



a strategy for enhanced

customer service





Foreword

I am pleased to present Waterways Ireland Customer Service plan entitled "A Strategy for Enhanced Customer Service". This document has been developed by the Communication Unit in conjunction with the Waterways Ireland Partnership Forum. It sets out our current standards of customer service and identifies a series of actions that we will take over the coming 3 years to build on and improve those standards.

As Chief Executive, I am committed to ensuring that there are effective internal arrangements in place to ensure that the standards will be effectively complied with and for monitoring and reviewing progress. A planned programme of communication and training on the strategy will be developed and Waterways Ireland will ensure that the document is delivered to all staff.

The focus throughout is placed firmly on identifying the necessary prerequisites and actions required to effect meaningful improvements in the standards of our services. The programme of improvements set out in the Plan is both ambitious and challenging, but we are committed to its delivery.

This document sets out Waterways Ireland's strong commitment to Quality Service, which recognises that our customers are entitled, as of right, to an excellent service delivered in a prompt, courteous and fair manner. I commend the plan to you and encourage you to actively support Waterways Ireland in implementing it fully.

John Martin

Chief Executive

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about Waterways Ireland

Mission Statement

Waterways Ireland strives to provide a high quality recreational environment centred on the inland waterways (of Ireland) in its care, for the use and benefit of everyone.

Remit

Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of inland navigable waterways principally for recreational purposes. The waterways under its remit are the Shannon–Erne Waterway, the Erne System, the Grand Canal, the Barrow Navigation, the Lower Bann Navigation, the Royal Canal, and the Shannon Navigation.



Structure of Waterways Ireland

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Operations	Finance and Personnel	Technical Services	Corporate Services	Marketing/ Communications
Northern Region	Finance	Civil and Structural Design	Corporate & Business Planning	Marketing & Promotions
Eastern Region	IT	Mechanical Engineering	Legal Unit	North/South Ministerial Council
Western Region	Personnel	Environmental Services	Strategy/Policy Development	Visitor Services
Operations & Planning Administration	Governance	Health and Safety	Equality and Human Rights	Departmental Liaison/ Communications/ Customer Relations
Asset Management	Training	Building Services	Management of Property Portfolio	Publications
Navigation Control	Procurement	Fleet Management	Provision of Corporate Needs	Library/Archive/ Photographic Management



Location of Offices

Waterways Ireland has offices and sites throughout the island. The following are the principal offices, however, a comprehensive listing of these can be found in the local telephone directory.

Headquarters

Enniskillen

5/7 Belmore Street, Enniskillen,
Co Fermanagh, BT74 6AA
Tel: +44 28 66 323 004
Fax: +44 28 66 346 257

20 Darling Street, Enniskillen,
Co Fermanagh, BT74 7EW
Tel: +44 28 66 323 004
Fax: +44 28 66 346 236

Regional Offices

Carrick-on-Shannon

Somerview House, Old Dublin Road,
Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
Tel: +353 71 96 50 787
Fax: +353 71 96 22 866

Dublin

Floor 2, Block C, Ashtowngate, Navan
Road, Dublin 15
Tel: +353 1 868 0148
Fax: +353 1 838 3647

Scarriff

Market Square, Scarriff, Co Clare
Tel: +353 61 922 033
Fax: +353 61 922 036

Others

Chief Executive's Office
20 Darling Street, Enniskillen,
Co Fermanagh, BT74 7EW
Tel: +44 28 66 323 004
Fax: +44 28 66 346 237

Press Office

Somerview House, Old Dublin Road,
Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
Tel: +353 71 96 50 898
Fax: +353 71 96 22 866

Waterways Ireland Visitors Centre
Grand Canal Quay, Dublin 2
Tel: +353 1 677 7510
Fax: +353 1 677 7514

Inspector of Navigation

The Docks, Athlone, Co Westmeath
Tel: +353 90 64 94 232
Fax: +353 90 64 94 147

Warden Service

The Lough Erne Warden's Office,
Castle Lane, Portora, Enniskillen,
Co Fermanagh, BT74 5GH
Tel: +44 28 66 322 836

