# **Heather Cooke**

From:

Denis M Baker, Ciaran Clinton, Catriona Hilliard, Tim Meehan <info@emra.ie>

Sent:

23 January 2019 13:13

To:

**RSES** 

Subject:

RSES - Online submission

**Attachments:** 

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From: Denis M Baker, Ciaran Clinton, Catriona Hilliard, Tim Meehan

Organisation: IWAI Nav Watch Group

Message Body:

Dear EMRA,

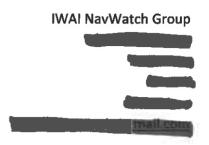
Please find attached a submission regarding the EMRA RSES.

Kind regards

**IWAI Nav Watch Group** 

This e-mail was sent from a submission form on Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (http://emra.ie)





The Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, 3rd Floor North, Ballymun Civic Centre, Main Street, Ballymun, Dublin 9.

21st January 2019.

Dear EMRA,

**Submission regarding the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy** 

Please find below, the submission from the IWAI NatWatch group.

#### 1. Introduction

The submission primarily identifies the 'Green & Silver' waterways route between Dublin and the midlands<sup>1</sup>, as of huge potential for economic benefit and social activity for the region. The submission suggests that EMRA consider this navigation route of international significance, one that has not been explored to its potential but which needs to be elevated to EMRA planning status to flourish.

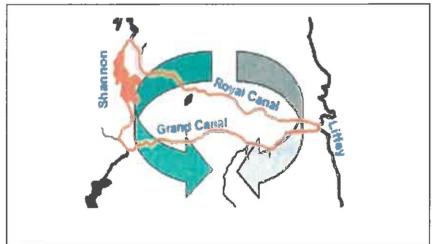
## 2. Green and Silver Navigation Route Submission Points

Accordingly, the group suggest that EMRA pay special attention to this navigation route for tourism, economic and social benefit in its future planning. As the RSES is the primary planning document for the region, EMRA could initiate a process whereby all local authorities are advised to take cognizance of the benefits of considering this route of collective benefit for the whole region. It will be necessary to work together over the lifetime of the RSES and relevant national plans, county development plans, local economic and community plans and area plans to distribute the relevance of the Green and Silver route across the region; and EMRA should also push to have this route on national tourism plans.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Green &Silver Route - Dublin, Royal Canal, River Shannon, Grand Canal triangular navigation route.

The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) was established in 1954. It has 23 branches across the Social Action of Ireland (IWAI) was established in 1954. It has 23 branches across the Social Action of Ireland (IWAI) was established in 1954. It has 23 branches across the Image of Manager of Manager

Walk as Toligans and Community interests with regards to promoting access to the waterways. In recent years this has taken the form of working with Waterways Ireland – the navigation authority, government Departments in relation to legislative reform regarding byelaws on boating use on the canals and Barrow sections of the waterways, and undertaking large infrastructural refurbishment projects such as the regeneration of the Boyne Canal in Co. Meath. IWAI also supports Special Interest Groups such as the CSIG which has undertaken a national mapping and charting project of much of the Shannon river and has had these systems published. In late 2018, as a response to the severe difficulties encountered by boating users of the Grand Canal and Royal Canal, which collectively along with a partial route on the River Shannon form the Green and Silver Route, a special interest NavWatch<sup>2</sup> group was established within the Canal branches of IWAI. The purpose of this group is to constructively contribute to the knowledge base regarding access to waterways navigation development and use from the boaters' perspective within the opportunities this information can provide to agencies. The submission highlights the opportunity of the Green and Silver route, which is the waterways circular (triangular) route of the Royal Canal, River Shannon, Grand Canal and Dublin (crossing the Liffey to get from the Royal or the Grand or vice versa).



Caption: Green and Silver route – the Royal Canal, The Grand Canal (crossing the Liffey in Dublin) and the River Shannon. Source – IWAI. As yet this is an unexplored route for major boating tourism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Navigation Watch – comprising expert members of Canal & Barrow branches of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland from the Royal Canal, Kildare, Dublin, North Barrow, Barrow, Offaly, and Shannon Harbour IWAI areas.



