

Online Cross-Party Group on Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism (by teams)

Wednesday 11th June 2025 at 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Stuart McMillan MSP, Convenor

Kenneth Gibson MSP

Non-MSP Group Members and Other Attendees

Finlo Cottier, RYA Scotland

Pauline McGrow, RYA Scotland

Jim McSporran, Clydeport

Alex McIntosh, Clydeport

Andrew Rendle, Scottish Coastal Rowing Association

Sarah Kennedy,

Fort William Marina & Shoreline Community Interest Company

/British Marine Scotland

John Kent, Bidwells

Norman Hollywood, Royal Scottish Motor Yacht Club

Glenn Porter, Ocean Sailing Scotland/RYA Scotland

Alistair Cameron

Fanny Royanez, Scottish Environment Link

Ian White

Eric Sweeney, Sailing Cruising Scotland

Christine Cameron, Lowland Canals Association

Emma Dudley, Water Safety Scotland

Anne Shedden, Forth Yacht Clubs Association

Simon McDonald, Aquaculture, Fisheries Processing Consultant/TV presenter

Aileen Monk, British Marine Scotland

Apologies

Emma Harper MSP
Clare Adamson MSP
Daniel Steel, Sail Scotland
Paul McKay
Martin Latimer, British Marine UK
Gordon Daly, RYA Scotland
Duncan Tannahill, WHAM/RYA Scotland
Graham Russell, RYA Scotland
Joanna Richardson, British Marine UK
Capt Alan McPherson
Brendan Bocker
Simon Limb, Clyde Marina
Eilid Ormiston, University of Highlands and Islands
David Adams McGilp, VisitScotland
Mark Smith, Scottish Canals
Ross Gordon
Laurie Piper, Scottish Canals
Councillor Maurice Corry

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 one change:

Christine Cameron – change from Lowland Canals user to “Lowland Canals Association”

Proposed: Simon McDonald

Seconded: Norman Hollywood

Agenda Item 1 – Cruise Ship Levy

SMCM reported that the Cruise Ship Levy consultation has closed at end of May for submissions. This item will now be taken off as an agenda item.

Agenda Item 2 – River Clyde/Clydeport Update

Jim McSporran introduced himself and provided his background in ports sector as service provider and joined Clydeport 5 years ago and explained that he is the Port Director, responsible for Scottish and Irish assets for the Clyde cluster and responsibility for the Clyde and Ardrossan Harbour authority.

Alex McIntosh provided her background and that her previous experience was as a Pilot in Aberdeen and joined Clydeport a year ago.

J McSporran and AM outlined their presentation and SMCM thanked them for the presentation and then followed an opportunity for questions:

Norman Hollywood, Royal Scottish Motor Yacht Club - NH stated that there has been condemnation and resistance to the introduction of the charges and that nothing convinces him whether the change is necessary. NH stated that he is speaking on behalf of the Royal Scottish Motor Yacht Club. Anytime that it is discussed with the members they ask how it has been calculated and what is involved and how is it going to be made to stick, unless it can be shown to be practical. NH asked are you in a position to determine the leisure movements and it would be difficult to find out how many boats went where. How do you foresee this going ahead?

JMCS thanked NH for the question -

1. We never got to the stage of getting engagement in place, this has been going on since 2019. When AM came into post, we felt that we needed to start engagement, and we had a meeting with marinas and shared concept in confidence and to get opinions and it got leaked. We did not get a chance to tell the story. The primary reason we are looking at this is due to the body of water and there are 171,000 vessel movements on the Clyde. It is an extremely busy waterway; we can account for most of them but not all of them. We have a legal responsibility and to ensure safety for all users in the Clyde. The fee is to ensure that is safe for all users. Safety is a shared responsibility, and they have a responsibility is to create the mechanisms to enhance safety.

JMCS provided a couple of examples of safety incidents:

1. Greenock – we had a container vessel, 300m, 20 storeys high, coming alongside. While it is berthing, leisure vessel came in between berthing ship and the quayside. This was a very challenging situation that put lives at risk.
2. Fishing vessel – just off the coast of Greenock, there was a tanker coming down the river and went right in front of tanker, vessels overturned, and all got out by stroke of luck.

NH responded by saying that we know perfectly well some of the stupidities that go about but reiterated that he did not see how the fee will make any material change to this. What would the fee be paying for, where would the funds raised go. There needs to be a bit more detail and conversation with the leisure industry before this can be taken forward.

JMCS stated that NH was 100% right and wanted to engage in a friendly manner. We did not get to that stage and are looking at exploring options. Dredging does affect leisure users. Wreck recovery is a drain on resource. JMCS further explained the background about vessels with spill response and this all costs money to get it moved. Issue of Notice to Mariners also cost money.

