
**British Waterways Scotland
Scotland Group**

Continuation of Meeting held on 13th November 2003 at 1300 hours

**Open to Public & Held in McGregor House,
Southbank Conference Centre, Kirkintilloch**

Representing British Waterways: Susan Achmatowicz
Jonathan Bryant
Campbell Christie (Chairman)
Ian Darling
Professor George Fleming
George Greener
Jane Karwoski
Rod Michie
Richard Millar
Sandra Purves
Stuart Sim
James Simpson
Ronnie Simpson
Jim Stirling
Lilian Wright (Minutes)

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

Introduction & Purpose of Meeting

Campbell Christie, Chairman of British Waterways Scotland Group (BWSG), opened the meeting and welcomed all present. CC outlined the purpose of the Public Meeting. He introduced Jim Stirling, Director, Scotland and Richard Millar, Manager Lowland Canals who were on the panel, then George Greener, Chairman and Stewart Sim, Technical Director, British Waterways. Also present were Jonathan Bryant the newly appointed Commercial Manager and Ronnie Simpson the newly appointed Business Development Manager for British Waterways Scotland.

CC went on to give an overview of the matters discussed in the morning meeting. These included the BW reorganisation, fees, progress on the Lowland canals and membership of the BWSG. CC advised that there had been three resignations from BWSG since the last meeting. These were, Sir Ken Collins, Chairman of SEPA, Arthur McCourt, Chief Executive of The Highland Council and Neil Butler, Managing Director of UZ Events. We would therefore be looking to appoint three new members to the BWSG.

CC stated that if the panel or other representatives of BW present at the meeting could not offer an immediate answer to any issue raised then the issue would be investigated and a response given within the agreed BWS timescale. CC then handed over to Jim Stirling.

JS addressed the meeting stating that a major priority for British Waterways Scotland is to see ongoing development on the canals especially in terms of more activity on the water and on the land. JS went on to emphasise where we were at present in respect of these issues.

(1) Activity on the Water

The number of boats using the Lowland canals has risen substantially year on year, whilst transit craft numbers are on target. Hotspots of activity are at Auchinstarry and in the area from Kirkintilloch, through The Falkirk Wheel to Ratho. We need to get customers to use the entire Bowling to Grangemouth stretch of the canal, together with the Glasgow branch. The Port Dundas redevelopment will have a significant effect on this. Growth of other types of craft is going well. There is now a pressing need to create more moorings and we will be making a start on Auchinstarry in the Spring of 2004, with the first stage of the works completed by Autumn 2004.

(2) Activity on the Land

House-building is going well and The Kirkintilloch Initiative, which is a partnership between East Dunbartonshire Council and Greater Glasgow Primary care NHS Trust, are looking to create more activity. Towpath numbers have doubled in two years.

JS went on to say that we were beginning to see progress across central Scotland. He then stated that he would welcome the views of everyone present.

Malcolm Lonie, Seagull Trust, Kirkintilloch Branch, said that he had attended the BWS Open Day in Kirkintilloch. He asked when the promised new moorings at Kirkintilloch would be available.

RM said that there will be moorings available at Kirkintilloch within the next two months.

ML then raised the issue of the water running off the roof of the Learning Centre. He said this was due to the fact that there was no gutter.

This is not BW's responsibility, however, RM said that he would raise this with management at the Learning Centre.

George McAngus, Forth & Clyde Canal Society raised the issue of the Bowling Sea Lock and the crane. He asked about the possibilities of electrification of these rather than the present manual operation which was slow.

Richard Millar stated that Bowling Harbour is high on British Waterways list of priorities, as it is seen as having great potential as a future marina. RM went on to say that they had looked at the possibility of mechanising both Bowling Sea Lock and the de-masting crane. This would cost approximately £200k, and although this is on the priority list, due to financial constraints British Waterways does not have funding for this at the present time. We are actively seeking funding for this project.

Alan Muir, Forth & Clyde Canal Society raised the question of Bowling outer harbour development.

JS stated that development of Bowling outer harbour area is connected to BWS future development plans as a whole.

AM then went on to ask about plans for wreck clearance.

JS stated that it would be prudent to do this in combination with re-development and re-securing of the outer harbour.

Penny Sinclair, Forth & Clyde Canal; Society asked about the decking at the Learning Centre as she was concerned that this could be slippery in the Winter.