E-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org
Website: www.waterwaysireland.org

Our Customers

All those who avail of the services of any Division of Waterways Ireland at any time are valued customers of Waterways Ireland. Our customers include:

Individuals

- Applicants for Licences
- Cruising Hire Operators
- Cruising Hire Users
- Private Boat Owners
- Fishing Organisations and Anglers
- Canoe Organisations
- Canoeists
- Sailing Organisations
- Sailors
- Hikers/Ramblers Associations
- Gun Clubs
- Families and Individuals
- Other Waterways users
- Visitors to heritage sites
- Heritage organisations
- Students and others seeking information in relation to our activities
- Farmers and landowners.
- Our own staff

Public Representatives

- Local Councillors
- Members of Dáil and Seanad Éireann
- Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly
- Members of the British Parliament
- Members of the European Parliament

State Bodies

- All Government Departments and Offices on the Island of Ireland
- State-sponsored bodies
- Non Departmental Public Bodies
- Regional and Local Authorities on the Island of Ireland

International

- European Union (including the Council of Ministers, Parliament and Commission)
- Council of Europe
- North/South Ministerial Council
- Other National Governments
- Other International organisations

Non-Governmental Organisations and Others

- Development groups
- Community groups
- Youth groups
- Conservation groups
- Voluntary groups
- Media (Radio and TV)
- Schools and Third level institutions
- Trade Unions
- Cross-sectoral committees
- Planning applicants and developers
- Tourism Bodies



Access to Information

The Communications Unit offers a contact point for public queries about Waterways Ireland policies, schemes and practice. Contact details for the Press Officer in the Communications Unit are as follows:

Press Officer

Waterways Ireland
Somerview House, Old Dublin Road
Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
Tel: 00 353 71 96 50787
Fax: 00 353 71 96 22866
E-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

Waterways Ireland also publishes a wide range of information and guidance material. Free publications may be obtained from the Communications Unit on request or from any Waterways Ireland public office. Copies of published legislation and other publications which attract a fee can be obtained from the Communications Unit on request. Information on the schemes and services administered by Waterways Ireland may also be obtained by accessing our website at www.waterwaysireland.org.

Customer Services Co-Ordinator

In March 2003 Waterways Ireland appointed a Customer Services Co-ordinator to co-ordinate delivery of its Customer Services Strategy. Our Customer Services Co-ordinator is also responsible for the administration of complaints handling procedures (see Chapter 4). Contact details for the Customer Services Co-ordinator are as follows:

Customer Services Co-ordinator

Waterways Ireland
Somerview House, Old Dublin Road
Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
Tel: 00 353 71 96 50787
Fax: 00 353 71 96 22866
E-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

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Our Commitment to Quality Service

As part of the principles of Customer Service for our customers and clients, Waterways Ireland devised the following Statement of Service Commitment for display in all its public offices and at strategic waterway locations throughout the country.

commitment
quality



Our Commitment to Quality Service

As part of the principles of Customer Service for our customers and clients, Waterways Ireland devised the following Statement of Service Commitment for display in all its public offices and at strategic waterway locations throughout the country.

OUR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY SERVICE

We serve a diverse customer base across a wide range of functions, and you, our customers have the right to expect quality services from us.

We will

1. Deal with you fairly and equitably.
2. Respect your privacy and confidentiality in conducting your business with us.
3. Treat you courteously and considerately.
4. Provide a prompt, professional and efficient service.
5. Respond to your correspondence and give you a contact name and phone number to enable you to contact us.
6. Provide full and accurate information on the services provided by us.
7. Provide services for customers who wish to conduct business through Irish or English or a different medium.
8. Provide an accessible and fair complaints and redress system.

