Waterways Ireland
Uiscebhealaí Éireann   Watterweys Airlann

HERITAGE & BIODIVERSITY PLAN

2030

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HERITAGE & BIODIVERSITY PLAN

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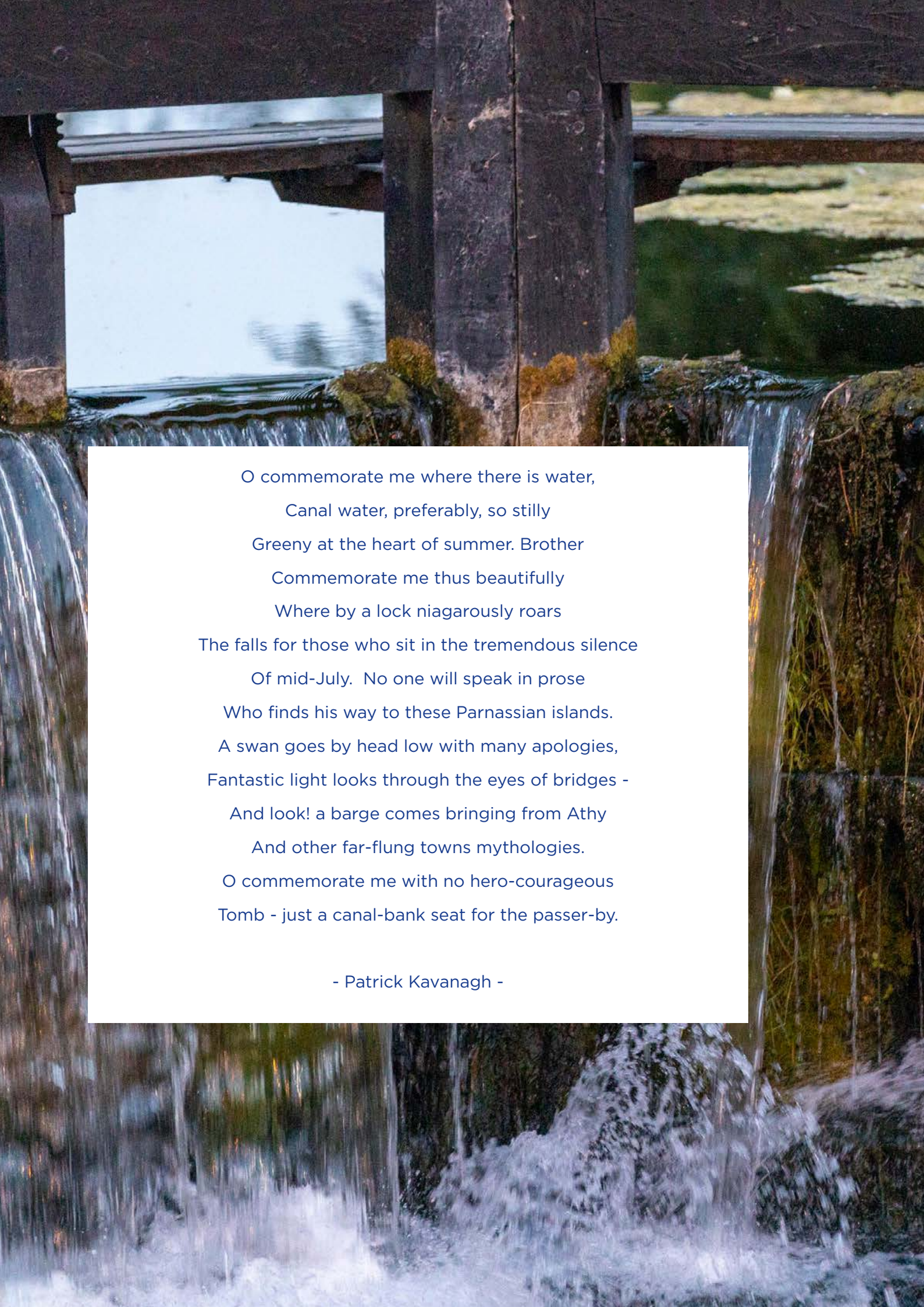## 30

Waterways Ireland
Uiscebhealaí Éireann Watterweys Airlann

O commemorate me where there is water,

Canal water, preferably, so stilly

Greeny at the heart of summer. Brother

Commemorate me thus beautifully

Where by a lock niagarously roars

The falls for those who sit in the tremendous silence

Of mid-July. No one will speak in prose

Who finds his way to these Parnassian islands.

A swan goes by head low with many apologies,

Fantastic light looks through the eyes of bridges -

And look! a barge comes bringing from Athy

And other far-flung towns mythologies.

O commemorate me with no hero-courageous

Tomb - just a canal-bank seat for the passer-by.

- Patrick Kavanagh -

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contents

Photograph courtesy of Enda Murphy

Foreword

As CEO, I am proud to present the Waterways Ireland Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2030. Our shared inland waterways are an essential part of our cross-border heritage and have played a crucial role in shaping Ireland's history and culture.

This plan is a comprehensive approach to preserving and promoting the natural, cultural, and historical significance of our inland waterways. It aims to ensure that these waterways remain accessible, sustainable, and protected for future generations to enjoy.

As with our first Heritage Plan, we are committed to working closely with local communities, government agencies, environmental organisations, and other stakeholders to identify the most important areas of focus for conservation efforts. We will also develop awareness programmes that engage people of all demographics in learning about the history and heritage of our waterways. Our actions will be delivered in a manner that is sustainable, transparent and accountable.

We believe that by working together, we can create a legacy of appreciation and stewardship for these vital resources. This plan is not just about preserving the past; it is also about building a brighter future where our waterways continue to play an inspiration role in our lives.

Thank you for your ongoing support as we continue our custodianship, protecting and promoting Ireland's inland waterways for generations to come.

John McDonagh
Chief Executive

About this Plan

This is Waterways Ireland's second Heritage & Biodiversity Plan, proactively addressing how our organisation manages the natural, built and cultural heritage of our waterways and develop appropriate strategies for their conservation, interpretation and promotion. We will build on the successes, lessons learned and invaluable partnerships developed since 2016 and strive to be an exemplar in heritage management.

With this Plan in place, Waterways Ireland can ensure that these valuable resources are protected while also enhancing public appreciation and understanding. The plan will also continue the organisation's commitment to work closely with local communities, government agencies, environmental organisations and other stakeholders to foster greater appreciation for the inland waterways' natural beauty, biological importance and cultural significance.

Finally, it is imperative we continue to manage and maintain our heritage and biodiversity assets so they are climate resilient, ensuring their enjoyment by this and future generations. In doing so we also will address the current biodiversity crisis and meet our legal and ethical obligations to preserve and restore these rich ecological and cultural corridors.

Photograph courtesy of Frances Kiely

Photograph courtesy of Kelly Whalley

Lessons Learned from the Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan 2016-2020

Following an independent review of our last Heritage Plan the following conclusions were reached...

- **Results, Outcomes & Impacts:** The Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan 2016-2020 provided a platform for a wide range of research, operational and engagement activities. There was a clear relationship to the UN SDGs and the waterways provide a unique space for engaging with the SDGs. However, at the time this alignment was neither planned nor reported on.

- **Lessons Learned:** This Heritage & Biodiversity Plan will, through integrated management, align the organisation with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Conditions for Success:** The successful implementation of the plan was dependent on the combined knowledge and expertise of Waterways Ireland staff and the partners.

- **Lessons Learned:** There is a need to strengthen the knowledge and data foundation that underpins this Heritage & Biodiversity Plan. This will be achieved by leveraging the ongoing work of Waterways Ireland alongside undertaking new research and supporting citizen science initiatives.

- **Replication:** Across the case studies (See Appendix II) there were no actions that could not be replicable and could have been combined into overall programmes directed towards achieving clear outcomes.

- **Lessons Learned:** Waterways Heritage assets provide a unique opportunity for heritage and biodiversity experiences, reaching communities across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Overall Delivery Outcomes of the Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan 2016-2020

The overarching aim of the original Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan was to "Identify and protect the unique waterways heritage and promote its sustainable use for the enjoyment of this and future generations". Each action within the plan was reviewed using the three "action types" of identify, promote and protect.

- **Identify:** Any action focused on generating data or conducting research. The outputs from these projects are diverse and can directly link to the actions relating to protection and promotion.

- **Protect:** Any action focused on direct protection and preservation of heritage assets.

- **Promote:** Any action focused on promotion to and communication with diverse stakeholders.

Identify 31%

Protect: 19%

Promote 50%
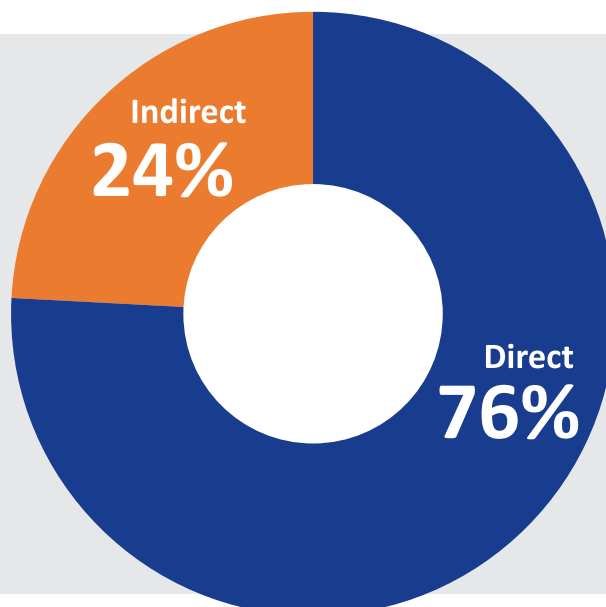
The assessment concluded that 50% were related to Promote Actions, 31% were related to Identify Actions and 19% were related to Protect actions.

Partnership Delivery

A key feature of the actions contained within the Heritage Plan was the high level of direct responsibility for delivery of the actions:

- Direct: 76%
- Indirect: 24%
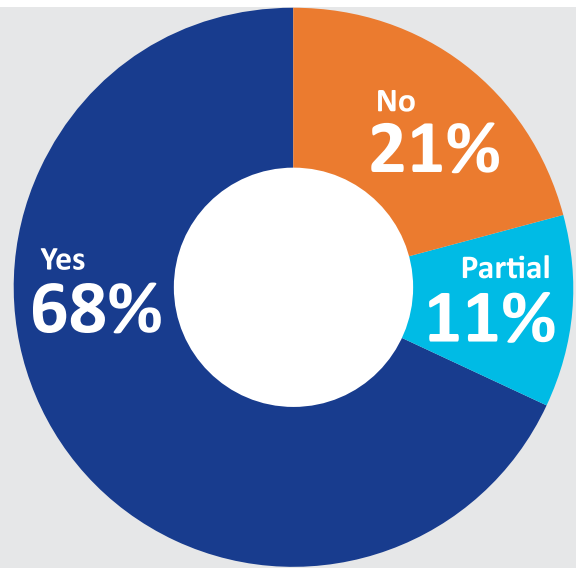
Indirect 24%

Direct 76%

4

Delivery

The rate of delivery of the action plan was very high considering the wide array of actions contained within it.

