



MINUTES OF USER GROUP MEETING

**HELD IN
THE GRANGE MANOR HOTEL, GRANGEMOUTH**

**ON SATURDAY 27 MARCH 2004
10.00 – 13.05 HOURS**

Representing British Waterways:

Richard Millar, Waterway Manager, Lowland Canals
Linton McBurnie, Patrol & Plant Officer, Lowland Canals
Tommy Thomson, Waterway Supervisor, Forth & Clyde Canal - East
Bill Robertson, Waterway Supervisor, Forth & Clyde Canal - West
Scott Gaherty, Waterway Engineer, Lowland Canals
Donald Smith, Engineering Assistant, Lowland Canals
Yvonne Laird, Finance Administrator, Lowland Canals
Marion Paterson, Receptionist/Administrator, Lowland Canals
Angela Donnelly, Administration Assistant, Lowland Canals

Guest Speakers

Claire Macnair, Sales & Promotions Manager, The Falkirk Wheel
John Ellis, Fisheries & Environmental Manager,
London & South East, British Waterways
Chairman, Lowland Canals Angling Partnership Scotland (LCAPS)
Ron Woods, Policy Development Officer, LCAPS
Amanda Durlik, Community Access Co-ordinator,
The Waterways Trust Scotland (TWTS)

Chairman

Professor John Hume, OBE

1.0 Welcome

Professor Hume opened the meeting at 10.05 a.m. and welcomed everyone.

He advised that today's meeting would include discussion groups to specifically discuss "how can commercial boating operations and charitable boating operations blossom together?". Each discussion group would have a chairman and scribe to take note of concerns and ideas and all this information will be incorporated within the Minutes of this meeting.

After the discussion groups the meeting would reconvene to agree the Minutes of the last meeting and make changes as appropriate as well as points of AOCB to be discussed.

2.0 Apologies

John Hume advised that there were numerous people who sent apologies and a full list of these would appear in the Minutes of this meeting as follows:-

1. John Black, Engineering Operations Manager, Lowland Canals
2. Ronnie Simpson, Customer Service Manager, Lowland Canals
3. Craig Sear, Waterway Supervisor, Union Canal
4. Elly Storrie, Administration Manager, Lowland Canals
5. Lisa Kennedy, Landscape Architect, Lowland Canals
6. Ralph Allardyce, SIWA
7. Mr R Anderson
8. Mr Sam Armstrong, Clarkston Angling Club
9. Mr Robin Black, SIWA
10. Mr Chas Booth, Sustrans
11. Dr Morris Bradley
12. Mr Brooksbank, Dove Centre, Wester Hailes
13. Mrs Lynn Brown, Beecraigs Country Park
14. Mr Alastair Chisholm, Millport
15. Mr Steve Clerkin, Linlithgow CAC & Scottish Federation of Course Anglers
16. Capt. Gordon Daly, Seagull Trust
17. Ms Ruth Crone, Scottish Canoe Association
18. Mr J Ferguson, George Watson College
19. Ms Margaret Ferguson Burns
20. Ms Ros Houldsworth, Calder Development Group
21. Mr S B Gilmore
22. Melville & Dr Judy Gray, LUCS
23. Ms Alison Harrison, Edinburgh Watersports
24. Mr Peter Hawkins
25. Mr Edward Helps, Alvechurch/Deckshare
26. Mr Desmond Hodges
27. Mr Joe Holland
28. Mr and Mrs Bill Jarvie, Forth & Clyde Canal Society
29. Mr Gudmund Jorgensen
30. Mr Steven Kelvin, FCS (Scotland)
31. Mr Hamish & Mrs Hillary Leal, Capercaillie Cruisers
32. Mr Jim Leishman, Falkirk District Canals Society
33. Councillor John Longstaff JP, The City of Edinburgh Council
34. Mr Billy Mason, Billy's Barge
35. Mrs May McIntyre, Falkirk District Canals Society
36. Mr Donald McKinnon, Forth & Clyde Canal Society
37. Mr K McKinnon
38. Mr David Muir
39. Mr Tim Parker, Black Prince Holidays
40. Mrs Dee Pilkington, Ratho
41. Mr Alister Preston
42. Mr A Rennie, Dumbarton
43. Mr and Mrs G Ritchie
44. Mr and Mrs D Rossetter, Standing Waves
45. Dr Alan Rutherford, Historic Scotland
46. Mr and Mrs J Sime, The Seagull Trust
47. Mr P Simpson & Ms C Johnston, Zazou (Restaurant Boat)
48. Mr J Stevenson, Camelon Boat Company
49. Mr D Stewart, The Union Inn
50. Mr and Mrs I Tennant
51. Mr Thornton, Commercial Boat Operators Association
52. Mr Gallagher, Summerlee Heritage Park, Coatbridge

