of grazing has enabled a diverse range of wetland flora to develop on the low gradient banks at the upstream end of the reach, and willow stakes planted among the slabs of broken concrete opposite Drumaheglis Marina have established surprisingly well and could be expected to provide some useful screening within 2-3 years.

Also some self-seeding of eared willow *Salix aurita* has taken place a few metres downstream of the upstream section of hurdle. This could be a potentially significant development if additional stabilisation results. The majority of the growth on both the upstream and downstream sections of hurdle is from the uprights, though there is some growth from the horizontal weave, especially from the lower parts.

Recommendations indicate the need for continual feedback, maintenance and repair by CVNI and landowners. Rivers Agency will continue to monitor and report on the success of trials.

BANN SYSTEM LIMITED – THE VALUE OF ANGLING

The price of a permit to fish for coarse fish in the River Bann has risen from £10 to £25. There are several reasons for what appears to be such a large increase. Bann System Limited runs an all year round professional bailiffing operation to protect its coarse and game fisheries in the absence of a wholly effective service being provided by government, as in other areas of the UK. Overheads are constantly escalating and coarse angling only meets about 12% of the present costs. Last season bailiffs seized 17 nets and 2 boats and undoubtedly deterred many other poaching operations by their mere presence. Evidence from the seized nets showed a pre-dominance of coarse fish (pike and bream) being killed. Also, the bailiffs' work involves helping to control predator numbers (e.g. cormorants), subject to DoE regulations, as well as constantly watching the rivers for pollution incidents. The previous fee of £10 had not changed for two seasons and the price of the coarse permit, even after this increase, remains below that of the corresponding game permit. In absolute terms, £25 remains a relatively modest amount to pay for a year's permission to fish one of Europe's best coarse fishing rivers.

Edward Montgomery, Bann System Ltd.

Anglers' Note

During Saturday mornings in the months of December and January, all coarse anglers on Lough Beg should note that fishing is not permitted before 10.30am in the area of South of Church Island, to avoid conflict with wildfowling.

LOWER BANN ANGLING PACK AND BROCHURE

The profile of angling on the Lower Bann and Moyola Rivers has been raised by the publication of a new angling pack and brochure. The angling pack, encompassing a wealth of information on the river system, beat location maps, clubs, permits and licences will be located at Tourist Information Centres. It is intended that Tourism Information Officers will extract the relevant pages on background information and technical advice to forward to prospective anglers. The complementary brochure, containing similar information will be used to promote angling on the Lower Bann and Moyola Rivers at specific tourism events and angling trade fairs.

Collage Ltd., Lower Bann Leader Company, Magherafelt Area Partnership Ltd., Moyola Valley Area Based Strategy and Bann System Ltd funded the production of the angling brochure and pack. The major work was carried out by Tom Maguire, Angling Development Officer, with assistance from Bann System Ltd. The Lower Bann Advisory Committee was involved in the production stages.

Copies of the angling brochure can be obtained from Bann System Limited, 028 7934 4796.

NEWS UPDATE FROM LOUGHSHORES AREA BASED STRATEGY

With a new Rural Development Programme expected to be in place later this year, the Loughshores Area Based Strategy is currently in the process of completing drawdown of funding under the current programme. The final investment by the Strategy is likely to be in the order of £940,000 which in turn is expected to result in more than £4.8 million being spent on the regeneration of the Loughshores area.

Meanwhile there has been a personnel change to the Lough Neagh Cycle Way with Jim Bradley returning to Craigavon Borough Council and Frank McGrogan taking over the reins. Work on signage, mapping, marketing and other implementation tasks continues and the Loughshores Area Based Strategy would like to convey it's thanks to Jim for his sterling efforts as well as welcoming Frank into his role.

The Quay Development Programme is now nearing completion with 5 of the 6 quays substantially completed and work the Battery due to be completed at the end of January. Quays at Gawley's Gate, Ballyronan and Brocagh have been formally launched by DARD Minister, Brid Rodgers and enjoy good local support.

BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER BANN

A new foot and cycle bridge is under construction downstream of the old Town Bridge in Coleraine.

The Millennium project, which will cost approximately £1m, will hopefully be completed by May 2001. The bridge will be four metres wide, with three spans each of 25 metres. It will have two piers in the river in line with the existing bridge piers. The suspension will be constructed in tubular steel to give maximum visibility to the existing Town Bridge.