NH stated that he took his point in lack of communication with the leisure industry. We have only recently become involved in this. There is a good case to be made for having another approach. Unless you get people recognising that things are changing or are unrealistic then

you will get massive resistance, and it will be difficult to implement. NH suggested starting again with this. NH asked how individuals would they pay for it, where would they pay? JM – the whole point was to get engagement and to get feedback. The points raised are valid.

AM stated that a positive has resulted from this as it has created open dialogue between the boating community and Clydeport. There needs to be a lot more engagement and need to arrange engagement sessions. We are not told about incidents, and we are responsible for the safety.

Simon McDonald thanked JMCS and AM for their presentation and it was quite informative. SMCD asked about the monitoring of the movement of leisure craft and asked if they have noted the movements of the fishing fleet as they are at sea 365 days per year. AM states that they do have initial information about fisheries that can be sent onto CPG members. AM referred to Slide 7 when you look at blue lines, these are fishing vessels. All vessels are set a particular colour. They have specific navigational risks and conduct risk assessments for the waterways set against them and take this into consideration e.g. VHF, condition of equipment. Extra images can be added in and the explain the overlays of the different traffic and this will be circulated to CPG members.

Eric Sweeney stated that he found the presentation misleading, not clear how the graphics show the reason for a fee. They don't represent the actual incidents and interactions of commercial and leisure craft. He stated that the leisure craft sector will not pay a fee. It is not fair to be both the regulator and operator. ES said that he takes the point really seriously about safety. The problem here is the people who use Clyde inappropriately do not have any relevant qualification. We may require to consider ensuring that everyone has an RYA qualification or don't allow them on the water.

JMCS stated that he took his duties seriously and stated that they have not set a fee. He reiterated the example of the vessel that went between the ship and the quayside and that as a duty holder he would responsible if anything should happen. The second person would be Alex McIntosh as the Harbour Master and other agencies would also be involved; MAIB, Police Scotland and HSE.

ES reiterated that they should have some sort of qualification. AM stated that the MCA are very reluctant to regulate leisure use and is without Port authority jurisdiction. ES says that people who are observing the rules should not be penalised. AM stated that he can lobby.

ES asked about the special mark at Cardwell Bay. AM stated that this is not within their harbour authority.

Action : Peel Ports has not requested any action on this, but AM will follow up and check on this.

JMCS noted that it sits within CMAL and will take this back. AM will take this offline and check this.

Alan Kohler thanked JMCs and AM very much for attending CPG and was much appreciated. AK stated that he was struggling as a boat owner and said he was not sure if any of the surveys, dredging and aids to navigation have been beneficial to leisure users and recreational craft. We understand the issue of abandoned boats. The Cruising Association work with RYA Scotland on this matter. You are potentially charging the wrong people. AK suggested that yachts over 10m could pay a small fee and register on the MCA Small Ships Register.

Clydeport Authority – AM and JMC work for Clydeport (employee), and it is part of Peel Ports Group.

AK stated that if abandoned boats are an issue, then there is a different way to handle it. AK understands the concern about safety and that you could have safety zones around Greenock. AK does not understand the need for 450 square mile Harbour Authority area (it seems disproportionate), AK suggested reducing to 5 or 10 square miles.

JMCS stated that this our statutory harbour authority and have responsibility to keep people safe and can't comment on other harbour authorities. The points are valid, registration may be a way to address this, and you can collate better information and make decisions.

AK suggested that they look at commercial high usage areas and submit a harbour revision order to reduce the harbour area.

Glenn Porter stated that he has worked in commercial yachts on the Clyde for 20 years and agrees with the safety concerns. The Heat Maps presented and taken within the timeframes may not be reflective of real time issues. We need to see breakdown of boating incidents. These are busy waterways and is a huge expansive area and require to look at avoidance techniques and routes. This may cause conflict with boat users. The boating community would love to get involved in polite engagement and understand what you do. GP stated that he understands the safety perspective, but the purposes of this conservancy fee has not focussed much on being safety related. The information that has gone out to the public, may be better rewritten and look at safety and traceability of boats. GP suggested engaging with boating community and possibly a registration type project for a relatively small fee to manage accountability. If it progresses in future years, then fee could potentially be increased at that time. GP asked how would you use the £100 fee to improve safety in the Clyde port area? JMCS stated that GPs suggestion makes a lot of sense but emphasised that they have not got to that stage yet and have to prevent incidents happening. All the wrecks pulled out of water are leisure boats. GP stated that he can see a way back with the leisure boating community and get a positive outcome to meet objectives on safety, whilst at the same time not alienating boaters. AM stated that if people ask how they want to communicate, we are here to listen and to the wider group and look at how they get safety information out in a meaningful way. For Notice to Mariners, we need to look at how is the information is going to be useful not just on conservancy fee but on critical safety issues. We require to determine what will be useful to people. It could possibly be an AIS link to show what is happening on the river. We need to look at moving forward.

