

Cross-Party Group on Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism (hybrid)

Tuesday 24th September 2024 at 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Stuart McMillan, MSP

Emma Harper MSP

Invited guests

Scott Fraser, Communications & Engagement Manager, Corporate Affairs and
Karen Dee, Waste Manager, Scottish Water

Neil Kitchener, Lowland Canals Association

Joe Penhual Smith, Sustainable ExtriKo

Non-MSP Group Members

Gordon Daly, RYA Scotland

Capt Alan McPherson, Forth Ports

Anne Shedden, Forth Yacht Clubs Association

Graham Russell, RYA Scotland

Alan Kohler, RYA Scotland/Cruising Association

Christine Cameron, Lowland Canals Association

Simon Limb, Clyde Marina

Martin Latimer, British Marine UK

Sarah Kennedy, Fort William Marina & Shoreline Community Interest Company
/British Marine Scotland

Aileen Monk, British Marine Scotland

Duncan Tannahill, RYA Scotland and West Highlands and Islands Moorings Association

Lee Boucher, Scottish Rowing

Fiona Partington, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust

John Kent, Bidwells

Finlo Cottier, RYA Scotland

Hannah Egan, Scottish Government
Esther Brooker, Scottish Environment Link
Glenn Porter, RYA Scotland/Ocean Sailing Scotland
Richard Millar, Scottish Canals
Mark Smith, Scottish Canals
Simon McDonald, Aquaculture, Fisheries Processing Consultant
Barry Schafe, Forth Estuary Forum
Brendan Bocker, Fairlie Yacht Club

Apologies

Joanna Richardson, British Marine
Jonathan Mosse, RYA Scotland/Inland Waterways Association
Eilid Ormiston, UHI West Highland
Clair McFarlan, Solway Firth Partnership
Derek Peters, Waverley Excursions
Andrew Rendle, Scottish Coastal Rowing Association
Stuart Smith, Paddle Scotland
Fred Moore, Cruise Loch Lomond
Momchil Terziev

Agenda item 1 - Welcome and Apologies

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes and Action Points from last meeting

- The minutes were approved as an accurate record with the following changes:

Page ... - the following sentence to be amended:

'East connected to west and Lowland canals navigability - AS reported that she attended the Lowland Canals meeting, and the depth has been reduced from 6 inches so there is an issue with getting small boats moving through and also asked for update on weed clearing.' The situation is not as bad as that! The depth has been reduced BY 6 inches.

- Page 2 "Martin Latimer, British Marina UK" change to British Marine
- Top of page 4 "SK asked if there had been discussions about the visitor levy.", change to cruise levy.
- Top of page 5 "short, medium and long term. . RW to" – remove extra space and dot.
- Page 6 – add the following sentence: we had a meeting with Andy Harmer on 29/07/24 which was very positive, and he is very supportive of our plans for the waterfront in FW.

Proposed: Sarah Kennedy

Seconded: Duncan Tannahill

Actions from last meeting

A discussion took place on outstanding actions and updates were made (Please refer to actions on page 7 and 8).

Agenda Item 3 – Scott Fraser, Communications & Engagement Manager, Corporate Affairs, Scottish Water and Karen Dee, Waste Manager

The presentation was made and there then followed an opportunity for questions:

SK asked about overflow underneath the pontoons but slightly up the roadway and asked how this could be changed as Scottish Water map is incorrect and the outflow is further up.

Action: SK will send the map worked up and they will update the systems. Scott Fraser and Dee contact details to be forwarded to SK.

