

## **The Benefits of Canoeing Ireland's Equipment Loan Scheme**

### **Laois Kayak & Canoe Club**

#### **Starting Out**

Based in Durrow, Laois Kayak & Canoe Club (LKCC) was established in 2011 to be a family-focused club that caters for all levels of kayaking. From the start, a strong focus of LKCC, as defined in its five year development plan, was to get people involved in kayaking who were not presently active in sport. We see the club as giving an alternative to those who do not engage in the more traditional sports. As such, our club officers have attracted many new female and younger members who had opted out of all sports. This has broadened the family appeal in the club and we now cater for ages 8 to 80 in many kayak disciplines.

#### **Club Development**

To help meet this objective, LKCC started to run beginner evenings during the summer months. Anybody who wanted to try out kayaking was welcome to come along. One evening a week soon grew to three as the numbers of new paddlers coming to our sessions quickly increased. Though club members kindly loaned their personal boats and gear to facilitate the demand, the limited amount of club-owned equipment soon started to become a constraining factor.

#### **Equipment Support**

It was at this point LKCC contacted Canoeing Ireland for assistance. Within a short time, LKCC was able to collect a fleet of kayaks, paddles, helmets, buoyancy aids and spray decks. Having this resource available to the club meant that we were better able to structure our summer training schedule and could guarantee people who came along that they would be able to get on the water. LKCC has used Canoeing Ireland's equipment loan scheme in 2014 and 2015. It has also availed of boats from the canoe polo and canoe marathon committees.

#### **Canoeing Ireland's Impact**

LKCC makes a conscious effort that all paddler training and progression follows Canoeing Ireland's development programmes and therefore each newcomer to the club is encouraged to attain a minimum of a level 2 kayak skills award. This summer, LKCC's instructors ran two level 2 courses during May and August respectively. In total, 30 paddlers were certified to this standard. Without Canoeing Ireland's help, the club would have not been able to deal with these numbers.

The knock-on effect of receiving support from Canoeing Ireland has had a positive effect in other ways too. The income generated from running courses has allowed LKCC to start purchasing more of its own gear. Eventually, we hope that the club will become self-sustaining. Some of this year's newest members have already bought their own boats and are building up their gear. They are getting involved in the wider paddling community through exploring some of the different disciplines including entering canoe marathon races and canoe polo competitions. For a smaller club such as Laois Kayak & Canoe Club, Canoeing Ireland's equipment scheme combined with committed club members is proving to be an effective way to realise the club's development and locally grow the sport. Further details about kayaking in Laois can be found at [www.laoiskayak.com](http://www.laoiskayak.com)

Pic 1: Laois Kayak & Canoe Club – First Beginner Group (May 2015)



Pic 2: Laois Kayak & Canoe Club – Second Beginner Group (August 2015)



Brian Ogilvie, Public Relations Officer, Laois Kayak & Canoe Club