

Hybrid Online Cross-Party Group on Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism

Tuesday 3rd March 2026 at 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Stuart McMillan MSP, Convenor
Clare Adamson MSP

Non-MSP Group Members and Other Attendees

Finlo Cottier, RYA Scotland CEO and Secretariat, RYA Scotland
Pauline McGrow, Secretariat, RYA Scotland
Andrew Rendle, Scottish Coastal Rowing Association
Alistair Cameron, Moody Owners Association
Esther Brooker, Scottish Environment Link
Glenn Porter, Ocean Sailing Scotland/RYA Scotland /Sail Scotland
Duncan Tannahill, West Highlands and Islands Moorings Association
Sarah Kennedy, Fort William Marina & Shoreline Community Interest Company/Chair British Marine Scotland
John Kent, Bidwells
Aileen Monk, British Marine Scotland
Joanna Richardson, British Marine
Eilid Ormiston, West Highland College
Alan Kohler, RYA Scotland/Cruising Association
Christine Cameron, Lowland Canals Association
Neil Kitchener, Lowland Canals Association
John Ormiston, Stravaigin Sailing

Apologies

Kenneth Gibson MSP
Arianne Burgess MSP
Jonathan Mosse, RYA Scotland
Martin Latimer, British Marine
Fiona Partington, Fife Coast & Countryside Trust
Simon McDonald, Aquaculture, Fisheries Processing Consultant/TV Presenter
Councillor Maurice Corry, Argyll and Bute Council

Agenda item 1 Information – Convenor Welcome and Apologies

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda Item 2 Decision - Convenor Minutes and Action Points from last meeting

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

Proposed: Sarah Kennedy

Seconded: Christine Cameron

Agenda Item 3 - Firth of Clyde Update – For information (invitation extended to Alex McIntosh, Clydeport)

PM reported that she had not received a response or update from Alex McIntosh and there is nothing further to report at this time.

Agenda Item 4 – Moray Flow Park

SMCM reported that a member's debate has taken place. FC further stated that the RYA Scotland Regional Development Officer North has made contact with a number of clubs and watersports organisations on that coastline and has brokered a meeting with the developer. They pointed out the concerns and limitations from the clubs. A briefing document is currently being drafted.

Agenda Item 5 Update on NPM2 Stakeholder Meeting – Graham Russell, RYA Scotland

GR provided an update and explained that RYA Scotland made a response to the position statement, but they had not held a meeting with marine tourism and recreation. The NPM2 team were very keen to hear our thoughts, and we are still at pre consultation stage for NPM2. When the document comes out for consultation the matters should already be resolved. GR was happy with how the meeting went and has been back in contact with Louise O'Hara Murray (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government) since then. SMCM attended the meeting and found it very interesting and informative

and the dialogue at the pre consultation is very important. SK stated that it was a useful meeting to highlight the importance of marine tourism and take it back to basics on what we need. It was to highlight our requirement and reiterated to keep us informed. AC explained that the team is relatively small to cover such a large area. The scattering of clubs and marine operators are very much more difficult to cover. SMCM stated that it is very important to engage in the process.

AS stated that in order to prepare a report went out to clubs for their input. The survey results were in broadly in line with the others and order of priorities. AS commented that the report is short and snappy rather than useable. We need to have clarity on what is in it and ensure that it is properly reviewed and implementable. We should give enough time for applications and agreed that it was a very good and useful meeting.

GR stated that he was happy with the structure and how things are progressing. The Plan is very lengthy and perhaps having a more digestible format ensuring that it is very clear about the vision and principles is the best approach.

Agenda Item 6

Alcohol Limits for non-professional mariners – Richard Ballatyne, British Ports Association

RB provided an outline of the remit of the British Ports Association. He wanted to bring it attention of the CPG about consideration that is being given to alcohol limits for non-professional mariners.

RB provided background to the sector. The government intervene on Harbour Revision Orders and planning applications. Marine safety is not devolved and is reserved to the UK government and to the Department of Transport and the MCA. When you get onto granular issues there was no alcohol limit for non-professional mariners. It is not a criminal offence for alcohol to be consumed on board. It is very difficult for ports to regulate on their own.

We as an industry are very keen to look at legislative correction to bring a part of the relevant act into force; it could be done through a statutory instrument or through a ministerial direction. It could be a relatively straightforward fix but would need support from the boating community. We think it is time to open up the debate.