FC asked about the Clean Water sports Alliance and highlighted that bathing water and recreational water can differ. SF stated that there are 3 asks that are outlined within the alliance. We look at bathing waters first and are increasing our monitoring capability. We look at investing on where we can improve the water environment and will be obtaining real life data. The recreational waters fall more under SEPA and will find partnerships to do this better. **Action: Arrangements will be made with sports governing bodies to have further discussion with Scott Fraser in regard to water safety.**

SMCM asked if they had engaged with Christopher Saving Lives Campaign. SMCM explained the background to how the charter was formed and resulted in action to utilise longer ropes. SF stated that they have worked with Water Safety Scotland and Scottish swimming to offer swimming lessons to improve water safety for children. **Action: SMCM will pass details to SF.**

GD asked about Solway Yacht Club where there was a new sewage system due to go in, but they have been informed that it has been put on hold. SF is aware of the recent work in Kippford, and they have reached a certain point and are assessing the viability of going ahead with the water treatment works. **Action: SF and GD to have a further discussion. GD also suggested speaking to the local community council.**

SMCM asked about the monitors. KD stated that there are 4000 Combined Sewer Overflows across our network and have existing and there is a commitment to install 1000 new monitors on overflows by the end of this year. We will put forward a business case for more monitors. **Action: SF/KD will update CPG on progress on monitors and also the business case progress.** KD stated that they focussed on bathing waters to decide on high amenity areas for Combined Sewer Overflows and monitors.

SMCM asked prior to this additional 1000; was there a shortage of monitors. KD stated that the monitor will indicate that the asset is overflowing. As regards the SEPA licence we should report on an annual basis on how many discharges there have been, and this has been in process for a number of years now. The environmental studies programme carried out in 2015 gave us this information and included modelling and this assists with investment planning. EH thanked for presentation and useful to hear about Kippford.

SMCM thanked them very much for presentation and for answering questions.

Action: Scottish Water presentation to be circulated to CPG members.

Agenda item 4 – Neil Kitchener, Lowland Canals Association, Depth changes- dredging

NK reported that he was following up on discussion on reduction in depth in Forth and Clyde Canals. (report was circulated to CPG members on 23rd Sep 2024).

There then followed an opportunity for questions:

- Simon McDonald stated that the number of boats that have gone through since 2012 are declining dramatically in Forth and Clyde Canals. There are a lot of people involved in the industry and we may need to look at volunteers to assist with cutting of weeds.
- GR stated that the inland waterways may be different but if it is not carried out within a number of years it is considered to be capital dredging and is not maintenance dredging.
- GD stated that there had been a redaction of minutes from the last meeting on 29th February that was posted to website. Scottish Canals had indicated that they would cut contracts as advised by Transport Scotland if they are not legally required. They have responsibility legally to maintain the canals and the government need to find the funds.
- R Millar emphasised that the Forth and Clyde canal is very important asset for Scotland. In 2000 they worked together with voluntary and public sector to get these canals opened and it was a great success with 20 million visits and have had more boats on the canal than we have ever had. We have had challenge with transits. The canals are busy and vibrant with 1100 boats coming through, they have their asset management strategy and are investing in Crinan and Caledonian. Lowland has had a higher amount of investment. The money they have is limited and they have had to prioritise and make hard decisions. They invested in Linlithgow embankments and have been investing in dredging. They got approval from Transport Scotland for capital dredging to take place. There are 140 miles of canals across Scotland. They have same status as Edinburgh Castle and are investing the best as they can to keep canals safe. Boats do not like dropping their mast and there are more weeds due to droughts and climate change. We have funded plant to do dredging. RM is grateful to Neil Kitchner for the paper prepared.
- Barry Schafe thanked NK very much for the presentation on the canals and the insight provided. There is great work taking place by Scottish Canals. There are no immediate solutions, and it needs money. BS asked are we modelling what usage would be the if the depth was resolved and we could re-open the Forth and Clyde canal.
- ML stated that the nature of the boats has changed considerably, dredging is extremely expensive. Dredging water is a difficulty and requires having someone to deposit it. There has been a lot of original thinking from engineers and board members. Is there a campaign to try and release funds from the Government and there is lots of competition from NHS and schools etc, A Shedden stated that there is demand e.g. Forth Yacht Clubs Association have 20 organisations that have an average of 40 boats, but they do not know if they are able to travel through and this could potentially rise to 100 boats.
- RM stated that demand is a big question, the Forth and Clyde appeals to the east coast boaters. A good year would be in the region of 100-150 boats, it is vibrancy that this brings to the canals and the associated communities, it is doable, but we need to understand keel arrangements and depth. Weed continues to be an issue and they try their best to cut back

but there are high costs. We would be keen to work in partnership with CPG members and need the support of the group to put forward our case.