- 68% of the actions were delivered.
- 11% were partially delivered.
- 21% were not delivered.

No **21%**
Partial **11%**
Yes **68%**

Of those actions that were not delivered, it was Identify actions that were the least likely to have been delivered but the number was very low (6). The reasons for not delivering were generally associated to not having resources in place or that the project was linked to a wider strategy or plan and this context superseded delivery.
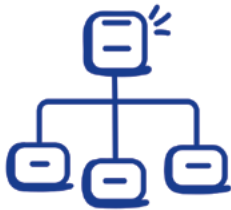
Indicators

When reviewing the existing actions, a LOGIC framework was considered. This framework reviews a plan or programme from the perspective of INPUTS, ACTIVITIES, OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES and IMPACT. The purpose of this was to identify actions that could have indicators associated with them to monitor progress and evaluate impact.

- Those identified as Yes were actions that could easily be measurable.
- Those identified as Maybe were actions that might be easily measurable.
- Those identified as No were actions that would be difficult to measure.

Maybe **17%**
Yes **32%**
No **22%**
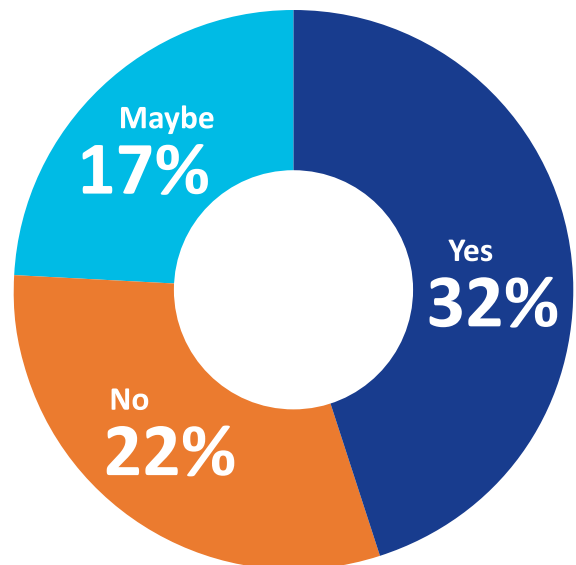
Approximately 70% of the actions could be measurable. This insight was used to adopt and inform the development of Objectives & Key Results (OKRs).

Current Key Policy Context

A desk review of national and international heritage policies was undertaken, to identify if there had been material changes in the policies listed since the previous heritage plan. Through this review a number of additional policies were identified. These have informed the new Waterways Ireland Heritage & Biodiversity Plan. These include:

1. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
2. The EU Nature Restoration Law
3. A European Green Deal
4. The European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, 2018
5. The Davos Declaration 2018: Towards a high quality Baukultur (building culture) for Europe, 2018
6. Heritage Ireland 2030
7. National Climate Action Plan
8. Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan
9. Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines
10. A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025
11. Project Ireland 2040
12. Archaeology 2030: A Strategic Approach for Northern Ireland (2020)
13. National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
14. Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy
15. Regional Development Strategy — Building a Better Future

A detailed list of all relevant legislation and policy is contained in Appendix I.

Alignment of the Heritage & Biodiversity Plan with Government Policies & the UN SDGs

The Waterways Ireland Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2030, Heritage Ireland 2030, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) all share a common goal of preserving and promoting Ireland's built, cultural and natural heritage. Each recognises that these resources are essential components of our national identity and contribute significantly to our environmental, social and economic well-being.

This Plan focusses on preserving and promoting our shared waterways heritage and biodiversity, recognising their interconnectedness and the vital role they play in sustaining our waterways for future generations. It aims to promote sustainable use of these waterways for recreational purposes while also protecting their natural and cultural heritage. The plan identifies three key areas of focus:

1. Develop a solid foundation of high quality and openly accessible waterways heritage and biodiversity knowledge.

2. Ensure that Waterways Ireland's management of heritage and biodiversity is integrated across the organisation's activities, to support alignment with the UN SDGs

3. Strengthen and support inspiring heritage and biodiversity experiences across our shared waterways.

Similarly, Heritage Ireland 2030 is a national policy framework that seeks to protect and promote Ireland's heritage until the end of this decade. It identifies five strategic priorities for action:

- **safeguarding** our built heritage;

- **strengthening** our intangible cultural heritage;

- **improving access** to heritage sites;

- **supporting** sustainable tourism; and

- **promoting** research, education, and innovation.

This is also mirrored in array of heritage policies and approaches in Northern Ireland including:

- The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) sets out regional guidance to "Conserve, protect, and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment". It recognises that Northern Ireland has a rich and diverse historic environment that contributes to identity, sense of place and history.

- Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate - Endorsed by the Executive in 2012 - A strategic and systematic approach to the management of historic property is set out.

- Strategic Planning Policy Statements for Northern Ireland (SPPS)

Moreover, the Plan aligns with several UN SDGs. For instance:

- **Goal 3:** Good Health & Well-being: The waterways and how we engage with them for well-being, recreational or mindfulness will help ensure healthy communities.

- **Goal 11:** Sustainable Cities & Communities - Promote sustainable tourism by providing opportunities for people to engage with these resources in a responsible manner.

- **Goal 15:** Life on Land – The Plan supports biodiversity conservation efforts in terrestrial and freshwater aquatic ecosystems.

- **Goal 17:** Partnerships for the Goals - Through collaboration between various stakeholders like government agencies or local communities among others can achieve common goals.

Indeed, a qualitative review of the Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan 2016-2020 was undertaken in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to assess alignment, retrospectively. This included a systematic review of the Heritage Plan in relation to 6 indicators under each of the 17 Goals.

These indicators are those most relevant to a European context and align with the Eurostat SDG reporting framework. This qualitative analysis indicated is that a small number of SDGs should be priority for the new Waterways Ireland Heritage & Biodiversity Plan, though of course other SDGs will also inform overall alignment to OKRs.

Through alignment with other complimentary goals, alongside those of UN SDGs, we can create a legacy of appreciation for these vital resources that will endure for generations to come. This Plan will follow a comprehensive approach to identifying areas where we can work together towards creating a more sustainable future while also preserving our rich shared heritage.

Heritage in the Context of a Climate and Biodiversity Crisis

Heritage is an essential component of our cultural, social, and economic well-being. It encompasses both natural and cultural resources that have been passed down through generations. However, in the context of a climate and biodiversity crisis, heritage is under threat like never before. The accelerating pace of environmental degradation poses a significant challenge to the preservation of our heritage, and it is crucial that we take action now to protect these valuable resources for future generations.

One of the most pressing threats facing heritage in the context of a climate and biodiversity crisis is habitat loss. As ecosystems become degraded or destroyed, species lose their homes and are pushed towards ever increasing vulnerability. This not only has devastating consequences for wildlife but also erodes cultural values associated with these landscapes.

Another significant threat to heritage in this context is extreme weather events such as floods, droughts or storms that can damage our historical navigations, monuments or important navigational infrastructure. In addition to these immediate threats, long-term environmental changes such as waterways level rise pose a risk to communities and their cultural heritage sites.

Photograpgh courtesy of Marta Majer

©Taming Ire

Photograpgh courtesy of Paul Dempsey

Photograpgh courtesy of Padraig Mahon

The importance of Waterways Ireland leading by example

Waterways Ireland plays a crucial role in protecting our heritage. As custodians of Ireland's inland waterways, we have the responsibility to lead by example and set the standard for conservation efforts. The protection of our natural and cultural heritage is essential not only for its intrinsic value but also for the benefits it provides to society, including educational opportunities, economic development, and social cohesion. Means by which Waterways Ireland can lead by example in the protection of our heritage is through alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Embedding the UN SDGs is also a Key Output of the draft Waterways Ireland Long Term Plan; illustrating the integration of sustainable practices across the organisation. In addition, the ongoing work by our Education Team is instrumental in fostering a sense of shared heritage and ownership in young people, who will become future custodians of the inland waterways.

Finally, it is important to note that leadership must occur at all levels within Waterways Ireland in order to be effective in protecting our heritage. It requires collaboration among internal and external stakeholders as such partnerships are instrumental in leveraging each other's strengths, expertise and knowledge towards shared objectives. At the recent Citizen's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss the final report stated that an all-island and wider transboundary approach should be taken into consideration with regard to biodiversity conservation and restoration. As a North South Body, we are ideally placed to adopt such approaches. It went on to stress that public bodies must be held accountable for their performance in biodiversity related legislation, directives and policies. This should also extend to built and cultural heritage assets.

Alignment with other Waterways Ireland Plans

10
Year Plan

Reports
to
Monitoring
Committee

Corporate
Plan
(Three
Yearly)

Business
Plan
(Annually)

Climate
Action
Plan

Heritage
&
Biodiversity
Plan

Photograpgh courtesy of Monica Lindsay

Types of Waterway Heritage Assets

NATURAL HERITAGE

Biodiversity & Natural Heritage

Biodiversity refers to all the variety of life that can be found on Earth. Biodiversity can also refer to variability at a range of biological levels: genetic, species and ecosystem. Inland waterways play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity by providing habitats for an array of plant and animal species. We are fortunate that many of these habitats and species have been afforded protection at EU and National levels (e.g. SAC, SPA, pNHA, ASSI, Ramsar). These waterways, which include rivers, canals, and lakes, are home to numerous aquatic species such as fish, amphibians, molluscs, and crustaceans. Additionally, they provide important adjoining terrestrial habitats and these important ecological characteristics have led to the establishment of specialised plant communities that support a range of insects, birds, and mammals. These are crucially important corridors for aquatic and riparian biodiversity. Our high quality aquatic habitats provide for a range of protected species, as well as important fisheries on the canals, rivers and lakes. Waterways Ireland has responsibility for management of the canals and waterways infrastructure, however under the Water Framework Directive we much ensure they also achieve Good Ecological Potential. This ensures we maintain the habitat integrity in a time of a Biodiversity Crisis, their landscape character and recreational potential. In Appendix III you will see a map of the inland waterways and the associated wildlife designations.

Ecosystem Services & Natural Capital

Inland waterways provide a wide range of ecosystem services that are essential to human well-being. These services include regulating services such as flood control and water purification, which help to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters and ensure access to clean water for human consumption. They also provide cultural services such as recreation and tourism, which contribute significantly to local economies and support human health and well-being. Moreover, inland waterways play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity by providing habitats for an array of plant and animal species. Another emerging field of research is how the waterways also represent significant natural capital assets that can generate economic benefits through sustainable use or conservation. As such, it is essential to manage these systems sustainably to ensure the long-term provision of ecosystem services.

