

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

Tuesday 11th March 2025 at 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Stuart McMillan, MSP

Katy Clark MSP

Kenneth Gibson MSP

Non-MSP Group Members and Other Attendees

Alan Kohler, Cruising Association/RYA Scotland

Pauline McGrow, RYA Scotland

Alistair Cameron, Sailor

Andrew Rendle, Scottish Coastal Rowing Association

Anne Shedden, Forth Yacht Clubs Association

Barry Schafe, Forth Estuary Forum

Christine Cameron, Lowland Canals Users Association

Councillor Maurice Corry, Argyll and Bute Council

Duncan Tannahill, WHAM/RYA Scotland

Eric Sweeney, Sailing and Cruising Scotland

Fanny Royanez, Scottish Environment Link

Finlo Cottier, RYA Scotland

Fraser McAllister

Glenn Porter, Ocean Sailing Scotland/RYA Scotland

Joe Penhaul Smith, Sustainable Extricko

Bill Stewart

Andy Carnduff

Sarah Kennedy, Fort William Marina & Shoreline Community Interest

Company/British Marine Scotland

Simon McDonald, Aquaculture, Fisheries Processing Consultant/TV Presenter

Robin Bromley-Martin, Celtic & Viking Corridor Project

Ross Gordon

Simon Limb, Clyde Marina

Martin Latimer, British Marine UK

Mark Smith, Scottish Canals
Joe Golledge, Tobermory Harbour Association
Momchil Terziev
Norman Hollywood, Royal Scottish Motor Yacht Club

Apologies

Emma Harper MSP
Clare Adamson MSP
Ariane Burgess MSP
Jonathan Mosse, RYA Scotland and Inland Waterways Association
Aileen Monk, British Marine Scotland
David Adams McGilp, VisitScotland
Graham Russell, RYA Scotland
John Kent, Bidwells
Daniel Steel, Sail Scotland
Laurie Piper, Scottish Canals

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.

Proposed: **Simon McDonald**

Seconded: **Sarah Kennedy**

GD reported that the Scottish Waterways for All AGM is being held on 12th March.

Actions from last meeting

A discussion took place on outstanding actions and updates were made (please refer to actions on page 8-9).

Agenda Item 3 – The Lowland Canals Association, Flotilla of Light Festival, Christine Cameron

Christine Cameron outlined the Flotilla of Lights event which was very successful. The event was held in the memory of Ronnie Rusack. There were 19 boats that took part. There was a party and a prizegiving after the event. Each boat was given £30 expenses to assist with participation. There were 1000 spectators on the bank.

Action: Video link to be circulated to CPG members.

There then followed an opportunity for questions:

Mark Smith stated that this is an amazing event that is held every year and is one of the highlights of the Union Canals calendar. MS wholeheartedly recommended it as a lovely event fully embraced by the locals. MS congratulated Christine Cameron and the Lowland Canals Association.

Sarah Kennedy asked about the concern raised about dredging. CC stated that the issue is the route from Bowling to Maryhill. CC reported that a letter has been sent to Transport Scotland. AC stated that it would be great to have inter-canal events, but we need to get the dredging sorted out so that we can get the boats through. SMCD congratulated the LCA on this excellent event and stated that he would be keen to attend the event on 8th November 2025 and suggested that similar events could be arranged on other canals.

Agenda Item 4 - Celtic and Viking Corridor Project, Robin Bromley-Martin

RBM provided detail of his background and outlined his presentation.

There then followed an opportunity for questions:

GD stated that on the North and South sides of the Solway Firth; this is just a day's sailing away. Solway hold cruise in companies and once this was up and running, he would anticipate Solway sailors coming across. **Action: GD will make contact with RBM to discuss further.**

ML stated they have had a lot of experience in cool routes, but it has swallowed up a lot of money and they link in with events that are already being delivered. ML asked for explanation on what additional benefit it will bring. RBM stated that he shared scepticism for funded projects, totally agree that the Viking 600 can funnel more competitive sailing. The "Richard Mille Cup" is coming to the Clyde next year. There are a whole series of events that we could bring into the equation. Their idea is that Iberia, France, British Isles and Scandinavia could all be involved, and it will be done on a regional basis. They would like racing to be reinvigorated but will take a tremendous amount of effort and activity. SL asked how it is being funded. RBM stated that they have put in bid for £3m from the regional fund. They provide 75% funding, and they would need to find the remaining balance.

SL stated that we need to understand what the outputs are. Scotland is good at attracting events but need to look at how the additionality will be funded. RBM responded by saying that they tend to hug the Irish coast; we would make it more attractive to sail up the west coast. The success of the marina in Ramsey is dependent on making this happen. RBM indicated that he would be very keen to support this additional racing. The first qualifier for Fastnet is being held in Scotland and this has not happened for some time.

