

Lowland Canals  
Steering Group

Freight Project  
Group

Lowland Canals  
Freight Action  
Plan

Phase 1

Executive  
Summary



**Submitted to**

**Lowland Canals  
Freight Project  
Group**

by

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document is an executive summary of the documents that form the output of Phase 1 of the Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan.

### **Background to the Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan**

In August 2005 the Scottish Executive issued Scottish Planning Police (SPP) 17 which stressed that developments need to consider transport as an integral part of the project. By clearly documenting the potential, opportunities and constraints of using the canals as a freight transport corridor, the Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan enables the Scottish Executive, Local Authorities and developers to consider whether the canals can play a part in meeting the guidance of SPP 17.

The Lowland Canals Steering Group, a partnership including Local Authorities, British Waterways Scotland, British Waterways Freight Managers, Businesses and other organisations, commenced a process of encouraging freight development on Scotland's Lowland Canals. The LCSG set up a Freight Project Group with the remit of determining the potential for re-establishing freight movement on the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals. The Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan is a two-phase study to investigate this potential. The Lowland Canals, running between Glasgow and Edinburgh, provide an opportunity to build on the close co-operation already established by the Millennium Link projects by using the waterways for business as well as leisure purposes. In addition to the property and tourism developments already being realised as a consequence of the reopening of the canals, the potential for the carriage of freight and the business opportunities it provides will add a third area of development arising from the re-opening of the canals.

The main objective of Phase 1 was to conduct surveys and investigations to identify:

- The potential and constraints which will influence the viability of canal freight on the Lowland Canals
- Surveys of business / retail parks and industrial estates in close proximity to the Lowland Canals that might provide freight opportunities.
- Identification of businesses (including waste, recycling and construction materials) both close to the canals and further afield which may benefit from the opportunities presented by the canals.
- Identification of potential canal-side development sites..

The final reports of Phase 1 present the findings of the investigations above, including a section which can be used as a stand-alone document introducing the Lowland Canals as a potential carrier of freight traffic, and the possible constraints which may be involved.

The output of Phase 1 of the FAP comprises:

- LC FAP Phase 1 Methodology
- LC FAP Phase 1 Potential for freight on Lowland Canals
- LC FAP Annotated Map
- LC FAP Loading & unloading sites record sheets
- LC FAP Industrial estates & retail parks record sheets
- LC FAP Businesses record sheets
- LC FAP Potential development sites

The following sections outline these documents in more detail.

## **Methodology**

A key part of Phase 1 of the Freight Action Plan is the Methodology, which outlines the survey methods used, the criteria by which wharves, businesses, industrial estates and potential development sites were identified. The methodology also details the means by which the opportunities and constraints associated with the use of the Lowland Canals for freight were identified. During the course of the surveys the methodology was updated and revised in the light of survey experience. The methodology report included as an output of Phase 1 provides a record of the methods and criteria used.

## **Report on the Potential for Freight on the Lowland Canals**

To date, a number of studies into the carriage of particular freights on the Lowland Canals have been carried out. However, there was no single summary document available that addresses the overall potential for the carriage of freight on the Lowland Canals, and the possible constraints that may be involved. As part of Phase 1 of the Freight Action Plan a summary document was prepared to provide an overview of the Potential for Freight on the Lowland Canals. The report introduces the potential for freight, documenting the opportunities and constraints for the movement of freight using both the Forth & Clyde, and the Union Canals. The information presented in this report is drawn from earlier freight-specific trials and studies, combined with data gathered in the preparation of the FAP, particularly for the Union Canal which, until now, has been less thoroughly investigated. This report is one of the chief outputs of Phase 1 of the Freight Action Plan and provides a much needed overview of the potential for freight on the Lowland Canals: as such it will be a useful tool to inform and advise potential freight generators of the possibilities available.

## **Annotated Map**

Phase 1 of the Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan produced an annotated Map of the Lowland Canals showing the position of each wharf, business, industrial estate and potential development site. This map needs to be studied in conjunction with the associated Phase 1 reports; the sites are identified using reference codes which relate to the sites described in the relevant associated report.

## **Record Sheets for Loading and Unloading Sites**

The Phase 1 surveys identified the freight loading and unloading points on the Lowland Canals. This section of the Freight Action Plan identifies all of the potential and existing loading / unloading points on the Lowland Canals. In the course of route investigation, all viable existing, derelict and potential sites were recorded. It should be noted that the aim of this list is not “listing as protected wharf site”, rather it is identification of what potential currently exists.

In total 58 wharves were identified, 27 of these were on the Union Canal, 27 on the Forth & Clyde Canal and four on the F&C Glasgow Arm.

The list includes some wharves that have only limited potential for freight due to site constraints or amenity use. They are listed for completeness and to record the potential for the collection / loading of boaters’ refuse or, for example small bottle-bank recycling material. A classic example of this type of wharf is the Edinburgh Canal Center at Ratho, which has a narrow access road and no space to turn large vehicles, but would provide potential for recycling, or boaters’ refuse traffic.