Geology

The significance of geology can often overlooked because it lies beneath all other natural landscape components, including habitats and ecosystems. Nevertheless, it plays a crucial role in shaping everything that exists above it. Numerous noteworthy geological features can be found adjacent to or within easy reach of the inland waterways, such as the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark in County Fermanagh. Moreover, geology serves as the backdrop for various picturesque waterway routes like the Deep Sinking on the Royal Canal.

Photograpgh courtesy of Janet Coughlan

Archaeological, Architectural, Industrial & Underwater Cultural Heritage

Archaeology

Archaeology involves studying past human societies through the remnants they left behind and their environmental evidence. The island of Ireland has archaeological remains dating back thousands of years, from the end of the last Ice Age. Notable archaeological sites along our waterways include Clonmacnoise on the Shannon Navigation and Mountsandel Fort on the Lower Bann, dating back to 7,000 BC. Waterways Ireland carries out its duties while adhering to strict archaeological mitigation measures and has made new discoveries, such as ancient dugout canoes found on the Shannon Navigation.

Monuments

The Monument classification is incredibly diverse, encompassing heritage sites such as buildings, excavated caves, and ritual sites. Essentially, monuments must have been intentionally created and have remaining evidence of their existence, but they are a varied group otherwise. In the Republic of Ireland, Monuments typically refer to manmade works pre-dating 1700 AD (although some post-1700 AD examples are listed). Northern Ireland does not make this distinction and can include scheduled twentieth-century examples like the Belfast Shipyard's 'Samson and Goliath' cranes or more recently the suite of 5 Lock Structures of the Lower Bann Navigation. Some Monuments may not be visible on the surface but are known through excavation alone. When dealing with this aspect of our heritage, the Sites & Monuments Record in NI and the Records of Monuments & Places in RoI serve as invaluable resources.

Architectural Heritage

Architectural Heritage encompasses traditional and designed structures or buildings, as well as groups of buildings such as industrial complexes, streetscapes, and urban vistas that hold historical, artistic, archaeological, scientific, social or technical significance. The architectural heritage is safeguarded by statutory protections like Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Elements within or alongside Ireland's inland waterways may be subject to these designations. Non-designated features that contribute positively to the unique character of the waterway are treated with appropriate respect. Additionally, this category acknowledges the importance of heritage skills and knowledge. As a result, practitioners with specialised expertise in maintaining and managing the wide range of heritage features that make up our navigations are in high demand.

Industrial Heritage

The term Industrial Heritage is more appropriate when referring to the waterways, although it is sometimes included in the broader definition of Architectural Heritage. It encompasses sites, structures, plant, machinery and mechanisms that are associated with industrial activities like manufacturing, mining sites and transportation infrastructure. The physical remains of Ireland's inland navigations' industrial heritage can be found above or below water, including bridges, lock gates, operating mechanisms, lock keepers' cottages, quays, cranes and cut-stone water channels with elements such as lock gates, weirs and stone banks often hidden underwater. The Cutts Lock on the Lower Bann Navigation (depicted below) is part of the Industrial Heritage Record. Waterways Ireland must be aware that industrial heritage is not always visible to the naked eye during their works. However, innovative technologies now enable us to detect such features by scanning beneath the ground surface.

Photograpgh courtesy of Sinead Lawlor

Photograpgh courtesy of Sonja Moore

Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH)

UCH refers to the remains of human activity from the earliest times in maritime, inter-tidal and inland waterway contexts. In relation to inland waterways this may include wrecks, archaeological objects, weirs, historic bridges, fording points, navigation structures, revetment walls and other associated structures and features which hold great historical, cultural, and scientific value. The underwater environment can afford remarkable levels of preservation and additional discoveries regularly occur. Underwater cultural heritage is protected in the Republic of Ireland by Section 3 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987 and Ireland's ongoing commitment to the protection and management of UCH by the intended ratification of the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage with the enactment of the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023. In Northern Ireland, several statutory provisions including the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects Order 1995 establish the legal framework for the protection and management of all aspects of the historic environment, including underwater cultural heritage and the Rules of the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage are adopted as best practice.

Cultural Heritage

Floating Heritage

Floating Heritage is a term often used to describe Heritage Boats, which serve as a tangible representation of waterways with significant navigation history. A boat can be classified as a heritage boat if it's over 25 years old and holds significance due to its intrinsic construction or its association with the country's commercial, cultural, economic, industrial, military, political, social or other history. In Ireland, several groups and individuals such as the Heritage Boat Association and the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland are advocates for preserving these vessels. In Ireland, Floating Heritage has been expanded to include associated intangible cultural aspects and is characterised by a unique 'living relationship' between the community of users and waterway communities and the traditional heritage boats that have been restored, adapted and/or preserved. This relationship is built on a strong foundation of traditions, knowledge and skills. These traditional skills are shared by the boat owners within the wider community and through outreach events, raising the status and awareness of floating heritage, heritage boats and their history as well as positive public engagement in cultural heritage. This has resulted in Floating Heritage being included in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Heritage Objects & Archives

The term "Heritage Objects" refers to a group of objects that are over 25 years old and possess cultural or historical significance, including works of art or industry such as maps, engineering drawings, books, documents, and genealogical records. Waterways Ireland has a rich collection of such objects and is actively working towards making them accessible to the public through online resources. Additionally, interested individuals can view these objects in person at our Archive located in Enniskillen or access it online here: **https://archive.waterwaysireland.org**

Music & the Arts

Throughout history, the waterways have inspired musicians, singers, artists, poets, and writers, providing them with rich opportunity for creative expression. Music and the Arts play a pivotal role in the preservation of traditional knowledge, customs and folklore of the waterways. Songs like *The Auld Triangle* made famous by Brendan Behan in his 1950s play 'The Quare Fellow'. It was immortalised in song by Luke Kelly of the Dubliners and it portrays a prisoner's longing for freedom along the banks of the Royal Canal. Writers celebrated the beauty of the landscape, such as Richard Hayward's travel book Where the River Shannon Flows, which gave a unique insight into rural life in Ireland as he recounts his journey from the Shannon Pot in the 2 weeks before the outbreak of WWII in 1939, while James Joyce's *Ulysses* paints a vivid picture of the role of the canals in Dublin life in the early 20th Century. Artists such as Jack B. Yeats and Harry Kernoff painted contemporary scenes from The Shannon and Dublin canals and Docks in the 1920s. 'Lough Erne Shore' has been covered by artists like Paul Brady and Dolores Keane. It is a traditional Irish folk song that speaks to the stunning landscapes and emotional resonance of Lough Erne.

Oral History & Folklore

Oral History & Folklore is an essential and ancient part of our waterways, encompassing memories and stories that are passed down from one generation to another. Often, these stories have no tangible artefact to support their authenticity. This makes preserving them crucial as they are ephemeral resources that hold immense value. It's essential to prioritize the preservation of these memories and traditions so that they can be safeguarded for current and future generations to come. Waterways Ireland has commenced collecting these oral histories, some of which can be heard on our Archive website, as well as our podcast series with Turtle Bunbury.

Placenames

The continued use and evolution of Placenames are closely tied to oral history. They are names given to individual fields, parts of fields, small sections of rivers, and urban street names that often provide a clue as to why they were originally named. For more on waterway placenames check out our collection from the Barrow Navigation Operations Team on the Meitheal Logainm website. With each passing generation, these placenames are being lost, making them a unique insight into our navigations that we must preserve.

Local History

Local History offers a distinctive and more detailed understanding of the significance of waterways to local communities and regions, which can often be overlooked as navigations evolve over time. For example, the Grand Canal played a crucial role in transporting goods across the midlands and directly affected the growth and prosperity of towns and villages along its route. Currently, interested individuals, researchers, and local history groups are gathering this information. The Plan aims to collaborate with such stakeholders and explore opportunities to make this information accessible.

Landscapes

According to the European Landscape Convention, a landscape refers to an area that is perceived by people and whose character is shaped by natural and/or human factors. This definition encompasses land, inland waterways, and marine areas, including both exceptional and ordinary or degraded landscapes. The waterways in Ireland offer a diverse range of landscapes, from the lakes of Lough Erne and the Grand Canal connecting Dublin to Shannon, to the rolling hillsides of Barrow Navigation. During the first Heritage Plan a dedicated Landscape Character Assessment was piloted for the urban Royal and Grand Canal in Dublin City.

Mission Statement

Waterways Ireland is committed to preserving and promoting our shared waterways heritage and biodiversity, recognising their interconnectedness and the vital role they play in sustaining our waterways for future generations.

Our mission is to inspire and empower individuals and communities to take action towards protecting and celebrating these invaluable resources.

Objectives & Key Results

Explanation of Approach

OKRs, or Objectives and Key Results, are a popular goal-setting framework used by many organisations, including the Waterways Ireland Climate Action Plan, to align their strategies and measure progress towards achieving desired outcomes. While initially developed for business purposes, OKRs have been adapted to other fields, including heritage management. Heritage management involves the preservation and promotion of cultural and natural resources for present and future generations. This requires careful planning, resource allocation, and monitoring of progress towards specific goals. OKRs provide an effective approach to achieving these objectives by breaking them down into measurable targets that can be tracked over time. Each year an annual programme of actions will be undertaken to ensure we achieve our targets. This also allows for ongoing review, in order to achieve the OKRs throughout the life of the Plan.

One of the key advantages of using OKRs in heritage management is their ability to establish clear priorities. By identifying specific objectives and key results, Waterways Ireland can focus on the most important tasks while ensuring that resources are allocated effectively. Another advantage is that OKRs provide a way to measure progress towards specific outcomes. This ensures that everyone involved in heritage management understands their role in achieving specific outcomes and is accountable for their performance.

Finally, OKRs promote accountability and provide a framework for collaboration among stakeholders involved in heritage throughout our waterways. By establishing shared objectives and key results, different groups can work together towards common goals while maintaining clarity around what each group is responsible for achieving.

Photograpgh courtesy of Emma Laffey

Objective 1:

Develop a solid foundation of high quality and openly accessible waterways heritage and biodiversity knowledge.

Timeframe: Annually

KR 1.1 Within the scope of this plan, all publishable data is made available in the year the data is collected.

KR 1.2 Heritage research initiatives are progressed to underpin Waterways Ireland's role as custodians of heritage and biodiversity assets.

KR 1.3 Data and knowledge is integrated across Waterways Ireland decision-making processes.

Impacts

- Open-source heritage and biodiversity data
- Informed management and investment decisions
- Informed decision making
- Compliance & risk reduction

Objective 2:

Ensure that Waterways Ireland's management of heritage and biodiversity is integrated across the organisation's activities and external partnerships, to support alignment with the UN SDGs.