Councillor Maurice Corry stated that it was fantastic to see RBM after 45 years. MC outlined his background and stated that he is a Councillor on the Argyll and Bute Council and have had a first push for the sector and have provided funding. MC has been involved in the development of Oban Marina and Helensburgh Pier. MC stated that they would support this as Argyll and Bute Council because they know it brings in revenue to Oban and Campbeltown, Tobermory etc. Helensburgh Pier is close to signing an agreement to get it operational and will open within the next 2 years. They are also looking to develop in Erskine. One of their main strands is to develop the marine side and stated that they would be happy to help with the Celtic & Viking Corridor Project. **Action: Councillor Corry and RBM to arrange a further discussion.**

SMCD stated that this is very inspirational and gave his thanks to RBM for the presentation. It is good to see Oban on the map. The Clipper Round the World Race was held in Oban in 2024 and it was

very successful and brought a lot of facilities into the town and as a result have had a lot of return visitors. SMCD stated that we are very keen to encourage any major event to Oban.

Action: SMCM will have discussion with Isle of Man colleagues and further discussion with RBM.

SK introduced her role as the British Marine Scotland Chair and stated that they hosted the clipper event and that it would be good to incorporate into the Celtic & Viking Corridor event. **Action: SK will share contact details with RBM.**

FC stated that he grew up on Isle of Man and the paper was very interesting and built on his knowledge.

SMCM thanked RBM for the presentation.

Action: Contact details to be circulated to CPG members.

Action: 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.

Action: Slides to be circulated to CPG members.

Action: Request to ask Scotland to be involved to attract more visitors and racers in Scotland. looking for more members and fundraising.

If you require any further information, please contact on robin.bm@port-edl.com

Agenda Item 5 – Update on Marine Tourism Conference

SMCM asked ML to provide an update on DS behalf in his absence.

ML highlighted that the Marine Tourism Conference provided an opportunity for Sail Scotland to discuss social media to promote other companies. FC provided a presentation on RYA Scotland. FC stated that there were some helpful updates, and it was good to connect with others and there were good workshops. There is a role with RYA Scotland to put out the The Green Blue message to share round organisations.

Action: Sail Scotland conference to be on the agenda for next meeting on 20th May.

Agenda item 6 - Cruise Ship Levy Consultation

SMCM reported that the consultation was published on 27th February and will be open until 30th May 2025. **Action: SMCM requested that this agenda item be removed as a standing item for future meetings.** FC stated that there is no definition of what a cruise ship is, in terms of size or passenger numbers. **Action: SMCM asked that people who are making submissions that this bring this to their attention to be detailed within the technical section.**

S Limb reported that there has been an announcement from Peel ports that they have formed an association with Greenock and Liverpool and the Global Port Holding Group. SMCM stated that they have a drive to increase sailings by more than half and this would be advantageous to the economy for both Inverclyde and the west coast. Maurice Corry asked for clarification, SMCM stated that there is information available on the Inverclyde Council website. RBM stated that the Isle of Man would

welcome more cruise liners.

Agenda Item 7 – Clydeport Conservancy Fee

SMCM provided an update and highlighted the following:

- We have had a campaign through the CPG. Petition has been put out there and a motion put forward and have got enough signatures to have a debate.
- We put an email out to Peel Ports with a series of questions. Gary Doyle from Peel Ports visited SMcM's office a couple of weeks ago to deal with the questions and is looking for a written reply before we have any dialogue so that this could be shared with CPG members. We have not had response as yet. Nothing has been brought forward at this stage.
- SMCM would warmly welcome members of CPG and as many others to be in contact with Peel Ports. There has been a number of queries from MSPs. SMCM asked that members reach out to networks to contact their MSPs and thanked them for their participation.
Action: SMCM to send a chase to Peel Ports on the questions raised.
- FC reported that there has been a push on a number of fronts; everything we have done has been in consultation with a number of representative groups and there is good awareness of what we are trying to achieve and has been co-ordinated. It has since gone very quiet.
- The questions that were posed were raised by CPG members and on social media:
 - Can you genuinely answer what the conservancy fee is trying to do. FC reported that he has written to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and received response stating that they would not get involved in a business decision. FC has indicated that it will affect many businesses. FC has not heard back from the Cabinet Secretary as yet and has received an acknowledgement that they are working up their response and once received, this will be shared with CPG members. SMCM stated that a number of colleagues have asked why this is important.
 - Alistair Cameron stated that he found it disturbing that Peel Ports have gone quiet and suggested that we should be thinking about looking to change the legislation to limit the powers they have as a harbour authority.

A Shedden reported that she has had a look at their fees document. There is a section in their fees document for yachts over 24m, but it did not feature in their 2024 document.

Action: Link to the Peel Ports Fees document to be sent round CPG members.

