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**British Waterways Scotland  
Scotland Group**

**Continuation of Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2003 at 1300 hours**

**Open to Public & Held in The Main Chamber,  
The City Chambers, Royal Mile, Edinburgh**

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**Representing British Waterways:** Susan Achmatowicz  
Campbell Christie, Chairman  
Ian Darling  
Professor George Fleming  
George Greener  
Jane Karwoski  
Kenneth MacKenzie  
Rod Michie  
Sandra Purves  
Stewart Sim  
James Simpson  
Jim Stirling  
Patricia Rettie  
Nigel Bell  
Richard Millar

**Other Attendees:** **As listed in Appendix 1**

### **Introduction & Purpose of Meeting**

Campbell Christie opened the meeting and welcomed all present and introduced those on the panel, which consisted of Campbell, as Chairman; Jim Stirling, Director British Waterways Scotland; Nigel Bell, BW Scotland Commercial Manager; Richard Millar, Waterway Manager, Lowland Canals; Patricia Rettie, Group Secretary.

CC also introduced Robin Evans, the recently appointed new Chief Executive of British Waterways.

He explained that the Group is made up of BW Board members, BW staff and people outwith BW who have particular skills and expertise, and can assist with the development of the business in Scotland. CC also explained that the Group meets several times a year in areas where the canals have an impact on the community, thereby, creating an opportunity for local people to come and discuss issues of concern or put forward any suggestions they may have.

CC gave a brief overview of the items discussed at the earlier meeting of BWSG. The main items were the Development Strategy for the Lowland Canals now that The Millennium Link is complete. This is a broad based strategy covering the next 10 years, there was also lengthy discussion on the BW Scotland Licence Review, which is nearing conclusion, having

been ongoing for some time. CC also explained that funding via the Scottish Executive was discussed and the importance of the relationship between BW and the Executive and the Minister, and that they understand the economic value of the canals and the opportunities for job creation.

JS acknowledged the excellent turnout and in particular the people who had travelled from the Caledonian area.

JS spoke of how there is a lot going on in general on the canals, but in particular with the Lowlands, and how most of the benefits of The Millennium Link will be land based, stimulated by activity on the water. JS also mentioned the Black Prince Hire Boat Company relationship with British Waterways which has now been established and based around Falkirk, but also stated that BW is open to suggestions as to where else they could be based.

JS also mentioned the activity nodes being created. Some will be large nodes with moorings and hotels and other smaller nodes with shower blocks, toilets, etc. He spoke of the Edinburgh Quay development now underway, the plans for Rosebank Distillery and The Falkirk Wheel and how it will expand, the marina planned for Auchinstarry, the Partnership project at Kirkintilloch and the plans for Bowling.

Due to the generosity of the Scottish Executive, a large amount of the extra funding has gone into improving the infrastructure of the canals, together with improved services and facilities for boaters. This extra money has enabled the bringing forward of the Crinan backlog programme, allowing repairs to the west reach of the canal, Locks 15 & 14, required works to reservoirs, the embankment and support for the Crinan Road. On the Caledonian, for example, works include a new overflow at Corpach ahead of a small scale Hydro Scheme at Banavie. Also new gates being procured for Muirtown Locks ahead of next winter's programme.

On the Lowlands in excess of £1m is being spent on bank protection, dredging, building facilities blocks, moorings, signage, CCTV and an extension to the Visitor Centre.

JS updated the meeting on the Carmuir Tunnel situation, where the failure of the head wall affected the Glasgow to Stirling railway line. JS stressed that this was not a canal failure and that the de-watering of the canal was to protect the canal and assist Railtrack to carry out the works required. Pressure is being brought to bear on Railtrack to ensure the canal is reinstated in time for the forthcoming season.

CC then invited members of the public to ask questions.

#### Mike Coates, Scottish Inland Waterways Association (SIWA)

Mike Coates said that he understands that the BWSG is only an Advisory Group, but what is the purpose and if they are having difficulty in ensuring BW Scotland develop such an all embracing strategy, will they, as BW, seek from the Scottish Executive, help with the necessary public sector investment in pump priming funds required to bring the services on the Union Canal up to the quality of services required to attract, support and sustain the outstanding potential identified by the Scottish Executive.

