

**Ireland's first Motoring Rally for Disabled Drivers to take place in Athlone**  
**Organised by the Irish Wheelchair Association as part of their**  
**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

**On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2010**, Ireland's first ever Motoring Rally for disabled drivers will take place in Athlone, as part of the Irish Wheelchair Associations (IWA) 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. Over 40 drivers and co-pilots will participate in this unique event which is sponsored by Wheelchair Cars Ireland.

IWA established a driving school for drivers with physical disabilities in 1969. The tuition service was formed in response to the dearth in public transport available at the time and to meet the needs of IWA members who wanted greater independence and freedom. Since then the driving tuition has expanded and developed into a nationwide service, last year IWA provided a total of 4,995 driving lessons to 447 members. IWA provides advice on motoring issues to thousands of people each year from the National Mobility Centre which is based in Clane.

According to Kathleen Mc Loughlin CEO of IWA:

"The ability to drive can provide people with physical disabilities with the independence to participate fully in society through employment, education and social activities. The IWA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Motoring Rally, is the first ever Irish rally for disabled drivers. We wish all those taking part a safe and enjoyable journey as they participate in this historical event".

Contestants will follow directions over four stages – setting off from a starting point at minute intervals while maintaining a pre-set average speed. Direction manuals will be provided to all co-pilots who will navigate the 140 kilometre course. Points will be deducted from contestants if they finish a stage too early or too late. Average speed will be recorded and calculated at non-disclosed locations, as well as at the finishing line.

The Road Safety Authority wished the IWA well for its event and congratulated the organisation on its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Declan Naughton, Director, Road Safety Authority said:

"The RSA is aware of the work the IWA has been carrying out in the important area of driver mobility and the RSA is committed to working with the IWA on issues to do with driver fitness and mobility".

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editor**

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) was founded in 1960 by a small group of eight wheelchair users committed to improving the lives of people with physical disabilities in Ireland.

IWA has played a key role in bringing many improvements and changes to the lives of people with physical disabilities in Ireland. Some of these include equality, access, employment, housing, sport, independent living and advocating for legislative changes.

From its small beginnings in 1960 the Association has grown into a vibrant network of 20,000 members and over 2,000 staff, as well as many dedicated volunteers. The Association is today as it was in 1960; focused on the needs of the individual and directed by its members.