



**British
Waterways
Scotland**

MINUTES

Title British Waterways Scotland Group Continuation Meeting/Public Meeting
Date 8 June 2006
Venue The Moorings Hotel, Banavie, Fort William
Attendees Campbell Christie (Chair); Ian Darling; Steve Dunlop; Professor George Fleming; Guthrie Hutton; Eva McCracken; Kenneth MacKenzie; Rod Michie; Sandra Purves.
Russell Thomson; Nicola Christie (Minutes)
Other Attendees: Duncan McInnes; Tom Fraser; Eddie Dunion; Gavin Linfield

Introduction & Purpose of Meeting

Campbell Christie, Chairman of the British Waterways Scotland Group (BWSG) opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and introducing himself and the other members of the panel - Steve Dunlop, Director British Waterways Scotland and Russell Thomson, Customer Services Manager, Highlands.

CC gave a brief overview of the concept of the British Waterways Scotland Group. It is a non-statutory Group established in September 2000, following the formation of the Scottish Parliament. The Group meets several times a year in areas where the canals have an impact on the community. This gives people with an interest in the canals the opportunity to come along and join the discussions.

CC informed the meeting that the minutes of both the BWSG meeting and the public meeting would be published on the British Waterways website at www.britishwaterways.co.uk/scotland

Russell Thomson gave a presentation, which provided an overview of current and planned activity on the Caledonian Canal. The presentation highlighted the benefits of partnership working to encourage more outdoor pursuits on the Great Glen Way by "boat, bike and boot". Further interpretation panels were planned for installation during 2006. The boat transits on the Caledonian Canal were increasing. With the completion of the £20million, 10 year lock stabilisation programme, closures of the canal for maintenance over the winter months would be kept to a minimum. In addition, aspirations to increase freight on the canal were being actively pursued in light of the Glendoe Hydro Scheme. In partnership with other interested parties, the lack of pontoons on Loch Ness was under discussion by the Highland Canals Steering Group. As a concordat partner of Highland 2007 British Waterways Scotland was keen to support this initiative with events on the canal, although, currently this was subject to funding.

CC thanked Russell for his presentation which demonstrated that BWS was working towards delivering increased usage of the Caledonian Canal.

CC opened the meeting to questions.

Tom Fraser who operated a small guest house asked for clarification regarding access across BWS property to cull geese on neighbouring farm land as requested by the crofters.

BW responded that, in light of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code which established access rights to be exercised responsibly over most land and inland water in Scotland, Mr Fraser had a right to access BWS land. Nevertheless, in light of the increased health and safety risks associated with the carrying of fire arms, it was agreed that a risk assessment would be carried out by the local BWS team and that these access arrangements would be formalised in a written agreement.

Duncan McInnes questioned whether increased commercial traffic on the Caledonian Canal would interfere with recreational traffic.

BW responded that the current numbers of freight vessels would not affect recreational traffic. If the number of freight vessels increased, it was expected that, with careful pre-planning the leisure traffic would not be affected. Commercial jetties already existed to assist passage planning for larger boats eg Lord of the Glens.

Gavin Linfield was concerned that fishing vessels on the Caledonian Canal were exceeding the speed limit and damaging the canal bank. He also expressed concerns over the speed of vehicles on the towpath.

Further, he queried the use of limestone for canal repairs instead of granite.

BW responded that if vehicles were observed exceeding the speed limit on the towpaths, the incidents should be reported to BWS to follow up. All BWS contractors, as part of the risk assessment for works to be undertaken, were advised of the speed restrictions on the towpath.

All vessels using the canal are advised of the speed limits and any vessel arriving too early for assisted lock openings were warned of the consequences of speeding.

As the Caledonian Canal was a scheduled ancient monument, the materials used for canal repairs were in accordance with guidance received from both Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland.

CC closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their contributions.

The next British Waterways Scotland Group Meeting and Public Meeting will take place in East Dunbartonshire on 19 October 2006. The details of the venue would be confirmed on the BWS website www.britishwaterways.co.uk/scotland

Issued by: Nicola Christie