With The Scottish Executive's endorsement of BW Scotland Group's role in championing BW Scotland's commercial interests, how are the group advising or guiding BW Scotland on the best strategy to enable the Union canal to meet its outstanding potential to attract commercial operators who may supply holiday hires, time shares, live-aboards and hotel boats while at the same time delivering the necessary quality of service required by this market -restaurants; pubs; pumpouts; fuel; chandlery and safe mooring marinas?  
Question asked verbally at meeting, confirmed later in written form)

Campbell Christie explained that we do not see the BWSG as separate from BW. To provide an input into policy rather than to establish policy, but helps to ensure issues are fed into the debate.

Nigel Bell added that it is important that BWSG has input to decisions and arising from discussions submissions will be put to the BW Board for necessary funding and to the Scottish Executive.

CC said that he and other BWSG members, who were also main Board members, would discuss at Board level issues arising from BWSG meetings. Arising from these discussions, conclusions are reached on funding requirements, etc. In this way priority is given to the projects which are identified as being of prime importance.

George Greener stated that the BWSG is an important bridge between BW Scotland and the BW Board. He went on to say that the BWSG made significant input into the Scottish Executive Policy document and that a great deal of that bears the standard of the BWSG. GG also pointed out that the BW Board has 2 Scottish members on it, but could not have provided the information to the Scottish Executive without the input of the Group into this excellent document.

**David Eaglesham of the Scottish Executive endorsed this and agreed that there had been a great deal of partnership working in producing the document.**

GG went on to explain the need for understanding the financing of what is required to deliver the document. Without the input from the BWSG BW could not have created the necessary relationship with the Scottish Executive and have the BW Board endorsement in what the Group does and BW is getting benefit of the working practices of the BWSG in England and in Wales learning about getting the best from devolution and the best from partnership working. All this has been discussed and is being taken forward by CC with the Minister and will serve to develop confidence in BW Scotland.

**Andrew Carnduff, Salt Water Group**

**Salt Water users represents a large number of users, possibly largest in Scotland. They would like to see more vibrancy on the water and feel if it is cheap to get on the water BW will get more people to participate. He asked how BW are going to promote this and how would boaters get up from the Carron River.**

CC explained that this had been part of the morning discussion and that it was recognised that there is a great deal of work to be done to achieve this and that it is not just an issue of licence fees.

JS welcomed the issue of the Carron being raised, but pointed out that it requires funding for a solution to be put in place. There has been discussion on a barrage to give a longer navigation window to allow boaters through. JS went on to acknowledge the amount of work which has been carried out by Richard Millar and his Team to improve navigability and security, although security will improve partly by getting more boats on the canals and there will be improved facilities for boaters. The biggest increase in traffic will be from small boats, trail boats, etc. At the Falkirk Wheel it is planned to have boat sales and BW is looking at other areas where new customers will come from, but cautioned that BW cannot make it too cheap at the outset and then introduce large increases later. JS pointed out that BW believes its asset to be valuable and that the quantum will rise as the level of service rises, but there will always be something at the cheaper end of the market. More boats are coming on to the canals and if people do not own a boat they will be able to hire one or have a trip on one.

JS also pointed out that the Forth & Clyde Canal Society have been doing a lot of work with BW and more CCTV is being installed. A great deal of work is being done with children of primary school age with assistance from the police. BW is also working with Scottish Enterprise to develop the business.

CC made the point that this is on the agenda for the BWSG to look at how we tackle encouraging boaters on to the canals, but that there is a lot going on.

**Myrtle Allardyce, SIWA**

Stated that she was glad to hear all that was being proposed and asked who carries responsibility for the consultation process, and is there a fees and marketing strategy, how does it ensure access for all as The Millennium Link intended to get activity going for fresh water boaters and not turn away existing boaters. Myrtle also put the point that in December she had enquired about mooring fees and was invited to a meeting to discuss this in January.

CC responded by explaining that the BWSG had been involved in the whole process and how it all must fit some rationale. Following today's earlier discussion CC feels that there is a rationale around the fee structure. CC went on to say that the reopening of the Lowland Canals makes it a very different operation to a small stretch of canal which is not linked, but BW does not want to see that type of activity priced out of the market. However if boaters receive services than they must be prepared to pay for them.

JS stated that one of the ways in which BW will increase traffic is by getting trail boats on the water by making it easy for short periods of time, whilst also encouraging longer-term craft to be based on the canal. He explained that the licence fee and moorings fee must be 2 separate things as BW wish to encourage developers to build moorings.