In some cases, such as at the Sighthill area of Edinburgh on the Union Canal, and the Glasgow Arm of the F&C, there are a number of potential wharf sites that lie close together. In these areas it would not be cost effective to develop all of the potential wharf sites, but the choice of which (if any) to use will ultimately depend on the traffic to be carried and the road element required to bring the freight to the canal. The report aims to record all of the potential loading & unloading areas in order to facilitate the consideration of all potential freight traffic for the Lowland Canals.

## **Record Sheets for Businesses**

This section of the Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan Phase 1 aims to identify all of the businesses that have the potential to generate freight for carriage on the Lowland Canals. There are a number of businesses that appear to have the potential for conveying raw materials, products, waste and recycling on the Lowland Canals. The opportunity for using the canals would need to be investigated further on a business-by-business basis. Whether or not these businesses could use the canals would depend upon a range of issues to be addressed in Phase 2 of the Freight Action Plan. These could include:

- The desire / potential for the business to transfer freight traffic to the canals.
- Existing contracts with hauliers that may prevent such a switch in the short term.
- Origins / destinations of freight traffic related to the business.
- The frequency and quality of freight movements
- The nature of the freight conveyed, and the ease of transshipment.
- The comparative economics between water transport and other transport modes.
- Availability of financial (and other) assistance to effect such a modal change.

The report includes record sheets for the 50 businesses that were identified as having potential as freight generators or freight users. Businesses identified in the course of Phase 1 fall into a number of broad categories, details of the category into which they fall are given in the recording sheet for each business. The categories include:

- Waste & Recycling.
- Building / Construction materials.
- Aggregates / Quarry products.
- Steel.
- Retail Goods.
- Whisky.

## **Record Sheets for Industrial Estates and Retail Parks**

During the Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan Phase 1 investigations into businesses which could use the canal for freight, a number of small businesses which individually would not generate sufficient freight for the canals were identified. Many of these small businesses were situated on industrial estates, trading estates or retail parks which, if considered as a whole, instead of as a collection of individual businesses, might generate sufficient freight to make use of the canals viable. This section of the report for Phase 1 of the LC FAP identifies industrial estates close to the canal, as well as some which are located further afield but with good road links to potential loading / unloading sites. Each site was given a record sheet as part of the LC FAP, these sheets record the important information for each site including OSGR, type of business on the estate, etc, as well as including a photograph.

In all, 44 industrial estates and three retail parks are included in the report, some of the industrial estates recorded are actually congregations of a number of small industrial estates in close proximity which have been considered as a whole for the purposes of this study.

Two main potential types of freight were identified for industrial estates / retail parks, these are:

- Waste & Recycling
- Building Materials

## **Potential Development Sites**

The opening of the Millennium Link stimulated regeneration and development along the Lowland Canals. The Millennium Link reports identify the ongoing plans for projects adjacent to the canals. These projects relate primarily to housing and business developments, and to date have not (with the exception of the WEEE plant at Twechar) considered the opportunities these present for freight. All such developments present opportunities for bringing materials to construction sites, and removing waste and recycling by water. One of the main constraints in realising this potential is the lack of suitable vessels on the Lowland Canals to promote and encourage this.

As an output of Phase 1 of the Lowland Canals Freight Action Plan, a list of potential development sites was produced, it is not comprehensive; the sites itemised are those which are considered to have the greatest potential with regard to recommencing freight carriage on the Lowland Canals. There are comprehensive lists of development

sites in the Millennium Link Reports. This document is intended to be complimentary to the Millennium Link reports; a number of opportunities were identified in the course of investigation where canal-side development could work hand-in-hand with freight and business potential. These are summarised in the table below, with cross-references to records for potential loading / unloading points, industrial estates and businesses, where further detail of potential development is provided. Full details of the cross-referenced sites are listed in companion documents. “LC FAP Wharves Record Sheets”, “LC FAP Businesses Record Sheets” and “LC FAP Industrial Estate & Retail Parks Record Sheets”.

## **Freight Action Plan Phase 2**

In addition to the Phase 1 activities, consideration was given to the progression of the opportunities identified in Phase 2 of the Freight Action Plan. Subsequent to the presentation of Phase 1 reports to the Freight Project Group, the decision was taken that the ten businesses with the most potential be identified and investigate further in Phase 2, with a report on each business being prepared. These Phase 2 reports will then provide a basis for discussions between individual businesses and Freight Project Group members.

Phase 2 is scheduled to take place in February and March of 2006

## **Conclusions**

Phase 1 of the Freight Action Plan highlighted that there is considerable potential for the re-introduction of freight on the Lowland Canals. The surveys identified 58 possible loading / unloading sites spread over the whole of the Lowland Canals. These, together with the 50 businesses that might generate freight, and 47 industrial estates or retail parks, indicate that there is good potential for freight on the canals. The information collected in Phase 1 of the Action Plan will provide an ideal basis for the production of more detailed studies of the most likely freight generators in Phase 2. These studies will in turn enable the Freight Project Group to approach potential freight generating businesses with suggestions for the re-introduction of freight onto the Lowland Canals.