
Irish Dragon Boat Association NEWSLETTER



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Irish Dragon Boat Association Limited

The Rookery

Lisnavagh

Rathvilly

Co. Carlow

R93 AK38

Ireland

Tel: +353 59 916 1685

Mob: + 353 85 7422902

Email: info@dragonboat.ie



Irish Dragon Boat Association



IDBA@IrishDragonBoat



[@IrishDragonBoatAssociation](https://www.instagram.com/IrishDragonBoatAssociation)

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR



Julie Doyle

Editor / IDBA Chairperson

Welcome back to the IDBA's annual newsletter, our first since December 2022. Over the last few years, we have been working hard to rebuild dragon boating to the strong and vibrant level it enjoyed before COVID.

We are excited to share that we aim to bring back The Dragon Run 10km in March 2026. In addition, we are developing a couple of new initiatives that we're not quite ready to announce yet, but we look forward to sharing more details soon.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new IDBA Treasurer, Anita Comerford, who joined the Executive Committee following Chris Barnes' retirement in May. We sincerely thank Chris for her dedication, time and many contributions throughout her service.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

IRISH TEAM MAKING WAVES AT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS!



Irish Senior A Women's Team – 500m (Photo courtesy of Mel Lloyd Photography)

The highlight of the year for Irish dragon boating was undoubtedly the return of the Irish Senior Women's Dragon Boat Team to international competition. From 14th – 20th July 2025, the team represented Ireland at the prestigious 17th IDBF World Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Brandenburg an der Havel, Germany. This marked the first-ever appearance of an Irish senior women's team at the World Championships, a milestone moment for the sport in Ireland.

The team, composed of 12 paddlers from across the country including Carlow, Kilkenny, Dublin, Belfast and Clare competed in three gruelling race categories: 200m, 500m and 2km. Their participation alone was a testament to their dedication, but their performance on the water was nothing short of inspiring. No medals this time, but Ireland proved they're a rising force in elite competition.

Beyond the races, the event was a celebration of friendship, resilience and national pride. The team embraced the spirit of the championships swapping jerseys, sharing stories and building bonds with crews from 32 nations. Their journey was supported by a passionate coaching and management team and cheered on by fans back home who followed their progress online.

With this historic debut behind them, the team is already setting sights on future championships. Their performance in Brandenburg has laid the foundation for more Irish crews to take part in international events and inspired a new generation of paddlers across the country. Next stop is the EDBF European Nations Championships in Munich, Germany in July 2026.



The team battling it out in the 200m (Photo courtesy of Mel Lloyd Photography)

DRAGONS AT THE DOCKS - END OF AN ERA



DATD 2024 Eye Dotting Ceremony

2024 saw the final edition of Dragons At The Docks (DATD) where annually 80+ teams from Ireland’s property and construction sectors took to the water competing in dragon boat races whilst raising vital funds for homelessness and community support charities. Unfortunately, the event had reached a natural conclusion as entries had gradually declined.

Since its launch in 2017 the event has raised more than €1.1 million. The primary beneficiary was the Dublin Simon Community which used the donations to expand housing initiatives for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Other charities supported over the years also included Aware, Alone, ISPCC and Women’s Aid, ensuring the impact of the event reached across multiple areas of need. Organizers highlighted the unique spirit of the regatta: “It’s not just about winning races — it’s about uniting the industry to make a difference,” said one spokesperson.



Are You Ready? Attention! Go!



Event Trophies



Welcome!



Docking!

WATERSPORTS INCLUSION GAMES

In 2024, the Irish Dragon Boat Association had the privilege of taking part in the Watersports Inclusion Games, hosted for the first time in County Cavan at the scenic Lough Ramor. The event brought together over 523 participants and 278 volunteers for a weekend filled with discovery, fun and the spirit of community. Dragon boating quickly emerged as one of the standout activities, giving participants the chance to paddle in unison, build confidence, and experience first-hand the joy of teamwork on the water.



