

Cross-Party Group on Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism

Tuesday 28th November 2023 at 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Stuart McMillan, MSP

Emma Harper, MSP

Invited guests.

None

Non-MSP Group Members

Andrew Rendle, Scottish Coastal Rowing Association

Eilid Ormiston, West Highland College

Duncan Tannahill, West Highland and Islands Moorings Association

Graham Russell, RYA Scotland

Sarah Kennedy, Fort William Marina and Shoreline Community Interest Company

Simon Limb, Clyde Marina Ltd

Martin Latimer, British Marine UK

Scott Johnson, Waverley Excursions

Anne Shedden, Forth Yacht Clubs Association

Andy Carnduff, Forth Yacht Clubs Association

Flora Partington, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust

Jonathan Mosse, RYA Scotland/Inland Waterways Association

Laurie Piper, Scottish Canals

Andy Harmer, Cruise Lines International Association

Apologies

Christine Cameron, Lowland Canals Association

Momchil Terziev

Clair McFarlan, Solway Firth Partnership

Paul Bancks, Crown Estate Scotland

Fanny Royanez, Scottish Environment Link

Gordon Daly, RYA Scotland

Alan Kohler, Cruising Association

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 from Alan Kohler (RYA Scotland/Cruising Association) on page 4.

Alan Kohler (Cruising Association) – AK thanked the Minister for coming along to the meeting and for the offer of further discussion. AK provided details of his sailing experience this year; 100 days sailing across Scotland and explained that while there are big marinas in Clyde, Oban and the Forth, they are largely parking spaces for boats and have neither visitors or accommodation. By contrast, there are visitor moorings in for example Rum, Canna, North Uist and Loch Maddy that only have a small number of moorings, are only used sparingly and are run by community volunteers, you pay by honesty box 5 and there are no staff offices. These small communities are reliant on that income. In the legislation and of the 31 pages there are 16 pages all about penalties; this will not encourage you to provide moorings or be a volunteer.

AK suggested there should be a minimum turnover size for small operators, below which the Visitor levy would not be applied. By the figures contained in the supporting financial impact analysis (Para 63, table 4) a typical micro business would incur extra running costs of £200-£850 per annum. Hence, with the illustrative rate of 1% levy, for any business with revenue below £20k-£85k p/a, the costs of administration would exceed the gross income from the Levy.

The Minister stated that they will make that assessment looking at admin costs versus levy costs. All the particular concerns are very important and local authorities can apply exemptions. It does not

need to be authority wide by default and they can also decide to make it seasonal as well. It would be a decision for the local authority to apply the visitor levy. AK stated that we need to have accountability from the Scottish Parliament and not just have it left to the local authorities and need to have safeguard for local micro businesses and community groups.

The Minister stated that it is a local tier of government; we have signed up a new deal with local government to enable them to have more powers and have a level of discretion. The Minister further explained that at Stage 2 we will look at detailed amendments. We recognise that this is about fiscal power being given to local government to enable them to develop their local economies. SMCM outlined about the stage 2 process, evidence will go into the committee, SMCM encouraged members to write into the committees. Action: CPG member organisations to consider giving evidence to the committee.

Proposed: Stuart McMillan MSP

Seconded: Martin Latimer

Agenda item 3 – AGM

The following positions were appointed:

Convenor

Stuart McMillan MSP, Convenor

Proposed: Sarah Kennedy

Seconded: Laurie Piper

Deputy Convenors

Emma Harper MSP, Deputy Convenor

Proposed: Sarah Kennedy

Seconded: Laurie Piper

Secretariat:

RYA Scotland

Proposed: Sarah Kennedy

Seconded: Laurie Piper

Agenda Item 4 - Visitor Tourism Levy Bill

SMCM provided an update on the round table discussion that took place with the Minister on 17th November.

The Minister accepted that there will be changes to the bill. They have listened to the points raised at the last CPG meeting on 26th Sep. SMCM has fed into the process regarding the small boats sector. SL reported that the Minister's office has been in contact to request more information and there is a

call arranged for 7th December. It was a very open and positive meeting. ML stated that marinas do not provide accommodation, it is more used like a car park and not all boats that come into marinas have accommodation e.g., they also move to marinas to get work done. Trying to classify as a visitor is not clear as it would seem. Moorings are run by small volunteer groups, and it would be difficult to obtain levy where they are run by volunteers. At the meeting Gavin McDonagh raised issue about VAT and we should remove ourselves from classification. We need to confirm that we are still part of tourism but be careful on the language. SL stated that it was clear that they are getting a lot of requests for exemptions from various sectors. We need to be clear that we are not asking for exemptions but rather that we want it to be excluded from the bill entirely.

Laurie Piper (Scottish Canals) stated that there are various marinas that do not offer overnight accommodation and leisure boaters are bringing their own boat and it was never intended that it should be included. ML stated that no two boats are identical, some RIBs have accommodation, and some don't, there is so many variables and is not easy to classify.