Timeframe: Annually

KR 2.1 A heritage and biodiversity training audit is developed for Waterways Ireland staff.

KR 2.2 Enhanced skills and capacity are available to Waterways Ireland and external stakeholders.

KR 2.3 Best practice delivery of heritage, biodiversity and climate initiatives and partnerships.

Impacts

- Internal Capacity
- Building Strategic approach to the WI
- Custodian Role
- Reporting on alignment with SDGs

KR 2.4 Waterways Ireland communicates on the alignment of our activities with the UN SDGs.

KR 2.5 Secure strategic partnerships with heritage organisations over the life of the Plan.

Objective 3:

Strengthen and support inspiring heritage and biodiversity experiences across our shared waterways.

Timeframe: Annually

KR 3.1 Increased numbers engaging with heritage and biodiversity initiatives delivered by Waterways Ireland.

KR 3.2 Increased support for, and engagement with, community organisations and other stakeholders promoting heritage and biodiversity initiatives.

KR 3.3 Waterways Ireland digital heritage resources reach new audiences.

KR 3.4 Feedback and insights are gathered from partners engaging with waterways heritage and biodiversity to inform our integrated management approach.

Impacts

- **Community groups are activated and heritage assets are animated.**

- **Community groups are more empowered to engage with Waterways Heritage OKRs**

Photograpgh courtesy of Daniel O'Neill

How the proposed OKR Framework have been applied to the previous Heritage Plan

To provide greater clarity on how the proposed new Heritage Plan implementation framework would compare to the previous more action-based approach we have retrospectively applied OKRs to five case studies delivered under the previous plan (available in Appendix II).

Case Study 1: Heritage Boat Survey: This initiative would have contributed to KR 1.2 in terms of being a research initiative that was developing new data and knowledge regarding heritage assets. Were this initiative to be developed under an OKR framework, more focus may have been placed on how the results from the survey are published and how data is shared both internally and externally.

Case Study 2: Digital Heritage: This is the kind of initiative that would have contributed to KR 3.1 and KR 3.3 in terms of developing digital heritage assets that can be accessed by a wider audience. Were this initiative to be developed under an OKR framework within the new Heritage & Biodiversity Plan, more focus may be placed on how to track users across the digital platforms and garner feedback so progress towards Objective 3 could be tracked.

Case Study 3: Community Engagement & Supports: This initiative would have contributed to KR 3.2 and potentially KR 3.4 in terms of providing supports to communities and developing mechanism for them to report on the initiatives undertaken with the funding. Were this initiative to be further developed under an OKR framework within the new Heritage & Biodiversity Plan, more focus may be placed on how to evaluate the range and mix of groups receiving funding, gaps in locations of funded projects and impact from the funded initiatives (e.g. spillover effects).

Case Study 4: Built Heritage - Heritage Hubs and Heritage Skills: This initiative would have contributed to KR 2.3 in terms of providing access to relevant heritage skills in specific locations and to KR 1.2 in terms of the research underpinning the project. Within the new Heritage & Biodiversity Plan, more focus could be placed on how the results from the research are published, data shared both internally and externally.

Case Study 5: Our commitment to protecting biodiversity inc. the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, Water Framework Directive monitoring, oversight of our own capital and maintenance works: This initiative would have contributed to KR 2.4 in terms of supporting annual disclosures on the contribution of Waterways Ireland activities to the UN SDGs.

Governance & Reporting

Governance is central to the delivery of this Heritage & Biodiversity Plan. Our approach builds on the Objectives and Key Results (OKR) framework; ensuring that responsibility is delegated across the organisation with results-oriented processes enabling those with specific experience and expertise to make the decisions that will make the difference required.

Our internal governance framework makes clear that the Climate & Sustainability Manager (with oversight for Plan implementation) agrees actions with Senior Management during each Business Planning year. Where required, Task & Finish Groups will be brought together from relevant teams to deliver initiatives required to achieve results. Task & Finish Groups may be small teams of two or three people and there may be initiatives which can be delivered by individuals. Each task and finish group will have a designated lead, appointed by the Head of Team whose area is most central to delivering the initiative. It is recognised that multiple initiatives will be required to achieve some key results. Our ongoing monitoring and reporting will continue to be important in guiding decision-making. It is important that the Heritage & Biodiversity Plan remains open to best practice and external insights and we will hold a mid-term review of the Plan along with ongoing monitoring of emerging best practice, innovative approaches and development sin policy and legislation.

Appendices

Photograpgh courtesy of Margaret Downey

Appendix I

Key Legislation & Policies

EU Heritage Legislation	
Planning & Built Heritage	SEA Directive 2001/42/EC (Strategic Environmental Assessment) EIA Directive 1985/37/EEC (as amended) (Environmental Impact Assessment)
Archives and Record Management	European Communities Act, 1972 (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 1998 INSPIRE Directive (2007/2/EC – Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community
Natural Heritage	Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC) Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) Freshwater Fish Directive (Council Directive 78/659/EC) Water Framework Directive (Council Directive 2000/60/EC) Environmental Liability Directive (Council Directive 2004/35/EC)

International Conventions	
Archaeology	European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta Convention), 1997
Architecture	European Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention), 1997 Burra Charter adopted 1999 Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage, 2003 Joint ICOMOS-TICCIH Principles for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage Sites, Structures, Areas and Landscapes 2011 (*The Dublin Principles*)
Natural Heritage	Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention), 1979 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention), 1979 Agreement on Conservation of Bats in Europe (Bonn Convention), 1993 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), 1971 Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), 1974 Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) (Bonn Convention), 1996 International Tropical Timber Agreement 1994, (1996) Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy
Culture and Natural Heritage	UNESCO Convention for the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Preparation of Cultural Heritage Sites 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage
Landscape	European Landscape Convention, 2000

Republic of Ireland Legislation	
Planning & Built Heritage	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Act (NIAH) 1999 Planning and Development Act, 2000 Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 Heritage Act 1995
Archaeology & Archaeological Objects	National Monuments Act 1930 and subsequent amendments of 1954, 1987, 1994 & 2004 National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023
Heritage Objects, Museums, Archives & Records Management	National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 Local Government Act 1994 National Archives Act, 1986 Data Protection Act, 1988 Freedom of Information Act, 1997
Natural Heritage	Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2012 Fisheries (Consolidation) Act, 1959 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, 1999Flora (Protection) Order, 2015 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and 2013
Landscape	Local Government (Planning and Development Acts, 1963-1999) Planning and Development Act 2000

Northern Ireland Legislation	
Planning, Archaeology & Built Heritage	Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 Planning (NI) Order 1991 Protection of Wrecks Act (1973)
Heritage Objects, Museums, Archives & Records Management	Museums and Galleries (NI) Order 1998 The Public Records Act (NI), 1923 Disposal of Documents Order, 1925 Data Protection Act 1998 Freedom of Information Act 2000
Natural Heritage	Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 Environment (NI) Order 2002 (as amended) Habitat Regulations 1995 (as amended)
Landscape	Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985 Amenity Lands (NI) Act 1965

Appendix II

Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan 2016-2020 Review

Case Studies

'BLACKTHORN' LOWER LOUGH ERNE. CASTLE ARCHDALE. WWII.

Case Study

Heritage Boat Survey

A survey of traditional heritage boats on the Grand Canal, Royal Canal and Barrow Navigation, included a register of heritage boats, a register of traditional boat builders, a glossary of terminology, a literature review, an audit of printed material, maps, and a priority list of boats in need of conservation. The report gives a picture of the numbers, condition and distribution of traditional heritage boats throughout the Waterways Ireland navigations in the Republic of Ireland.

Purpose/Goal Location
All Island

Start Date
2016

Approach
Research

Use of Volunteers
No

Evidence of Impact
Yes – survey results and report

Funder/Partner
- Waterways Ireland
- Inland Waterways Association of Ireland
- Heritage Boat Association
- Meitheal Mara (Community boatyard)

Links

WI Heritage Boat Survey 2017

https://www.waterwaysireland.org/heritage-boat-survey

Case Study

Digital Heritage

Purpose/Goal

Showcasing examples of scientific, community advocacy and community interactions with local environment and heritage assets in order to enhance public knowledge and understanding of Ireland's heritage.

Location

Online

Approach

Digital communications

Use of Volunteers

No

Evidence of Impact

Yes

Funder/Partner

• Waterways Ireland and Contractors

Links

Waterways Zibaldone: https://tours.innovision.ie/v/0Vq2aL7OjXY

Virtual Reality Project: https://youtu.be/FHEK_Y1P_7Y?si=lNwFORPQ32eqCjdp

Online Open Day: https://www.innovision.ie/waterwaysireland

Waterways Ireland Digital Archive andHistory of the Waterways: https://archive.waterwaysireland.org/

Videos

Waterways Ireland YouTube account/library: https://www.youtube.com/user/waterwaysireland/videos

"Waterways Ireland is committed to developing new and innovative approaches to heritage interpretation" and ensuring that Digital Heritage supports this for current and future generations. UNESCO describe heritage as "our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations".

Photograpgh courtesy of Elspeth Hall

Case Study

Digital Heritage

Heritage is something that is, or should be, passed from generation to generation because it is valued. Heritage resources span cultural, educational, scientific, administrative, technical realms, and some of these are being created in or converted into digital form. These digital materials include texts, databases, still and moving images, audio, graphics, VR/AR and web pages, among a wide and growing range of formats.

Many of these resources have lasting value and significance, and therefore constitute a heritage that should be protected and preserved for current and future generations. Digital heritage is likely to become more important and more widespread over time. Increasingly, individuals, organisations and communities are using digital technologies to document and express what they value and what they want to pass on to future generations. New forms of expression and communication have emerged that did not exist previously. Generating and maintaining community engagement with waterways heritage can be complicated, as witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic, which highlighted some of the many challenges and risks.

Providing digital heritage experiences is one strategy organisations utilsie to ease this pressure and provide a way for the public to continue to engage. It can increase the accessibility of collections and provide richer, more compelling visitor experiences. Through the Heritage Plan, Waterways Ireland has explored various ways to foster online engagement that is meaningful and informative. These initiatives include:

Stories from the Waterways

A series of digital media films to convey the importance of waterways heritage and peoples sense of place and connection with the natural and built environment.

Waterways Zibaldone

A collaboration between Waterways Ireland and the National College of Art and Design Bureau+ Programme to increase and promote awareness of our shared waterways heritage.

Virtual Reality Project

A VR experience that allows people to take a virtual trip along the canal – on land, on a heritage barge and below the water's surface.

Waterways Ireland Virtual Open Day

A freely accessible platform for accessing information, inspiring and supporting action by showcasing projects and community collaborations and raising public awareness.

Google Trekker Loan Programme

Over two years the following waterways were captured and made available to view on the Google Earth, Streetview and Maps app: The Shannon Navigation, Royal Canal, Grand Canal Barrow Line and the Barrow Navigation.