Watersports Inclusion Games 2024 – Lough Ramour



All Aboard

The momentum continued in 2025 as the Games returned to Malahide Yacht Club in Dublin, welcoming nearly 650 participants and hundreds of dedicated volunteers. Once again, dragon boating played a central role, demonstrating why it remains one of the most inclusive and empowering watersports available. The sport's team-oriented nature allows individuals with a wide range of physical, intellectual, sensory and learning differences to join forces in a shared adventure. No prior experience required, just enthusiasm and willingness to try something new.

A heartfelt thank-you goes out to the members of Carlow Dragon Boat Club, the Plurabelle Paddlers and Barrow Dragons, who generously gave up their weekend to ensure every participant had a positive and memorable experience. Their commitment exemplifies the true spirit of the dragon boating community—supportive, welcoming and passionate about opening the sport to all.

The Watersports Inclusion Games continue to grow each year and with that growth comes a renewed celebration of diversity, access and opportunity. These Games are more than just a weekend event; they are a powerful reminder of what can happen when barriers are removed and people are invited to explore their potential on the water.

The IDBA is proud to play its part in this movement and looks forward to contributing to future Games.



Watersports Inclusion Games 2025 – Malahide Yacht Club



Watersports Inclusion Games 2025 – Malahide Yacht Club

OH, TO BE A DRAGON BOATER!

Sun on skin, a steady beat,
Paddle dips, so strong and sweet.
Twenty hearts in steady time,
Pulling hard in perfect rhyme.

Water flies, the boat takes flight,
Muscles burn with all their might.
A dragon's head, a painted drum,
Victory's call is yet to come.

Teamwork strong, a unified force,
Following a practiced course.
Oh, to be a dragon boater, free,
Part of something wild, you see.



Dragons At The Docks 2022

2025 SEASON RECAP

The Irish Dragon Boat Association brought communities together across Ireland in 2025 with a vibrant calendar of events that celebrated sport, culture and inclusivity. From spring through autumn, paddlers and spectators alike enjoyed the rhythm of the drums, the splash of the paddles and the spirit of teamwork that defines dragon boating.

Athy Dragon Boat Regatta – 4th May, River Barrow, Athy

The season kicked off in style as crews charged down the River Barrow in a fast-paced 200m sprint, setting the stage for a highly competitive year ahead. Barrow Dragons claimed victory in the U18 category, Carlow Dragons topped the Women's division and Belfast Phoenix Paddlers powered to first place in the Open race category. With clear skies and lively crowds along the riverbanks, the atmosphere was vibrant and full of excitement.



Athy Dragon Boat Regatta – Start Line (Photo courtesy of Adrienn Hártó)

Kerala House Boat Race – 11th May, Carlow Town Park

The Kerala House Boat Race brought the vibrant traditions of Kerala to Ireland in a lively multicultural celebration. Now in its third year since launching in 2023, the event saw a record number of team entries and drew huge crowds. An array of stalls offering traditional Kerala cuisine added to the festive atmosphere, while the racing itself was fiercely competitive, showcasing both community spirit and cultural pride. The event was even livestreaming direct to India.



This Team Means Business!



Trophies Up for Grabs



Digging Deep!



It's all about having fun!

Barrow Dragon Boat Regatta – 8th June, Carlow Town Park

Crowds gathered along the Barrow for a vibrant summer regatta filled with fast-paced racing. The event delivered exciting competition across all divisions:

- U18 Division: *Barrow Dragons* claimed victory once again, continuing their strong run of form.
- Open Division: *Belfast Phoenix Paddlers* powered to the top spot.
- Women's Division: *Kilkenny Dragons* emerged triumphant in a highly competitive field of ten teams.

A lively atmosphere, close finishes and enthusiastic supporters made the day a standout highlight of the racing calendar.



Kilkenny Dragons



Liquorice Allsorts



Cork Dragons

Lough Rinn Dragon Boat Regatta – 13th & 14th September, Mohill, Co. Leitrim

One of the year's largest gatherings took place on the scenic waters of Lough Rinn, drawing teams from near and far. Despite a brisk wind, Saturday delivered a full and exciting programme beginning with the traditional 200m races and followed by the inaugural 1000m turn race, which proved a hit with all crews. Unfortunately, worsening weather conditions forecast for Sunday forced the cancellation of the next day's racing, a decision agreed upon by all teams to ensure safety on the water.