Richard Millar stated that BWS have now put anti-slip material in place.

Dave Waterston, Private boat owner, thanked BWS for what they had done so far on the canal. He then asked about pontoons at the approaches to locks.

RM responded that he is at present installing pontoons and there is an ongoing programme across the waterway.

DW said that he remembered the canal in the 1950s when it was more accessible. There had not been as many problems with weeds in the 1950s as there were now.

JS responded saying that there were two issues with weeds.

- Natural Habitats/Erosion Protection

British Waterways is duty bound to protect the habitat of any unusual flora and it is only in this part of Scotland that we find some very rare species of plants. In addition, the flora provides protection against erosion of the banks. It is necessary to find the right balance between the need to keep the canal navigable versus the protection of the natural habitat. These are issues pertinent to the modern world which were not on the agenda in the 1950s.

Ann Street, Boat owner brought up the issue of weeds on the towpath. She asked if there was a different policy in England and Scotland. She had spent some time boating on the English canals and did not have the problem of 6' weeds that she experienced in Scotland. She asked George Greener what the policy on this was in Scotland.

SS responded on GG's behalf stating that there had in fact been some inconsistency across the network. He advised that there were now new Guidelines in place re the fringe area between the towpath and the water. Weeds were being cut back in popular mooring areas. On the Ashby canal, where there was no hard edge, weeds have provided erosion protection since the 1930s. We are now looking at this situation and others like it across the network.

AS commented that the weeds had been particularly bad this year.

RM commented that the problem was often due to the shape of the canal. For example, the weeds were worse where the canal was dish-shaped. We will work on these areas with our weed-cutting machinery.

SS said we are revising our Waterway Standards at the moment and this will take into account what people should expect. This will cover issues such as landscaping, staff and locks. We are looking at the internal process of modifying/upgrading. We will go out to public consultation in January 2004. If you would like to receive documentation please speak to JS or RM. We want to receive the views of the users.

GG said that there will be areas that some users don't like however it is hoped that the public consultation will enable us to 'get it right'. GG said there was an interesting challenge ahead of us regarding the data about canals. He thought that the recent restructure would be helpful as it will improve communication. In the past this had been an issue as different Public Bodies had taken different views on Standards, e.g. English Heritage. The new structure will make things better

CC asked when the last revision of Waterway Standards had taken place.

SS said that Waterway Standards had originally been introduced in 1990 and the last revision had been in 1996.

Bill Purves, Edinburgh Canal Society said he was concerned about the weeds, not only in the water but on the stretch of embankment from Slateford Aqueduct in particular. BP stated that there could be as many as two dozen scullers using this stretch of canal on a Sunday. Although the scullers were well versed in the the rules for letting other canal users pass, there was some concern about hire boats which were not au fait with the art of passing on this stretch of the canal. The amount of overhanging shrubbery on the offside is causing concern, as it is almost impossible to get in close enough to let others pass. BP asked if the shrubbery on this one mile stretch of canal could be cut back to resolve the problem.

RM acknowledged that this issue had been discussed in the past. He went on to say that we need to take into account the environmental constraints, but would look at this again to see what could be done.

BP felt that there was a real danger of a collision between hire boats.

JS said that when we cut back trees and shrubbery we quite often get a storm of protest with letters of complaint arriving at our offices. However, if the shrubbery along the stretch leading up to the Slateford Aqueduct poses a threat to safety for canal users it will be looked at again.

George McAngus, Forth & Clyde Canal Society said there was a problem with trees on the bend at Cadder.

RM advised that we have a tree management plan which involves professionals carrying out inspections at various locations along the canal to check on the condition of individual trees. He would check out the situation at Cadder as any split or dangerous trees should have been cut back or removed.

Andy Devenport, Edinburgh Canal Society & Tollcross Community Council, raised the issue of housing next to Lochrin basin in Edinburgh. AD wanted to know if BWS would be getting involved in this project.

JS said that BWS have been advocates of a master plan for the area. BWS was also involved in an Edinburgh Quay Development. It was important not to confuse the two roles of BWS in the area.