3.0 Lowland Canals Update

Richard Millar

John Hume invited Richard Millar, Manager, Lowland Canals to give an update on the Lowland Canals.

Richard opened his presentation by advising that a very interesting discussion topic was planned later on in the morning. He drew the group's attention to the fact that these were vital moments for the development of the Lowland Canals, times of change, the busyness of The Falkirk Wheel and pubs and restaurants are beginning to flourish along the corridor. All suggestions coming from the User Group are being taken on board and he also advised on a few of the changes due to take place in the Lowlands Office as follows:-

The Lowlands Office would be moving in May this year to the building at The Falkirk Wheel and Richard advised that the this office would now be responsible for operations at The Falkirk Wheel. All would be advised of the new address and contact details in due course.

Two new appointments had been made at the Lowlands Office. –

John Black has taken the position of Engineering Operations Manager. With a background in engineering maintenance with Scottish Water he has now come to British Waterways and will be in charge of the Winter Stoppage Programme.

Ronnie Simpson, previously with Commercial Department in Glasgow and having organised The Scottish Boat Show in 2003, was taking up the position as Customer Service Manager. Ronnie's remit would be administration, licensing and mooring as well as community liaison and business development.

Unfortunately, both new managers were not available at the meeting as they were both on holiday in Tenerife.

Richard showed the meeting the new Openness and Accountability procedure for internal complaints which now takes the place of "Tell us What you Think" Customer Charter.

The group were informed of the two updated websites i.e. www.thescottishboatshow.co.uk and also www.waterscape.com Also www.scottishcanals.co.uk should have relevant up to date information.

There would be a single point of contact for all boat movements and this telephone number would be advised to the group in due course. We intend improving customer care on the canal. Demand for moorings will be identified and increased interest will be noted. Ronnie Simpson will be responsible for these procedures being put into place.

Richard identified a number of issues such as weed, debris in the channel, vandalism, antisocial behaviour and fly tipping as well as seepage from the canal. He highlighted the cost of removal of materials which had been fly-tipped. The group were assured that his team were doing their best to alleviate any problems caused by these issues. He also pointed out that the canal was old and needed constant repair work done however we should be able to see problems developing before the problem got out of control such as the well publicised work which needed to be done on Lock 13.

Edinburgh Quay – development will flourish and come alive with boats, pubs restaurant and it is expected that the north side of the canal in Edinburgh will be filled around 14 June.

Leamington – apparently a 200 year old boat has been found in Union canal here. Richard promised to report back on that if he found out any more information on that story.

We had a busy end of year spend when the Scottish executive gave £2.2M to British Waterways Scotland. The following were identified as requirements for this spend –

- Additional moorings across system
- New surface on road into Grangemouth Sealock
- New lock gates for Lock 17-20
- Dredging on Forth & Clyde (Lock 3/Auchinstarry to Kirkintilloch)
- New toilet block at Lock 27
- Boat storage area at Bowling
- Repair to feeder system
- Vegetation control and access for offside inspections
- Resurfacing of towpath near Three Bridges Car Park leading to The Falkirk Wheel.
- Resurfacing work at Harrison Park
- 17 water points
- 19 bins for boaters
- Dog bins
- LCAPS – fish stocking at Locks 19-20 and signage

Richard promised that there would be more happening in 2004.

15 hire boats planned – Alvechurch/Black Prince and of course Ronnie Rusack's Lowland Canals Cruises have been a great success and will continue.

Facilities will have to improve and marketing is important.

Updated Skippers Guides/canal guide/Geo Maps/Tide Tables are planned and the Lowland Canals DVD is now available.