JR asked about the estimate about 25 deaths and RB understood they were UK wide. Clare Adamson MSP asked who would be responsible for policing this, RB stated that the insurance is regularly requested by harbour authorities and other marine operators. There would be resourcing required by the Police. RB thought that there may be a bit of push back from the police and the Home Office, but they have been receptive. Harbour authorities would need to get training on gathering evidence. We would not be carrying out breath testing all the time it would be on risk and evidence led basis.

FC stated that the insurance covers primarily interactions in a harbour and marina. FC further stated that he was not aware that alcohol fits into that, if alcohol was involved then the insurance would be invalid. RB explained that because there is not a prescribed limit, they are not breaking any law in a recreational environment.

GR reported that 15 years ago this was raised and there was a number of people who were against it because it would be so difficult to do. GR stated that in his personal view (Not RYA) he believed that there should be a limit on the same basis as is done for roads. If there was an accident, then they should be breathalysed. GR asked who on the boat is responsible and would there be a designated

skipper. The RYA's view is education not legislation, the education is very important and looking to make a cultural change. RB stated that there must be a way that someone is identified of being in charge of the vessel. If you introduce rules, then you work towards compliance.

DT asked about the 25 deaths and whether they have happened within port areas or generally at sea. RB stated that they are in the marine environment. RB stated that the limits would apply to all UK coastal areas. DT stated that once the journey is underway then you should not consume alcohol. The challenge in the west coast of Scotland is how it would be policed; how would you identify how the boat would be apprehended. Whilst the boat is moving, if you are under influence, you are in risk especially in port areas. What would be your view on consumption of alcohol at anchor. RB stated that it would be when under navigation. If you are policing large areas and have the rule, then we would look resource accordingly and could potentially target areas with police in a cost effective way. Nothing can be done until legislation is in place. DT accepted that but the practicalities of it would be very challenging. DT gave example of motorhomes and asked that we look at this legislation to provide some information and make comparisons.

Clare Adamson MSP stated that she sits on the CPG on Safety Awareness and RNLI and Police are carrying out rescues, CA suggested that they could have a joint cross party group meeting to discuss the various issues.

AS asked for clarification on whether we are saying that it is only the skipper that would be checked when navigating. RB stated that we would need to have an agreement between the various authorities but that would be the broad aspiration.

CA stated that the Safety awareness group has looked at the trawlers as a home and discussed who is in charge of the trawler in port. There is a lot to think about and consider.

AK stated that he is a boat owner and does not drink much and is not affected by this. There are a small number of incidents, AK gave an example of a Topper national event where a speed boat hit the rocks and there were 2 fatalities, but he was not aware of any others since then. 25 deaths over 15 years is very sad but is in the top 10 of fatal accidents in boating. More people die of accidents out with the sailing arena. AK would like to see evidence and numbers and asked how does RNLI data compare. We should provide clarity on the data. RB stated that there is no formalised data with stats as yet. RB stated that harbour masters are more concerned about the risks. AK asked that he come back with numbers. RB stated that when they tried to collect data with the RYA there was push back, there is no prescribed limit and have to go on intelligence. AK stated that we know that all fatal accidents are investigated. AK said that if the number is increasing in Scotland, then it needs to be evidenced. There is a big difference between a camper van and a commercial ship. If the wind changes it will be dangerous if you do not move and if they do not move because of alcohol, then they would end up being rescued and require services of the RNLI.

RB stated that we have the Health and Safety at Work act; there is no regulations here, you are accepting risk as tolerable, but you have an opportunity to limit it to make the seas and coastal areas safer. We require to look at other safety protocols, railings etc. AK stated that we should address high risk and high probability.

SK stated that some sort of legislation would be useful, as they have witnessed some inebriated sailors. SK reminded the meeting about the visitor levy that excluded moorings so therefore considered parking spaces. As long as they are not moving then this possibly could be accepted.

GP thanked RB for the presentation and was interested to hear the views. There is existing precedent for this and there have been convictions for alcohol as an influencing factor. It may be better to change focus, and it may be an easier approach to look at this as type of formalising in the event there is an incident. We should not take an approach to monitor but make people responsible for those who have had too much to drink. We may be look at balancing the field here. Would this be some sort of formalising and also look at campaigns to educate the leisure boaters and work with marine partners in the boating community.

RB agreed that education is part of the solution, it has helped but not solved all of it. GP stated that the education piece would be on the potential outcomes on when something goes wrong.

FC provided details of article:

[Boat skipper jailed over death of passenger David Haw in Poole Harbour - BBC News](#)

JO stated that at anchor this is still considered to be navigating.