9. Ensure that all of our public offices, where possible, are accessible to all users and are maintained in a clean and tidy condition.
10. Ensure that our public facilities, where possible, are accessible to all users and are maintained in a clean and tidy condition.
11. Remain committed to the continuous improvement of service delivery and will consult with you, our customers to explore how we can continue to best meet your needs.

Your comments are valuable to us in our efforts to improve our service. Please address your comments to the:


Customer Services Co-ordinator
Waterways Ireland
Somerview House, Old Dublin Road
Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
Tel: 00 353 71 96 50787
Fax: 00 353 71 96 22866
E-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

If your experience of the service falls below or exceeds your expectations, please let us know.

Martin Dennany
Director of Marketing and Communications
Waterways Ireland

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your
entitlements



your entitlements

Your Entitlements under our Service Commitment

Waterways Ireland is responsible for a diverse range of services to customers from many different backgrounds with many different needs. However, our commitment to service excellence demands that each of our customers be treated with courtesy and respect. To this end we have adopted detailed Codes of Practice that will underpin our relationship with our customers. All staff are aware of their obligations under these Codes of Practice and will receive ongoing training and support in meeting those obligations. As an element of these Codes of Practice we are also committing ourselves to specific timescales for delivery of service enhancements. These will be subject to review and, where possible, improvement over the lifetime of this Plan.

In the event of you not being satisfied with our efforts to meet these self-imposed standards we have developed an internal Customer Complaints Procedure to address instances of customer dissatisfaction.

How We will Deal with Your Correspondence

When you write to us we will

- Acknowledge receipt of your correspondence;
- Where a response is required, reply to you within 20 working days of receipt;
- Use clear language, avoid jargon and explain any unfamiliar technical terms;
- Include full contact details on all our outgoing correspondence; and
- Reply to e-mails by e-mail subject to privacy considerations.

Telephone

When you telephone us we will

- Answer your call quickly and politely;
- Identify ourselves to you by name and section;
- Take your number and call you back if we can't answer your query immediately; and
- * When transferring a call, tell you to whom you are being transferred.

Personal Callers

When you come to meet us in person we will

- Treat you with courtesy and respect your privacy;
- Maintain a clean and comfortable reception area at all public offices;
- Make every effort to accommodate any specific needs you may have; and
- If you are meeting with us by appointment, reception staff will be advised in advance of your arrival.

Information

When you seek information from us we will

- Provide up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information on our policies, schemes and services;
- Ensure that all information is made available in a clear and understandable format;
- Ensure that all information is made available in alternative formats; and
- Ensure that our website is kept up to date.

Applications for Licences

In addition to our underlying commitment to respond to correspondence within 20 days of receipt we also undertake to process all valid and complete applications for Licences in accordance with the timescales set out below:

10 days:

- Applications for Boating permits
- Applications for Registration of Vessels
- Applications for Swinging Moorings
- Applications for Winter Moorings

Timeframes in respect of a number of other schemes administered by Waterways Ireland, including encroachment licences and applications for way-leaves, cannot be classified due to the nature of the schemes themselves. Notwithstanding this, we will in consultation with our customers, seek to develop performance indicators in respect of these schemes during the lifetime of this Plan.

Complaints

If you are not satisfied with our efforts to maintain these standards or have concerns or complaints about any aspect of your dealings with us, please tell us. If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction at local level please write to:

Customer Services Co-ordinator
Waterways Ireland
Somerview House, Old Dublin Road
Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
Tel: 00 353 71 96 50787
Fax: 00 353 71 96 22866
E-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

Who will

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint advising you of the named officer who will be handling your complaint
- Complete the processing of your complaint within 20 working days or if this is not possible inform you of the timescale within which your complaint will be dealt with.
- Where your complaint is upheld, apologise to you and, where possible, try to rectify the situation immediately
- Where your complaint is not upheld, explain our reasons to you and advise you of your right of appeal.



