

**British Waterways Scotland Group**

**Minutes of Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2002 at 0930 hours  
Held in The Crinan Hotel,  
Crinan by Lochgilphead, Argyll**

**Present:** Susan Achmatowicz  
Neil Butler  
Ken Collins  
Ian Darling, in the Chair  
Professor George Fleming  
George Greener  
Jane Karwoski  
Arthur McCourt  
Stewart Sim  
Jim Stirling

Iain Herbert, General Manager, The Falkirk Wheel & Visitor Centre – attending in part

Patricia Rettie (minutes)

Minute	Subject
	<p>Ian Darling chaired the meeting in the absence of Campbell Christie.</p> <p>The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming those present and informed the Group that David Fletcher, Chief Executive of British Waterways had been awarded a CBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours in recognition of his services to the UK's inland waterways.</p> <p>The Group joined him in expressing their congratulations to him.</p>
<b>SG40</b>	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Campbell Christie, who was attending his son's wedding.</p>
<b>SG41</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2002 were accepted and agreed. Minutes of these meetings are available on the <a href="http://www.scottishcanals.co.uk">www.scottishcanals.co.uk</a> website.</p>

<p><b>SG42</b></p>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>Item SG34 – PR informed the Group that BW Scotland’s IT Manager had contacted the company who host scottishcanals.co.uk. The facility to log file downloads had not been included, but this has now been rectified, although, statistics prior to now are not available. It is only possible to tell the number of times that the BW Scotland site is visited, not the number of times each individual page is visited.</p> <p>Item SG35 – Accounts for 3 Year Plan and the Regional Business Plan, which is incorporated into National Business Plan, will be available for October Meeting of British Waterways Scotland Group.</p> <p>JS proposed that the Group have an additional meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2002, immediately following the British Waterways Scotland Annual Meeting, which will be held on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>. This meeting to discuss priorities ahead of the next business planning round.</p> <p>GG is also keen to see Scotland treated as a country in its own right, particularly in the 10 Year Plan, as with Wales, thus showing British Waterways to be fully embracing devolution.</p> <p>GG made the point that there is a key staff resource in Watford to assist with preparation of this material and that JS is able to make use of this. He also encouraged the sharing of best practice between England, Scotland and Wales.</p> <p>A McC emphasised that within the Scottish Executive, June to September of each year is the critical spending review period. This year the review covers the following 3 years .</p> <p>Item SG37 – PR to produce a form for Group members to fill in their network contacts, which they consider, could be helpful to BW. This information to be ready for October Meeting.</p> <p>GG &amp; CC had met with external members of the BWS Group as agreed at the meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> March. This was a very productive exercise which highlighted the commitment of these members and their willingness to assist BW in whatever way possible.</p>
<p><b>SG43</b></p>	<p><b>Strategy for Developing The Lowland Canals</b></p> <p>JS stated that the intention is to ensure the Lowland Canals are a success following on from the Royal Opening and that a workshop had taken place during the last week in May. The objective of this was to look at a development plan through which risk can be assessed, capital allocated and actual implementation take place.</p> <p>The way forward is to encourage and stimulate water based activity, and when appropriate, by setting up day boats and hire boats, together with provision of moorings and associated facilities. At the same time other areas of the business, such as property development will continue in parallel.</p> <p>Partnership working will be key to the greater success of the business. Links</p>

with private sector, Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Companies will be essential. The wider issues of Social Inclusion and our work with The Waterways Trust will also be covered.

SA asked what the relationship had traditionally been between BW and operators. JS responded that BW had been the landowner, with the operator being the tenant. Now BW would look to providing equity thus becoming a partner within a joint venture. The aim being to ensure a quality product bringing benefits to BW and the operator. JS also pointed out that there is a grading system for boats which is endorsed by the English Tourist Board so that customers know what to expect. BW could envisage putting in risk capital which would ensure that they are in a strong position to influence quality of service/process with partners.

JS was asked by KC to qualify what exactly BW meant by partners. He explained that we seek to involve experienced hire boat operators to bring their expertise to the venture and BW could put in capital.