Caption: Green and Silver book cover – comprised of the Royal Canal, the Grand Canal and the mid-Shannon. The route is approx. 320 km and can be completed in 10-12 days of continuous travel by boat, however it is preferable to take as long as you can.

In the boating community, 'The Green and Silver Route' is based on the route taken on a documented triangular journey undertaken by L.T.C. Rolt in 1946. His subsequent publication of 'The Green and Silver' book in 1949, is now in its 7th edition and as boating 'classic' has become a bible for canals navigation enthusiasts in Ireland and the visitors to date from overseas. Rolt was one of the founders of the Inland Waterways Association (UK) in 1946.

Boaters who currently do this route in Ireland can register to take part in the Green and Silver logbook challenge, by which they get various passport style stamps on an old fashioned log book format; a certificate; and a brass plaque to mark their achievement. The Dublin branch of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland have been the main drivers of the use of this route and administer the registration, log book and plaque allocations. However it is also the users of the Green and Silver route who have contributed to it becoming known in the boating community over the last decade and it is an excellent example of 'ground up' grassroots user based perspective being able to contribute to regional development, once the relevant support and resources to push it on further are considered and applied. It is 70 years since the publication of the original book so it is timely that in 2019 it gains more exposure.



The Green and Silver route runs through nine of the twelve EMRA local authority areas – from Dublin City Council out the Royal Canal through Fingal, Meath, Kildare, Westmeath and Longford to the River Shannon (with access from the Shannon to the Camlin River – a particularly tranquil and secret spot on the overall navigation), back in the Grand Canal through Offaly, Kildare and South Dublin, with a spur line off in into Laois to access the River Barrow system. This route has the potential to be a major international level boating destination servicing both the city and the wider EMRA region and should be viewed as a collective resource with regard to its navigable future.

The canals network in Ireland is some 200 years old, and still functioning in much the same way as it is in the early 1800's. Manually operated lock are still operated the same way, the canal banks ensure the immediate natural environment is available and local history and heritage is on its doorstep in the many towns and villages through which the Green & Silver route passes. We are very good at presenting our nation's history through documentaries, drama, theatre and so on, but there is nothing that can evoke the actual real experience of canal boating except to undertake it.

Canal inland navigation routes are highly popular and economically beneficial in other jurisdictions and interconnectivity is the nature of the canals systems worldwide as that was the reason for their establishment. While many have fallen out of use as their original trade routes, they have been redeveloped into major inland boating destinations, some examples below -



Caption: Stourport Ring, in the UK, interior route encompasses the purple area, interconnecting various locations along the route, with its extended links out to the Irish Sea north and south of Wales.



Caption: The Canal du Midi is a 240 km long canal in Southern France. Originally named the Canal royal en Languedoc and renamed by French revolutionaries to Canal du Midi in 1789, the canal was at the time considered one of the greatest construction works of the 17th century. The canal connects the Garonne to the Étang de Thau on the Mediterranean and along with the 193 km long Canal de Garonne forms the Canal des Deux Mers, joining the Atlantic to the Mediterranean.

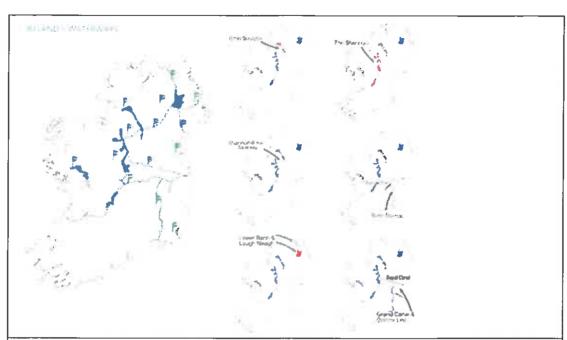


Caption: The Central Ring, a very popular circuit amongst Dutch cruisers, taking in some of the most attractive cruising grounds and historic stopping places, a 'circular economy'!