3.5 Appeals

Appeals should be directed to the Chief Executive in the first instance, who will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint advising you of the named officer who will be handling your complaint
- Complete the processing of your complaint within 20 working days or if this is not possible inform you of the timescale within which your complaint will be dealt with.
- Where your complaint is upheld, apologise to you and, where possible, try to rectify the situation immediately
- Where your complaint is not upheld, explain our reasons to you and advise you of your right of appeal.

Further appeals should be directed to the office of the Ombudsman in the relevant jurisdiction. A review of the appeals avenues open to customers will be undertaken.

A comprehensive Appeals Procedure will then be developed if required.



4

Customer Service - Our Programme for Improvement

Waterways Ireland faces many challenges in providing a consistently excellent service to our wide range of customers. We have therefore adopted an ambitious programme for improving our delivery of services over the next three years. We will report on our progress in implementing this programme in our Annual Report.

customer
service



customer service
Our Programme for

4.1

Quality Service

Standards

A copy of our Customer Service Commitment will be displayed at all public offices and at strategic waterway locations. Our Customer Services Co-ordinator will monitor adherence to codes of practice and service targets and will report to Waterways Ireland Chief Executive on a quarterly basis. We will publish reports on our performance on our Website and in our Annual Report. A scheme to recognise excellence in the delivery of customer services will be considered in 2004.

Key actions

- Codes of Practice adopted by 1 February, 2004
- Customer Service Commitment on display in all public offices and at strategic waterway locations by 1 February, 2004
- Develop customer service training for staff
- Ongoing monitoring of service standards
- Quarterly reports to Chief Executive starting 31 March 2004
- Review of performance included in Annual Report
- Consideration of a scheme for recognition of excellent customer service delivery
- Review of customer service strategy on an annual basis

Improvement

4.2 Equality/Diversity

In the annual review of the customer service strategy, all services operated by Waterways Ireland will be considered to ensure that the three commonly acknowledged equality objectives in relation to different groups in society are addressed in the delivery of services:

- Equality of Opportunity
- Equality of Participation
- Equality of Outcome

Waterways Ireland will also implement the New Targeting Social Need Plan to enhance access and participation for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion

Key Actions

- Develop and implement an information and training programme for all staff in relation to Equality legislation
- Review all existing services in line with the Equality Scheme
- Ensure all new projects are equality proofed
- Implement the Waterways Ireland NTSN Plan to enhance access and participation for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion

4.3 Public Offices

Waterways Ireland seeks to ensure that its public offices are accessible to everyone. We will, where possible, address deficiencies in relation to access and privacy at our offices. All Waterways Ireland public areas will be maintained as pertaining to the Codes of Practice. We will continue to strive to meet the requirements of our customers with specific needs.

Key Actions

- Continue to enhance access to public offices, particularly for people with disabilities and others with specific needs
- Develop our means and resources to provide services to those with specific needs



4.4 On Shore Facilities

Waterways Ireland seeks to ensure that its on shore facilities are accessible to everyone. However, we are in some cases constrained by our obligation to protect our heritage and by the physical nature of the location of the service. We will, where possible, address deficiencies in relation to access at our on shore facilities.