KC made the point that Local Authorities are key to the planning process, and therefore BW need to be able to influence these matters.

A McC in response to being asked if BW were statutory consultees in planning process stated that they are likely to be consulted in local planning and of course through the neighbour notification system. If in partnership with Local Authority, who are also the Planning Authority, any applications for Planning Permission must be referred to the Scottish Executive.

ID reinforced the importance of seeing vessels on the water as quickly as possible. SS assured the group that British Waterways Scotland (BWS) was in discussion with hire boat operators and he is confident that BWS will get support from the operators. A small start of say 12 boats could make a difference. Our target is to get something established for next season.

ID raised the point of competition between new operators and existing operators, who have been operating on closed sections of the canal prior to the opening of The Millennium Link.

SS responded that holiday boats and trip boats could be seen as complimentary to the existing operators.

SA suggested that it would be beneficial to get operators round the table to discuss and to put together a joint business plan to minimise threats and BW could build in quality systems and get a true picture of what they would be expected to put in.

SS stated that this approach was being considered.

GG stated that as a matter of urgency some key elements of the process should be listed as a logical sequence of steps. BW must be seen to pick up all points and embrace those who will be most affected. Amongst these were:

- Get Legal Director involved
- Ensure clear processes are place
- Basis for talks with operators
- BW is Public Sector Body and must ensure it acts responsibly and with

fairness.

GF suggested that the Group should be used to help achieve this.

JS informed the Group that BWS had purchased 2 day boats and that the Forth & Clyde Canal Society are running a programme in problem areas, along the Forth & Clyde, in partnership with BWS. We supply boat and they run trips. We will consider putting another boat on the Union Canal, but the voluntary sector on the Union is more localised at present. The intention being to encourage local people, particularly young people to see the canals as an asset not a target

GG suggested that it would be useful to get Scottish Executive involved to enable them to give support when questions are asked and Ministers could have answers prepared in advance.

In response to ID's question about the impact of the changing business needs on the Scotland Team, JS replied that initially by working with the Watford Team the situation should be manageable, but in the longer-term the situation will require review. The greatest impact will be on the Commercial Team. JS has had discussion with Robin Evans, Commercial Director, Watford regarding the structure of the Scotland Commercial Team and what assistance will be necessary.

It was agreed, by the Group, that it would be beneficial to have Nigel Bell of Scotland's Commercial Team along to the October Meeting of BW Scotland Group to give update.

Objectives to be achieved by October Meeting are:

- To have hire boat operators interested in operating on Lowland Canals
- Report on node identification and development

JS to identify where members of the Group can assist in these matters by helping to gain insight into BW development plans. ID and Nigel Bell already hold regular meetings to discuss property issues . The Group are also asked to put forward ideas for land based activities. SA is keen to assist with this she suggests looking at 5 nodes identifying possibilities and pitfalls.

SS informed the Group that a Scottish Boat Show is planned at The Falkirk Wheel Site in 2003 prior to Scotland hosting the World Canals Conference in Edinburgh, in September 2003.

NB stated that this is an area where he is happy to be of assistance and JK put forward the importance of establishing corporate entertaining on boats and at The Wheel Site in order to target the interest of these groups and to encourage them to involve their families in canal based activities .

GG stated that it is important to be looking at innovative finance initiatives. GF talked of competition between major Scottish banks. BW already has a relationship with National Australia Bank. GG wants these issues raised at next British Waterways Board Meeting.

