

## 'Sinister and malicious' vandalism of ringbuoys

Vandalism of ringbuoys on the Waterford Greenway has been labelled 'sinister' and 'malicious'.

"For the second time in the last few months I've come across a very sinister and downright evil form of vandalism," said Nicky Hannigan DLA Helvick Lifeboat Station. "On Wednesday morning August 22, while walking along the Greenway opposite Sallybrook I noticed something was just not right with a ringbuoy in its housing. On closer inspection I saw that the rope that is supposed to be tied onto the ringbuoy had been burned off the lifesaving equipment and was missing."



Damaged chord on a ring buoy which is the property of Waterford Council. Photo: Nick Hannigan.

He continued: "The second incident happened a few months ago when it was brought to my attention that a ringbuoy had been vandalized in a very sinister and malicious way. The ringbuoy had been taken out and the rope burned through a number of times along its length and put back into its housing giving the impression that all was intact. Both of these acts of vandalism on the two ringbuoys which are supplied and maintained by Waterford Council, would have proved them useless in the case of an emergency!"

Fianna Fáil says continued vandalism of life-saving equipment must be tackled.

Highlighting the issue on a national basis, Fianna Fáil Senator Keith Swanick has said the continued and repeated destruction of lifebuoys at beaches, rivers, and lakes across the country must be tackled head on.

He described the recent destruction of lifebuoys in Waterford as "totally unacceptable".

Senator Swanick, who has introduced legislation which makes it an offence to steal or damage life-saving equipment such as defibrillators and lifebuoys, says it is totally unacceptable that thugs across the country continued to put lives at risk through their reckless behaviour.

"Just last week in Waterford the ropes attached to lifebuoys along the very popular Waterford Greenway were burned off or cut for the second time, rendering the lifebuoy useless," he said.

"This behaviour is completely unacceptable, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice."

In 2017, he brought forward the Life Saving Equipment Bill in July 2017, which seeks to make it an offence to steal or damage life-saving equipment such as defibrillators and lifebuoys. If passed, the Bill imposes strict new penalties, including a fine of up to €50,000 and a jail term of up to 5 years for anyone convicted of interfering with life-saving equipment.

“Since then a petition to support the Bill has secured almost 20,000 signatures – a clear indication that the appetite is there to bring in legislation to protect vital life-saving equipment,” he said.

“I hope to see the Government progress this legislation in the new Dáil term and send a clear message that this kind of behaviour won’t be tolerated.”