Key Actions

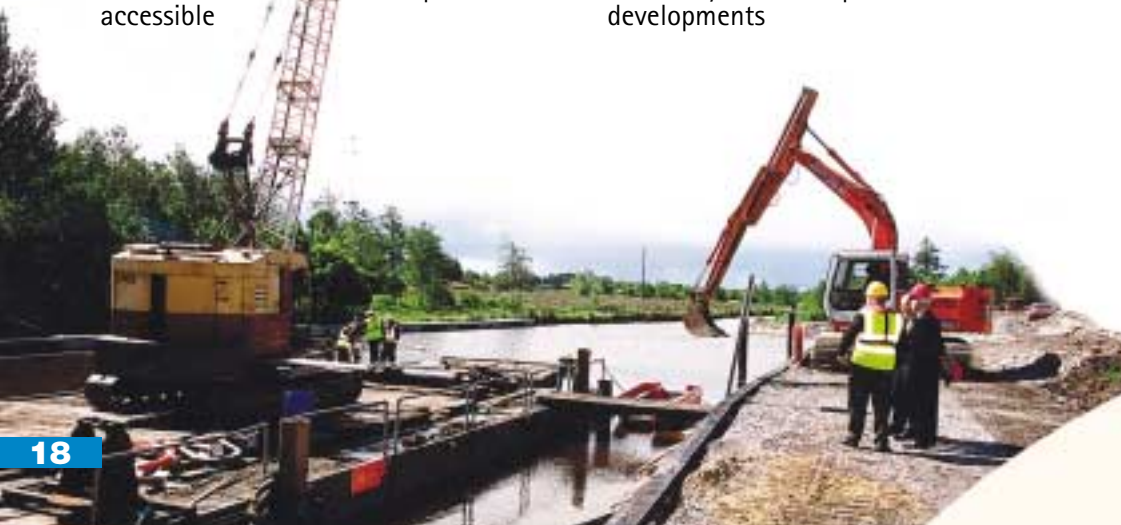
- Establishment of a Special Policy Unit to review our on shore facilities
- Engage in public consultation regarding the review - June 2004
- Formulation of on shore facilities policy - July 2004
- Ensure that our on shore facilities are well maintained and where possible accessible

4.5 Navigations

Waterways Ireland seeks to manage the various uses of the waterways and also to ensure that a balanced and consistent legal framework is put in place to build and encourage the safe use of the waterways.

Key Actions

- Review the Navigation Bye-Laws (Ongoing)
- Engage in public consultation regarding the reviewed bye-laws - December 2004
- Report on the findings of the public consultation - March 2005
- Review and implement new signage on the navigations - June 2004
- Engage in public consultations in all waterway related capital developments



4.6 Information

The redesign of Waterways Ireland website will be completed by July 2004. We will initiate a comprehensive review of existing Waterways Ireland forms and information leaflets during the spring of 2004. In the course of this review, specific attention will be directed to improving the quality and clarity of information provided and the use of technology to address the needs of customers with specific needs. The recommendations of the review will be implemented on a phased basis commencing in mid - 2004. In the interim we will ensure that information published by Waterways Ireland can be accessed through our website.

We will provide comprehensive lists of available publications at all public offices and review the accessibility to customers of our publications.

Key Actions

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive and user-friendly Website enabling access to information on Waterways Ireland work (July 2004)
- Institute review of application forms and information leaflets (March 2004)
- Develop information leaflets to answer frequently asked questions (March 2004)
- Review of accessibility of publications (March 2004)



4.7 Timeliness and Courtesy

Monitoring of adherence to our service targets and Codes of Practice will be the responsibility of line management with the support of the Customer Services Co-ordinator. Appropriate training in customer service skills will be provided to staff.

Key Actions

- Monitor the implementation of the codes of practice
- Develop a specific customer service training programme for frontline staff, in line with the codes of practice and Waterways Ireland commitments to service delivery.
- Develop a correspondence tracking system.

4.8 Complaints

A complaints procedure is available to our customers. Monitoring of this complaints procedure will be the responsibility of our Customer Services Co-ordinator and a report on its operation will be included in our Annual Report.

Key Actions

- Ongoing monitoring of complaints received
- Report to Chief Executive on a quarterly basis and publish review in Annual Report
- Review the complaints received and use the feedback to improve service delivery

