

# MINUTES

**Title** British Waterways Scotland Group Meeting

**Date** Thursday 1 March 2007

**Venue** Linlithgow Union Canal Society Tea Room, Linlithgow

**Attendees** BWSG - Campbell Christie (Chair); Robin Evans; George Fleming; Guthrie Hutton; Eva McCracken; Kenneth MacKenzie; Rod Michie; Sandra Purves; James Simpson; Duncan Sutherland.

BWS – Steve Dunlop; David Lamont ; Richard Millar; Nicola Christie (minutes)

**Apologies** Susan Achmatowicz; Tony Hales; Richard Milham.

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## Action

### 1. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Chairman noted apologies and welcomed Duncan Sutherland and David Lamont to their first meeting.

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2006 were a true record, subject to an amendment on p4, first line from "Institute" to "Institution". The matters arising from the previous meeting were on the agenda.

### 2. BW National Business Plan 2007/08 – 2010/11

RE reminded the BWSG that the Defra grant in 05/06 was £64m. This grant had been reduced to £55.4m for 06/07 and 07/08. As a consequence, the aspirations of the policy document Waterways for Tomorrow were not fully funded. Users in England & Wales had been vocal in their protest against these cuts. BW are in detailed discussions with Defra regarding the spending review for 08/09 – 10/11 and a response from the Minister is awaited.

This was disappointing, however, to address this shortfall, BW was seeking to drive more value from the canals with aggressive efficiencies. The Business Plan focussed on spending wisely for best benefit ie increased visitor numbers. To ensure the waterway structure remained reliable and safe, assets are scored relative to safety and importance to the business.

In Scotland the assets and activities of BWS are supported as an instrument of delivery of government policy. This was similar to the

support BW enjoyed from government in the past. The BW executive team must in turn support BWS to maximise Scotland's waterways as an attractive, safe, reliable asset and support growth in activities on and around Scotland's canals.

There was concern expressed that the support services for BWS may be reduced as there were 160 fewer people in the business. Advice would remain for critical, core issues. The focus of the business must be on essential objectives. The voluntary sector remained important to BW.

### **BWS Business Plan 2007/08 – 2010/11**

SD presented the strategic themes of the BWS Business Plan. Future priorities have been developed around three key thematic priorities – Assets; Regeneration and Destinations and three operational priorities – Delivery; Governance; Partnership which sets out the operating context for BWS future activities.

The priorities highlighted in the BWS 4 year Business Plan were:

Raising public awareness of the canals in Scotland supported by marketing and events activity;

Understanding demand to be more customer focused;

Creating Destination Plans. Edinburgh, Falkirk and Glasgow are priority sites with further sites identified;

Increasing BWS performance in heritage and environment;

Utilising canals as an enabler of regeneration;

Continuing track record of delivery to meet the aspirations of the Scottish Executive within a robust contractual relationship including performance management indicators;

Refreshing and refocusing BWS relationships with key partners and stakeholders to demonstrate the benefits waterways can achieve for Scotland.

DL highlighted that, operationally, there was a clear link between the business plan and the BWS works programme on the ground, recognising the Steady State model of planned preventative maintenance, clearing arrears and embracing Health & Safety targets. An analysis of demand v capacity was underway with outsourcing where appropriate.

### **3. BWS – Adjustments to Structure**

DL referred to the adjustments to the simplified BWS structure. The adjusted structure re-deployed resources to the following areas:

- Business Development
- External Funding
- Works Planning
- Marketing & Events
- Contracts Management

The revised structure had been welcomed by the staff as it was better shaped to focus on delivery and the development of the waterways in Scotland.

The likely impact of the Scottish elections was discussed. BWS must offer a clear statement of its needs and the Comprehensive Spending Review submission served this purpose. It was agreed that the BWSG can help to shape and influence by raising public awareness of BWS activities.

The generational issue was also discussed. BWS had brought in marketing expertise to assist with a targeted, professional Christmas Event at The Falkirk Wheel. This approach must be extended across the canal network. The right type of event can change points of view.

Inclusive and disability awareness needed to be raised. The access for all activities of BWS needed to be articulated more within BWS literature. It was a duty on BWS to seek the views of the disabled community. DL and Eva McCracken to meet to discuss BWS initiatives in this area.

DL/EMcC

The affordability of the restructure and re-shaping of the business was raised. The current business plan reflected the needs of this refocused approach.

