Listening to Our Stakeholders

A Review of Formal Communications
Public Consultation

Introduction

The British Waterways Board, operating as Scottish Canals, will continue in Scotland as a stand-alone public body when the functions of the British Waterways Board in England and Wales are expected to transfer to the Canal & River Trust in the early summer of 2012.

Following the conclusion of the requisite Parliamentary processes, a Scottish Canals Board will assume responsibility and accountability for the Scottish Canals, meeting regularly at canal-side locations across Scotland.

This is therefore an excellent time to review the role of our current advisory groups and the public meetings programme we have established over the past decade to ensure efficiency but, most importantly, that communications between the new Scottish Canals Board and management team and all those with a stake in securing the future of the canals are open, direct and fruitful.

The current British Waterways Scotland Group (BWS Group), an independent team of seven voluntary advisors and two British Waterways Board (BWB) members which was established in 2002 to help guide and support British Waterways Scotland and the Scottish Government in developing the Scottish canals, were invited to undertake a review and come up with proposals by Scottish Government and BWS in light of the structural changes proposed for British Waterways. As a result, the recommendations within this consultation document are proposed and all those with a stake in the future success of the Scottish canals are invited to contribute to this important consultation.
Responding to the Consultation

Responses to this consultation should be sent to BWS by close of play on 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 2012 using the contact details below.

Send by post to:  
Listening to Our Stakeholders Public Consultation  
Attention: Lesley Corr,  
British Waterways Scotland,  
Canal House,  
Applecross Street,  
Glasgow  
G4 9SP

Send by email to:  
Lesley.Corr@scottishcanals.co.uk

Questions
Should be directed in the first instance to Lesley Corr by email using the address above or by telephoning 0141 354 7534.

Publication of Submissions
A summary of submissions will be available at www.scottishcanals.co.uk or by telephoning British Waterways Scotland on 0141 354 7534 after 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 2012.

Consultation

1. Advisory Groups

There are currently two advisory groups - the British Waterways Scotland Group (BWS Group) and the Scottish Canals Development Group.

1a. The British Waterways Scotland Group

The BWS Group is chaired by Dr. Jon Hargreaves CBE, one of the two current non-executive members of the British Waterways Board appointed by the Scottish Government to represent Scottish interests.
The second Scottish Board member, Duncan Sutherland, is also part of this group along with seven independent voluntary advisors (who were selected via open competition). Together, they have a wealth of expertise within the fields of boating, regeneration, environment, commerce and the third sector and their contribution to the strategic growth and development of the Scottish canals has been invaluable since the group was established a decade ago.

The Scottish Government has invited Jon Hargreaves to be Chair of the Scottish Canals Board and Duncan Sutherland, Tanya Castell, Martin Latimer and Geoff Aitkenhead have been identified as the inaugural members of the Board. They will be formally appointed by Scottish Ministers and assume responsibility and accountability for Scottish Canals following a successful conclusion of the Parliamentary processes to transfer British Waterways England and Wales to the Canal & River Trust. It is also intended that Steve Dunlop, BW’s Director Scotland who will become Chief Executive, will be appointed to the Board.

With effect from 1st April 2012 the current BW Board has delegated its powers and responsibilities in respect of BW’s canals in Scotland to a Scottish sub-committee comprising Jon Hargreaves and Duncan Sutherland. Geoff Aitkenhead, Tanya Castell and Martin Latimer will serve as shadow board members and act in an advisory capacity to the Scottish sub-committee until the transfer takes place as part of their induction to become actively involved in influencing future Scottish Canals issues and decisions from an early stage.

**Recommendations:**

**Dissolution of the BWS Group**

The Scottish Canals Board intends to meet regularly at canalside locations throughout Scotland. The BWS Group proposes that the BWS Group remains in place until mid 2012 to provide the new Board with valuable experience and knowledge during its induction and initial days. Thereafter, it will be reviewed with a view to dissolving it to avoid duplication of the functions undertaken by the Scottish Canals Board and the BWS Group.

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Creation of Short-Term, Theme-Based Advisory Groups

The BWS Group recommends that time-limited and theme based informal advisory groups should be brought together when strategic issues arise for the Scottish Canals Board and to assist in influencing local and national policy.

With members drawn from relevant stakeholder groups by invitation based on relevant skills, these focused groups would provide the Scottish Canals Board and the Scottish Government with fresh insight but also, importantly, give stakeholders interested in a particular theme the opportunity to influence direction.

