



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Our Ref: ENV/2122/AMC/3

18th February 2022

Christine Horner
Department for Infrastructure
Inland Waterways
Room 3.09 Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB

By Email: Christine.horner@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
InlandWaterways@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Dear Christine

Re: Access to Lough Neagh

Further to a recent meeting of Council's Environment Committee meeting I was asked to write to your department seeking an update on access to Lough Neagh because of low water levels on Lough Neagh and build-up of sand and debris at Quays affecting the depth of water available for fisherman, particularly in the Moortown and Ardboe areas.

I understand there has historically been an agreement in place to dig out the quays and assist with access; however, in recent years this does not appear to be happening. As a result, access to Lough Neagh for fisherman is problematic.

To this end, I would be grateful if you advise on what is being done by the department to address access issues for fisherman associated with low water levels, and digging around the quays to maintain access to the Lough.

I look forward to your response to the issues raised. Should you wish to discuss this matter, please contact me or Terry Scullion (Assistant Director of Property Services), on 03000 132 132 by email at terry.scullion@midulstercouncil.org

Yours sincerely

Anne-Marie Campbell
Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Environment

DfI Rivers Western - Coleraine

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Our reference: IN1-22-3746

01 March 2022

Dear Ann Marie,

RE: Access to Lough Neagh for fishermen

I refer to your letter of 18th February regarding the above matter that was sent to Waterways Ireland.

DfI Rivers have the responsibility for maintaining many of the fishing quays around Lough Neagh.

During the pandemic most silt removal operations were suspended due to the need for social distancing measures as a result of the Covid 19 restrictions. However, DfI Rivers has now put in place an agreed operating procedure to manage these health and safety requirements and maintenance of the Lough Neagh Quays has now recommenced.

Recent problems experienced by fishermen on Lough Neagh were compounded by low water levels after a software update recently caused 2 gauging stations to produce false readings that led to the average water level of the lough appearing to remain at a static level. As a result, the water level dropped approximately 100mm below the statutory minimum. This fault was fixed and the water levels rose quickly with the wet weather experienced in the latter part of February.

The water levels are currently well above the statutory maximum and the sluice gates at Toome are fully open to lower the lough level.

Quay cleaning is ongoing and we hope to have many of the quays cleaned before low summer levels might cause further problems.

Yours sincerely,

Ruairi Boylan
Dfl Rivers
Area Engineer
Coleraine