**Myrtle Allardyce said BW should be looking at opportunity costs where people will spend their money and looking at the tourism market and the European market.**

JS said BW must look at where the business or customers are coming from, there will not be many people who will take boats from the Union Canal to Europe or from Europe to the Union. This is also the case for the Forth and Clyde, although there is the potential for smaller yachts with shallower draft to go through the Forth and Clyde. The bulk of the European traffic is confined to the Highland Canals. Most of the Lowlands traffic will be on the towpath and via smaller craft, therefore this is not comparable. JS pointed out that the non British tourist at The Falkirk Wheel accounts for 8% of the market and BWS does not expect a high percentage of foreign boats to be based on the Lowland Canals. However, The Falkirk Wheel has been well marketed at the European Boat Shows and there has been a lot of interest.

CC pointed out that the BWSG has looked at best practice to ensure that our charges are in line with others and found ours to be reasonable. Costs for other activities were also looked at and still the finding was thought to be reasonable.

**MA referred to length of cruising on Scottish canals compared to that in the south where canals are much longer.**

**David Wright**

Made the point that following devolution and the opening of The Millennium Link he understands that increase in administration staff and office blocks would be necessary, but feels that the number of bank staff is smaller than in the past. He asked what BW will do to ensure they are looking after their asset.

CC said that the BWSG will be ensuring that BW has the resources available in Scotland to make The Millennium Link vibrant and successful and get people on the water.

RM made the point that there were previously 12 bank staff on the Forth & Clyde and 8 on the Union, now there are 26 full time and BW are finding other ways of increasing this through a government scheme called New Deal where employees are paid through the scheme and given training resulting in a CV with skills enabling them to apply for skilled positions on the waterways in the future. This will increase the numbers by a further 20 by April.

CC made the point that where contractors are used within BW care is taken to ensure they work within BW rules and culture.

**Colin Galloway**

Raised the point that minutes from the Lowland Canals User Group Meeting did not report questions from the attendees and did not list who had attended.

RM undertook to resolve this.

**Donald MacKinnon**

Complimented the Auchinstarry development and asked if BW were aware of the A80 proposed upgrade and any impact it may have on the canal. Donald also said that the Cumbernauld Action Committee were keen to have this road upgraded to motorway standard and had organised petitions in favour of the reopening of the Kelvin Valley Route.

CC said that he was aware of the situation and the Scottish Executive had taken a decision that the route should not go near Auchinstarry. We are not aware that it is up for reconsideration.

**Robin Black Chairman, Caledonian Canal Operators Association**

Wished to raise the issue of the proposed changes to licence fees for Commercial Operators on the Caledonian Canal. Whilst he was pleased to hear about the ongoing maintenance programme, he wished to make the point that the business was experiencing a downturn of almost 50% partly due to the downturn in tourism.

RB also stated that business had suffered greatly due to the outbreak of Foot & Mouth disease and that no assistance had been given to operators other than BW offer to delay the collection of licence fees.

RB made comparisons with European market and Ireland. He stated that the operators would welcome the opportunity to open dialogue to discuss and negotiate the situation.

CC asked NB to respond as he has been in dialogue with the operators.

NB began by stating that BW have had already had dialogue with the operators, but agrees more is required, and feels that a position of mistrust has arisen where it is thought that BW is withholding something which they are not.

NB said that he would like to spend time to get a better understanding of the business and what the actual costs are for running such an operation.

JS stated that whilst we may consider that 6.5% is correct in the long-term, it is recognised that to implement the full increase immediately may be unreasonable. To further discuss the way forward operators must be prepared to meet with BW and provide full information on

costs of running the business and each type of business would be looked at individually. This would be a completely open and fair process to all with no deals behind doors. JS stressed that if this was the perception, then he could only apologise, but it is not the case, but people must understand the high costs of maintaining and improving the canals and must be prepared to pay for their use.

CC agrees this is an opportunity for an open book policy. BW is open about its costs and prepared to discuss, but takes the view that if we provide a service it must be paid for. BW wants to see business continue, as does the Scottish Executive, therefore a way forward must be found which is seen to be reasonable by all parties.