Caption: Belgian canal routes showing a range of interior navigation destinations, **bringing economic and social benefit to all locations.** 

Economic value of the boating community is important and valuable across Europe. As well as the per boat spend of domestic and visiting craft to the local communities along the canal, boats bring life to the canals, with their visual impact as attractions to other canal side users. A British Waterways statistic advises one boat attracts 84 visitors and the lifestyle benefits of having boats actively navigating a canal network adds a multitude to the place-making and identification of various locations along any route.



Caption: Irish Inland Waterways network showing the Royal and Grand canal connectivity through the midlands to the Shannon and the wider Shannon / Erne system including access to the west coast in/out through both Dublin Limerick effectively a navigation route right across Ireland - connecting the Irish Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and the Shannon-Erne system; and showing its navigation connectivity to the Barrow system permitting access to/from the South/East coast via the Waterford/Three Sisters estuary, all in that development of the midlands routes are critical elements of the overall navigation system. Source: IWAI.

People who have been boating this midlands route for decades are well aware of the beauty, tranquillity and majesty of many of the locations along the canals routes where greenways are being developed and in support of access by all to the fabulous amenity of the navigation system. As well as its own locations, the Green and Silver route provides access to the wider breadth of the Irish inland navigation system, and for that very reason should also be developed/encouraged as a navigation route. It is quite reasonable to expect small boats travelling in to the Dublin, Waterford or Limerick estuaries to consider travelling into the midland inland waterways as part of their visit to this country, utilising the existing navigation to permit that access for instance to various sites with the Irelands Ancient East tourism brand and the emerging Irelands Hidden Heartland along the Shannon, all of which should be explored as part of an upgrade agenda for the Green & Silver route.

 Developing the Green & Silver Navigation route for tourism development both within the city and out into extended locations of EMRA should be seen as a significant opportunity for the RSES.



Consequently, with the current announcement in national media that there is an opportunity for Dublin's canals to become a branded tourist destination, a highly feasible choice could be to extend and brand the whole navigation in this regard and not just view the Dublin end of both the Royal and Grand Canal as only relating to the city.

 It would be hugely beneficial to push any future new branding out to the hinterlands and the ideal choice would be the Green and Silver, or a local derivation of it such as the Green and Silver Greenways; or for instance joint product marketing such as the Greenways and Silverways.

## 3. Submission points on specific RSES chapters/objectives

Mapping the navigations – this point is made with regard to all graphical items in the draft document. The submission recommends the inclusion on **ALL** maps and charts of the Royal and Grand Canals, the River Barrow and the River Shannon, which do not show on a single graphical entity throughout the whole draft RSES document.

Without this basic charting of the infrastructure, it will be difficult to identify specific locations for development and support, whether they are boating issues or opportunities for tourism development.

#### Chapter 1 Introduction

This mapping point above also falls specifically with within draft document point 1.1. that this is a strategic plan that will shape investment of the region to 2031 and beyond so it is suggested it is imperative to include the routes mapping now in order for their development and progress, within the RSES role to create a sustainable and competitive region. The navigation mapping should be consistent across all maps and charts; and should apply to the Dublin, the hinterland and the outer region.

## Chapter 2 Strategic Vision

Rural development is crucial in the midlands, both from an economic and social perspective, particularly with the large reduction in current Bord na Mona employment expected in the near future, which does actually present opportunities for re-imagining the midlands within the perspective of this submission.

The Green and Silver route runs through large and small towns such as Naas, Edenderry, Tullamore, Athlone, Longford, Mullingar, Enfield, Kilkcock, Leixlip and Maynooth. These can offer local boating route points e.g. weekend hire boats, to use the local areas of the Green and Silver from those locations. Small businesses in this area are starting up and indeed somewhat established - notably Royal Canal Boat Trips operating trips between Clonsilla and Kilcock on the Royal Canal (ref <a href="https://royalcanalgreenway.ie/listing/royal-canal-boat-trips/">https://royalcanalgreenway.ie/listing/royal-canal-boat-trips/</a>); on the Grand Canal bargetrip.ie based in Sallins and more recently boattrips.ie on the Barrow along adding to the long established Barrowline cruisers in Vicarstown. Also, there are several hire companies on the Shannon that would be willing to send their tourist hire boaters into the midlands if they could be confident of access and reliability of use as per several points in this document.

