
British Waterways Scotland Group

Minutes of Meeting Held on Thursday 8th May 2003 @ 0930 hours

In The Lovat Arms Hotel, Fort Augustus, Inverness-shire

Present: Susan Achmatowicz
 Ian Darling, Acting Chairman
 Professor George Fleming
 George Greener
 Arthur McCourt
 Kenneth MacKenzie
 Rod Michie
 Sandra Purves
 James Simpson
 Jim Stirling

In Attendance: Beatrice Clark, Waterway Development Co-ordinator; Catherine Cain, Waterway Development Manager, North West; Nigel Bell, Commercial Manager & Iain Herbert, General Manager for The Falkirk Wheel & Visitor Centre

Patricia Rettie (minutes)

Minute	Subject	Action
	ID as acting Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.	
SG 76	Apologies Apologies were given for Campbell Christie, Chairman BWSG; Jane Karwoski; Ken Collins; Neil Butler & Stewart Sim, Operations Director, British Waterways	
SG 77	Minutes of Previous Meeting Minutes of the meeting held on 6 th February 2003 were agreed.	
SG 78	Matters Arising ID asked for update on Scotland's Licence Review. JS informed the Group that there are two aspects to the Licence Review. One being the proposals for the private boaters, which following the consultation period was implemented on 1 st April 2003, supported by a paper outlining the process followed in order to arrive at the final structure of the Review. JS stated that there has been no further conflict since its introduction. Richard Millar, Waterway Manager for the Lowland Canals has recently had a meeting with the Union Canal Boat Owners. This was a good constructive meeting. Discussions on pricing will be ongoing. The second aspect is that of the Commercial Operators. A meeting was held on 1 st April, in Inverness with the Caledonian Canal Operators Association	