### Jeremy Lamb, Union Canal

JL spoke on behalf of himself and other boaters on the Union Canal at Ratho on the issue of dispute with householders whose properties are situated on the canal and the rights of the boaters to be resident on the canal at the Ratho moorings. He gave examples of lack of return correspondence from British Waterways, and made particular reference to a letter he had expected from BW on the subject of the householders and boat owners.

RM apologised that the letter to house owners had not gone out. BW will write to all house owners making them aware that boaters do have the right to use the moorings at Ratho.

JL raised the issue of BW's policy in relation to selling boats together with moorings, which does not allow such a transaction. He also has an issue over whether or not he requires Planning Consent to be resident on his boat.

RM confirmed that this is the case with regard to sale of boats and moorings, but that BW Scotland may be prepared in particular instances to look at this on a case by case basis.

BW has carried out extensive enquiries into the issue of Planning Consent and has been advised, by all Councils, including Edinburgh City Council that this is necessary for anyone to be resident on a boat on the canals and they must also have services. Lisa Kilpatrick, another member of BW staff has also been out to the mooring with representatives of Edinburgh City Council and they confirmed that this was the case.

CC assured Mr Lamb that BW would deal with him speedily and fairly.

JL did not feel that BW had answered the question and that if real consultation was taken on board most people would find this to be the case.

JS responded that following a discussion, if those involved do not like the conclusion it does not necessarily mean that BW are bad at consultation.

JL claimed that BW does not respond to letters and e-mails it receives.

JS said that BW are happy to provide written responses, but that in some instances RM has gone out to see the problem first hand and spoken to people direct. It had been felt that the matter had been dealt with and did not respond in writing for this reason.

### Peter Simpson, Zazow

Stated that his e-mail was not responded to and telephone calls not returned, but that he has been given assurance by Alex Conway of BW that this will improve.

JS stated that if letters or e-mails are sent to us we will respond, perhaps we do not always write, as stated earlier, but in future we will ensure that a response in writing follows all such contact.

## Anne Street, Boat Owner

Has only one issue. Anne is pleased as a boater to be able to use the canals, but made the point that there is not enough information available about the canals and this comment has also been made to her by English visitors at The Falkirk Wheel. Would like literature to tell people what else they can do whilst visiting the canals. Has sent e-mails to JS and to Iain Herbert at The Falkirk Wheel on this matter and would like an acknowledgement.

CC stated that whenever he has been to the Visitor Centre there has been plenty of information available covering all these topics.

AS responded that it does not contain information on other attractions.

**Note:** Following on from the meeting a check was made and it has been established that there is a substantial amount of information available within the Visitor Centre and there is a company employed to come in on a daily basis to stock up the literature. However, BW is always happy to receive suggestions for anything else that people consider will enhance the visitor experience.

Myrtle Allardyce made the point that this is a world class centre, but inside it is geared only to 7 year olds.

**Note:** Again, following the meeting enquiries were made regarding this point and the interactive wall was designed with all age groups in mind.

Mike Coates referred to criticism of BW administration and to Jeremy Lamb's point, which had been put forward earlier, that Ratho boat users have no clear understanding of BW policy on usage.

BW's view is that they provide via the website, printed literature, User Group Meetings and via their Waterway offices a wide variety of information on all issues relating to the canals.

## Ronnie Rusack

Agrees that BW does not reply to letters and gave examples. He also spoke of the lack of information available at The Falkirk Wheel and suggested selling wall space within the Falkirk Visitor Centre for advertising. RR also informed the meeting that he sends someone down every week to ensure that his literature is on display.

BW again apologised for correspondence not answered and reiterated that would ensure responses were returned on all correspondence in the future.

Dialogue was asked for on facilities for boaters at Edinburgh Quay.

CC said that there would be dialogue and BW would be happy to initiate a meeting.

Myrtle Allardyce stated that SIWA wants to see vibrant canals and agrees we need balance and trust and co-operation and suggests an open meeting for all to attend to get things going.

CC happy to meet with SIWA to discuss policy and way forward and also with Commercial Operators as stated earlier in the meeting to find the forward with their particular issues. JS is also happy to do this.

With regard to The Falkirk Wheel publicity BW will look into this, but CC believes this is already there. CC said he would be happy to ensure that information is available to encourage visitors to return and to visit other attractions.

CC thanked everyone for a very active meeting and hoped all would contribute towards activity on the canals and gave assurance that JS is happy to respond to any concerns which may arise.