#### **4. Freight Transportation on Scotland's Waterways**

The Scottish Executive Freight Action Plan placed a high priority on using inland waterways as a means of creating sustainable transport. There was a clear expectation on BWS to actively pursue all opportunities to move transport modally from road to water. BWS had recognised this expectation in its current 4 year business plan.

Business Development responsible for delivery of freight to the canal network. Richard Millar & Ronnie Simpson, no longer have operational activities on the Lowland Canal to focus on waterway development - a strand of which includes freight.

The Business Plan has a stretching target of delivering 2 freight exemplars, one in the Highlands & one in the Lowlands.

BWS narrowing focus to opportunities which show greatest promise.

BWS intervention may be necessary to stimulate the initial market. Likely interventions may include additional navigation equipment to support freight, specific material handling equipment or lease/purchase of a bespoke vessel .

The wider context of the demise of coastal shipping and container ship ports was important. BWS would instigate conversations with this market place.

The cost of transferring freight to water should not be underestimated and the SE must be made aware of this cost. The SE have a commitment to waterway freight as part of the sustainability agenda.

## **5. Comprehensive Spending Review – BWS Draft Submission**

The latest draft had been circulated to the BWSG members for consideration prior to the meeting. SE had been consulted and approved of BWS approach which demonstrated tangible outcomes from funding. Partnerships with the business community to be included. Disability access to be included. Environmental footprint to be emphasised.

Further draft to be circulated prior to submission to SE.

## **6. Updates – River Leven**

BWS working in partnership with SE, Sepa, Clydeport, local council and local enterprise company to regenerate Dumbarton with canal solution to solve flood risk and provide potential marina. This was an exciting opportunity to link Bowling, Clyde and River Leven to Loch Lomond to change the scale and use of the Millennium Link with an iconic engineering solution. This was a costly but exciting project over a 7 year programme.

### **Tamfourhill, Falkirk**

The outline of the Masterplan for the Tamfourhill area of Falkirk was being finalised to create a sense of arrival at The Falkirk Wheel. BWS and Falkirk Council working in partnership to progress. Historic Scotland applying for World Heritage Status for the Antonine Wall. The joint funding by BWS and Historic Scotland of a Heritage Officer would assist engagement with Historic Scotland regarding the masterplanning of The Falkirk Wheel site.

### **Helix**

To transform the landscape between Grangemouth & Falkirk into a thriving environmental community. BWS in partnership with Falkirk Council and Central Scotland Forest Trust. The Helix project is one of only 3 Scottish projects competing in the last 23 of the Living Landmarks programme. Stage 2 funding bid to be submitted to Living Landmarks programme in May 2007.

**BWS**

This is a transformational project which will provide a unique

outdoor space for all with access to woodland, paths and cycle-ways; improve the connection and navigation between the Forth & Clyde Canal to the Forth Estuary with a new cut canal and an innovative new Kelpie boatlift, developing water based activities; create major public artworks and develop a sustainable environment.

The BWSG members were urged to support this bid by raising public awareness.

### **Dalriada**

The Dalriada project around the Crinan canal in Mid Argyll had been successful in its bid for £1.8m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Dalriada Project is a long-term initiative to protect, restore, improve and promote the natural and cultural heritage of Mid Argyll, in a way that benefits the local people, businesses and visitors. It has the potential to create a community heritage experience in terms of information, education, interpretation and access. The key to delivering the vision and unlocking the potential of Mid Argyll's heritage assets will be the creation of a network of good quality interpretative points or "hubs" linked by an easily accessible network of routes.

## **7. Communications Action Plan**

The framework for the BWS Communications Action Plan circulated prior to the meeting was noted. A practical Communications Action Plan would be circulated to the BWSG members for discussion at the next meeting.

## **8. Any Other Business**

### **Thomas Telford Celebration**

Sandra Purves reported that the Institute of Civil Engineers were planning a tour of Thomas Telford constructions throughout Scotland from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2007. This was to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Telford's birth. An evening boat trip from Muirtown Locks was planned for 4 July 2007 and a commemorative plaque designating the Caledonian Canal as an Historic Civil Engineering Landmark would be presented to BW on board.

Details of the Thomas Telford Conference at the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the 2 July 2007 were noted and BWSG members were invited to register for this conference.

**NC**

### **BWS Web-site**

A programme of improvements to the BWS web-site were underway and would be in place by end of March 2007.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

A site visit would be arranged for the BWSG on Thursday 10 May 2007. Suggestions for location were invited by email to

[nicola.christie@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:nicola.christie@britishwaterways.co.uk)

**BWS**

**All**