

## BALLYRONAN BOAT CLUB – CLUB HOUSE

12<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Mrs Campbell

Ballyronan Boat Club (BBC), based at Ballyronan Marina, was formed in 1974 to promote sailing and water safety on the north western shores of Lough Neagh. It is a small but a very proactive club, which aims to provide facilities and promote participation in water sports for all sectors of the Mid Ulster and wider community. Water safety and skills development are core values of the club's ethos, and the Club is an approved RYA training centre.

Ballyronan Boat Club currently does not have its own club premises and this is proving to be a major restriction to current need and ongoing development. We have the use a room in the council amenity building, but size, limited to about ten people, and opening hours restrict use to committee meetings and other small groups. With the recent growth of the club it is not possible to accommodate a significant number of the members for club meetings or even to get together with a cup of tea after sailing.

As an RYA Training Centre, as well as water based courses, the Club delivers class room courses such as first aid, sailing theory, radio, and safety. To meet demand and make these courses financially viable normally requires more than 10 participants, which is not normally possible at the amenity block and previously the BBC has sent both members and outside applicants to other clubs to obtain training. This limits the training aspect of the Club as well as curtailing an important income stream.

Ballyronan Marina is undoubtedly the best facility on Lough Neagh and as a club we are looking forward to seeing the current renovations being carried out. The Club would like to recognise and congratulates the Council on it's vision for the site. As the site modernises, the club would also have plans to build a modern attractive club house in line with the Councils vision and believe it will enhance and benefit the Councils plans for Ballyronan Marina.

To date the quality of facilities has been highlighted as being a major determination as to whether people continue to participate in sailing and other water sports after an initial trial period and this is clearly displayed in the high turnover single year membership. BBC every year can have anywhere up to 30-40 new participants, but without a physical Club presence on site and appropriate facilities, many people tend to move on.

The quality of the playing environment has been shown to be a major factor in encouraging new participants to any sport including sailing/water sports and ensuring that they continue to participate. Facilities have a high impact on "satisfaction" of existing members and have been shown to be vital to attracting and keeping new members. Appropriate facilities are necessary to make sport attractive and fun, helping support running costs, and opening it to participatin by the whole community with access for all.

Lough Neagh is a wonderful facility for water sports, but its use is limited by lack of access. Ballyronan Marina is one of the few and arguably the best access point onto the Lough, and the Boat Club sees it as the prime location to offer on-water safe access. There is much discussion about the need for shared facilities amongst other users, such as canoing and the

new Lough Neagh On-Water tours. Not wanting to dwell but what is needed apart from good access is the meeting place to include club room, kitchen, training room, and changing facilities to support a structured sailing development programme to grow participation through increased public access and defined high performance, community, club and school development programmes.

The club already has a number of vessels to facilitate those who do not have their own boats, and will encourage and further develop provision for people with disabilities, people on low income, young people at risk and women and girls.

Aims :-

1. Increase participation in boating, including sailing – both racing and family sailing and other water sports
2. Provide sailing opportunities for a member's lifetime.
3. Improve access to boating and clubhouse facilities for all.
4. Use sailing as an aspiration/ inspiration to deprived groups/communities and schools to improve health and well-being
5. Encourage disadvantaged groups to use sailing as a sport – in particular older members of the community and female sailors
6. Set up a local RYA Sailability centre for disabled sailors which will also increase access to sailing for the wider community
7. Host provincial and national regattas/ championships.
8. Create a pool of club sailing-racers to club race and represent Ballyronan Boat Club locally and internationally. Provide life-long coaching for members.
9. Provide quality coaching and racing for disabled sailors with the aim to produce sailors to represent Ireland and GB&NI at international events and future Paralympics if sailing is returned as a listed sport.
10. Provide facilities to house other water sports – open water swimming (triathlons), kayaking, etc.
11. Contribute towards reducing mental health issues in the community.

Whilst Mid Ulster Council owns and maintains the Marina, the Boat Club is the only organisation promoting, bringing people together, and facilitating water sport on the site. Indeed, it is the only such organisation on the western shore of Lough Neagh, and hence it provides a unique opportunity to promote water sports with all the health, social, self-awareness, confidence, safety awareness, risk assessment, and decision-making ability the sport provides. The population within 30 minutes access is currently in excess of 150,000, and within 60 minutes, 1.7 million.

In addition to the above The Club has an agreement with Cookstown High School including corporate membership and has had ties with local scout groups and youth clubs providing open days for some years. The Club is very keen to build on these relationships and with other organisations to enhance their programmes. At present we have the location, Lough Neagh, we have access through the Marina, and we have the boats, but we lack a clubhouse

and facilities of a suitable standard. Additionally, there are other activities at Ballyronan such as the triathlon and Lough Neagh Tours, which would benefit greatly from access to clubhouse facilities.

To meet our duty as a club in light of this very clear need, we are proposing the development of a permanent clubhouse with appropriate facilities. As a first step, as previously discussed, we are requesting the agreement of MUDC to this in principle, followed by agreement of a suitable site.