Case Study

Community Engagement & Supports

Purpose/Goal

Promotion, education and awareness raising.

Location

Place-based and Online

Use of Volunteers

Yes

Evidence of Impact

Yes

Funder/Partner

- Multiple across various campaigns, including Community Organisations, County Council Heritage Officer Programme, the Waters and Communities Programme & Inland Fisheries Ireland (Tidy Towns)

Links

Heritage Grant Scheme: https://www.waterwaysireland.org/heritage-grant

Community Engagement Toolkit: https://www.waterwaysireland.org/Documents/Heritage%20+%20Environment/WI%20ENG%20TOOLKIT%200803%20WEB.pdf

Waters and Communities Award: https://www.waterwaysireland.org/waters-and-communities-award

Videos

Stories from the Waterways: Cruinniú @ Portumna: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNWqsoKTB10

Waterways Ireland, Volunteer Voices: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQGd3MCr9Yo

Waterways Ireland, Education and Outreach: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbt2-6Fw71w

Waterways Ireland Heritage Plan
Heritage Grants - Impact 2016-2020

Projects on 8 of our waterways

20,000+ community members involved

94 Successful Projects

Applications **170**

61 organisations supported since 2016

Delivering over 60 actions across 4 objectives

€100,000 made available to community groups since 2016

Community Engagement Toolkit

This Toolkit was researched and developed by Robert Kelly as part of a Master of Science in Sustainable Resource Management (Policy and Practice) from the National University of Ireland, Galway and the University of Limerick. Waterways Ireland, through their Heritage Plan 2016-2020, recognised the need of community groups to acquire knowledge and guidance on how best to leverage the rich natural and built asset of their local waterway to animate their local community.

In 2018, Waterways Ireland entered into a collaborative research project to develop this toolkit which we hope will aid communities across the Island of Ireland in maximising the potential of their local waterway resource.
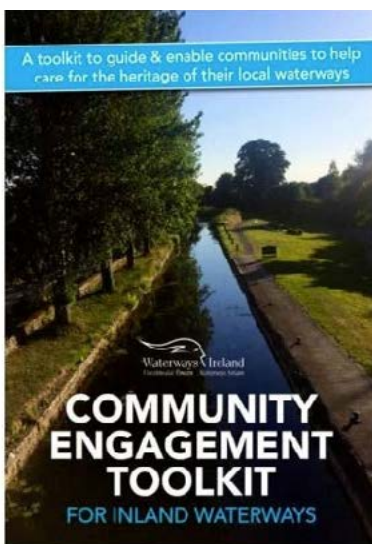
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

CRUINNIÚ @ PORTUMNA BALLINASLOE
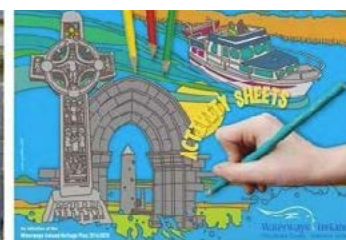
KIDS ACTIVITY SHEETS
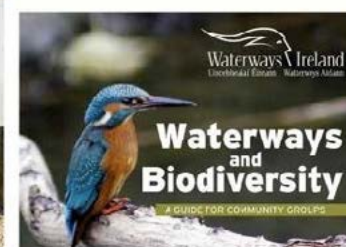
BIODIVERSITY BOOKLET FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

Cruinniú Events

This Cruinniú event involved two successful collaborations between the Heritage Offices of Waterways Ireland and Galway County Council and a range of community partners. The family friendly events showcased Ireland's cultural heritage, arts and crafts, and other heritage practitioners.
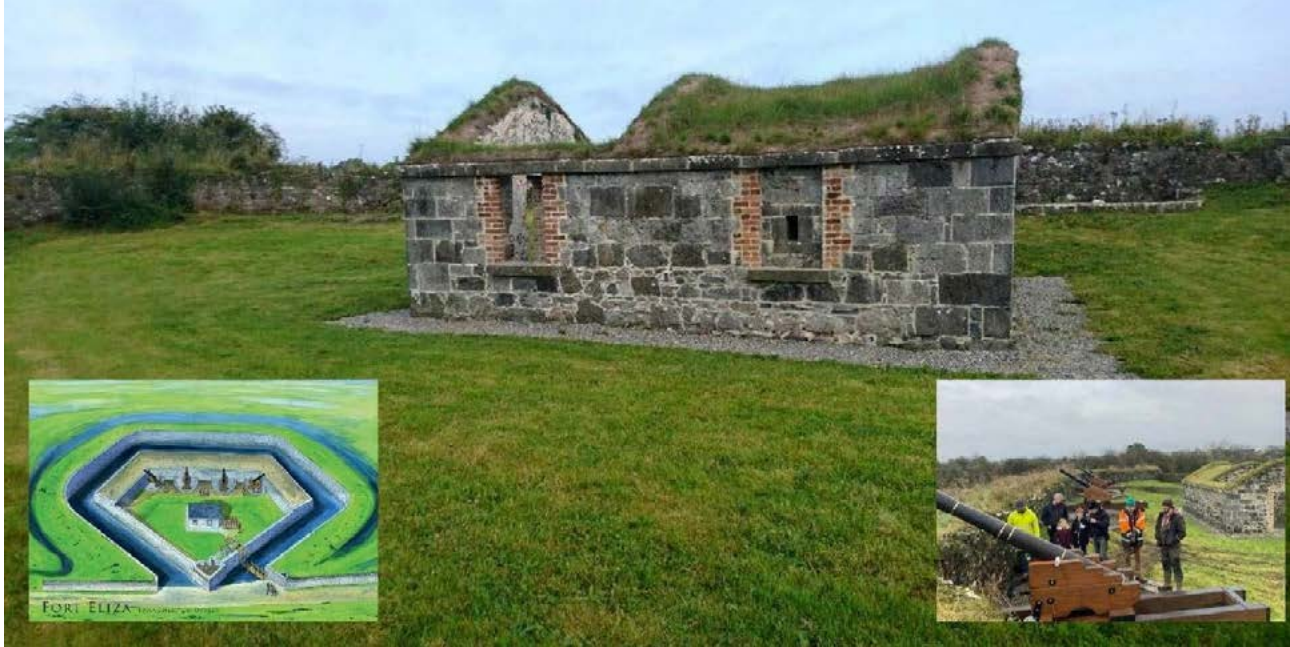
Case Study

Heritage Hubs and Heritage Skills

Purpose/Goal

To understand the contribution of waterway buildings make to an area and how built heritage can be considered as a contributor to a local economy.

Location

All island

Evidence of Impact

Yes

Funder/Partner

- Waterways Ireland

- Architectural Conservation Professionals

Links

Heritage Surveys: https://www.waterwaysireland.org/heritage-surveys

https://www.waterwaysireland.org/ecological-surveys

https://www.waterwaysireland.org/Documents/Heritage%20Boat%20Survey%202020.pdf

Heritage Hubs Report: https://www.waterwaysireland.org/Documents/Heritage%20+%20Environment/Heritage%20Hubs%20report%20for%20website%20nov%202017.pdf

Conservation Guidelines: https://www.waterwaysireland.org/Documents/Heritage%20+%20Environment/Waterways%20Ireland%20Built%20Heritage%20Conservation%20Guidelines.pdf

Videos

Stories from the Waterways – Virtual Heritage: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mjq4eoYqYE4

Stories from the Waterways - Ribbontail Paddlers: https://youtu.be/bog2VeaiUpY

Stories from the Waterways – Lock Gate Replacement: https://youtu.be/Js2MW0tyTnk and https://youtu.be/1-0KTFOgF1M
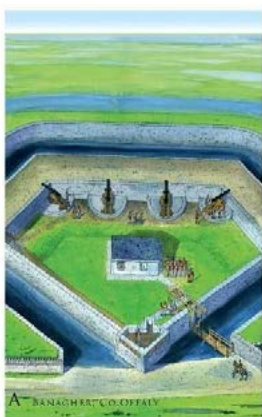
HISTORIC STRUCTURES FUND
2020 & 2021 - FORT ELIZA

HISTORIC STRUCTURES FUND
2022 - THE FOUR POTS
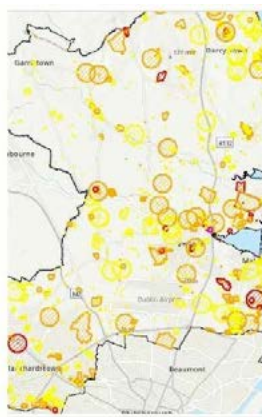
HERITAGE STEWARDSHIP FUND
2022 - CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Buildings associated with the inland navigable waterways of Ireland contribute to a substantial built heritage resource. They reflect and demonstrate the range of building skills and techniques associated with the inland waterways of Ireland and represent a significant resource in terms of vernacular architecture. These buildings have both a story to tell as well as contributing the local character of an area. An increasing recognition of the contribution of waterway buildings make to an area can be seen in various research demonstrating how built heritage can be considered as a contributor to a local economy. There has also been an increase in research related to adaptive reuse, which is the repurposing a building for a different use than it was designed for, of waterway buildings.

To further understand this potential, Waterways Ireland commissioned an audit of all built heritage assets throughout its waterways and further research in June 2016 to gather data and gain an understanding of the issues around the built heritage of Waterways Ireland waterways and to identify the potential for the development of Heritage Hubs. In the same year Waterways Ireland also commissioned Guidelines on the Conservation of Built Heritage. Heritage Hubs provide a clustering of heritage resources with a central location for people to come together to share knowledge, learn skills, serve community needs, and protect heritage sites.

The identification of fifteen heritage hubs and the final selected four hubs has shown what a rich built heritage resource Waterways Ireland has responsibility for. Maintaining and managing this heritage is a considerable responsibility, they should also be viewed as important assets.

Additional research was undertaken to augment this as follows:

• Identification of nearby recreational and tourism facilities close (such as greenways/blueways).

• Clarification of listing on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage or Local Authority's Record of Protected Structures.

•Clarification of structure condition, rarity and significance.

• Cross referencing sites with Waterways Ireland Product Development Reports, Asset Register prepared by the Property and Legal team of Waterways Ireland.

Photograpgh courtesy of Noel French

Case Study

Protecting Biodiversity

Purpose/Goal

To support implementation of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, Water Framework Directive and ongoing monitoring and oversight of our own capital and maintenance works.

Location

All island

Evidence of Impact

Yes

Use of Volunteers

Yes

Funder/Partner

- All Ireland Pollinator Plan

- Baltrasna Boreen Biodiversity Group

- IAS Working Group

Links

Waterways Ireland has conducted numerous Ecological Surveys on some of Ireland's waterways: https://www.waterwaysireland.org/ecological-surveys

Videos

Royal Canal Citizen Science Project: https://youtu.be/jMzvlf_ExLQ

Canals Health Check: https://youtu.be/SztLrpKlhRA

46

Waterways Ireland has a statutory responsibility to ensure the protection of the water quality of the canals, and the habitats and ecological systems that depend on it. This responsibility is aligned with a number of national and EU policies and regulations.