Myrtle Allardyce, SIWA, said that she would firstly like to offer her compliments to Richard Millar for the way in which he was managing the Lowland canals. She said that RM's approach is very refreshing and very much appreciated by canal users. MA then went on to raise a number of issues:

(1) Caledonian Canal Commercial Operators and Leisure Operators

MA advised that Robin Evans chief executive of British Waterways came to a meeting in Inverness recently. A proposal is expected very soon regarding the Commercial Operators.

(2) Fees for BWS services

MA said that resident boaters feel that they are being asked to pay fees for services that they have not received.

JS said that this should not be happening. An allowance should be made for services not received. This was written into the moorings conditions.

RM confirmed this saying that the owner of the "Golden Lizard" was told he would only be charged £23 until the full suite of services was available. RM apologised for any mistakes that may have been made in this respect.

(3) BWS invoicing system

MA stated that some users have experienced difficulty in obtaining an invoice from BWS for services. This issue needs to be resolved as it has a knock on effect on businesses trying to keep their accounts in order.

RM asked MA if she would provide him with a list of names.

(4) Ownership of moorings

MA stated that this is an ongoing issue which had already been discussed at the BWSG meetings in Edinburgh and Fort Augustus. It concerns a dispute between a boat owner and a householder regarding ownership of a specific mooring on the canal at Ratho. MA said that the householder does not appear to have received a letter clarifying the position of ownership of the mooring. The property is now on the market stating that the boat mooring goes along with the house. MA said that transfer rights regarding moorings needs clarification.

JS responded to MA's point regarding transfer of moorings stating that the terms and conditions regarding moorings are clearly documented. These can be readily accessed on the BWS website. The mooring does not belong to the householder.

RM stated that a letter clarifying BWS' terms and conditions regarding moorings has in fact been sent to the boat owner. RM said that he has also had a conversation with the householder in question and the householder now has a clearer understanding about the issue of ownership of moorings. The mooring does not belong to the householder, it belongs to BWS.

Ann Street, private boat owner, raised the issue of licence and mooring permits. She wanted to know if these came from Watford or from the local waterway office. She felt that there was some confusion over this issue.

RM said that mooring permits are local and can be purchased at any waterway office. The craft licence on the other hand is issued from Watford for the entire UK network. You can apply for your licence via your local waterway office but all the documentation is processed at BW Head Office in Watford.

Penny Sinclair, Forth & Clyde Canal Society, said that she welcomed the idea of a Marina being built in Kirkintilloch and wanted to know what security measures would be in place. For example, would it be covered by CCTV cameras.

JS said that the basin would be constructed and managed by The Kirkintilloch Initiative and that there would be security guards on duty. He went on to say that, on one side of the basin there would be an Arts Centre whilst the other two sides of the basin would be in the layout of a small industrial estate with Craft Centres.

PS asked about the strip of land between the Learning Centre and Townhead Bridge. She was concerned about any further proposed developments along this stretch as she felt they had already lost half of an important wildlife corridor when the Learning Centre was built.

JS said that this area would be developed by the Southbank Initiative and was most likely to be a housing development.

PS said that they had been trying to get Southbank Road widened for years and felt that they did not need any more building going on along this stretch.

JS said that this was an issue for the Planning Department rather than BWS.

George McAngus, Forth & Clyde Canal Society raised concerns about unstable pontoons at Clydebank Shopping Centre.

RM responded saying that four posts have been set into the canal at that location in preparation for a fixed mooring jetty.

As there were no further questions raised, Campbell Christie brought the meeting to a close, thanking everyone for coming along and advising that the next meeting of the BWSG would be held on Thursday, 4 March 2004 in Glasgow. Notification will be via a Public Notice in the Press and the Events Page of the BWS website.

Appendix 1: Members of the public in attendance:

Myrtle Allardyce	: SIWA
Chris Bell	: Wave Partnership
David Connell	: Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Andy Devenport	: Tollcross Community Council & ECS
Ken Grant	: Edinburgh Canal Society
Malcolm Lonie	: Seagull Trust, Kirkintilloch Branch
George McAngus	: Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Tricia McLuckie	: Edinburgh Canal Society
Alan Muir	: Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Bill Purves	: Edinburgh Canal Society
Penny Sinclair	: Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Peter P. Stewart	: Paisley Canal & Waterway Society
Ann Street	: Boat owner
Alan Stuart	: Bridge 1940
David Waterston	: Boat owner
Stuart Young	: Forth & Clyde Canal Society