

RNLI announce 12 month lifeboat trial on Ree - Nov 2011

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Lifeboats News Release

RNLI gives go-ahead for lifeboat trial on Lough Ree

Date: 04/11/2011

The RNLI is to trial an inshore lifeboat on one of the biggest loughs on the River Shannon. At a recent meeting of the RNLI Board of Trustees the decision was taken to place an inshore lifeboat on Lough Ree for at least 12 months to assess whether a permanent lifeboat station should be established.

Formal representations were made to the RNLI by the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland with support from lough users and various statutory bodies including the Irish Coast Guard, for a declared search and rescue asset to be present on the lough.

The charity already operates 43 lifeboat stations around the coast of Ireland and inland on Lough Derg and Lough Erne with around 1,500 volunteer lifeboat crew members. There are estimates of upwards of 1,000 boats moored in or around the Lough, which also has a number of large marinas. The Lough is also a major intersection on the Shannon-Erne navigation route.

The RNLI will initially operate a B class Atlantic 75 lifeboat from temporary station facilities. The lifeboat will come from the existing RNLI relief fleet and a decision will be taken following the year-long trial whether to establish a permanent station.

Martyn Smith, RNLI Divisional Inspector for Ireland, said: "I am delighted that the RNLI Trustees have agreed to place a lifeboat on Lough Ree. The support and enthusiasm for an RNLI lifeboat on Lough Ree from the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, lough users and statutory agencies has been enormous. As a charity which relies on volunteers and the generosity of the public we were very impressed with the level of interest and engagement from everyone we encountered.

Lough Ree is at present the only major lake on the Shannon that lacks a dedicated search and rescue presence. It is the centre for a variety of leisure pursuits based both afloat and ashore and has a significant amount of marine traffic passing through. It therefore makes sense for the RNLI to have a presence here which will see us take local volunteers, train them to the highest standards, provide them with the best equipment and enable them to deliver a life-saving service that Lough Ree needs."

Initial meetings have already been held by the RNLI locally to gauge interest and support and moves will now be made to recruit the volunteers needed to run the lifeboat station.

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IWAI News Release

IWAI welcomes decision to establish RNLI Station on Lough Ree

Greg Whelan, President of the IWAI warmly welcomed the decision by the RNLI to establish a Lifeboat Station on Lough Ree. This has been the result of a long campaign by the Athlone Branch of the IWAI and the national executive of the IWAI to seek formal lifeboat rescue services on Lough Ree. The IWAI through its Athlone Branch and the annual Shannon Rally have been active campaigners and fund raisers for the RNLI for a number of years.

The decision by the RNLI provides for the first time a dedicated and resourced professional rescue service to the many users including boat owners and hirers to the significant number of anglers who use the Lough Ree on a regular basis.

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