Richard promised a bigger and better Scottish Boat Show this year.

The Photo Competition last year was a success and another one is planned for this year.

A new Leisure Puffer is being built at the moment and the size is 42' long 10' wide and 3' deep. We are also hoping that Gregor Fisher will open The Scottish Boat Show.

Enterprise Island – Scottish Enterprise to take Millennium Link boat through the canal for business development.

Lowland Canals Art Strategy – The Waterway Trust Scotland – link with Richard Demarco and Ian Hamilton Finlay to bring the Scottish equivalent of the Venice Vienielli to the Lowland Canals.

New directional signage will be springing up all over the canal network.

Richard finished his presentation by advising that it was a bright new dawn for the Lowland Canals.

3.1 QUESTIONS

Tommy Lawton – Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Auchinstarry Basin – is there a plan for the same in Kirkintilloch/Strathkelvin

Richard Millar

I can't guide on this. I have seen a lot in the press but this doesn't seem to be happening on the ground. We have offered to look at future waterspace.

Tommy Lawton

Drawings are available.

Richard Millar

Is additional information available?

Tommy Lawton

I have a meeting with Andrew Thomson next week.

Mike Coates

£2.2M finance from the Scottish Executive. Has there been dredging on Union canal under railway bridges.

Richard Millar

We had only seven weeks to spend this money and the Union Canal has its own contractors and because there are more locks on the Forth & Clyde Canal this took priority

Question -

Use of canal by rowing clubs

Richard Millar

We have been talking to rowing clubs for a number of years. There is no change since talking originally.

Myrtle Allardyce

Congratulated Richard on all the good promotional work

Richard Millar

Thanked Myrtle for drawing attention to just another one of the jobs done.

Question –

40 more boats on canal. Does BW want to regulate private and residential.

Richard Millar

800 boats on canal – that plan continues. Visitor moorings – optimistic way ahead at Harrison Park. We need more time. We need to buy pontoons and also to take the next step of a more structured plan in Scotland.

Myrtle Allardyce

Is there any significance in the move to The Falkirk Wheel for Lowlands Office - Change in Scottish Water as water authority.

Richard Millar

No – nothing underlying. Unsure of what Myrtle was suggesting.

Myrtle Allardyce

There is a change in relationship with what you are managing. Will the Visitor attraction be managing boat trips?

Richard Millar

Iain Herbert is responsible for the Visitor Centre and Trip Boats and we are looking after the site. We are required to make sure that The Falkirk Wheel is a five star visitor attraction. The Wheel is not the same as the rest of the canal network. There are clear differences.

Robert Hunter

Waterspace strategy on Forth – various things are happening with that at the moment

Richard Millar

We have the Leisure Puffer being built at the moment

Guthrie Hutton

Is the office move going to take place by water to The Falkirk Wheel?

Richard Millar

This could be good PR

Jaki Stevenson – The Nolly Barge

In consideration of the Puffer planned – are there plans for a fleet of boats by British Waterways.

Richard Millar

With reference to the Puffer – this is a separate enterprise from British Waterways and is owned by the Governor of the BBC and as he is originally from Maryhill there are plans to call the Puffer the “Maryhill”.

Dave Waterston

What is the update on the Glasgow arm.

Richard Millar

I think this is still ongoing. Christopher Breslin/ISIS Development Group. Port Dundas is hopeful – there is activity on the ground with this issue.

Question –

Business and enterprise against charitable what is the position.

Richard Millar

Last year 30,000 people were taken out in charitable boats
25 commercial boats take less than that.

Ann Street

Dog bins – are the Local Authority responsible for the clearing up of these bins? We had a TWTS pick at Broxburn.

Richard Millar

Dog bins are first and foremost a British Waterways responsibility.

Ann Street

Are there any planned for Broxburn?

Richard Millar

Yes – some areas have cameras and also have dog wardens attached to police forces. Dog Wardens still enforce. Linton McBurnie is out with the police in this connection at the moment.

John Hume

If we can use the River Clyde it will be very valuable. Some review of these operations – maybe we will be able to address this at the next meeting.