For example, Waterways Ireland is responsible for complying with environmental legislation including the Water Framework Directive and the Fisheries Acts. The national Water Framework Directive monitoring programme for canals has been in place since 2006 and currently the monitoring programme for canals includes 44 monitoring sites in 15 Artificial Water Bodies.

Under the Wildlife Act 2000, the canals are proposed Natural Heritage Areas of national significance from a conservation perspective. Many waterways are designated sites under the Birds and Habitats Directives (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation) and the Wildlife Act 2000.

The National Biodiversity Plan (RoI) and Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy required agencies such as Waterways Ireland to draw up their own biodiversity plans, all of which will contribute to the protection of the biodiversity of our waterways.

Waterways Ireland incorporated its sectoral Biodiversity Action Plan commitments into its Heritage Plan, following agreement with relevant Government Departments.

Photograpgh courtesy of Esther Woodley

"Waterways Ireland supports ecological biodiversity – over 80% of its landholdings are within a National or European designated site and the green infrastructure of the waterways provide important ecosystem services."

Value of Inland Waterways 2016 report
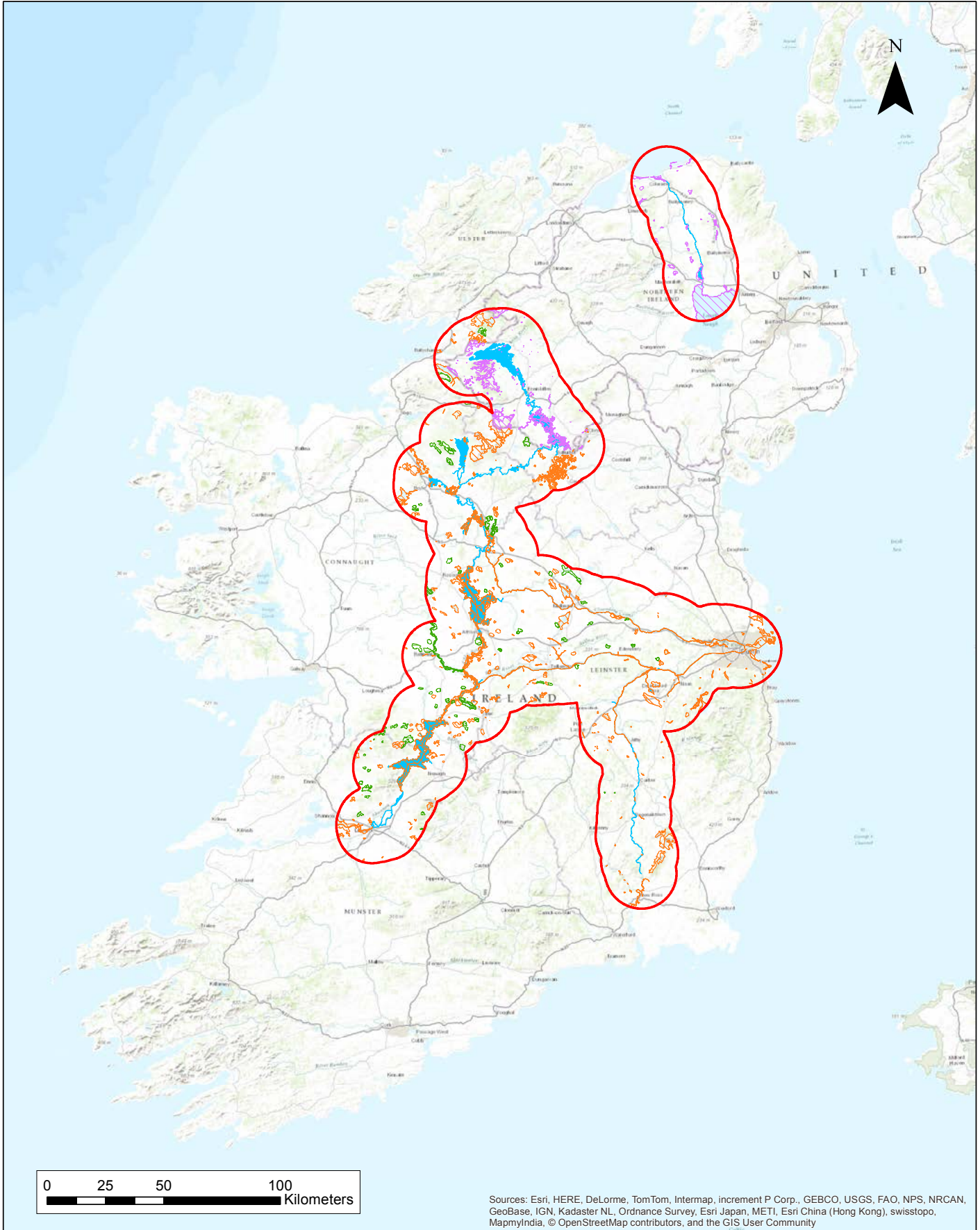
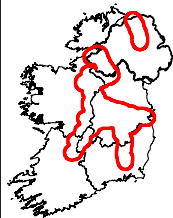# Appendix III

Biodiversity Designations Along Our Waterways
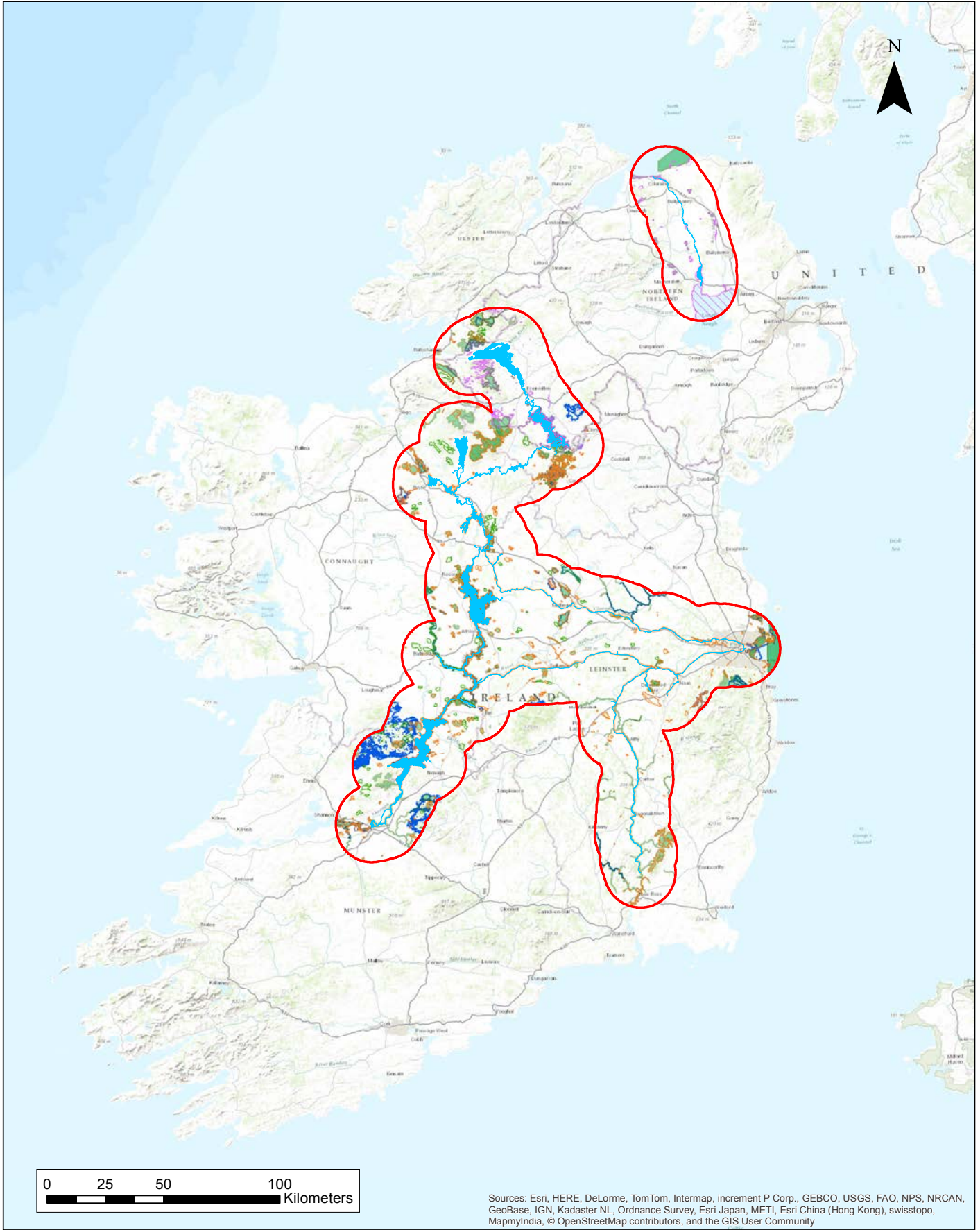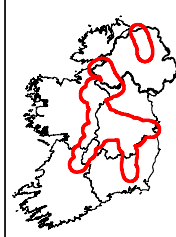
Legend

Designated sites within 15 km
Navigations
NI - ASSI- Areas of Special Scientific Interest
RoI - NHAs- Natural Heritage Areas
RoI - pNHAs - Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
EU - SACs - Special Areas of Conservation
EU - SPAs - Special Protection Areas

Waterways Ireland HDA

Designated sites within
15 km of the waterways

Web: www.waterwaysireland.org
e-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

