

Press release

11<sup>th</sup> June 2018

## **Flying Fifteens Ready To Set Sail**

### **World Champion Sailors to visit Strangford Lough for Willowbrook Foods Flying Fifteen Championships**

100 sailors will take to the water this month, as Strangford Lough Yacht Club hosts boats from all over the UK and Ireland to compete in the Willowbrook Foods Flying Fifteen Championships of the British Isles.

Beginning on 27<sup>th</sup> June, the four-day event will see helms and crews compete for the Flying Fifteen Association of Ireland's Northern Championships. This hotly-contested event has attracted previous and current world champion helmsmen, including Charles Apthorp and Steve Goacher.

The championship marks the diamond jubilee of Flying Fifteen Sailing on Strangford Lough, which remains home to many previous winners of this prestigious trophy. Strangford's flat waters and picturesque scenery make it ideal for water sports, especially sailing.

This year's event is sponsored by Ireland's largest bagged salad producer Willowbrook Foods, based in Killinchy on the shores of Strangford Lough. Willowbrook Foods Managing Director, John McCann MBE, is a former National World Champion and New Zealand Champion sailor:

"As a County Down based business, we are delighted to be supporting this event and look forward to welcoming competitors, families and old friends back to sail and enjoy our beautiful landscape. As an ex Flying Fifteen sailor, I have enjoyed the boats for years and visited many foreign climes, enjoying the hospitality of other clubs. It is great to be able to ensure the viability of another great championship on our doorstep and support the sport I have enjoyed so well. It is a great honour to host the event here in Northern Ireland," said John McCann MBE.

The racing can be viewed from several locations around the lough including Whiterock, Kirkubbin, Sketrick and Mahee. A high number of competitors, spectators, volunteers and visitors are expected in the area. In turn tourism revenue for local businesses and accommodation providers will be generated, as event organiser Roger Chamberlain explains:

"The Flying Fifteen is a two-man high performance planning keelboat with a symmetrical spinnaker which is spectacular to watch. It was the chosen racing boat of Prince Phillip, and still attracts many of the top sailors in the country. These boats take a great deal of skill to sail competitively and with a growing fleet in Ireland and the UK, we can expect some great racing and some fantastic evening entertainment for friends and families alike.

“We have over 50 entries to date from the UK and are expecting to match that from all corners of Ireland. Most will stay locally and enjoy our great hospitality and produce, which we will showcase in the evening events through partners such as Copeland Gin and Finnebrogue Artisan.

“Events like this would not be possible without the support of our main sponsors Willowbrook Foods and Ards and North Down Borough Council, as well as the huge number of volunteers who have given up their time to help out.”

- **Ends** -

#### **Notes to Editors:**

- Strangford Lough (from Old Norse Strangr Fjörðr, meaning “strong sea-inlet”) is a large sea loch or inlet in County Down, in the east of Northern Ireland. It is the largest inlet in the British Isles, covering 150 km<sup>2</sup>.
- The lough is almost totally enclosed by the Ards Peninsula and is linked to the Irish Sea by a long narrow channel or strait. Within the lough, tips of drowned drumlin hills create a spectacular myriad of islands, while on shore, the hills form a pleasant rolling landscape. The main body of the lough has at least seventy islands along with many islets (pladdies), bays, coves, headlands and mudflats.
- Strangford Lough was designated as Northern Ireland’s first Marine Conservation Zone and designated a Special Area of Conservation. Its abundant wildlife is recognised internationally for its importance.
- **Willowbrook Foods, based in Killinchy County Down, is Ireland’s largest bagged salad producer supplying prepared vegetables, meal accompaniments and salad to the Irish and UK retail and food service sectors.**

**Photo Caption:** Event organiser Roger Chamberlain is pictured with Willowbrook Foods Managing Director, John McCann MBE at Strangford Lough Yacht Club at Whiterock, ahead of the Willowbrook Foods Flying Fifteen Championships of the British Isles beginning on the 27th June 2018.

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