The bridge will be welcomed by pedestrians and cyclists alike as a safer means of crossing the river. The project has been substantially grant-aided, with Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, contributing around 35% of the total cost. A safe cycling route through Coleraine would provide an ideal north coast link as part of the national cycle network in NI.

The majority of in-river construction is being undertaken in winter in an effort to minimise disturbance to the navigation patterns of salmon and eel.

WATERWAYS FOR FREIGHT

The advantages of water transport in terms of economic and environmental sustainability are evident. Whilst sea and estuary ports are important centres for commercial shipping, many inland waterways and canals are solely used for recreational craft.

Coleraine Harbour Commissioners are working directly in line with Government policy on sustainable transport. They have been successful in increasing shipping trade along the five miles of the Bann Estuary and River to Coleraine town's harbour.

The improved trade will mainly be in the form of imported timber products and exported scrap metal, increasing the annual turnover at the harbour to approximately 40,000 tonnes. It is anticipated that there will be an average of one large commercial vessel plying the estuary and river each week.

If the environmentally damaging dependence on road transport is to be reduced in the future, perhaps more serious consideration should be given to commercial bulk transport using Ireland's current and potential inland waterway system.

Lionel Duddy, Coleraine Harbour Commissioners can be contacted on 028 703 42012.

LOUGH NEAGH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

'The Lough Neagh Management Strategy will be an integrated and participatory forum and guide for the optimal co-ordination of activities to the mutual benefit of all the environment.'

Lough Neagh system is a dynamic system that has been influenced by thousands of years of human activity, and in turn now effects the lives of numerous people in many ways including commercial fishing, recreation, tourism, cultural and environmental activity. Inevitably some of these activities and uses can have an impact on the system and be at odds with each other. The Management Strategy is providing an opportunity for statutory bodies and interest and user groups to form a partnership to allow for discussion and development of draft management recommendations to ensure the present and future sustainable use of the area's resources.

The Strategy is developing through a series of public meetings and open work group discussions that have already identified the many areas of interest of the Lough users. These interests extend to many aspects of the Lough. A complex raft of possible recommendations for the present and future management of the Lough and its environs is evolving.

Through this participatory approach, a series of mutually agreed recommendations will be produced. These will be presented at further public meetings in spring 2001. Following this a further open consultation phase will aim to finalise details of all recommendations, culminating in the production of the Lough Neagh Management Strategy early in 2002.

Peter McKinney, the LNMS Facilitator can be contacted in Sperrin House at 028 7963 3711 or at peter@lnmsf@breathemail.net

THE COALISLAND CANAL

My earliest memory of the canal is standing on the footpath in front of our house and shop at Harbour View and catching the grains of Indian corn as they bounced from the high-sided carts carrying the grain from the lighters in the Basin to John Stevenson & Co's mill on the Dungannon Road. The carts were painted with orange lead and pulled by large Clydesdale horses, which were so well used to the routine of drawing the lighters that they could have done without the carters who accompanied them.

How times have changes. Since the fifties Harbour View has become "The Square" and the Basin has been drained and filled in. About half of it is used as a car park, a toilet block and a roadway, which links Lineside with Main Street. The remainder is a grassy area and, from the second lock, the canal lies stagnant to the Blackwater River, 4.5 miles away.

The Basin and the canal, as far as the second lock, are now the property of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, which last year agreed to sell the basin area for car-parking for a proposed supermarket; thankfully this has not materialised. The Rivers Agency owns the remainder of the canal including both towpaths.

The new Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan 2000 contains a very strong policy statement on the Coalisland Canal. It states that the line of the canal must be protected and preserved for its eventual restoration as a working canal and that even "permitted development" will be withdrawn if it is considered to impinge on the ultimate re-opening of the waterway. This very positive attitude of the planning service is much appreciated. In the past, both Enterprise Ulster and Ferguson & McIlveen have done studies for the local council on the proposed re-opening of the canal. Both were positive but the funding has not materialised. The re-opening of the Ulster Canal is the key to connecting Lough Neagh and all the canals of Ulster to the rest of Ireland's waterways; with that now almost certain, the Coalisland Canal is a definite runner.

Friends of Coalisland Canal

To let local people show their affection for the canal and to raise awareness of it, some fellow enthusiasts and I – under the banner of the Friends of Coalisland Canal – held a Canal Walk on the evening of 16 August 2000. Old photographs and maps of the canal were begged, borrowed and gathered for an exhibition.

Despite very heavy rain, 150 walkers started at The Point just after 6.30pm. The weather was ignored as people chatted about the canals, boats, walking, nature, fishing etc. There was a real feeling that we were expressing in a positive way our support for the clean-up and eventual restoration of our canal.