0   25   50   100   Kilometers

Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

0   25   50   100   Kilometers

Waterways Ireland
Uiscebhealaí Éireann   Watterweys Airlann
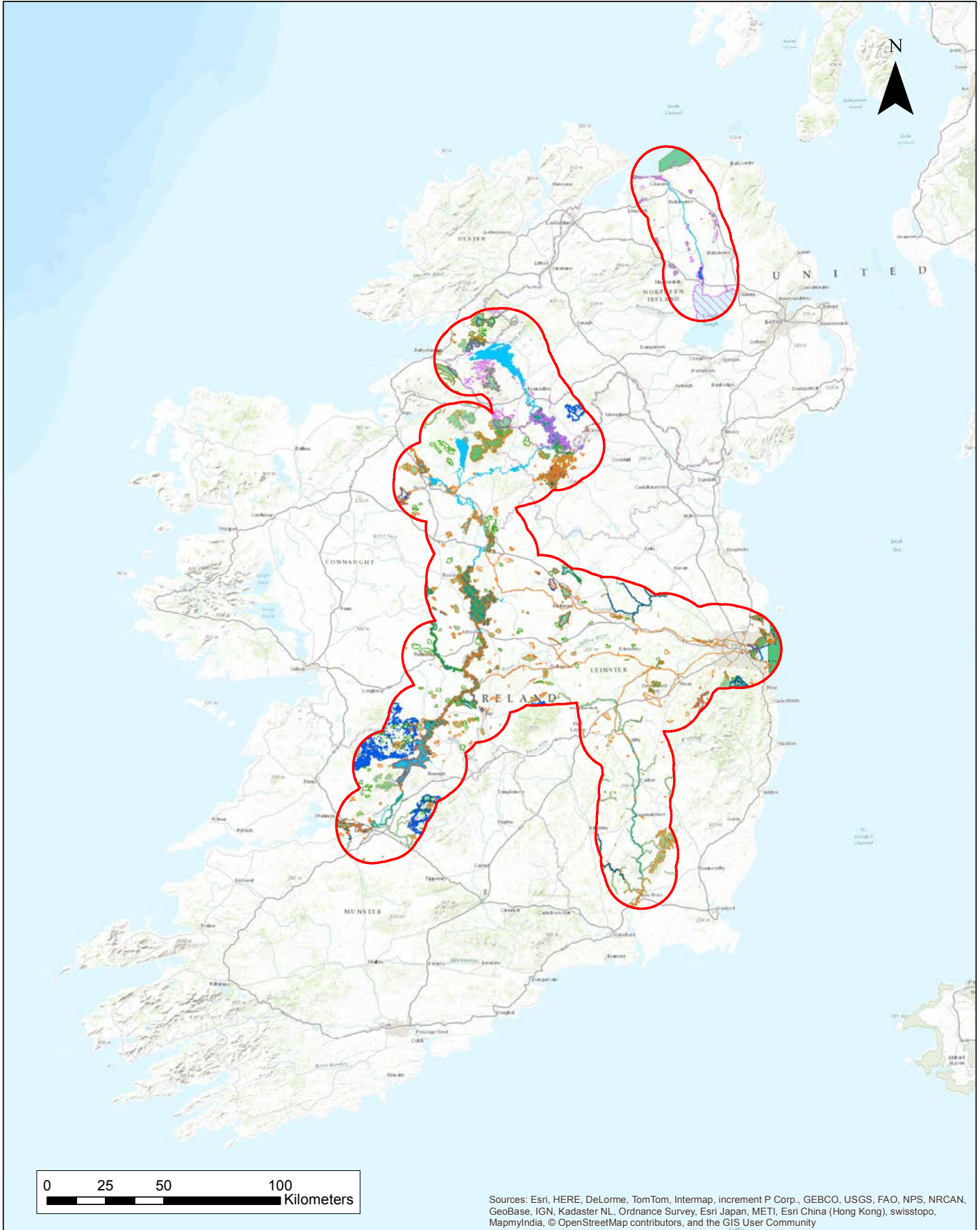
Web: www.waterwaysireland.org
e-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

Legend

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RoI - NHAs- Natural Heritage Areas
RoI - pNHAs - Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
EU - SACs - Special Areas of Conservation
EU - SPAs - Special Protection Areas
Designated sites within 15 km
Navigations

Waterways Ireland HDA
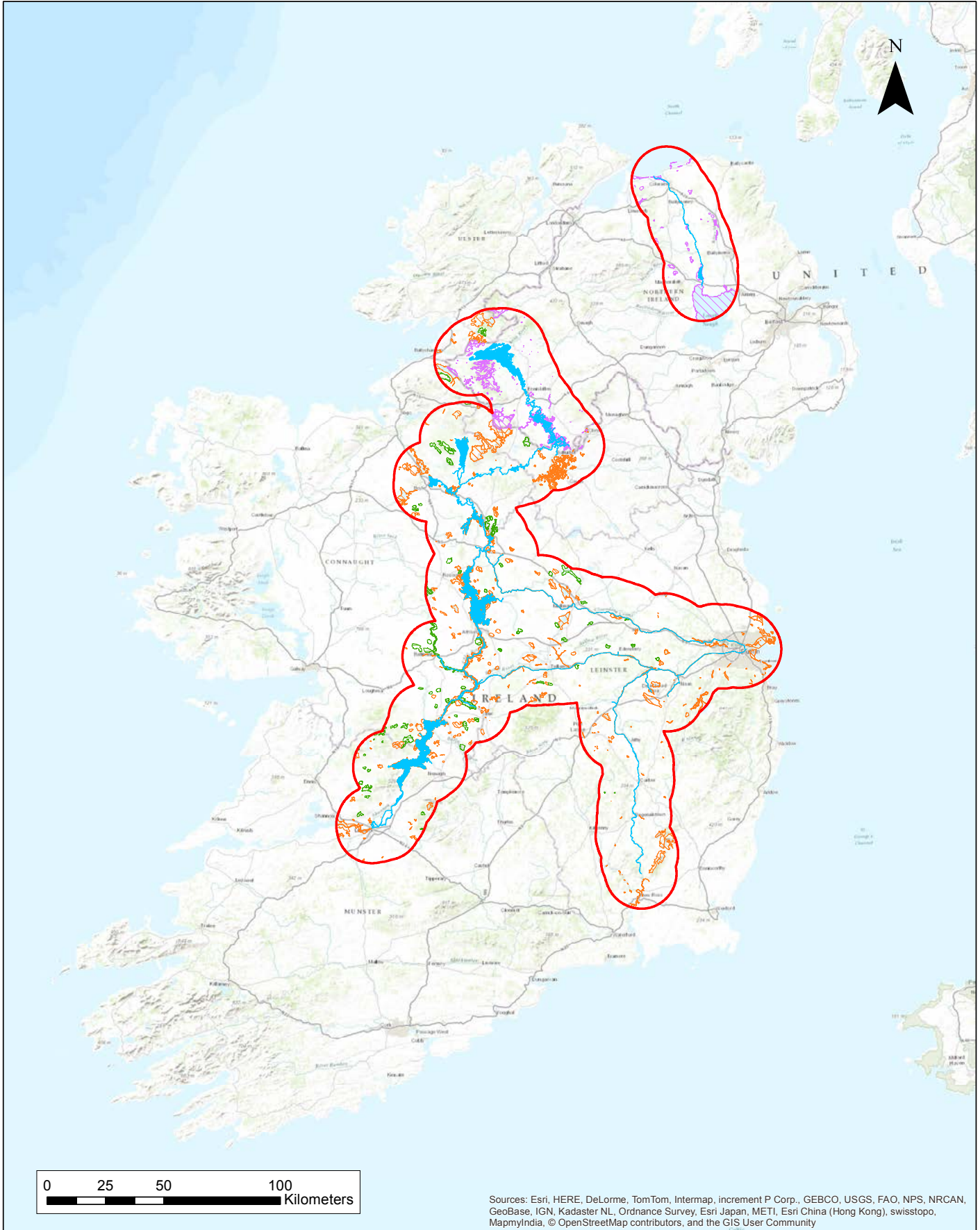
Designated sites within
15 km of the waterways

N

0 25 50 100 Kilometers

Waterways Ireland
Uiscebhealaí Éireann Watterweys Airlann

Web: www.waterwaysireland.org
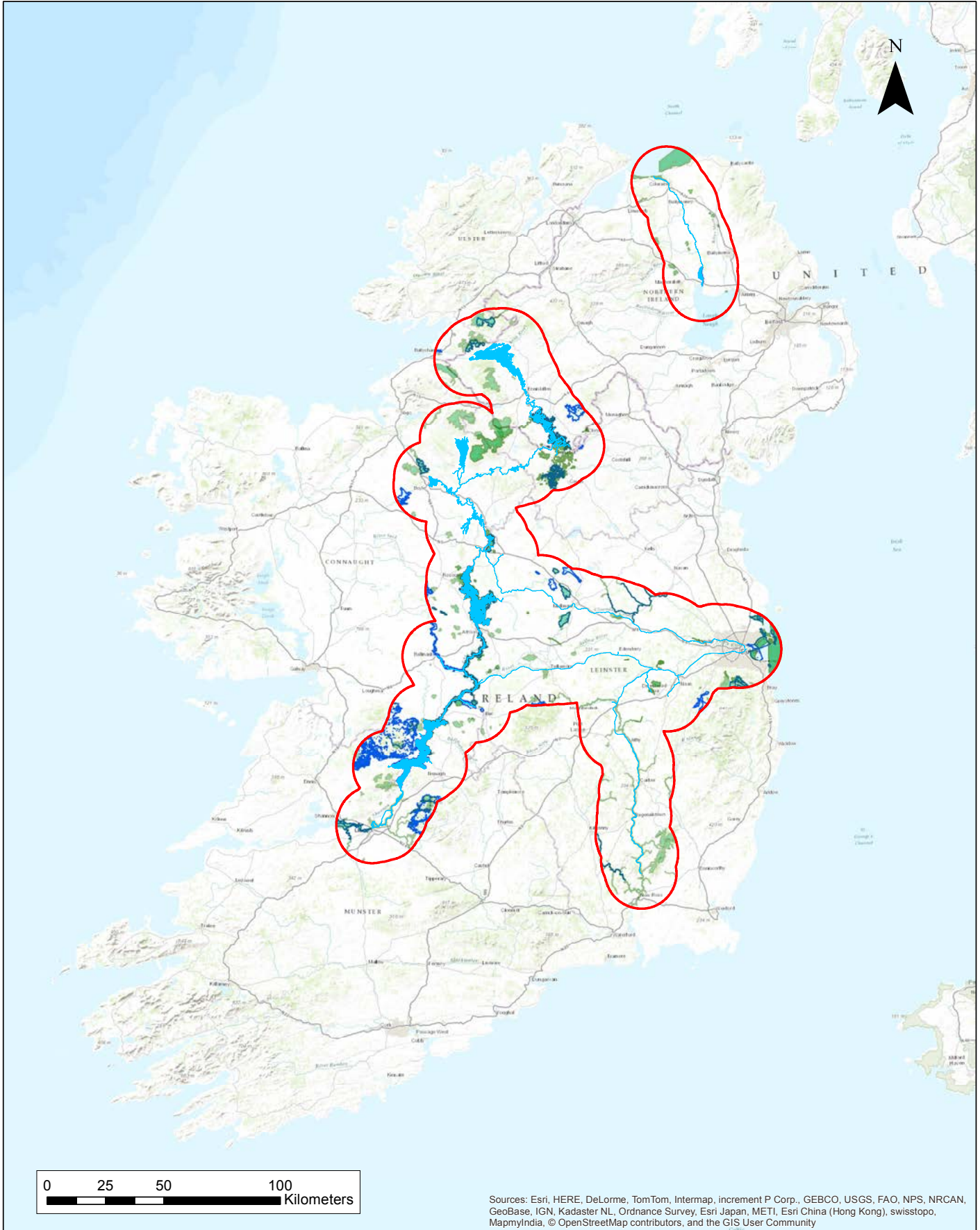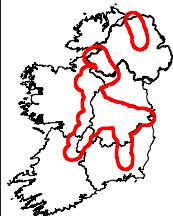e-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