	<p>(CCOA), BW staff, Rod Michie, representing the BWSG, representation from SIWA, and the BMF. This was a good constructive meeting, although following the meeting there seems to be some differences in BW's understanding of the agreed outcomes and that of some of the operators. However, BW and the CCOA have had further discussions and are in correspondence. Progress is being made and clarity of the issues is emerging.</p> <p>BW and the CCOA will work together on the revision of charges with resolution by September 2003.</p> <p>JS explained that fees were last established in 1998 and there has been no increase since. Small Hotel Boat Operators appear to be the ones in greatest difficulty and BW has agreed to show leniency in relation to their debts. BW also recognises that other types of Operators do quite well on the Caledonian Canal and has new agreements with these businesses.</p> <p>ID asked for update on progress for the Group by September.</p> <p>GG made the point that out of the four different types of businesses operating on the Caledonian, three appear to be doing well, with one not so successful. He asked if any examples of Small Hotel Boat businesses doing well elsewhere could be obtained and pointed out that it may not be a viable market for this canal and that there may not be any justification for keeping alive a business if it cannot make a profit. GG pointed out that a strategy is required for dealing with this and queried whether part of the package would be marketing and business advice with co-operation from Operators.</p> <p>NB pointed out that the two struggling Operators at the top end of the market are geared to the American market, which is not doing well at present, but this may be temporary and recovery is possible. Whereas, a similar type of offer at a lower cost per week does well. The businesses not doing so well may be aimed at the wrong market and he can't see how these can make a profit.</p> <p>GF encouraged a collaborative approach. Both BW and the operators wish to promote the growth of business on the Caledonian Canal. It is important to the Scottish Executive that businesses are given the opportunity to flourish on the canals.</p> <p>GG agreed, but pointed out that it is important to have clear facts and clear comparators.</p> <p>GF reiterated the urgency of this collaborative approach and that we need to act whilst at the same time be gathering data. GF suggested that hire boat operators on the Caledonian should number more than 2 as is the case at present.</p> <p>JS stated that data is being gathered, but it would appear that there is a lack of consistency in our approach across the network. A review is underway in England at the instigation of the Chief Executive.</p> <p>JS advised that Crown Blue Line, a major European hire boat operator, have been showing confidence in the Caledonian and are considering adding more hire boats to the fleet.</p> <p>JS agreed with the need for quick progress and that the Group should be kept up to date via the monthly conference calls.</p> <p>RM queried whether or not percentage of turnover is the correct model and</p>	<p>JS</p>
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	<p>sought guidance on responsibility for finally deciding the most appropriate answer. GG stated that it was for the BWS Group to offer advice, but that it is ultimately a matter for JS to decide. JS stated that BW is committed to reaching a fair, open and honest solution.</p> <p>ID acknowledged that the Group are sensitive to issue and the urgency of the need for a solution. JS again assured the Group that a further meeting will be taking place very soon.</p> <p>Meeting with former Minister, Iain Gray</p> <p>A good constructive meeting took place on 26th March, CC and JS attended. Within this meeting discussion took place on the challenges, opportunities, the funding regime and the pressure on Scotland to eliminate the safety backlog. The Minister was as positive as he could be in the circumstances, so close to the election, and whilst he was not able to promise more money, the Minister did indicate a positive attitude. CC's points have been recorded in a letter, signed by Iain Gray, and left as a marker for his successor.</p> <p>JS and CC will prepare letter for new Minister, which GG will approve.</p> <p>Scottish Enterprise</p> <p>Robin Evans and JS had meeting with Robert Crawford, Chief Executive of Scottish Enterprise at which he agreed to give half day of his time to BW to talk about how to turn ideas into businesses. A meeting was scheduled for 16th May, but the length of time allocated for this, by Scottish Enterprise, was not long enough, so will now be rescheduled to allow more time.</p>	
<p>SG79</p>	<p>The Community & The Canal – Beatrice Clark, Waterway Development Co-ordinator for the Caledonian Canal</p> <p>Beatrice began her career with BW 2 years ago. The first year was as a Lock Keeper and then she moved to the role of Waterway Development Manager on the Caledonian Canal. The role is becoming more about communications with both customers and the community.</p> <p>Beatrice gave a presentation on her work with the various communities along the canal. A large part of her work has been the rolling out of Wild Over Water (WOW), the BW initiative for enthusing, educating and involving children in the waterways. The Highlands and Islands are the primary users of WOW in Scotland, with some 19,100 primary school pupils involved.</p> <p>GG enquired as to whether Beatrice had received the Chief Executive's policy on working with children, JS explained that it was to be disseminated at the next SMT meeting to be held the following day. GG also suggested ensuring the Minister for Education is appraised of the value and success of this programme. JS will assist with this.</p> <p>Beatrice is also working on water safety campaigns for children, working with the local Police, Fire Brigade and schools. A staff newsletter is produced ensuring that Caledonian Canals staff are kept up to date and endorse this in their daily work.</p> <p>JS spoke of the death of the son of BW staff member, John Gordon and how it had raised concern for safety around the canals. Initially, the community wanted barriers around the canal following the accident, but have now moved away from this. BC said that consideration was being given to using</p>	<p>JS/BC</p>