- Mark Smith (Scottish Canals) stated that we should communicate the times people can transit through the Forth and Clyde.
- GD reported that he is an Officer of Seagull Trust Cruises and they have taken 20,000 disabled passengers for canal cruising. In Kirkintilloch, Falkirk and Ratho there is not too much of an issue with weeds. In 2019 the Scottish Canals Asset Management strategy was set for the subsequent 10 years, and it identified that the western end of Forth and Clyde would be let go and returned to remainder status if finances were not available to keep it going and asked if this was still the case. RM confirmed that remains in place and we are managing risks. Mark Smith stated that it is not within the Scottish Canals gift to change responsibilities.

SMCM thanked NK for his presentation and for all the contributions in particular RM and MS.

Agenda Item 5 – Visitor Tourism Levy/ Cruise Ship Levy Consultation

Visitor Tourism Levy

SMCM reported that the act is now in place and Edinburgh has been the first to introduce the levy and is up to other local authorities whether they want to do it in their areas.

Cruise Ship Levy Consultation

Hannah Egan provided an update and stated that if any members have any questions, she can pass this on. There will be tight turnaround time.

Action: The Cruise ship levy consultation will now be added as a standard agenda item.

Agenda Item 6 – Sustainability – Joe Penhaul Smith

JPS outlined his presentation and there then followed an opportunity for questions.

Circular Economy

HE provided an update on what is happening with Scottish Government and explained about work in the circular economy. There is a 4 nations approach package focussing on household waste electrical goods and work in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland and a report will be prepared in May 2025. There is a big focus on wind turbines and offshore wind energy, and they have a commitment to deliver end of life wind turbines by 2028 approx. There is a Product stewardship strategy where they will take products from sails to astro turf and put in a matrix that will throw up policy interventions and what steps we can take to address. This would include mattresses, tyres and textiles and also would include sails. We are determining the context of textiles. We want to ensure that we are working collaboratively with other home countries and will look to be innovative and be the lead in Scotland. We are keen to work with stakeholders to make sure that we are making the right policy interventions.

GR stated that this is very good news, and the removing of grp hull boats is very important. Some have come to the end of their life, but others have just been neglected. There is a high cost to dispose in region of £4K and there are issues with transporting of hulls. It would be useful to have a plant near Falkirk so that this could be brought along the canal so that it does not need to go on a lorry.

Action: GR asked that we return to this discussion at a future meeting.

Capt Alan McPherson (Forth Ports) reported that there have been abandoned vessels causing petrol in the water and there are high costs to remove it. It is better to have process in place to pre-empt this pollution risk.

Action: It was agreed that this should be on agenda for next CPG meeting on 26th November, and will reduce agenda items to allow for an in-depth discussion.

Action: Slides to be circulated to CPG members.

Action: Hannah Egan and Joe Penhaul Smith to have a further discussion (PM to share contact details)

SMCM thanked very much for presentation.

Agenda Item 7 – Conservancy Fee – Clydeport, Simon Limb

SL explained that the conservancy charge to leisure vessels has been proposed at a meeting that they attended in August. The charge will apply to boats between 6m and 24m within the Clyde jurisdiction north of Irvine and will apply to permanent berths and visitors. The charge proposed is £120 per annum and £90 for summer. The group have asked for formal consultation but have not heard back as yet. Their plan is to introduce this in 2025 but have asked for delay for a year.