AC stated that it would not be acceptable for people to be charged. AC introduced Anne Shelden who will be new representative for Forth Yacht Clubs Association as of the AGM in March 2024. SMCM welcomed Anne to her upcoming new role. We would welcome all the support. They are too small to operate a charging system. There is differential between real commerciality and recreation. SMCM asked when AC will stand down. **Action: SMCM encouraged members to send in submissions to the committee and highlight that you would be keen to give evidence to the bill.**

SMCM thanked the CPG members for all their very helpful contributions. It is hoped that there will be positive changes to the Bill. SMCM has indicated that he can provide changes based on what has been input from the CPG members. ML stated that we need to make sure that we follow up with good positive communications. We must not shut ourselves out of other potential funding streams. LP stated that the intention was that the monies collected would be deployed to a relevant DMO in partnership with Council and decision would be taken on where it will be spent. We require to ensure that we are engaging with the DMO's to ensure monies are getting spent appropriately.

Emma Harper MSP stated that she missed the last meeting but has looked at the submissions; there is a lot of negativity and opposition and a lot of single submissions. EH explained that she was a member of the Tourism CPG and will follow up to see if there is similar representation through the Tourism CPG. SL stated that we support the premise of the levy but questioned the relevance of it to the marine tourism sector. EH stated that she appreciated all the work done that resulted in the round table discussion with the Minister.

ML expressed concern of the lack of contact from Crown Estate Scotland and that it is important for them to report on their activity.

SJ (Scott Johnson, Waverley Excursions) raised an issue regarding lack of consultation from Crown Estate Scotland on exclusion of landing at the Helensburgh Pier. There is no economic use of Helensburgh pier, and it will fall into the sea, and it has been closed to marine traffic since 2018.

Jenni Minto MSP has been very supportive and has been in contact with Argyll and Bute Council. Waverley Excursions are happy to work the community to fundraise for funding this landing stage.

Action: SJ to keep SMCM updated, and SJ thanked him for the support.

E Harper MSP explained that she is the MSP for the Stranraer area, and we welcome the Skiffy Worlds going to Stranraer and will have further discussion with ML.

JM reported that it has been a big day for HVO; they are going to make HVO affordable to boaters. We are backed up by Crown Oils. It is owned by 5 different westminister departments. The Group met with DFT, and they are keen to look at the problem and find a constructive way of moving

forward. DFT thought it was a devolved issue, but we have made it clear that this is not the case, and we should have some representation from the CPG. **Action: It was agreed that we make Mairi McAllan MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero aware and provide a detailed briefing on the work that has happened and the engagement with CPG. Action: PM to get details for Mairi McAllan and provide to JM. JM to send draft of letter form JM before it goes to the Cabinet Secretary. SMCM will inform that it is on its way and to provide some context. Letter is also be copied to Richard Lochhead, (Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade).**

JM reported that he sent a letter to DEFRA and also an Inland Waterways Association member wrote as an individual to DFT complaining about a situation where he could not use the fuel in his boat. He received a letter back and they indicated that once the fuel is in, they say it does not matter what it is used for; we require to get clarification on this.

Action: SMCM suggested that during the UK general election campaign people engage with the candidates of their constituencies, to make them aware and also make them aware of the contradictions. Action: JM suggested about Grangemouth being an issue that could be discussed.

AM reported that there was a report released earlier in the month about environmental impact of propulsion schemes and British Marine can get access to the report. AM suggested that the technical team could present the report at the CPG. SMCM agreed that this would be useful.

Action: AM to speak to Technical Team and to also send the information to Mairi McAllan (Minister for Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero) and have further discussion with JM. SL reported that the ICOMIA have a lot of technical expertise and the report is very relevant. ML stated that we should be careful on what we quote, some of it is maintenance orientated.

Storm Babet – GR stated that there was an impact on the east of Scotland, the worst affected area was at Granton where 3 boats sank, and 12 boats were damaged. The North Berwick breakwater was breached and there have been big swells. We are looking at what advice we can offer. GR has met with the RNLI and Climate Change partnership as we will expect worst storms and action will have to be taken. SMCM agreed that there should be more consideration given to this matter.

Agenda Items 5 – AOCB/Future Business

Action Points from 7th February 2023

- Invite Skills Development Scotland to a future meeting. **(Lawrence Durden unable to attend so this will be moved to another time)**
- Contact be made with each of the 32 local authorities (education directors) to make them aware and also provide a list of the types of jobs available so that they can feed into Modern Apprenticeship Week. **(Action ongoing)**

Actions from 28th November 2023 Meeting

- **SMCM will contact Crown Estate Scotland to arrange a meeting,**

The following 4 organisations to be asked to present at the meeting on 27th February 2024:

1. Greenports – attending on 27th February 2024.
2. Crown Estate Scotland, awaiting response.

3. Argyll and Isles Partnership – have confirmed attendance.
4. Cruise Liner Association, Andy Harmer, Managing Director, Cruise Lines International Association attending on 27th February 2024.

Agenda Item 6 - Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 27th February 2024 at 6pm at the Scottish Parliament.
(Hybrid meeting)