	<p>the money, collected in the community after the accident, for the provision of a bus to take children to swimming pools to learn to swim.</p> <p>AMcC said that a lot of effort is going into teaching children to swim, but the geography is difficult, it is a 60 mile round trip to the swimming pool and transport is an issue.</p> <p>ID made the point that it is appropriate for BW to play a part in this by being aware of the issues and encourage this type of activity where possible</p> <p>BC also reported on work to make the Caledonian Canal accessible to as many people as possible. Crane hoists are now being installed to enable people in wheelchairs to embark and disembark vessels. Staff are now being trained to operate the equipment. Millennium Commission funding has been awarded as has Community Development and HIE funding.</p> <p>GG made the point that IWAAC find greatest problem is lack of information. BC responded that there is a CD available giving all points along the canal where there is disabled access.</p> <p>NB pointed out that canal access for all should be a very strong campaign for BW.</p> <p>GG again made the point that the appropriate Minister should be approached.</p> <p>GF Cautioned that it is important to watch costs as minimum standards must be met, must be clear about what we can achieve, but acknowledged that BC's work in this area is excellent.</p> <p>Beatrice continued to inform the Group of other events involving partnership working. These included Topper event held in Muirtown Basin, the Inverness Rowing Club, enquiries from the National Sprint Trials, Great Glen Week & Sail Caledonia.</p> <p>JS made the point that it is important to ensure that sponsors feed in something towards the cost of the infrastructure from these events.</p> <p>BC stated that these events use dead water space. GG requested that JS get estimate of value creation in the wider sense of what BC is doing in the area. GG also advised that JS speak with Robin Evans and Dieter Helm of OXERA, who are going to give advice on this subject.</p> <p>Fort William are forming a partnership for promoting the town as the Outdoor Capital with multi activities. There are more than 500,000 visitors to Loch Ness per annum, contributing £20m to the Scottish economy. There are 200,000 visitors to Fort Augustus, but only The Lovat Arms remains open after 8 pm and BC asked for ideas from group on how to change this.</p> <p>BC was also involved in a 4 day press trip on the canal which has been a great success.</p> <p>BC intends to take more of an active role in the promotion of the Caledonian Canal.</p>	<p>JS</p> <p>JS</p>
<p>SG 80</p>	<p>World Canals Conference 2003 – Catherine Cain, Waterway Development Manager, North West Region</p> <p>Cath has been seconded from North West Region to organise the World</p>	

	<p>Canals Conference, which will take place between 24th - 26th September 2003, in The Edinburgh International Conference Centre, Edinburgh.</p> <p>Cath gave a presentation to the Group, which provided a brief history of the World Canals Conference (WCC) and explained that the WCC provides an opportunity to bring hundreds of canal enthusiasts, professionals and scholars together from around the world to learn about a variety of topics relating to canals.</p> <p>Cath also provided information on the content of the conference. This will include site visits and tours, a social programme for the evenings with hospitality at Edinburgh Castle and The Falkirk Wheel, 2 day plenary sessions with keynote speakers, workshops and networking opportunities and pre and post conference tours. These will be offered to all delegates with information being given to delegates to encourage them to visit canals throughout the duration of their visit. It is anticipated that this will be, on average, 2 weeks.</p> <p>The role of the BW Scotland Group will be to act as a hosting committee welcoming delegates to Scotland, provide a presence on site visits and act as workshop facilitators.</p> <p>As a follow up to the conference, Watford will be looking at analysis of contribution to tourism and the local economy, whilst using projected economics as a draw to secure additional investment.</p> <p>BW Scotland Group were asked for network contacts to approach for sponsorship. A Sponsorship document is available for this purpose.</p> <p>So far a broad range of delegates showing interest with 80 confirmed bookings and capacity for 300. A number of magazines are already promoting the conference.</p> <p>BWSG were asked to think about magazines / journals which may not directly relate to BW but may also be appropriate for the purpose.</p> <p>GG made the point that in terms of sponsorship, money could come from commercial exhibitors and private sector sponsorship.</p> <p>GF said that he has experience of the difficulty of raising money, but that the benefits can go on for some considerable time following the event. This can be in the form of the profit of opening up the BWS network. Most sponsorship opportunities come from the commercial sector and GF suggests targeting large contracting organisations</p> <p>Cath informed the Group that OMNIBUS has been approached, and an approach is to be made to Edinburgh City for cash contributions, as they stand to make a substantial sum from the conference being held in Edinburgh.</p> <p>Another suggestion was to approach European companies, e.g. Pedro Boats from whom BW has recently purchased 3 boats.</p>	S Salem
SG 81	<p>The Falkirk Wheel & Visitor Centre – The Business Plan & The Vision – Iain Hebert General Manager of The Falkirk Wheel & Visitor Centre & Nigel Bell, Commercial Development Manager</p> <p>Iain Herbert gave a presentation on The Falkirk Wheel and Visitor Centre. This provided an overview of the improvements which have been carried out</p>	