200m Sprint Highlights:

- Plurabelle Anna stormed to victory in the BCP category, setting the tone with power and precision.
- The Donegal Dolphins claimed the U18s, proving the next generation is brimming with talent.
- In the Open competition, the Dublin Vikings battled hard to secure the win.
- The Carlow Dragons shone in the Women’s category, adding another accolade to their growing list.

1000m Turn Race Results:

- The Carlow Dragons once again dominated the Women’s competition, showing consistency across distances.
- Kilkenny Dragons took the honours in the Open division, navigating the turns with strength and strategy.



Dublin Vikings



Medb’s Dragon Warriors



Race Control

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

2025 wasn’t just about racing, it was also a year of growth. The IDBA ran multiple helm courses, giving participants the skills to steer dragon boats safely and teach crews the basics of paddling. These courses created a new wave of confident helms ready to guide boats at regattas and practice sessions. Alongside this, the IDBA delivered several coaching courses, aligned with the International Dragon Boat Federation’s standards. Together, these training opportunities ensured that Ireland’s dragon boating community had more qualified leaders, stronger safety standards and a sustainable pathway for future growth.



DATES FOR THE DIARY 2026

Sunday, 29th March 2026

The Dragon Run – 10Km

River Barrow, Graiguecullen, Carlow

Sunday, 3rd May 2026

Athy Dragon Boat Regatta – 200m

River Barrow, Emily Square, Athy, Kildare

Thursday, 21st May 2026 – 19.00hrs

IDBA Ltd Annual General Meeting

Video Conference Meeting

Saturday, 6th June 2026 (provisional) & Sunday, 7th June 2026

Barrow Dragon Boat Regatta – 200m & 500m

River Barrow, Graiguecullen, Carlow

24th– 30th August 2026

IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival

Lac du Bourget, Aix-les-Baines, France

29th – 6th September 2026

15th IDBF Club Crew World Championships

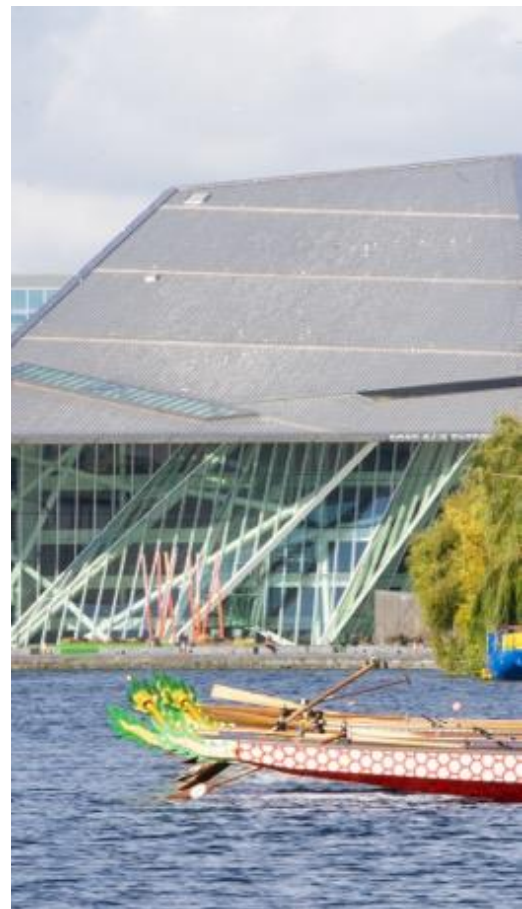
Liyu Lake, Hualien, Chinese Taipei

(Open to all registered Irish club teams)

Saturday, 12th September 2026

Lough Rinn Dragon Boat Regatta – 200m & 1000m

Lough Rynn, Mohill, Leitrim



Pacific Dragons from Canada at the Dublin Dragon Boat Regatta 2019

We would like to issue our Newsletter 3 times a year, so if you have any news, articles or dragon boat photos you would like to contribute to the next edition, please email the Editor – Julie Doyle at info@dragonboat.ie.