DT stated that if Peel Ports bring this into force this will have a potential further impact if the port companies, then charge too. DT has received a copy of a letter as a result of writing to MSP, they have indicated that a wider consultation will take place in the next few months with outcome expected by the end of this year.

Action: Letter from John Swinney, First Minister to Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Transport to be circulated to CPG members.

ES stated that the situation of CPG members has not changed. The concept of a conservancy fee is outrageous. The fact that it is quiet is worrying. We should do something proactive and ask them to drop it.

RBM stated that he would be very interested to be copied into this material and reported that

it has been discussed in their fraternity and it is worrying that others could jump on the band wagon.

After discussion the following actions were agreed:

- SMCM will send chase up Peel Ports for response to questions.
- SMCM to contact Peel Ports taking information from letter in regard to the proposed timescale and also people to go back individually from across the wider sector.
- SMCM will arrange Members Debate and advise CPG of date.
- SMCM reported that as regards the aspect of legislation change, he has made contact with SPICe (Scottish Parliament Internal Research Centre) however it is difficult to change legislation and can take a lot of time; it would be an aspiration for the next parliament as a consultation would need to take place before it can be taken to parliament. Alistair Cameron stated that the time it takes is justified because of the impact that this will have, and it would encourage other port companies to take this forward too. **Action: SMCM will arrange Members Debate and advise CPG of date. Councillor Maurice Corry asked if the Cabinet Secretary could be part of the member's debate. SMCM will send invitation.**
- A Shedden asked what gives Peel port the authority to do this; is it their contract or does it fall under the Crown Estates and The Harbour Act. Is it possible to get a summary of all the documents to clarify devolution powers? Can we have a different definition in Scotland; what are we using as a yardstick, what statutes apply or not. SMCM explained that it is existing legislation. **Action: SMCM will produce a short document to provide an outline of the Harbour Act legislation and will circulate to CPG members.**
- Katy Clark MSP thanked the CPG for putting the motion down. We are not happy with the legislative framework; it is very unusual for this infrastructure to be in private ownership. The Peel Ports are undermining their position. This hopefully will be the first step to get this addressed.
- AK stated that the powers were aimed at a public authority. AK agreed reviewing the act is a very long-term process. B Schafe stated that we have established practice and that it might be worth consulting a lawyer if the question goes by British Marine Scotland that could provide leverage. FC advised that the same information was provided as SPICE, and because of the way it is worded in the Harbour Revision Order they can leverage a fee. BS stated that if the legislation that was worded at the time that it was intended for public authorities; there is potentially an argument that it was never intended to be interpreted in that way and does that raise an opportunity. **Action: FC to consult with RYA Legal for further advice. SK to follow up with BM Legal team and will liaise with FC.**
-
- A Shedden asked about the custom and practice for 24 metres or over; should they bring this in they will be able to locate the boats as they have AIS. AK stated that the Peel Port charges are detailed in section 1.1 that covers the conservancy fee. Section 1.4 covers large yachts and thinks that this refers to berthing fees. ES endorsed that in order for large yachts to get the boat from Cumbræ berth into James Watt Dock, the charge is higher than the docking fees. There are less boats coming here and this trend will continue if they do not drop the proposed fees. Alistair Cameron suggested asking FC to check with the lawyers to ask them specifically what grounds could be used to challenge the fees based on the existing framework.

Agenda Item 8 – AOCB/Future Business

None.

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 20th May 2025 at 6pm hybrid or online to be decided (changed from 13th May).

SCM thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

Vote of thanks was given to Convenor.

Actions:

- **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 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.
 - 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.

Flotilla of Lights Festival

- Video link to be circulated to CPG members **Update: circulated 14th March 2025.**

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.

Sail Scotland Conference

- To be on the agenda for next meeting on 20th May.

Cruise Levy

- SMCM requested that this agenda item be removed as a standing item for future meetings. **Update: actioned.**

SMCM asked that people who are making submissions that this bring this to their attention to be detailed within the technical section.

Clydeport Conservancy Fee

- SMCM to send a chase to Peel Ports on the questions raised.
- Link to the Peel Ports Fees document to be sent round CPG members.
- Letter from John Swinney, First Minister to Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Transport to be circulated to CPG members. SMCM to contact Peel Ports taking information from letter in regard to the proposed timescale and also people to go back individually from across the wider sector.

SMCM will arrange Members Debate and advise CPG of date. Councillor Maurice Corry asked if the Cabinet Secretary could be part of the member's debate. SMCM will send invitation.

- SMCM will produce a short document to provide an outline of the Harbour Act legislation and will circulate to CPG members.
- SMCM will produce a short document to provide an outline of the Harbour Act legislation and will circulate to CPG members. FC to also consult with RYA Legal for further advice. SK to follow up with BM Legal team and will liaise with FC.