	<p>since the opening last year and of what is available to visitors once they are on site.</p> <p>It has been decided that admission to the site should remain free for the time being. Once on site what is offered is the opportunity to do a variety of things, such as take a boat trip through The Wheel, use the children's play area, walk and picnic in the grounds, hire boats, look round the Visitor Centre, enjoy refreshments in the café area and purchase from the shop. JS had discussion with James Froomberg on the matter of free entry to site, during his recent visit to Scotland, and it was agreed that this was appropriate in order to promote and encourage visitors to come to the site and take the opportunity to participate in all that is available once there. There is a charge for car parking on site.</p> <p>Of particular note was the image of Visitor Centre extension around which there was some discussion. The extension has been funded, utilising some of the additional funding received from the Scottish Executive, enabling this to be ready for the busy season. The design is by RMJM who were original architects for the Visitor Centre.</p> <p>Customer service training is being carried out in-house to keep up standard of service.</p> <p>GF suggested that it might be a good idea to try to brand the restaurant. IH agreed to look at this and is already in discussion with a local Brewery re the manufacture of 'Falkirk Wheel Ale'.</p> <p>There will be opportunities for marketing via Waterscape. IH to prepare a Business Plan for this.</p> <p>There is now a new Local Authority car park area, which is free, but charge for on-site parking is still reasonable and could be sold as being closer, safe and secure in order to demonstrate that it is worth paying for.</p> <p>Once new security fencing is complete site can be sold as event space.</p> <p>Heritage Portfolio, the contracted caterers for the Visitor Centre, are often approached about where to hold events. This could be a useful contact for BW.</p> <p>GG asked about our relationship with and support from Falkirk Council. IH responded that they are in regular discussion and that he will be approaching them on the matter of providing an increased level of support.</p> <p>SA asked about what coach trips, which come to The Wheel site, do in the area in addition to visiting The Wheel. IH replied that these are mainly day trips but there is a need to gather data to see where else they go in the area to establish benefits to the community overall. Other information on where to visit in the area is available in the Visitor Centre.</p> <p>GF put forward the suggestion that IH approach Land Rover as they have just closed their Aberdeen off-road facility and may be looking for an alternative venue.</p> <p>GG advised JS to call Robin Evans to seek advice on exhibits & museums and how this can be tailored to The Falkirk Wheel Site.</p>	<p>IH</p> <p>IH</p> <p>IH</p> <p>JS</p>
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	<p>Nigel Bell – Development to Unlock Potential Now versus The Longer-Term</p> <p>Unfortunately due to lack of time NB was unable to provide as lengthy a presentation as he had intended.</p> <p>NB demonstrated the need to look at future and wider vision of the potential for development of The Wheel Site. NB made the point that The Wheel is a high quality product and should be developed with this in mind. He spoke of how it could be developed as event space, complimented by site developments, which could include quality pubs/restaurants. This would encourage visitors to stay for longer, bring them to site in the evenings as well as in the day, build in conference facilities. NB spoke of the potential for a hotel site and the possibility for high quality office premises.</p> <p>SP asked how The Wheel site would get people on to the rest of canal. JS responded that this is the starting point, once we get it right there then we will roll out from there to the rest of the canals throughout Central Scotland.</p>	
SG 82	<p>General Update from Jim Stirling</p> <p>JS informed the Group that following the visit to Scotland by the Scottish Affairs Committee in December 2001, at which an evidence session was held to investigate the economic opportunities of The Millennium Link, BW, Scottish Enterprise and several of the Local Authorities have been asked, by the Committee, to attend a review of the job creation potential of the modernised canals, at the House of Commons, on 20th May.</p> <p>There was some discussion about property holdings in the Fort Augustus area and how they should be managed. GG made the point that our approach should be about mutuality of benefit : to BW and to the local community.</p> <p>BW will review Fort Augustus housing issues in due course.</p>	
SG 83	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	
SG 84	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>13th November 2003 in Kirkintilloch.</p>	