<p><b>SG44</b></p>	<p><b>Strengthening The British Waterways Scotland Group</b></p> <p>GG and Campbell Christie have had discussions with external members of the Group who are all keen to continue their involvement with Group.</p> <p>It has been concluded that the size of the Group should be increased to include more external members. A draft advertisement and draft criteria for the selection of additional external members were circulated at the meeting for comments. The intention was to have new members in place by the next Scottish Annual Meeting scheduled to take place in Edinburgh on 5<sup>th</sup> September, If the number of applicants is high it may take a little longer to complete the process.</p> <p>In addition to increasing the number of members on the Group, it is important that more value is to be obtained from it for British Waterways. To achieve this a two way flow of information is to be encouraged. Members are to provide networking information to BW Scotland and BW will aim to keep all members up to date on issues and events, thereby encouraging the Group to function as an integral part of BW Scotland. Greater frequency of meetings is to be considered and Group members with similar interests encouraged to share information when unable to attend meetings. There was discussion on the value of a monthly conference call to keep members up to date with current issues and needs of BW Scotland. It was felt that this would be worthwhile and give members a stronger sense of involvement.</p>
<p><b>SG45</b></p>	<p><b>Strengthening The Relationship With The Scottish Executive</b></p> <p>JS explained to the Group that during discussions with the Scottish Executive on the position paper on Scotland's Canals it had become clear that opportunities presented by an enhanced waterway needed to be better explained to the Scottish Executive. The main purpose of the paper will be to initiate broader discussion and essentially to inform the wider Executive with a view to ensuring mutual understanding of the benefits our waterways can bring and how they can assist the delivery of the Government's overall agenda.</p> <p>JS then went on to say that members of the Group could play a key role in helping to champion the waterways by assisting with networking contacts with the Executive and other public agencies. The matrix, which will be provided for them to complete, will assist with this.</p>
<p><b>SG46</b></p>	<p><b>General Update</b></p> <p><b>The Falkirk Wheel:</b></p> <p>ID, on behalf of the Scotland Group, congratulated Iain Herbert and his colleagues on the success of the Royal Opening on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2002.</p> <p>Iain informed the Group that on the day there were approximately 3,500 invited guests, plus around 3,000 members of the public .</p> <p>On 26<sup>th</sup> May, despite the weather, there were 10,000 people on site for the event held jointly with Big in Falkirk.</p>

Official count began from 31<sup>st</sup> May and over the three day period numbers totalled 35,000 and total numbers to date are 138,000.

There are teething troubles with parking, but BW is working closely with local police and Falkirk Council to resolve these.

A charge of £2 per car has been levied for those wishing to park on site. A Park & Ride facility is offered, which is free, but most people prefer to park on site. There are also substantial numbers of cyclists and people on the towpath. So far it has not been a problem to accommodate numbers wishing to enter the Visitor Centre and retail spend and catering income are good.

Initial problems with toilet facilities due to large volume of visitors are being resolved.

Site is open until 1830, but last boat trip through The Wheel is 1700 hours. Opening times will be regularly reviewed in line with demand. Press comment on the opening times was noted.

There was a discussion on charging policy. The general view of the Scotland Group was that pedestrian access to the wider site should be free. Charging for car parking and possibly for entry to the Visitor Centre would be appropriate. In the long run, The Falkirk Wheel has to be sustainable, therefore, it is important to identify the appropriate balance between people being able to 'see' The Wheel without charge and paying for services or facilities provided.

It was agreed that there should be a policy statement rationalising BW Scotland's approach to charging.

Iain Herbert informed the Group that he has now been appointed to the Board of Forth Valley Enterprise and the Local Tourist Board.

Market research results are very positive. IH has tested this further by talking to people in an unofficial capacity. Public want to know what else will be offered, e.g. boats, concerts, etc.

GF suggested that there should be a link between The Wheel Site and Rosebank Distillery. BW should seek to own the brand from Rosebank.

IH is to view the amphibious vehicles for The Wheel Site week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> June and the first one is due to be tested within the next few weeks.

IH is also looking at setting up vending machines outside the Visitor Centre for soft drinks, ice cream and coffee to encourage spend by those not wanting to visit café.

### **The Crinan Canal:**

The B841 Bellanoch to Crinan Road collapse is a Local Authority liability for repair. However, JS stated that BW are willing to assist the Local Authority during de-watering in the proposed stoppage period from January to March 2003. GG concerned as to whether when road is examined that there may be other areas liable to collapse. A risk assessment would require to be drawn up

to ensure:

- Joint problem solving partnership with Local Authority continues
- BW show public (MSP's Councillors & Crinan residents) partnership is taking all reasonable steps to safeguard the road
- All foreseeable consequences of removing the water are understood and possible repair needs drawn up.