Legend

Designated sites within 15 km

Navigations

NI - ASSI- Areas of Special Scientific Interest

RoI - NHAs- Natural Heritage Areas

RoI - pNHAs - Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Waterways Ireland HDA

Designated sites within
15 km of the waterways

N

0   25   50   100
                              Kilometers

Legend

Designated sites within 15 km

NI - ASSI- Areas of Special Scientific Interest

RoI - NHAs- Natural Heritage Areas

RoI - pNHAs - Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Navigations

Waterways Ireland

Uiscebhealaí Éireann   Watterweys Airlann

Web: www.waterwaysireland.org
e-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

Waterways Ireland HDA

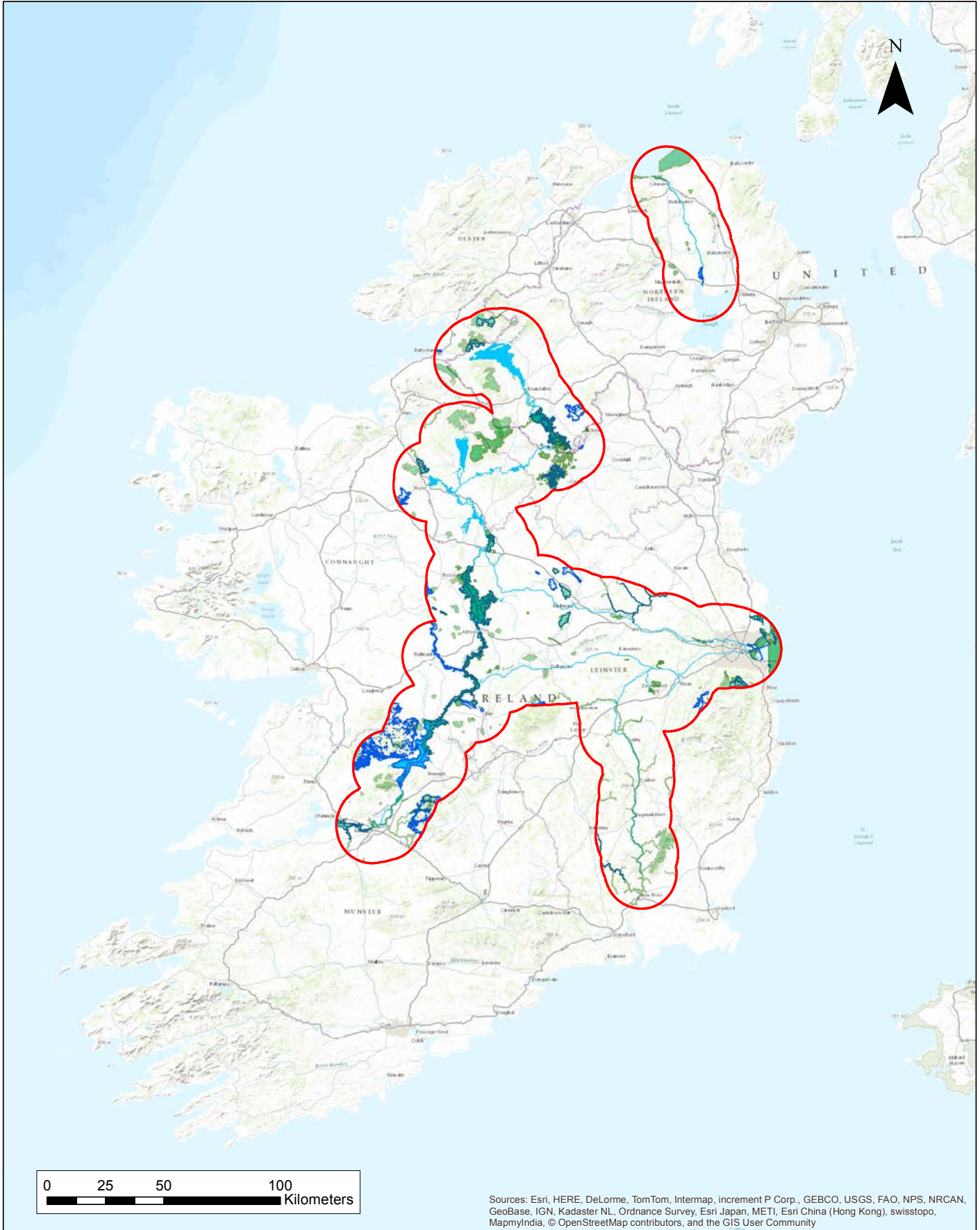Designated sites within
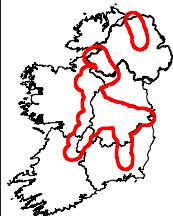15 km of the waterways

Legend

- Designated sites within 15 km
- Navigations
- EU - SACs - Special Areas of Conservation
- EU - SPAs - Special Protection Areas

Waterways Ireland HDA

Designated sites within
15 km of the waterways

Web: www.waterwaysireland.org
e-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

0   25   50   100 Kilometers

Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN,
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MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

0   25   50   100
Kilometers

N

Waterways Ireland
Uiscebhealaí Éireann   Watterweys Airlann

Web: www.waterwaysireland.org
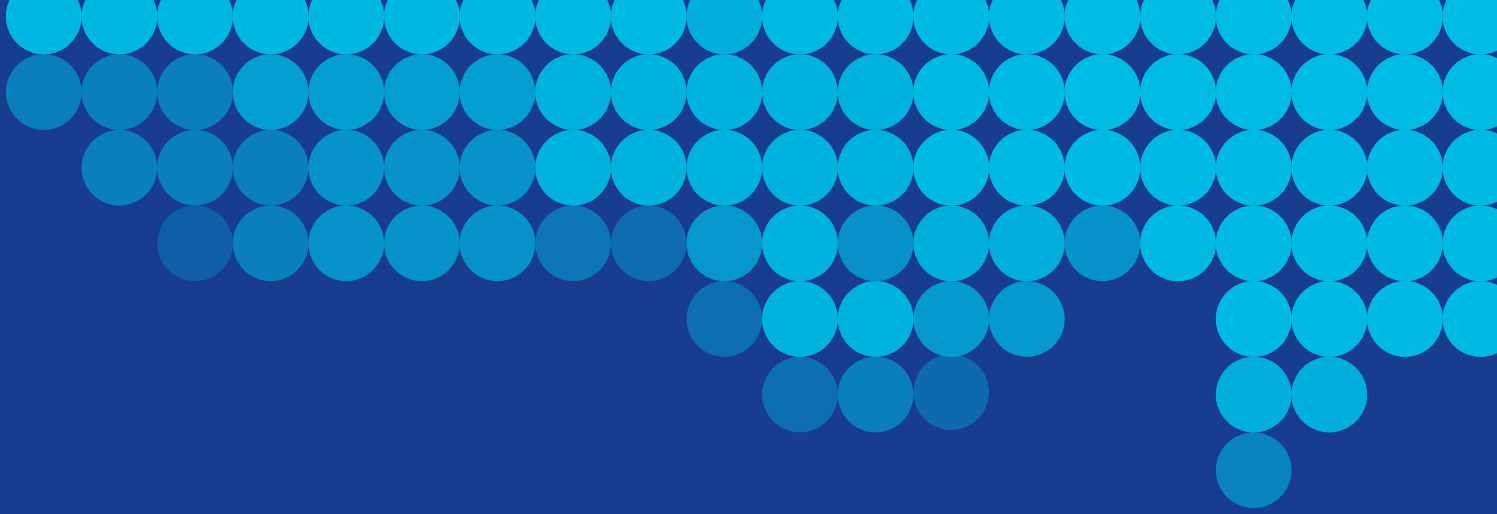e-mail: info@waterwaysireland.org

Legend

⬜ Designated sites within 15 km
🟩 EU - SACs - Special Areas of Conservation
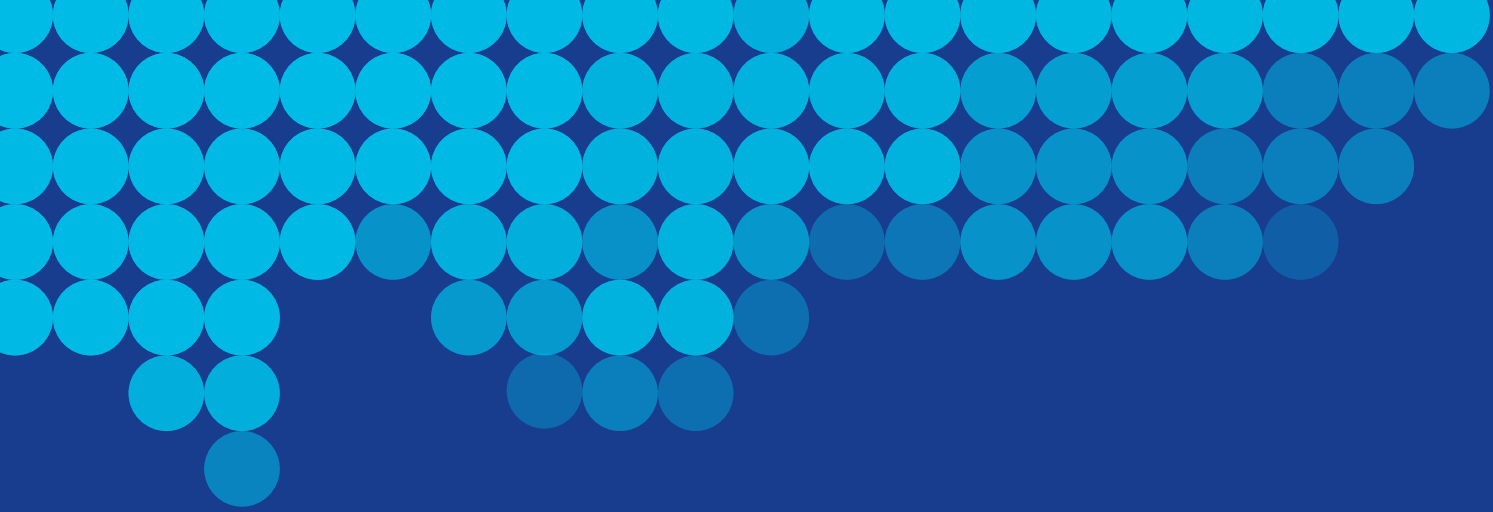⬜ EU - SPAs - Special Protection Areas
🟦 Navigations

Waterways Ireland HDA

Designated sites within
15 km of the waterways