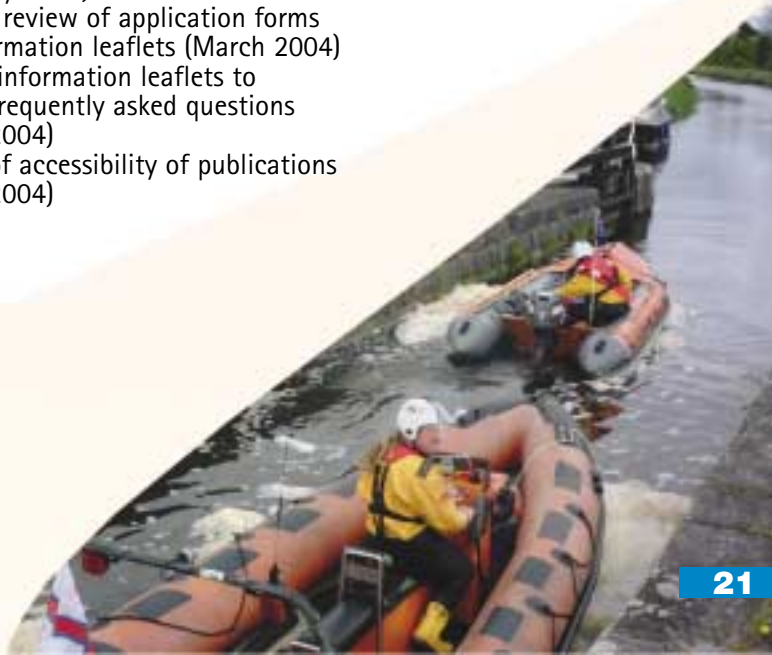
4.9

Appeals

Any refusals of service to our customers issued by Waterways Ireland will include a statement of the reasons for refusal and state how the decision may be appealed. Appeals should be directed to the Chief Executive in the first instance. Further appeals should be directed to the office of the Ombudsman in the relevant jurisdiction.

Key Actions

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive and user-friendly Website enabling access to information on Waterways Ireland work (July 2004)
- Institute review of application forms and information leaflets (March 2004)
- Develop information leaflets to answer frequently asked questions (March 2004)
- Review of accessibility of publications (March 2004)





4.10 Consultation and Evaluation

Meaningful improvement in the quality of service provided by Waterways Ireland can only be achieved in consultation with our internal and external customers. Over a six month period coinciding with the implementation of the Customer Service Strategy, we will make contact with our customers, both through representative groups and individually, to assess current levels of satisfaction with our services and to identify the most appropriate mechanisms for ongoing participation by customers in the monitoring and development of services. Emerging from this process we will publish our detailed strategy for customer consultation.

Key Actions

- Review and implement mechanisms for regular consultation with customers
- Publish report(s) on feedback from consultations with customers in this strategy

4.11 Choice

Electronic Business is essentially about facilitating access to services and access to information. The redesign of Waterways Ireland Website, to be completed by July 2004, will be a key element of Waterways Ireland e-business strategy, to provide a broader range of choice to customers in accessing information and services. Where appropriate, we will, in consultation with staff representatives and customers, explore the use of flexible working arrangements to optimise availability of services.

Key Actions

- Develop e-public service strategy, to maximise opportunities afforded by Information Technology
- Continue to review, in consultation with customers, choices in service delivery

4.12 Official Languages Equality

All official publications issued by Waterways Ireland will continue to be made available simultaneously in both English and Irish. Due regard will also be given to Ulster-Scots and other mediums. All customers who wish to be dealt with through either the English or Irish languages will be facilitated without detriment to the quality of service provided.

Key Actions

- Appoint Language Officer to Waterways Ireland
- Provide scheme of voluntary training in Irish to staff
- Increase the level of service through Irish available to our customers throughout Waterways Ireland

4.13 Internal Customer

A Partnership Forum, representative of front-line service providers from across Waterways Ireland has been established. This Group was actively involved in the preparation of this Plan and will also be involved in the monitoring of its implementation. The Group was specifically invited to advise on how Waterways Ireland can best serve and facilitate its internal customers in the provision of excellent customer service.

Key Actions

- The Waterways Ireland Partnership Forum will specifically consider internal customer issues and make recommendations (ongoing)
- Communicate actions and targets internally



For further information contact:

Waterways Ireland,
20 Darling Street,
Enniskillen,
Co. Fermanagh,
BT74 7EW



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F: +44 (0) 28 6634 6257
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