Eilid Ormiston stated that perhaps there is a case for more awareness and education about the potential risks consuming alcohol while at sea before moving to a "law" enforcement situation.

DT stated that legislation should be sea based but also include inland water.

GR asked has this been raised with the RYA. RB stated that it has been raised many times with the RYA and also with the UK Government. The MAIB are investigating an incident from last year. We have had some issues from Stornoway and the Clyde.

FC asked is this about navigational risk or people behaviour in harbour environments. RB stated that ultimately trying to regulate it, we want a national approach, within harbour limits and in around ports and you can regulate the whole marine environment.

SMCM thanked RB as it has raised a lot of interesting dialogue and questions, we will need to have a lot of consultation in future.

Action: Presentation slides to be circulated.

Agenda Item 7 – Right to Roam

FC explained that this has been raised due to an agenda item request for discussion at the last meeting on 11th December from Brendan Brocker. In summary there is a right to navigation within a harbour authority with additional potential restrictions. The Right to roam does not apply in the marine environment or waters. We should be careful about using that phrase "right to roam", "freedom to navigate" to a certain point.

SMCM thought it was a very useful paper, and this can be shared with widely.

SK thanked FC and his team for preparing the paper and it was succinct and very clear.

SMCM thanked FC very much for his work on the paper.

Agenda Item 8 AOCB/Future Business

Closures of Kyle Rhea

The electric cables over Kyle Rhea need replaced and it will take a day to do each one; Scottish and Southern Energy have a marine licence for the works. The details attached to the marine licence is to provide 3 months warning and to discuss with local people about the closures. For commercial operators things are usually planned more than 3 months in advance. The issue is not with local people but people coming from elsewhere. If you are in a sailing yacht, then you are committed to going through. GR has made contact with the SSEN team, and they were very pleased to hear from

him, the work is postponed this year, and we will look to see what mitigations can be put in. It is very unusual where there are cables over it and the work requires to be carried out. We are bringing it to a resolution and are awaiting word from SSEN to get confirmation and then a statement will be issued. DT stated that the work GR has done has been fantastic and dialogue has taken place with SSEN, so that when they do commission the work details will be provided on details of closure days.

Launch of Giant Opportunities Marine Tourism Strategy

SMCM reported that the launch of the new strategic framework for marine tourism will be on Wednesday 11th March with a drop in session that day in the Scottish Parliament for MSPs.

Action: SK stated that they are very delighted that the framework document, Giant Opportunities, 2026 – 2-30, is ready to be launched and online link will be circulated to CPG members – see [here](#)..

Action: SMCM asked that CPG members send a link to the Giant Opportunities document to all the election candidates in their constituencies. SK asked how you obtain the nomination list. SMCM responded by saying that the close of nominations will take place in April where there will be contact details for each of the candidates.

SK reported that the training project is underway and will report back on progress to the next CPG.

SK provided the following detail of the Port Marine Safety Code courses taking place.

Action: SK will send full details for onward circulation to the CPG members.

British Marine is running the [Port Marine Safety Code](#) course in Scotland on 30 March and TYHA will be holding their [Code of Practice Tour](#) with 2 dates in Scotland – Inverness on 28 April and Portavadie on 7 May.

The TYHA meetings will cover updates on :

- The revised 8th edition of the TYHA Code of Practice, in partnership with Marina Projects
- The new Marinas & Boatyards Health & Safety Code of Practice
- Updates to the Port Marine Safety Code

Training and the TYHA meetings are open to non-members.

Agenda Item 9 - Parliamentary Report 2021-26

SMCM reported that the report is being prepared and contains details of all meetings that have been held within the Parliamentary term.

Action: SMCM requested that PM add the following items to the report:

- NPM2 meeting notes and presentation.
- Draft CPG Minutes from 3rd March

SCM closed the last meeting of the Parliamentary term by thanking the CPG members for the inputs and contributions.

RB thanked SMCM for all his efforts in the parliamentary term.

Vote of thanks was given to Convenor.

ACTIONS

- Alcohol Limits for non-professional mariners slides by Richard Ballatyne, British Ports Association to be circulated.
- Giant opportunities Marine Tourism Strategy to be circulated. (sent on 10th March).
- Port Marine Safety Code courses information to be circulated.(sent on 6th March).
- NPM2 meeting notes and presentation slides and Draft CPG Minutes from 3rd March to be added to the Parliamentary Report.