We are suggesting two possible sites as indicated on the enclosed plan, No.1 on the south side of the old pier, or No 2, a floating clubhouse in keeping with the new council developments on the site. We would be happy, indeed, keen to discuss these locations and any others you might suggest with you, with a view to coming to an agreement from which we can move forward.

It is our strong opinion that a thriving club is necessary for the future prosperity of the Marina, and through it, the greater enjoyment by all of the wonderful facility provided by Lough Neagh, and for this, a clubhouse with appropriate facilities is a prerequisite.

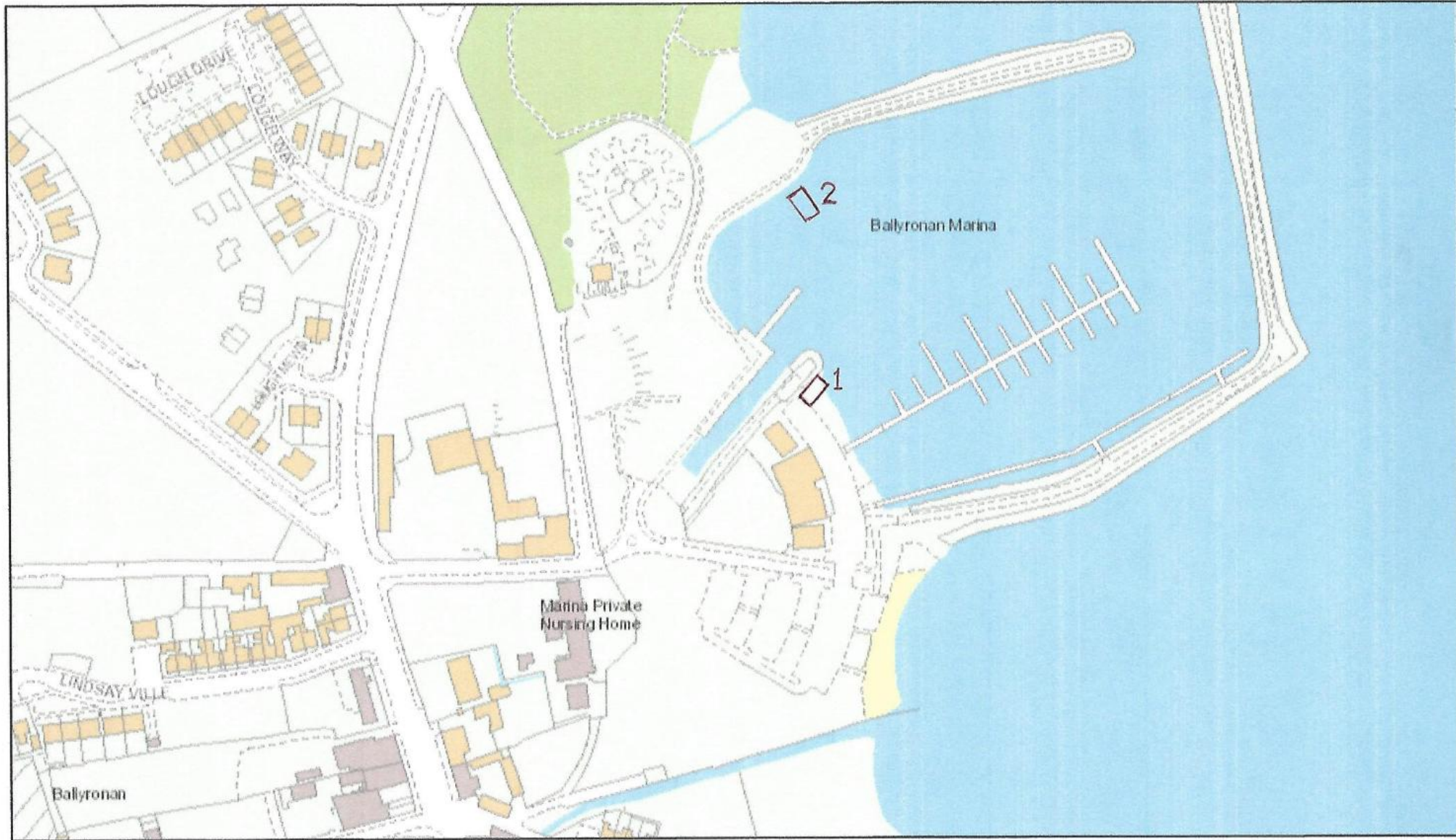
We look forward to hearing from you and meeting you to discuss this.

Yours faithfully

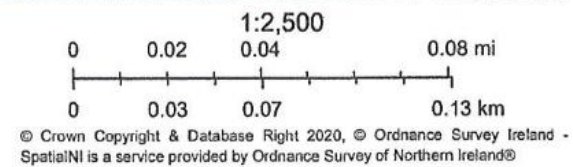
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# Ballyronan Marina



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