More people joined in along the way and, some two hours after we began, over 200 happy people reached the Cornmill where they were greeted by many more and given a welcome cup of tea and sandwiches.

The community floor of the mill, which can seat 200 people, was unable to accommodate everyone and many had to stand in the foyer. The capacity audience listened attentively as Tommy McIlvenna, a teacher in St Joseph's High School who has studied the building of the canal, gave his detailed and sometimes humorous account of the building of the Coalisland Canal. Afterwards many people contributed tales of the canal in former times.

The Walking Club said that they would use the towpaths regularly in the future and at 11.00 pm we reluctantly went home, feeling that a strong message had been delivered to the powers that be that the Coalisland Canal must immediately be cleaned up pending its inevitable restoration as a fully working canal. Actions speak louder than words, so the voice of over 200 people of all ages, creeds and classes, walking 4.5 miles in driving rain, must surely be heard and acted upon.

Sean Campbell was on the last lighter to leave the Coalisland Basin; may he be on the first boat back into it.

Excerpt from an article by Jim Canning.

RAISING DERRYWARRAGH BRIDGE

Craigavon Borough Council, the River Bann and Lough Neagh Association, the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland and the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure are holding discussions on the possible raising and strengthening of the bridge from Maghera to Derrywarragh Island at the south west of Lough Neagh. If the bridge was raised or replaced with an opening structure, larger watercraft could use the Maghera cut to gain access to and from the Blackwater River, thus avoiding the sand bars at the river mouth. The lower stretches of the Blackwater River provide eleven miles of clear navigation from the Lough to Blackwater Town and the proposed Ulster Canal link with the Erne system. Obviously local users, residents and landowners will be consulted and kept fully informed of events.

LOUGH NEAGH TRIATHLON

Saturday, 4 August 2001 at 2.00 pm
Ballyronan Marina, Shore Road, Ballyronan, Magherafelt
1.5k Swim – open water swim in Lough Neagh (wet suit compulsory)
40k Cycle – 3 laps undulating cycle course around Ballyronan
10k Run – 2 laps flat run course through Ballyronan
Relay – run in conjunction with the individual triathlon
Will be a team relay. Three members in each team
(1 person to compete in each discipline)

For further information contact Ballyronan Development Association Tel: 028 7941 8399

**BITTE, 1ST DAS PORTGLENONE?
NON, C'EST KILREA**

Passing through Belturbet I was surprised to her Italian, German and French spoken in the streets. I had cycled south along the line of the old Ulster canal from The Moy and it is to the re-opening of the Shannon-Erne canal that Belturbet owed this happy injection of cosmopolitan vowels and income. Why don't the same tourists patronise the waterways in Northern Ireland from the Blackwater past the Moy through Lough Neagh and into the Lower Bann? It's not necessary to await the re-opening of the Ulster Canal. Tourists could be minibused between waterways. Envisage a package that offers tourists entry via Derry and home via Shannon airports thus avoiding having to retrace their route overland.

Could the new Waterways Ireland play a role by actively encouraging existing cruise operators to pilot inter-waterway cruises? WI might also assist with the marketing to reassure potential tourists that the waterways are tranquil and unobstructed, even in July!

When cross-border agencies are evaluated for effectiveness, what will they have achieved? This assessment will be awaited with some scepticism along stretches of the Bannside. What better demonstrable recommendation than the melodious voices of bambini in Coleraine as they sound throughout every summer along the streets and quays of Belturbet.

ULSTER WATERWAYS GROUP CONFERENCE

“ONCE AGAIN UPON THE LAGAN”

On 20th October 2000 the Ulster Waterways Group held its 3rd Annual Conference with the proceedings entirely dedicated to the history and proposed restoration of the Lagan Canal.

May Blair; author of “Once Upon the Lagan” presented a social history review. An overview of present initiatives, including restoration of Lock 12 and the building of the new Civic Centre at Lisburn, restoration of a lock keepers cottage near Shaw's Bridge and an outline of a River Action Plan were given. The feasibility of restoring the entire Lagan Canal, its significance within the entire waterways network and the economic and social benefits of waterway restoration were highlighted. Delegates had the opportunity to visit several sites of interest along the Lagan navigation, including the site of the first lock at Stranmillis weir and a lock and cottage adjacent to Shaw's Bridge.

Further information on the conference and the Friends of Ulster Waterways can be obtained from Shane Belford, Ulster Waterways Group, 028 9042 5230.