Serviced locations for these trip boats to moor at further into and along the canals system are a must to both grow the economic benefit these bring to very local areas, and extend that economic benefit to other locations along the navigation route, some points on which are noted in 'infrastructure' below.

#### Chapter 3 Growth Strategy

The Green and Silver route is a major asset which is not currently collectively in the attention span of the relevant local authorities and it should be elevated to be included as an asset in the collabortive regional plan for its economic and social benefit. It has the relevant scale across a wide range of the local authorities in the region and can function in the provision of tourism and employment. A creative approach of integrating the Green and Silver route into the regional plan will attract talent and skills to

its development and majorly contributing to a regional place-making initiative. Its eco system by its very connected nature lends itself to enterprise clusters particularly based on servicing boats needs e.g. boat support businesses; destination harbours and tourism enterprises.

Its route as a connection between all the county locations identified and particularly as a link between the capital city, its hinterland and the outer areas of the EMRA region indicate it is as important asset, heretofore unacknowledged in the region; and as such RPO 2.1 should have the Green and Silver route included in all local authority development plans as a growth enabler.

The outer region of EMRA is acknowledged as having an extensive network of sub county towns and small towns and villages, of which many can benefit from elevation of the Green and Silver route to regional status for future short term planning until 2031; and

 a benefit study for each of the locations such should be policy of the EMRA RSES when adopted for the imaginative scenario planning for the region to utilize the waterways network.

#### Chapter 4 People and Place

Developing people and place initiatives is an important element of utilising waterside opportunities. In particular canals offer a unique opportunity for development this agenda. Buckman (2016) points ' to the benefit of place-making' with regard to canals (or with a typo making it play-making! — author comment) and the US 'Projects for Public Spaces 'What Makes a Successful Place' which examines three projects that capitalised on their canal infrastructure for both place making and economic and social development which is suggested to EMRA as a reference read. In Europe, EMRA attention is drawn to the recent regeneration of the Scottish canals in relation to tourism benefits and in particular to the policy driven process that enabled this to take place (Lennon, 2016) and attention is paid to the Falkirk Wheel and The Kelpies arts projects (McKean et al, 2017) — perhaps ideas for linking to the Sculpture Park at Lough Boora as a canal destination if looked at from an Irish perspective.

• The placemaking potential of the overall route cannot be overestimated particularly within the overall EMRA region and should be explored.

## Chapter 5 Dublin Metropolitan Areas Strategic Plan

Both canals have a terminus in the city. This could be addressed for the regional planning of extended use of the system into the midlands and recognized, as the population outside the city are very much also connected to the capital in many ways and the route can be considered a major recreational/navigation resource.

This group recommends EMRA study the Cotswold Canals restoration study insofar as to how they contribute to the social and amenity benefit for nearby cities (Stening, 2004).

# Chapter 6 Economy and Employment

Economic benefit and a wide range of employment opportunities are a major common point coming through from many of the economic analysis reports that have been completed on various waterways. For recommendations, this group suggests further research by EMRA prior to its final RSES on evaluations such as those done on the Kennet & Avon Canal (Millar et al, 2004); the Mancunian Way, (Deas et al, 1998) and the study by Maeer et al (2004).

• In short, this group suggests that **Boating means Business!** This should be adopted as an objective within the EMRA RSES in particular in its contribution to the regional policy objectives of RPO 6.14 right through to 6.18 which are in support of such a strategy.

#### Chapter 7 Environment

Supporting the canals infrastructure in their current use and potential regeneration are key opportunities for the integration of land and marine planning as per RPO 7.1 (for instance for small sea vessels to be able to traverse the country and access the Shannon via the Green and Silver as per a further point elsewhere). Such use of the canals will significantly contribute to access by the population and visitors to biodiversity and natural heritage in various ways, principally by making nature more available to both the general population and to visiting boating tourists and specifically to section 7.6 of the draft RSES which highlights the connectivity between ecological and hydrological eco systems in this instance taken as the natural surrounding habitat and flora and fauna accessible by using the canals systems. In this regard the draft RSES has already recognized the Royal and Grand Canals as locations of Strategic Green Infrastructure and Cultural Heritage (p 124). It also highlights the significant opportunities to develop flagship projects along the waterways (p 126) and should be examined and implemented from a regional development perspective.

