



**British Waterways Scotland
Scotland Group**

Continuation of Meeting held on 7th December 2001 at 1230 hours

Open to Public & Held in The Clydebank Town Hall

‘Looking After the Future of Scotland’s Canals’

Representing British Waterways: Campbell Christie, Chairman British Waterways Scotland Group
George Greener, Chairman British Waterways
Stewart Sim, Operations Director
Jim Stirling, Director Scotland
Patricia Rettie, Executive Services Manager

Other Attendees: Richard Fitzgerald, Former BW employee
Raymond McKinnon, Member of Public
Colin Bryson, Sustran (Sustainable Transport)
Tom & Nancy Lawton, Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Guthrie Hutton, Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Dan Henderson, Director of Planning, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Jim McElhill, West Dunbartonshire Council
Bill Hunter, Clydebank Shopping Centre Manager
Sandra Carmichael, Marketing, Clydebank Shopping Centre
David Thistleton, DTZ

Introduction

Campbell Christie welcomed all those present, introduced BW representatives and explained the purpose of the BW Scotland Group, how they meet several times a year in various locations where the canals have an impact on the area. CC then spoke of the changes with the Scottish Parliament and in particular the appointment of Wendy Alexander, Minister for Enterprise & Lifelong Learning & Transport, replacing Sarah Boyack.

Purpose of the Meeting

CC explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss BW’s priorities for Scotland, now that engineering works are nearing completion, and to ensure that the aspirations of what would flow from this come to fruition and add economic development and include social input. CC said that BW would welcome the views of those present and be happy to hear any issues or points anyone wished to raise.

CC also spoke of the Scottish Affairs Committee’s visit to Scotland to look at how job creation aspirations are being achieved.

Points from Attendees

Bill Hunter asked when the Forth & Clyde would be fully open.

Jim Stirling replied that the Forth & Clyde Canal had opened for navigation, West to East & East to West, since May of this year. He went on to say that it was unlikely that there would be much activity over the winter months, but there had been reasonable success in the first year and now we must aim to encourage more residential and holiday boats to be based on the canal. Although there have been over 100 boats through since the reopening of the canal BW is aiming for 500 per annum within 5 years.

JS acknowledged the work of the Canal Societies.

Sandra Carmichael asked whether BW would be getting the schools involved and what incentives were there to get boats on the water.

JS explained that the link between Edinburgh and the Forth & Clyde not being open yet was limiting, but that we are issuing licences for £50 at present. So far there has been a 50% increase and if all goes to plan after 5 years BW expects to achieve and exceed targets.

JS also explained that BW Community Liaison Staff work with schools and Local Authorities on water based activities and are working with parents to form a water safety programme similar to the road safety one.

JS acknowledged that Canal Societies play a big role here and BW work with them to get children on the water and that there are 2 boats which already sail up and down the canal which children can get on and off where they want to. Children are also given opportunities to operate locks. These activities are carried out on an informal basis and a formal one through schools.

Sandra Carmichael explained that the Shopping Centre put on workshops in the summer and would like to do something on the water, but is concerned that insurance issues may prohibit this. Sandra feels this would be popular not just with children, but also with other groups such as model boat owners.

Tom Lawton of the Forth & Clyde Canal Society said he understood it would be the responsibility of the organisation running the event, but as BW has cover the answer may be to work with BW.

GG stated that BW would get their experts to look into this and CC made the point that we want the communities involved and that 'a safe canal is a canal that is being used'. Sandra also felt that greater use of the canal may be a way of keeping the rubbish out. GG made the point that involving people gives them ownership.

Tom Lawton agrees. He also raised a point about landing stages being unstable and need to be fixed and that it was difficult to load and unload passengers.

JS said this would be fixed.

Colin Bryson told the he would like to see crab apple trees being planted along the canal and how attractive these would be when in blossom and would make good photo opportunities, but he has concerns about vandalism.