4.0 Marketing of Lowland Canals and The Falkirk Wheel

Claire Macnair

Claire introduced herself as the Sales and Promotions Manager at The Falkirk Wheel. She advised that she had only been in this position for a couple of months.

Her remit is developing the business by joining local and international customers. There have been 750,000 visitors since the opening – three times what was expected. She plans to maximise research and advised that the 2003 Scottish Boat Show welcomed 25,000 visitors. She is looking to develop increased awareness in the Falkirk area and incorporate tour operator itineraries. Many people around the world have not as yet heard of The Falkirk Wheel and clearly this is something that Claire plans to change.

She noted that the youth of today is a market of increased revenue and is looking to the bigger picture of encouraging customers to move out from The Wheel to the canal network. Falkirk area has many attractions which could be incorporated within a Falkirk Passport to encourage people to visit all places of interest such as Callander House and Kinneil House in Bo'ness as well as The Wheel.

Claire announced that there would be two new trip boats at The Falkirk Wheel this summer. Both of these will have disabled access.

A strategy for encouraging people to come from Glasgow and West of Scotland to visit The Wheel is also expected to go ahead.

The website address is www.thefalkirkwheel.co.uk

Claire reported on the way the business was developing in that there was more and more TV coverage as well as film requests. The Wheel has received an award for Innovation and this will be presented to our local MEP in New York. With the arrival of new signage and interpretation panels at the site Brass Rubbing Packs are now very popular. Claire is also looking at cross selling incorporating possibly hotel packages. Corporate hospitality is a major selling point now. The recently published Falkirk Wheel Guide Book is now available in the Visitor Centre. With regard to the dog fouling campaign Claire reported that most complaints at The Wheel are about this specific problem. Dog toilets may be a consideration within the site in the future.

With the imminent arrival of the new boats at The Wheel there is a “Name the Boat Competition” which is being highlighted in the Falkirk Herald and this has involved the local schools.

School visits are going ahead on a regular basis and of course we have the information website www.wow4water.co.uk which has materials for both teachers and pupils alike.

4.1 Questions

Liza Coates

Three trip boats per hour – we are surely going from strength to strength. On the trip from the Union Canal out to The Falkirk Wheel one of the things that impresses me most is that the breathtaking view over the Forth.

However the peace and tranquillity is disturbed by hearing private conversations from other boats whilst going over The Wheel.

Seagull Trust

The Marion Seagull trip boat – washing dishes causes a lot of noise too.

Claire Macnair

We have to look closer at the product and make it work cleverly for us.

Lisa Coates

But three boats an hour – this is a lot?

Richard Millar

The plan is to have availability and resources to do three trips per hour over The Wheel. One boat will take 96 people. This plan would go ahead if we have peaks in the number of people requesting trips. We must accommodate our customers.

Ronnie Rusack

The stretch from Ratho to Linlithgow is used well and the views from Avon Aqueduct can sell the idea of going further to The Falkirk Wheel and on to Glasgow and going the other way into Edinburgh.

Claire Macnair

It has taken two years to get established at The Wheel and we are creating more possibilities continually.

Ronnie Rusack

Tourist attraction is visited then we could encourage visitors to go further to other areas.

Claire Macnair

There should be local appeal and a much wider audience.

Ronnie Rusack

Promotion suggested.

Jaki Stevenson – The Nolly Barge

User Group statistics – how does British Waterways get this information?

Claire Macnair

Through pedestrian counters on towpaths. Anything done with data? – Well it helps us to understand why visitors do or do not come to the site. Customer Feedback Forms and the Booking Line plays a part in this information.

Jaki Stevenson

Does British Waterways publish this data?

Claire Macnair

Unsure of this – the purpose of collating this information is to help us to understand our customer base.

Question –

Have you abandoned the amphibious vehicles?

Claire Macnair

No – this is still possible however they do not hold very many people. We hope to get environmentally friendly boats.

Richard Millar
Boats with diesel engines

Question –
Standard charge to go into site - £2 – is this idea to be dropped?

Claire Macnair
No not dropped – we need to get the product right first. That is the remit of Sales & Promotions. There is a charge for car parking.

John Hume
You will have to look at this more closely.
John cautioned that many attractions have halved the number of visitors when they start charging for entry.

