

**British Waterways Scotland
Scotland Group**

Continuation of Meeting held on 30th October 2002 at 1300 hours

Open to Public & Held in The Moorings Hotel,

Banavie, Fort William

Representing British Waterways: Susan Achmatowicz
Neil Butler
Campbell Christie, Chairman
Ian Darling
Professor George Fleming
George Greener
Jane Karwoski
Arthur McCourt
Kenneth MacKenzie
Rod Michie
Sandra Purves
Stewart Sim
James Simpson
Jim Stirling
Patricia Rettie
George Ballinger
Beatrice Clark
Mike Harrison

Other Attendees: Russell Leiper, Local Resident & Boat Owner
Tony Whitelocke, Local Resident
Ray Norris, West Highland Sailing
Mary McDonald, Local Resident

Introduction & Purpose of Meeting

Campbell Christie opened the meeting and welcomed all present and introduced those on the panel.

CC explained that the British Waterways Scotland Group had been set up, in September 2000, following the devolution of the canals from West Minster to Scotland, and that this is an Advisory Group to the British Waterways Board, the Scottish Executive and the Ministers.

He told of how the Group is made 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 then invited members of the public to ask questions.

Tony Whitelock, a local resident, raised the issue of the water level of the canal, when it is raised it cascades over the lock gates causing seepage to the neighbouring gardens. This has been happening for about 1½ years. He would like to know what BW's ongoing plan for dealing with this is.

Jim Stirling, Director Scotland, explained that the overriding issue is public safety, therefore, it is necessary to ensure all locks have a high water level.

George Ballinger, Engineering Manager explained that the necessary higher water levels have allowed seepage above the grouted level of the walls and that BW acknowledges that an overall solution is required to prevent continued seepage and that this will be looked at during this year's winter stoppage programme.

Tony Whitelock also asked about the planned Hydro Scheme at Banavie.

George Ballinger explained that this has been under consideration for some time and is still in the planning stage. No decision has been taken, yet, to go ahead.

Tony Whitelock asked if there would be a by-pass pipe and how visible it would be.

George Ballinger replied that the by-pass pipe would come down by the side of the locks and into the chamber, below ground level, under the bridge.

Russell Leiper asked if BW was aware of the proposed new access road for Banavie Quarry, which will lead to increased traffic alongside the canal, and he believes this will have an impact on walkers and people visiting Neptune's Staircase.

Jim Stirling said that BW was not aware of this proposal, but that it will be investigated as a result of it being brought to his attention.

Mr Leiper said that it is anticipated that there will be a lorry passing along this road every 10 to 15 minutes. Mary McDonald, another local resident, does not agree with this estimate, thinks it will be less frequent.

Mr Leiper made the point that the present access road does not impact on the canal in the way that the proposed new one will.

Mary McDonald raised the issue of the picnic and play area next to Neptune's Staircase and asked if there was an intention to relocate it further away. Mary made the point that it is well used and that the local people do not want it to be moved, it is used as a car park and coach drop-off point.

Jim Stirling explained that Neptune's Staircase requires greater tourism infrastructure and that BW are in discussions with the local Council. It was explained that no detailed plans were in place at present, but that if tourism related development went ahead, a play area would be included, indeed the Council would insist on this.

Campbell Christie gave assurance that before any development could take place. Planning Application would require to be submitted and there would be ample opportunity for local residents to debate the issues and that BW would want to discuss matters with local residents.

Campbell thanked the attendees for the points raised and advised them to keep in touch with the Waterway Office in Inverness.