Mr Bryson also spoke of his involvement with Sustrans, and how he and others go along the canal towpaths and pick up glass and rubbish and they would like to know if it would be possible for BW to have a barge to collect rubbish as this is a big problem.

CC & JS explained that BW carry out quite a bit of tree planting involving children and volunteer groups. JS said that The Waterway Trust may be able to raise funds for tree planting and BW will get the work carried out.

With regard to the problem of rubbish CC made the point that the more the canals come into use the less of a problem the rubbish will become. He pointed out that it is early days and that BW is carrying out educational programmes which will discourage this type of behaviour and bring about a new culture.

Dan Henderson spoke of the problem of illegal dumping in a number of areas and how it is the responsibility of the council, public, British Waterways and the Shopping Centre. The programme with young people is a the way forward where the benefits can be shown.

Tom Lawton spoke of an article in a newspaper on the subject and that there is a work boat in Kirkintilloch which could perhaps be adapted for the purpose of clearing up, but he agreed the emphasis is on education or the problem just repeats.

Stewart Sim spoke of how this is a problem everywhere and that in London there is a boat which goes up and down the canal clearing up rubbish. He also made the point that it would be helpful to share ideas and best practice around the regions.

GG suggested a competition to name litter collecting craft and how achievement often comes through this type of initiative.

Guthrie Hutton raised the issue of security for boats mooring overnight. He explained how at present they are using their craft for Santa Trips and that it is necessary to chain the boat in the middle of the canal. He also raised the matter of how there are areas of the canal where boaters cannot stop at all. Lambhill being one example, and how this is a disincentive to boaters.

JS acknowledged the problem and stated that this was not something that BW could resolve in isolation, but that it is a matter to be handled in partnership with others.

Guthrie stated that he would like to see this particular area targeted now.

Jim McElhill asked if BW has any plans to put litter bins on towpaths and any plans to carry out resurfacing works in the area.

JS made the point that bins only work if there is a system in place for emptying them and this would be something that would have to work up with the local councils.

He stated that the towpaths have been recently resurfaced, but that BW would look at areas of concern.

Jim McElhill – the area from Clydebank to Glasgow boundary was damaged when dredging was being carried out.

Dan Henderson said that the council may be able to provide litter bins at certain locations e.g. car parks and in some urban areas.

Jim McElhill made the point that the towpath is well used by people to go to and from the shopping centre.

Dan Henderson asked for locations of where moorings would be.

JS said that these would develop over time according to demand. At present there are moorings at Bowling, Auchinstarry and Kirkintilloch and there may possibly be a demand for some at Kilbowie Road. JS stressed that security would be important in order to encourage people to use them and the importance of attracting the hire boat industry.

SS spoke of 2 hotel narrow boats that are coming to Scotland and that they are already fully booked.

Guthrie Hutton said that the double footbridge was a great impediment to running short trips and as not a lot of people used it could the second bridge be removed.

JS said that this was a requirement of the Shopping Centre in order that BW would cause minimum disruption to shoppers.

Dan Henderson explained to the meeting that if the 2 bridges had not been put in place CIS would not have invested the £20 million for the upgrade of the Shopping Centre and therefore there was no alternative and that the blame did not lie with BW.

Guthrie acknowledged the tremendous enthusiasm and support that there was for the canal in Clydebank.

JS made mention of the public meeting that had been held in the Town Hall on this subject and that the public had wanted 2 bridges as they did not want disruption.

Dan Henderson said that the elderly residents were opposed to ramps for wheel chairs, push chairs and trolleys.

Sandra Carmichael said that often people do not see things long-term and David Thistleton acknowledged that there had been a lot of discussion on the matter, but that things do change over time.

JS acknowledged the support demonstrated in Clydebank at the Opening Event and CC made the point that in a few years the Shopping Centre would be centred around the canal. There may even be 'Shop & Sail' options

Jim McElhill thanked British Waterways.

CC closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He stressed the importance of support and how people would look back in 20 years and say 'great project, here for all time'.