• Utilizing these navigation systems to the nth degree of their potential is a major opportunity for EMRA that should not be missed.

#### Chapter 8 Connectivity

As well as the tourism aspects of the Green and Silver route, the integration of land use and transport is being developed by the greenways on both canal systems. There is further opportunity to develop these as linear wi fi arteries both to and from the capital to the midlands for both tourism information provision and local business alike. In this way they can echo their previous role as commercial development opportunities akin to their trade route days. Some elements of WiFi instrastucture are

being installed along Greenways and this should be further explored for implementation across the overall network .

## Chapter 9 Quality of Life

The quality of life aspect of utilizing the waterways further to contribute to economic and social growth in the midlands cannot be overestimated. Several studies have been references in previous sections of this submission, however a short point here suggests the significant opportunity for the canals/waterways to contribute to place-making initiatives in the midlands as outlined earlier. This chapter in the draft also references the regeneration priorities of the National Planning Framework and it would be hoped the canals/waterways can be included as major points within such regeneration in the midlands both urban and rural areas of EMRA and of course in the capital city.

# Chapter 10 Infrastructure

The investment opportunities required for the Green and Silver to further develop are confined to several solve-able situations.

#### **Water Sources**



shortage, only 10 years after it reopened, particularly over the last couple of seasons. Picture from summer 2018 - Coolnahey Harbour, summit level of the Royal Canal near Mullingar.

Reliable water provision for the Royal Canal is a significant need which can be realized by the provision of water pumping stations from adjacent rivers with a release of the Lough Ennel water source for the Royal back to that navigation. Pumping technology is not new to canals. Birmingham City regenerated its own network using this technology, many examples of which are available to EMRA with their further research into the matter.

Other water sources for the navigation have been compromised over the years but can be fixed. These include ones for the Grand Canal where for instance the Bord na Mona source in Offaly was considerably reduced due to cutaway bog activity. Now that the post cutaway bog use of the source is not needed for the Lough Boora location of cutaway peat activity as it is a recreation park, it too should also be released back to the Grand Canal.

 A survey ascertaining original water sources for the Royal and Grand Canals and how they can be reinstated would be most beneficial to ensuring its further development.

#### **Bridges**

There is one particular lifting bridge which crosses the Royal Canal behind Connolly station, and it only opens a six times a year at designated times to let boats through and is a major delay point on the route and discourages users from trying the circumnavigation. Affectionately known by the boating community as the 'Effin' bridge, it can only usually let one or two vessels through at a time, always during mid-week once they have booked their passage well in advance. This bridge illustrates better than any how blocking the navigation deprives it of it's lifeblood or boat traffic and seriously curtails tourism development on the overall route and locally within Dublin. It is understand by local Dublin IWAI branch members that the bridge is due for upgrade/renewal, and that larnrod Eireann are open to implementing a better system, or preferably an 'under lock' where the canal effectively locks down to a lower level while it passes under the bridge to allow regular access to that part of the canal.



Caption: The 'Effin' Bridge, above Spencer Dock, Dublin. Barge 118B beginning its passage under the rail bridge, elevated on four jacks by Irish Rail staff, just below Lock 1 on the Royal Canal.

 It is recommended that EMRA work with larnrod Eirean on this matter and perhaps utilise funding from the European Regional Development Fund or more locally the Urban Regeneration Fund under the National Planning Framework to address the needs of this project.

In general, while canals are being elevated into the status of more accessible public realm through the development of greenways and access to these routes, this IWAI NavWatch group have however unfortunately been able to identify area of greenway development that could do with improvement. These include the specific requirement for instance for

- an awareness of the historical and heritage value of canal sites; and as such should not include infrastructure such
  - o as plastic signage;
  - o inappropriate extra bollarding at locks;
  - downgrading of the navigation needs in favour of the walkways;
  - o installation of railings under current bridges which are a danger to boaters;
  - o the installation of new fixed/swing bridges (for instance as is currently proposed in the Kildare Greenway Part 8 submission to which this group have made a submission);
  - o and as part of any strategy method statements for canal maintenance, ongoing maintenance dredging in particular also needs to be formulated and published.

an element of any master plan for the integration of the walking and cycling route within the
existing heritage and historical value of the overall Green and Silver route should be explored.

