

# Community Owned Moorings

- amazing places on vibrant canals



*A flotilla of boats celebrating the 10th anniversary of the re-opening of the canals*

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# 1. Community Owned Moorings In Brief

Community owned moorings will be an alternative to Scottish Canals' moorings in Scotland. So any boater who has their mooring (whether it is leisure, residential or commercial) at a community owned mooring location will no longer deal with Scottish Canals with respect to their moorings. Community owned moorings are fundamentally 'for boaters, by boaters', working closely with Scottish Canals (SC) to realise the vision of an **empowered, resilient, sustainable and vibrant canal community**.

Community owned moorings will be established one by one across central Scotland. The first location will be at 'Narrowboat Farm', co-located with a new organic farming venture two miles east of Linlithgow, which will allow up to 12 boats to moor initially. This will serve as a model site for future expansion into a network of new community owned moorings. It is envisaged that each mooring site will be adapted to make the best use of its own location.

The organisation will be incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). It will be run by a board of trustees and decisions will be made democratically by its membership which will be open to anyone in the canal community. It will raise funding to establish sites independently of SC. It will receive mooring fees from customers and will use this income to operate and maintain mooring sites. Any trading profits will be re-invested in the project.

The first site will be at 'Narrowboat Farm' near Linlithgow, within a one-day cruise of 80% of the canal community. The site will be co-located with an eco farming operation to share infrastructure and widen the benefits of the project to local population. Further sites will be launched once Narrowboat Farm is a proven success.

Community owned moorings will be an excellent example of community empowerment by Scottish Canals, reflecting Scottish Government priorities. It will allow the boating community to take ownership of an essential part of the success of the canals.



## 2. A case for support

### 2.1 Core Benefits

The Community owned moorings project is based around excellence in:

1. **Empowerment:** allowing the canal community to create a brighter future for itself
2. **Resilience:** for the canal community through security of tenure for moorings
3. **Vibrancy:** attracting more people to the canals and generating more boat movements
4. **Sustainability:** increasing financial stability for the canal network both through revenue from boaters and economic activity that a busy canal stimulates

### 2.2 Benefits In Detail

In more detail, community moorings also benefit the following key areas:

#### 2.2 a) Cultural Benefits

We are a community that brings the ancient monument of the canals alive. From the canal societies and charities who open up the relaxing environment to the wider community, to the leisure users who cruise, canoe, walk and cycle their way along the canals, to the floating community that call canal boats home, canals draw nearly everyone. The diversity of this community is its strength, and community owned moorings will provide nucleation points around which it can grow. Busy mooring locations and travelling boats add to the safety and security of an area for all users. Establishing a critical mass of boats in an area adds the benefits of a neighbourhood watch scheme and acts as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour.

#### 2.2 b) Socio-economic Benefits

A busy canal is a canal that generates economic income across Scotland. Busy canals create many business opportunities from moorings themselves, to purchasing and servicing boats, boating holidays and the trade they bring, cafes and restaurants, and businesses that a busy towpath can attract.

Houseboats also offer a rare opportunity for affordable housing in Scotland. At present, houseboats offer the only real chance to become a home-owner without a mortgage or large bank balance. Community Moorings give them an alternative to existing moorings, opening new locations that boaters shape themselves.

## 2.2 c) Heritage Benefits

Canals offer a view into our industrial past. Canals attract traditional designs of boats, some of which haven't changed for 200 years. They are a living example of a way of life that spans two centuries. Full of original structures, the canals only come alive when they are busy with boats. Community owned moorings make this possible, allowing people to truly appreciate this piece of heritage gold.

## 2.2 d) Tourism Benefits

The whole length of the canals, winding 70 miles from Edinburgh to Glasgow, is a tourist attraction in its own right and these attractions only really come alive when they are being well used. Many tourists hire boats to cruise the canals and these holiday boaters want an active canal, and interesting places to moor along their trip. A search for images of lowland canals shows the enormous attraction of moving boats to photographers and tourists alike.

## 2.2 e) Environmental Benefits

Canal-boat life can be a very environmentally-friendly way of life. By virtue of the off-grid nature of boats and the finite resources that can be carried aboard, boaters are very careful with resource use. Small water tanks, limited space for fuel, wood-burners for heating and efficient use of fuel for cooking all lead to a thrifty use of resources. In addition to resource use, the canals themselves offer a unique aquatic habitat which is much cleaner than during its industrial past. Boaters are often the first to act when these wildlife corridors are harmed by indiscriminate dumping. A secure future for active canals is a secure future for the wildlife that inhabits the canals.

## 3. How Community Owned Moorings Will Work

### 3.1 Structure & Governance

The governing body will be incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) which is a new, streamlined company structure for charities in Scotland. The SCIO will be regulated by The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and will sign up to 'the code' which is the voluntary code of practice for social enterprises in Scotland. This will ensure strict governance of the SCIO.

We will have a strict remit to build and manage moorings for the benefit of the canals and wider community. All profits generated from trading will be re-invested in mooring locations and well-defined projects that benefit the canals. Profits will not be distributed as dividends and an asset lock will be in place.

Our constitution will outline a two-tier SCIO structure. The first tier is a board of trustees which will be elected annually from the second tier of the SCIO: its members. The board will be entrusted to handle the day-to-day operation of the charity and its sites, but decisions on more important matters will be voted on by the members. Trustees and members will agree on the threshold for decisions which require membership voting.

### 3.2 Relationship with Scottish Canals & Historic (Environment) Scotland

Community Moorings will not be successful unless there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the charity and Scottish Canals. Both parties have entered into a working relationship on this project in the spirit of long-term cooperation. We will enter into long-term lease agreements with Scottish Canals as it is envisaged that most, if not all, mooring sites will fall on Scottish Canals' land.