**Question 1**
Do you agree that the BWS Group should be dissolved? If so, what are your views on timing?

**Question 2**
Are short-term, theme-based advisory groups an effective way for the Scottish Canals Board and Scottish Government to hear the advice and opinion of stakeholders?

1b. The Scottish Canals Development Group

In 2002, the then Scottish Executive published ‘Scotland’s Canals - an asset for the future’ which set out a long-term strategic direction for the canals which has withstood the test of time well.

This policy document recognised the significant improvements and investment which had taken place on the Scottish canals and led to the establishment of the Scottish Canals Development Group to ensure the continued strategic and sustainable development of Scotland’s canals through partnership working.

Chaired by a senior official in the Scottish Government, the Scottish Canals Development Group comprises senior representatives from a wide range of public sector organisations including the nine local authorities with a canal within their catchment, Scottish Enterprise, VisitScotland,

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SportScotland, Scottish National Heritage, Historic Scotland, SEPA and the former Inland Waterways Advisory Council (IWAC).

Sub-groups of the Scottish Canals Development Group - The Highland and the Lowland Canal Steering Groups – were also established to identify projects to deliver the strategic direction of the Scottish Canals Development Group and drive them forward.

These regional groups became local Project Delivery Partnerships. These local Project Delivery Partnerships have been extremely successful with a number of transformational initiatives achieved and strong relationships established.

**Recommendation:**

The BWS Group proposes that there is no longer a requirement for the Scottish Canals Development Group as the Group’s role has been absorbed into Project Delivery Partnerships over recent years.

The BWS Group recommends that there is much to be gained by encouraging the local Project Delivery Partnerships to share ideas and best practice and this will be encouraged and facilitated by Scottish Canals moving forward.

**Question 3:**
Do you agree that the Scottish Canals Development Group should be discontinued?

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2. **Public Meetings**

2a. **Customer Forums**

Public meetings currently take place twice a year on the Lowlands and annually on the Caledonian and Crinan canals. Historically, these ‘Customer Forums’ have attracted boating customers in the main and cover strategic and operational issues with occasional guest speakers.
Recommendation:

The Customer Forums should be continued and reinvigorated to attract a broader variety of stakeholder groups such as community organisations and walkers, cyclists, paddlers and anglers.

Moving forward, the Scottish Canals Board and the Scottish Government will also attend to ensure stakeholders have access to decision making and the Board and Scottish Government are able to communicate directly with stakeholders.

Question 4
What are your thoughts on the current format of your local Customer Forum?

Question 5
Do you have any ideas about how to encourage a wider variety of interests to take part?

2b. Saltwater and Freshwater Groups

The Saltwater and Freshwater groups in the Lowlands were established a number of years ago to address the specific interests of each boating sector. Group members are also invited to the wider Customer Forums.

Recommendation:

The BWS Group recommends that meetings of the Saltwater and Freshwater groups are discontinued. Instead, all customers will be encouraged to talk directly with the appropriate Waterway Manager so that arising issues and opportunities are given attention swiftly and effectively.
Question 6
Do you agree with this approach or do you have other ideas you would like to share?

3. Important Partners

Whilst their remit is outwith this consultation, the BWS Group wishes to recognise the increasingly important role of The Waterways Trust Scotland (TWTS) and the Lowland Canals Volunteer Group.

The Waterways Trust Scotland, which will continue to operate when The Waterways Trust in England and Wales joins the new Canal & River Trust, performs a vital role in communicating with people and communities and engaging them with the Scottish canals in a relevant, exciting and meaningful way. The Trust also has a strong track record for attracting funding partners to make these canalside initiatives possible.

The BWS Group believes that TWTS should be encouraged to fulfil its great potential with more collaboration with other charitable sector bodies and local community organisations and new exciting, local canalside initiatives across Scotland.

Whilst the Lowland Canals Volunteer Group, which was established in 2010, is also not an advisory group, it too fulfils a central communications role. It has already fostered stronger links between boaters, canal societies, charities and social enterprises encouraging them to help maintain and promote the canals through volunteering and a growing events programme.

4. Final Thoughts

In addition to the questions above, we are keen to hear any other thoughts you might have on this subject in particular how we ensure a greater variety of interests are represented at each Customer Forum.

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