#### Locks

Downgrading of the navigation through various elements such a decrease in maintenance are causing major problems however a more recent situation has also arisen with a major reduction in staff levels on the navigation system, resulting in the need to schedule boat passage well in advance and sometimes a wait of up to 24 hours for assistance with passage through a lock. This has had a major impact on boat traffic in the last couple of seasons and in particular detracts from the freedom of boats to move with as little assistance from lockkeepers as possible. It is recommended EMRA seek a policy

that permits boaters to use locks on an as need basis within reason e.g. daylight hours, as it is
unreasonable to expect the tourist to have to constantly check access for passage and endure
possibly several episodes of waiting many hours for the help of relevant lock keeping staff.

# Chapter 11 All Island Cohesion

As can be seen from the map provided, the canal and navigation network cover both the Republic and the North of Ireland. It is an ideal navigational network in which to develop cross border activities and linkages between all elements of the network, not just those adjacent to the border -

• the Green and Silver route access to the midlands and the north should be seen as an ideal platform by which to develop further interconnectness between the two jurisdications.

## **Chapter 12 Implementation and Monitoring**

If the Green and Silver route is to be taken advantage of, this submission recommends the appointment of a special projects officer for the development of the Green and Silver route from Dublin to and throughout the midlands at its various points within located within local authority locations membership of EMRA.

The Green and Silver network would also benefit from a development sub strategy in its own right as an element of the EMRA RSES, in order to undertake a circular route needs assement and develop them into opportunities; identify various funding channels for infrastructure that may be required; and put in place a SMART timeline for achievement of objectices with the EMRA RSES sub-strategy.

utilisizing the Green and Silver route for integrated regional development across boating,
 tourism, economic and social regeneration is a medium to long term project and should be

accorded the time and resources accordingly, coordinated by EMRA perhaps from a regional office in the midlands.

#### 4. Concluding points

The collective power of the local authorities and the EMRA RSES Economic and Social agenda are suggested as the most beneficial method by which the route can be developed to its potential; and by which the collective needs of the local authorites can be addressed with agencies such as Waterways Ireland; Failte Ireland; Discover Ireland, Inland Fisheries and Irish Water.

Inland Waterways International have pointed to this current few years being the renaissance of the inland boating systems across Europe with a recent large development taking place for instance at Gdansk Bay and the Vistula Lagoon in Poland, and note projects in France, Czech Republic, Sweden, the eastern Länder of Germany (with the new lift at Niederfinow), and major projects also continuing in the Netherlands and Belgium (new, bigger locks), along the Danube (Serbia and Croatia) and in many other places, even on the (relatively) small canals in the North-East of England (IWI, 2018).

 This submission seeks to address the opportunities that are available to Ireland and in particular the EMRA collection of counties that could benefit enormously from a renewed look at Royal Canal, the Grand Canal, the Shannon, and Dublin on the overall route of 'The Green & Silver'.

Notwithstanding that some local authorities are paying attention to the opportunities available from canals, however primarily from the greenway perspective rather than the navigation and tourism opportunities that could ensue and in somewhat of a 'per county' perspective understandably looking after their own particular need where required - in conclusion, this submission suggests it is imperative that this route is given some due regard and some years of due diligence regarding its development from an overall regional planning perspective and is strongly integrated into the EMRA final RSES.

# Signed: Denis M Baker, Ciaran Clinton, Catriona Hilliard, Tim Meehan. Interim Co-ordinating committee for IWAI NavWatch group

The group are available to further develop points on this proposal and submit a range of further reference material if required, within any review of the submission made herewith. Indeed we would welcome an opportunity as a group of experienced and expert users of the inlands navigations across the country in general and in particular on the Green and Silver route, to contribute further to any final report that may ensue from this submission in the finalization of the overall EMRA RSES.

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