As the canals were scheduled as ancient monuments in 1979, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has responsibility for overseeing developments on the canals. The SCIO will apply for Scheduled Monument Consent on a site-by-site basis. Therefore any structures that the SCIO plans to build to allow the mooring of boats will require permission from HES. SCIO will design these structures in accordance with best practice and ensure that these structures are reversible to protect the monument.

### 3.3 Financial

We have a financial model which is sustainable and only requires external funding for mooring site set-up costs. The benefits highlighted above will allow us to seek funding from key sources to create the infrastructure necessary to moor boats. Once these one-off assets are funded the revenue from moorings will cover essential maintenance and improvements to facilities as well as administration costs.

Our main revenue stream will be mooring fees from boaters and this will cover running costs of moorings. Any trading profits gained will be reinvested in current moorings or used to set-up new moorings. Secondary to this, we will reserve the option to reinvest trading profits into projects which benefit the wider canal network e.g. maintenance tasks.

### 3.4 Site Management

Each community owned moorings site will have a dedicated site warden who will oversee the security and maintenance of the site. Much like networks of caravan parks across the UK, these will be mostly residential customers who are the 'meet and greet' for moorers as well as keeping a log of issues. The site wardens will report back to the project manager or members of the board for any required actions.

## 4. Narrowboat Farm - Scotland's First Community Owned Moorings Site



*"Before": Narrowboat Farm in 2015 showing the 175m stretch of canal frontage*

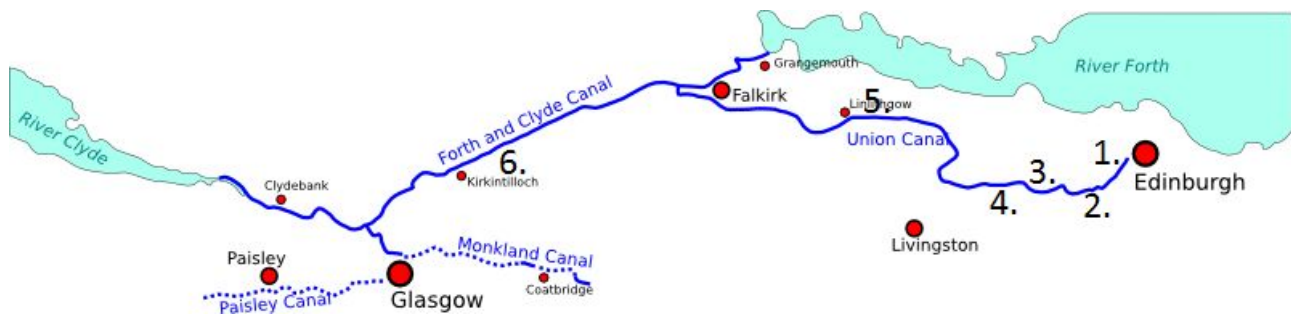
Narrowboat Farm will be the first community owned moorings site and has already been adopted as a pilot site for the project. Sited in the middle of the Union Canal, 2 miles East of Linlithgow, Narrowboat Farm is a 4-acre field with 175m of canal frontage, owned by a boater. It is within a one day cruise of approximately 80% of lowland boaters. Narrowboat Farm combines a community owned moorings site with a small-scale eco-friendly farming operation. Combining the community owned moorings site with the farming operation has a couple of essential benefits:

1. **Shared Infrastructure:** The farming operation will be responsible for putting in place infrastructure that can be shared by the moorings. This includes water, electricity, parking, storage, pathways etc which are already mostly complete. This significantly reduces the potential capital costs required to get the site up and running.
2. **Widening the benefits of the project:** The moorings will also allow the farm to use the canal as transportation for goods, as a practical and marketing tool. For the first time in over 150 years, the canal will come to life again as a transport system for local produce. By facilitating these benefits, the moorings will now indirectly serve a larger local population with a local, healthy, environmentally friendly food source.



## 5. Potential Future Mooring Sites

It is our ambition to operate a number of successful mooring sites across the lowland canals initially and potentially the Caledonian and Crinan canals in the future. Establishing moorings within a half-day cruise of each other will multiply the benefits of the project by stimulating boat movements and the sharing of moorings between boaters. A number of sites across the lowland canals have been identified for assessment:



#	Location	Status	Notes
1	Redhall	Rejected	Canal in poor condition and moorings would restrict navigation without significant work to canal
2	Wester Hailes	Unknown	Security highlighted as an issue in this area, however moorings could receive local support
3	Hermiston	Unknown	Previously used informally as visitor mooring and would suit assessment to formalise this
4	Ratho	Unknown	Area west of Seagull Trust centre to be assessed
5	Narrowboat Farm	Approved	Field with 175m of canal frontage site of 'Narrowboat Farm' project
6	Twechar	Unknown	Unused moorings already in place as part of local community project which could incorporate community owned moorings – requires proper assessment
7	Maintenance Berth	Unknown	At a location TBC (perhaps disused Kirkintilloch dry dock) to provide maintenance facilities

The above list was made in 2016 and will change constantly as sites are identified, assessed and approved or rejected. Due to the long lead times on establishing mooring sites, it is important to assess a number of sites simultaneously once the first site is up and running and the model is proven.



## 6. Contact Details

For more information on the Community Owned Moorings project, please contact:

Iain Withers  
Narrowboat Farm  
Linlithgow  
EH49 6QY  
email: [iain.withers@talk21.com](mailto:iain.withers@talk21.com)  
phone: 07866 776 640