Alistair Cameron made a couple of observations; the definition of conservancy is extremely wide and cannot see this term in the legislation or should it be a "safety fee". AC also stated that Clydeport had expressed difficulty in engaging with the boating community, however they had been invited to all of the meetings but have not attended and should avoid this in future. AC confirmed that marinas were consulted earlier in process, however there was no consultation with British Marine and some marinas had not bene consulted, and they will be key going forward.

The incident maps outlined are inconsistent over a long timescale and advised that there needs be consistency between the maps in order to tell the story accurately. In terms of safety, charging a £150 fee will not improve safety. Some type of registration scheme will help in this regard. Going forward communication will be vital. In terms of Notice to Mariners, marinas are going to hit 80% of leisure traffic, they post MET office reports in the main office. This is a logical place to start and put the message out about safety. AM stated that they have been engaging with marinas, sharing notice to mariners and are on their distribution

lists. People do not read them as perhaps there is too much technical information and is not fit for the audience.

AMc further explained that the term “conservancy” is in the [Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code \[Section 10, p33\]](#). Marinas will be included in this code and there will need to be more engagement. There are 145 marine facilities within statutory harbour authorities and require to ensure that the safety management systems dovetail with this. We need to understand how they are managing their marine facilities safely. A compliance exercise has been set by MCA and will take place over the next 9 months.

Charles Bird – Thanked JMCs and AM very much for presentation and it was very much appreciated and fully understand their frustration on how you have been treated. Speaking in terms of a recreational boater on the Clyde who heard about the tentative plans on this fee. We will have all loved for you to have engaged with the community. I do hope that your sense of victim hood will not influence the ongoing discussion in the future and would be unfortunate. CB emphasised that amongst recreational boaters there was a great deal of incomprehension and frustration on what we heard. CB asked the following questions:

1. How much money you are hoping to raise form the conservancy fee from recreational boaters.
JMC’S stated that it never got to that stage, we did not decide on the fee.
2. Incidents involving recreational boaters and inexperience of skippers.
How does charging £100 prevent the person going between a ship and a quay, it does not prevent that; good training, experience and having the right certifications does or look at some sort of registration scheme. It is good practice that keeps people safe. The fee may help to keep tabs on people. CB stated that must have some sort of idea of what the costs are. There is a risk from a reputational point of view due to the large sums of income for Peel Ports. JMCs stated that the money has been reinvested in the infrastructure.
3. Engaging marinas – CB stated that he was not sure what you are proposing will enhance.

Anne Shedden, Forth Yacht Clubs Association - AS stated that you will get different views from marinas and boat users and there needs to be engagement with both. AS advised that the RYA, Cruising Association and Clyde Yacht Clubs Association are the organisations that have communication with members on a like by like basis.

The boats that come through the Forth and Clyde and then into the Clyde area, there is work going on with Scottish Canals to get more from East to west for smaller boats and a conservancy fee would be a disadvantage.

Action: Pauline to share Anne Shedden’s details with Jim McSporran.

Norman Hollywood stated that RYA Scotland would be the best means of communication with yacht clubs in Clyde through organisations such as Clyde Cruising Club, Clyde Yacht Clubs Association. There are a number of agencies that could be used much better and have closer extensive use of RYA Scotland who would then promulgate the information. There are huge boats from 60ft down to smaller boats and would like to see RYA Scotland more prominent on all future communications so that we can get a more realistic idea on what is going on. JMCS reported that the Harbour master, Gary Doyle has been in discussion with RYA Scotland and agreed that this would be a good idea.

Sarah Kennedy introduced herself as Chair of British Marine Scotland and stated that a lot of members have been concerned and asked that they be involved in their communications.

Action: All organisation contacts to be shared with Jim McSporran and Alex McIntosh.

SMCM stated that this will be the start of regular dialogue. SMCM stated that it would not be required to attend every meeting, but it would be useful to come along to some of these meetings. JMCMs stated that they would be happy to attend the quarterly meetings. SMCM stated that from points raised there is a sense of frustration. Going forward we can have regular dialogue and if there is any change in your position asked that this be shared with the organisations and CPG.

SMCM further stated that there has been a lot of relevant points raised on the consistency of data and timescales, it would help to have more up to date information on discussion with CPG and organisations. AM stated that detail will be added and information provided on how they assess areas on regular survey and can increase frequency of surveys if required. They will ensure that there is consistent data across the presentation.