Claire Macnair
Charging for parking or entry – we will have to look at this a bit closer.

John Hume
The Welsh Folk Museum were overwhelmed when they took off the entry fee. Summerlee charged and the visitors dropped but when this fee was dropped the visitors doubled.

Myrtle Allardyce
Early development has been proved to be one of three. Shortbreak packages, passport and rail links. Can you speak to other attractions along the canal corridor. You could provide passes to encourage the business. International visitors would be interested in short breaks coming from Europe. Now is the time to see that everything is written in other languages such as French and Italian.

Mike Coates
In the Lake District we met a family who wanted to visit Hadrian's Wall in that area. We have two ancient Roman attractions locally to The Falkirk Wheel – you need to link in with The Antonine Wall locally to develop this part of the business.

Tommy Lawton
One point – can we let The Wheel promote all of this.

4.2 Action - All discussions and suggestions noted by Claire Macnair.

5.0 Update on LCAPS **John Ellis/Ron Woods**

Update on the first year – what/who is LCAPS – committee 5 from British Waterways and 5 angling representatives

- Memberships on sale in over a dozen tackle shops across Scotland – almost 100 members joined in 2003
- Stocking – 500lb mainly roach and some Perch into Lock 19-20 (7 November)
- Signage – going up – aims to be finished by 31st March
- Coaching – Wester Hailes (Union) and Firhill (F&C Community Project) – Jim Brown Firhill Junior Anglers and Ken Armstrong
- Publicity – BBC Landward programme
- First draft of Fishery Action Plan developed

Forthcoming Developments

- Open meeting for interested parties – further development of Fishery Action Plan; identification of long term contribution from angling community and other stakeholders
- Bring the Committee back to full strength
- Joint ventures with TWT (Scotland) – initial training of new tranche of coaches followed by wider coaching initiatives for young anglers in Glasgow and Falkirk.
- Training of initial cadre of bailiffs – visible presence on the bank for the first time.
- Wider availability of memberships – (other BW locations, boat hirers etc)
- Improved publicity – e.g. new leaflets more widely available, posters at Wheel?
- More stocking (autumn 2004)

Ron Woods reiterated that there was a real need for involvement and specifically to train people in bailiffry. He reported that LCAPS had a long term loss in both Andy Carroll and Steven Clerkin. They are looking to have commercial undertaking to sell more permits and the leaflets will be reprinted soon with more up to date information available. British Waterways are committed to continue stocking with new fish.

5.1 Questions

John Hume

LCAPS is a Sunday Name – maybe consider a name which is easier to remember. Historic Scotland had a much longer name but was shortened to a name which is a lot easier to remember.

Question -

Dead fish – what can be done

Ron Woods

Most anglers are aware of different species and discarded tackle. There has to be good housekeeping and not discarding tackle but taking it home.

Question –

Dead crows?

Ron Woods

We have to behave responsibly

Myrtle Allardyce

Guarantee from BW to promote short breaks and have a Passport to various other places of interest as well as The Wheel and canals. Angling holidays could be incorporated within this.

John Hume

Suggest that you take all this on board

- 5.2** Action - Various issues pertaining to angling were discussed and John Ellis and Ron Woods will take these issues to future meetings of LCAPS to be incorporated within information available to anglers in the User Groups in the future.

6.0 Report from TWTS

Amanda Durlik

Amanda Durlik gave a short update presentation to the User Group and in particular advised that Scottish Natural Heritage and British Waterways were

jointly funding a feasibility study on Lowland Canals. The area of investigation is improvement of physical and disabled access on the Lowland Canals. The report will be available in November. There will be funding available to do some access improvements. Plans are afoot for improvements at Tintock Tunnel and Hairstaines. Amanda reported that the local school did a lot of fund raising for the access path into the housing in that area.

Amanda also gave details on the forthcoming Cycle Challenge event on 25 April. The purpose is to make cyclists aware of other users on the canal. Packed lunch boxes will be available on the day and free bells will be provided. Volunteers will be needed on the day especially on the Forth & Clyde. This will be specifically geared towards families/Disabled and elderly.

6.1 Questions

Guthrie Hutton

Concerned about Tintock development. There was an agreement that wildlife would be protected on the offside and no works would take place here.

