

ICU Policy on Access

Access disputes are becoming more commonplace and efforts are being made to reach a nationally accepted approach to meet the needs of recreational users and the concerns of landowners.

In February 2004, the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív, set up a countryside council, Comhairle na Tuaithe, to address among other issues, the issue of access to private land for recreational purposes.

Comhairle na Tuaithe aims to:

- ensure that all those with an interest and concern in the sustainable development and proper management of the recreational amenities of the countryside are fully consulted on their future management;
- develop and update, as necessary, a national countryside recreation strategy;
- ensure that all means necessary are used to resolve conflicts that arise in relation to access issues and responsible enjoyment of the countryside;
- raise awareness of the benefits to and responsibilities of recreational use of the countryside and to carry out research and training on related issues;
- ensure that adequate funding is made available to allow the organisation to achieve these aims;
- and to examine the benefits and management of increased leisure use.

The Irish Canoe Union has made a submission to Comhairle na Tuaithe summarizing the position of the Irish Canoe Union in relation to access and the development of a National Countryside Recreation Strategy. >> [ICU Submission to Comhairle na Tuaithe](#).

The ICU recommends that canoeists endeavour to adhere to its **Code of Conduct**:

Special consideration should be given to the impact of canoeing on the natural environment and other water users.

1. *Minimise your impact on the natural environment at all times particularly make efforts to reduce river bank erosion at access and egress points.*
2. *Be sensitive when parking, changing, entering and exiting the water.*
3. *Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach. Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.*
4. *Maintain positive, co-operative relationships with other water users and riparian landowners as this is important for the future of canoeing and the future of canoeing environments themselves.*
5. *At entry and egress points behave in a friendly, positive manner towards owners. Be mindful of the time you are spending occupying the launch or take – out area and that you do not unfairly restrict opportunities for others.*