The following points were then raised:

- Alan McPherson stated that each harbour authority has a right to charge. AM provided background on a similar scheme that he operated in England. Harbour authorities are looking at leisure craft to help the upkeep of river but in turn they also should improve the harbour facilities.
- AK stated that in England there are lots of great facilities for the charge that is applied. Any fee should be related to the services provided and he is not aware of benefits in the peel port areas. GR stated that they need to be reasonable and reflect what benefits will be.
- SL reported that Peel Ports discussed it with a small group of marine operators but have not consulted with the RYA, Scottish Canals and local authorities to take up the soundings. ML stated that Peel Ports should collect the fees and not be dependent on the marinas to collect on their behalf.

Action: It was agreed that invitation be sent to Peel Ports to next meeting on 26th November. ML suggested inviting MSPs to also be in attendance.

Action: SMCM asked members to engage with MSPs that represent their constituencies to raise this issue in advance of meeting on 26th November.

Action: SK reported that she brought this up with Kate Forbes MSP (Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic) and has advised writing to all 8 MSPs in the affected areas and would be happy to assist following that action.

Agenda Items 8 – AOCB/Future Business

GR reported that he had a very useful meeting with CMAL re Harbour Consolidation Orders and have established a channel of communication. SMCM stated that Audit Scotland report gave them a clean bill of health.

GR reported that Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport is attending a meeting with RYA Scotland at Forth Corinthian this evening as part of Climate Change week.

Alan McPherson reported that the safety boat code is undergoing a significant change, and this will affect boats and marinas. The compliance team will work with various sectors and risk assessment will need to be adhered by end of 2024. SL further stated that the Port marine safety code for small harbours and marinas safety provisions will be proportional to the size of facility.

Action Points from 14th May 2024 Meeting

- **Presentations**
The following presentation slides to be shared:
 - a. **Andy Harmer, Cruise Lines International Association, – to follow.**

- **East Coast** - Discussion to take place between DAM and AS.

- **Marine toilets** – A Shedden reported an issue with sea water toilets due to lack of pump out facilities. **Action: SMCM and PM will do a follow up discussion to look at it as a future agenda item.**

- **East connected to west and Lowland canals navigability** - AS reported that she attended the Lowland Canals meeting, and the depth has been reduced from 6 inches so there is an issue with getting small boats moving through and also asked for update on weed clearing. **Action: DAM will follow up with Laurie Piper at a future meeting to discuss this further.** GR has said that these issues have been raised with Scottish Canals already and is due to budget issues. AS stated that canals were used as an environmental method to divert water away to stop flooding issues in other areas.

- **Invitations to meetings:**
 - Invite Skills Development Scotland to a future meeting (ongoing).
 - Greenports – unable to attend, look at future date.
 - Crown Estate Scotland, awaiting response.

- **Lochmaddy**
 - SMCM to send email out to MSPs who represents the Highlands so that they are all aware. **Update: Ongoing**

Action Points from 24th September 2024 Meeting

Scottish Water

- Scottish water slides to be circulated (**Update: sent on 4th October 2024**)

- SK will send the map worked up and they will update the systems. Scott Fraser and Dee contact details. **(Update: Contacts circulated).**
- SGB's to have further discussion with Scott Fraser.
- SF and GD to have a further discussion on sewage system in Kippford.
- SF/KD will update CPG on progress on monitors and also the business case progress.

Sustainability

- Slides to be circulated to CPG members.**(Update: sent on 4th Oct 2024)**

British Marine Scotland

- Giant Strides paper is being updated by EKOS and to be presented at a future meeting.

Circular economy

- Add as an agenda item to meeting in February 2025.

SCM thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

Vote of thanks was given to Convenor.

Agenda Item 5 - Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 26th November 2024 at 6pm at the Scottish Parliament (including the AGM) in person and online. (including AGM). We will take decision to have face to face meeting.