Amanda Durlik

At Hairstaines there are some paths already developed. Constant traffic creates a path down to the towpath.

Guthrie Hutton

Offside development ?

Amanda Durlik

Tree planting in that area to paths – one a bit rundown and one for works vans. We have spent money in improving these.

Guthrie Hutton

But what about the wildlife? There is an agreement to leave this undisturbed.

Amanda Durlik

There is a massive overgrown area. People use this as a link from housing to the canal.

John Hume

Extend this discussion with Amanda Durlik at another time.

6.2 Action – Amanda to investigate and meet with Guthrie Hutton in connection with this issue

6.1 Sean McGurgan

Great to see primary schools involved. Cyclists should have Code of Conduct.

Amanda Durlik

All cyclists will be provided with Waterway Code and Permit to help them to think about these points. We are giving them an Information Pack and other information on the day of the Cycle Challenge. There will also be opportunity to get more information to them.

Sean McGurgan

Will this be like the Tour de France.

Amanda Durlik

Families will be involved and this is not a race. They will learn about clearing up their litter also.

**7.0 Break Out into Discussion Groups –
Zetland Suite/Dundas Suite and Glensburgh Suite to discuss various
problems and advise solutions.**

Richard Millar introduced this section of the meeting by reminding everyone that the Millennium Link has been seen to create jobs and get people to enjoy canals. He advised that there were currently 25 commercial hire boats on the canal and we needed to work out the transition between the commercial and charitable boats. Clearly we have to work together to establish a rule here.

An objection was raised by Tommy Lawton of Forth and Clyde Canal Society that we should not be discussing the difference between commercial boat business and charitable boat business.

Richard Millar emphasised that there are anomalies which need to be clearly defined and our User Group is the best forum by which these issues can be investigated.

John Hume
Overruled the objection and invited all to break out into their respective groups.

Jaki Stevenson – The Nolly Barge
Registered compliment that this is actually being discussed.

Bill Purves – The Edinburgh Canal Society
Regarded talks as an opportunity.

The meeting reconvened at 12.55 p.m.

John Hume
This was a positive discussion and a report will be given at the next group meeting

Richard Millar
This will be circulated within the minutes of this meeting.

7.2.1 Action – Administration to collate and incorporate within minutes

8.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting **John Hume**
John invited the meeting to make any relevant changes. There were no changes and the minutes were agreed unanimously.

9.0 Any Other Business **John Hume**
Matters arising –
Sandra Purves advised that the Edinburgh Canal Society boats are being surveyed for the Boat Safety Scheme and she wondered if others wanted a surveyor to come along at the same time. She advised that there was a sheet at the back of the meeting room to lodge interest in doing this altogether.

West Edinburgh Canal Society – 24 April – Dove Centre Wester Hailes – meeting in connection with working as a wider team and getting people on the canal – 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

9.1 Guthrie Hutton
Can we invite walkers to User Group to widen the interest base

Mike Coates

Yes – Ramblers Associations

- 9.2.1** Action – Administration to advise Rambling groups and association to request attendance at User Group in the future.

John Hume and Richard Millar advised that this would be done.

- 9.0** Richard Davies – Glasgow River Festival
Advised that the festival would take place on 16 – 19 July – Science Centre Broomielaw – started by Glasgow City Council.

Ronnie Rusack
Showed interest in this event.

It was also advised that there was need for more pontoons.

10.0 Conclusion and Next Meeting

Richard Millar brought the meeting to a close advising that there were 430 people out last weekend at the Litter Challenge with quite a lot of British Waterways staff. He reiterated that the Users should keep talking to us. We are continuing to try very hard to develop the business.

John Hume endorsed this and thanked Richard Millar for all he had been doing for canals since taking over the job.

The meeting closed at 13.05 p.m.

Date: Saturday 30 October 2004

Time: 9.30 a.m. for 10 a.m. start

**Venue: Grange Manor Hotel
Grangemouth**

- 11.0. FOR YOUR INFORMATION -
5 actions recorded/MP/June 2004
For ease of reference – items are numbered
.0 – presentation
.1 – Questions & Comments
.2 – Actions**