JS also informed the group that the matter has been raised at the meeting with Lewis McDonald, Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport & Lifelong Learning.

AMcC made the point that Argyll & Bute Council could approach the Scottish Executive as this is the only road in and out of Crinan and Argyll and the Islands Enterprise could be involved as this is economic tourist facility. The matter would then become a 3-way discussion.

### **Caledonian**

BW has become a partner in a new initiative called The Loch Ness Partnership. The aim of which is to make better use of Loch Ness as a "brand" to attract business and to improve facilities and amenities around the Loch.

During the coming year BW have plans to construct a mini hydro scheme at Banavie near Fort William. GF Made the point that he also sees great potential for wind power generation on both the Caledonian and Crinan Canals. This is being explored.

The Caledonian Canal is also well suited to carrying freight. Timber could be transported by canal to Corpach and waste by canal to a disposal site – if the disposal site is beside water.

### **Lowland Canals**

Anti Social issues are being addressed by working with the Police and Local Communities. This is an important area where Waterways Trust and Canal Societies can be of great help.

Litter and debris continue to be a problem. Craft suitable for carrying out litter and debris removal from the waterway and the embankments are being purchased. Staff resources and monies are being diverted to litter clearance in order to meet customer expectations.

<p><b>SG47</b></p>	<p><b>Current Issues</b></p> <p>The Group are keen to know how much BW Scotland is engaging with the community. JS explained that there has been a reorganisation within Scotland Regional Office and that what has previously been known as the Partnership Group, now comes under the direct management of George Ballinger and is more of a delivery department, now known as Technical &amp; Environment Department. This department has a number of partnership initiatives ongoing with Local Authorities, various Development Groups, Community Groups, schools and organisations such as Scottish Natural Heritage and Central Scotland Countryside Trust. Eddie Coogans, formerly the Partnership Manager remains in a Strategic role .</p> <p>It was agreed that this topic would be discussed further at a future Scotland Group meeting.</p>
<p><b>SG48</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GF is still keen to travel the entire length of the Forth &amp; Clyde Canal to see first hand problem areas and areas with possible regeneration opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>GG's view is that it is good to walk the course. Boat trips are not always so useful and are very time consuming.</p> <p>GF feels he would prefer to do boat trip in order to establish, for example, where you would stay if you were doing the trip on a boat with no overnight accommodation facility.</p> <p>It was agreed that further discussion on this is required and that Waterway Managers should be kept informed. JS to bring forward suggestions on how this is best progressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NB informed the Group of a Ministerial visit to Sweden scheduled to take place in October of this year. He has been asked to put together an entertainment package and feels this is a good opportunity to promote British Waterways Scotland and in particular, the Highlands.</li> <li>• GG would like views on the meeting to be sent to PR, as, with the exception of Campbell Christie, all members were present.</li> <li>• JS informed the Group that the World Canals Conference for 2002 is being held in Montreal in September and he has been asked to prepare a paper and give a presentation. The theme of the conference is 'Of Canals and Cities' and the title of Jim's presentation is 'The Millennium Link – A tale of Two Cities – Edinburgh &amp; Glasgow'. JS stressed that this will be an important showcase for Scotland's Waterways and a great opportunity to market the 2003 conference</li> </ul>

	which Scotland will host in September, in Edinburgh.
<b>SG49</b>	<p><b>Meeting Dates</b></p> <p>A paper tabling important dates for the remainder of 2002 and dates for British Waterways Scotland Group Meetings for 2003 had been provided to the Group prior to the meeting for consideration and comment. JS to advise on the venues as soon as practical.</p> <p><b>Dates for 2003 BWSG Meetings are as follows :</b></p> <p>Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February  Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May  Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September (Also the planned date for the Annual Meeting)  Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November</p>