Further comments were then raised:

- AK stated that his point is that there is no articulation on how the fees would be used. Narrowing the scope would help the marina rather than putting on extra bureaucracy/ Registration won't improve safety.
- CB stated that he was very concerned that the attitude will inform future dialogue, and we need to keep reaching out. The presentation information was not particularly useful. Questions on the finance side were not answered.
- SMCM – stated that we will ensure that Jim McSporran receives the invite emails.
- GP stated that the current presentation was not related to the original presentation on conservancy fee. Peel Ports want to be able to trace people who are not operating safely. I see there is a potential solution with a low cost to boaters that may appease Peel Ports.
- SMCM stated that if there was some sort of registration scheme would that make it easier for any port authority to deal with chasing owners of vessels, make it easier for an additional fee to be introduced. AK provided an explanation of the MCA ships register; Part 1 is for recreational boats and then part 2 is the small ships register SSR. That would be the right way to register. AK suggested that it could be made compulsory for a particular size. It may solve some issues but not all, for example PWC.

FC thanked everyone for their contributions. FC explained that he followed up after Graham Russell met Peel Ports at a Holyrood reception and wrote to JMCS indicating that we want to facilitate better engagement. We are willing to engage and met with AM. One that is of mutual interest is yacht clubs having to register their events with Clydeport and the need to make this process as easy as possible. We want to work constructively with Clydeport on a number of matters which may also result in helping with conservancy fee.

There has been a lot of dialogue between RYA Scotland and Stuart McMillan's and Seonaid Campbell. From that point we have managed to get Clydeport to attend this evening, it has taken quite some time. SMCM stated that he appreciated the effort that has gone in from RYAS.

Eric Sweeney asked (on teams' chat) - Are we not entering discussions about how to deal with the current situation? Perhaps not how any party would have liked to start a discussion, however as no payments are currently being asked for it may be time to get engaged and perhaps look at promoting

a non cost engagement in the first instance which may improve traceability and accountability?
SMCM stated that it is up to individual organisations to take their stance, there is nothing on the table that shows a clear pathway on what is going to happen going forward.

AS stated, that she understood the safety issue and is not against the principle however it looks like it currently within their remit already. AS asked about whether insurance would cover wrecks. AS expressed other concern that even although it may not happen this year, when it goes quiet over the winter, we need to ensure that it does not go through before the new election process.

Action: FC reported that Graham Russell is developing an advice paper about abandoned boats. FC will look into the insurance side.

AC stated that he had concerns about the fee and presentation slides shared with marinas and not coming over as transparent. Perhaps they should look at reducing area of responsibility, reduce 450m down to 5 or 10m and also have safety zones rather than implementing a charge.

SMCM asked the members the following

Action: What would you actually see happen:

- a) That is achievable
- b) Is not achievable and is going to cost a lot of money
- c) Ensure and enhance safety of the Clyde

NH stated that there should be a move to change the Harbour Act of 1964 as this would restrict the harbour authority of having that jurisdiction. SMCM stated that it had been discussed but we looked at it and it is not something that is being pushed because of the lengthy process.

SK reported British Marine Scotland have prepared information on abandoned boats that will be compliant with Scottish law and will share this information with their members.

Action: SK to share the report on abandoned boats with members

Agenda Item 3 – AOCB/Future Business

- Cruise ship levy to be removed from agenda.
- Firth of Clyde Update to be standard agenda topic to replace “Peel Ports update”
NH asked whether this issue would continue to be looked at., SMCM confirmed it will continue to be an agenda topic at future CPG meetings.

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 23rd September 2025 at 6pm.

SCM thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

Vote of thanks was given to Convenor.

Actions:

River Clyde/Clydeport

- Alex McIntosh to update the presentation slides and this will be circulated to CPG members.
- Invites to future CPG meetings to be made to Jim McSporran and Alex McIntosh.
- PM to share Anne Shedden's details with Jim McSporran.
- PM to share all organisation contacts to be shared with Jim McSporran and Alex McIntosh.
- Abandoned boats - Graham Russell is developing an advice paper about abandoned boats. FC will look into the insurance side and feedback to Anne Shedden, Forth Yacht Clubs Association.
- Cardwell Bay - ES asked about the special mark at Cardwell Bay. AM stated that this is not within their harbour authority. Action : Peel Ports has not requested any action on this, but AM will follow up and check on this.

Celtic & Viking Corridor Project

- Slides to be circulated to CPG members – **Update: circulated on 14th March 2025.**
- SMCM will have discussion with Isle of Man colleagues and further discussion with RBM.
- GD will make contact with RBM to discuss further.
- Councillor Corry and RBM to arrange a further discussion.
- SK will share contact details with RBM.
- Contact details for RBM to be circulated to CPG members.
- RBM requested to meet with the Ministers to cement relationship between Scotland Isle of Man. SMCM asked RBM to come back to CPG at a future date to provide an update.
- **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 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 are 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.
 - Circular economy - Add as an agenda item to a future meeting.

Scottish Water

- SGB's to have further discussion with Scott Fraser.
- SF/KD will update CPG on progress on monitors and also the business case progress.

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