

Re-Union Canal Boats Ltd Annual Report 2015



Introduction

Re-Union Canal Boats is a social enterprise based on and around the Union Canal. We engage meaningfully with canalside communities in Edinburgh and Falkirk through a variety of projects including boat training, community engagement, canal clean up's, health & wellbeing projects, employability programmes and work with recovery and mental health practitioners. Re-Union also co-ordinate the annual Edinburgh Canal Festival and Raft Race. We provide training programmes in Edinburgh and Falkirk for people referred to us by a range of agencies and also for people who love the canal.

Re-Union offer boat trips to community and private groups in Falkirk and Edinburgh to generate income. We also own 51% of Capercaillie Cruisers, a holiday hire boat company, based in Falkirk, which is the trading arm of the organisation.



WINNERS BEST SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, Falkirk Herald Business Awards 2015

Re-Union were the winners of the Best Social Enterprise Award sponsored by the Falkirk Herald newspaper in October. The judges deliberated long and hard in this hotly contested category but Re-Union came through because of their enthusiasm coupled with their business acumen and desire to grow their enterprise. Well done to all of the team in Falkirk! – Lesley and Phil were on hand to accept the Award.

Canal Centre

Unfortunately we had to move out of the Re-Union Canal Centre at Edinburgh Quay due to a change in circumstances of the landlord and we moved to our current office at 15 Valleyfield Street in July 2015. While this is not an ideal location for us it is serving our needs well and the Edinburgh Social Enterprise Network moved with us and continues to sub-let an office from Re-Union.

Board

The voluntary Board of Directors of Re-Union in 2015 consisted of Sheila Durie, Sam Baumber, Douglas Tharby, Gerry Baker, Helen Wyllie, Christine Wilson, Sheila McMillan, Caroline St Johnston and Jan Colligen. Jan resigned in March 2015 due to time pressure.

Staff

Pat Bowie continued as full-time General Manager. Sam Adderley remained as Canal Community Development Worker going on maternity leave and replaced by Anna Canning. Lesley Young joined us to manage Falkirk volunteer programmes and Richard Fox took charge of the Lockkeeping Project. Stuart Pownall remained as Business Development Worker and Caroline Moffat took up her post as General Administrator in May 2015. We also continued to employ 4 skippers/trainers on a casual basis.

Volunteers and Trainees

In 2015, through a variety of projects, Re-Union recruited 144 new people to the canal. Many of these individuals remained with the organisation and added to our existing core of around 30 volunteers who help to deliver crewing and lock keeping on the other side of our organisation. These training programmes were funded by People and Communities Fund, Department for Work and Pensions and Scottish Canals who contracted with Re-Union to deliver lockkeeping services.

Re-Union continue to offer a wide range of training and experiences including RYA training in Crewing, Helmsman, Engine Maintenance, First Aid and Train the Trainer courses. We also cover Water Safety, Canal History, Lift Bridge Training, Lock Training, Canal Clean Up's, Hospitality, Rope Work, Mental Health Awareness, Food Hygiene, Walk Leader Training and Mentoring.



We continued to deliver a bespoke training programme for the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. This training has been extremely well received, with very positive feedback from NHS staff and patients alike. Re-Union also hired the boat to The Sorted Project and supported them to develop a 'recovery' drop in service on board which has gone from strength to strength.

People & Communities Fund – Falkirk and Edinburgh



Managed by Sam, Lesley and Anna this project concentrated on Canal Communities Health All Round. The project funded by People & Communities Fund brought people together from referral agencies in Edinburgh and Falkirk. 108 volunteers were engaged over the year across both locations. The volunteers have attended weekly boat training and health and wellbeing sessions including healthy eating, alternative relaxation techniques, walk leader training, Nordic walking and budgeting for health eating. Tailored support has been given to each individual throughout their personal journey of improvement. 44 participants attended 4 x walk leader training sessions which included canal history and heritage (4 route maps have been created), and a further 48 attended 4 x local history & public speaking training sessions. 136 boat sessions were provided and in addition to boating skills, crew skills, water safety, heritage talks etc., a volunteer-led group comprising on average 8-10 participants has been established to focus on the canal's natural heritage and importance as a resource for wildlife and wellbeing. The group are working

towards the John Muir Award (Discovery Level, with possibilities of progression to higher levels). A total of 13 canal clean-ups took place with 120 volunteers attending. This project engages with volunteers with many barriers and the groups are supported to offer peer support across generations, gender and backgrounds.

Job Centre Plus - Falkirk

2015 saw us establish a partnership with DWP to deliver 4 employability programmes. This project was developed and managed by Lesley. The popularity of these employability, skills development, health and wellbeing projects has continued to grow and through a positive partnerships with local job centres and the communities we serve, we have increased interest in what has become known as a project that truly offers 'canal magic'. We achieved all mandatory evaluation markers including supporting some participants into employment within the contracted period. Feedback to DWP was extremely positive and encouraged us to start negotiations for a similar project in Edinburgh for 2016.



Lock Keeping



2015 saw the start of a volunteer lock keeping project in partnership with Scottish Canals which involved Re-Union delivering lock keeping service between the Kelpies (Lock 3) and Lock 16. This was the first time Scottish canals had engaged with volunteers in this way and although it was a steep learning curve for all concerned the project has been a great success and has been extended for a further year. Managed by Richard this project sees up to 8 volunteers at a time working the locks 7 days per week. Feedback from boaters has been excellent and Scottish Canals are pleased with how this has gone. This project has complemented

other projects in Falkirk giving our programme trainees a further role to play if they want to remain involved with the canal – which many of them do.

Events

The annual Canal Festival took place on Saturday the 27th of June, where our volunteers played a huge role in the site set up, marshalling the event, running boat trips from Lochrin Belle and Roseann for the community and then breaking down the site. 20 Re-Union volunteers and 4 staff members attended on the day. The canal festival was enjoyed by local community members, enjoying various activities including music, stalls, local food, face painting, raft race, boat trips and model boats. The event attracted around 6000 people as per the Scottish Canals pedcounter bringing a mix of old and new visitors to the canal.

12 volunteers supported us with the flotilla for the official opening of the Kelpies by HRH Princess Anne in July which gave them the opportunity to travel from Edinburgh to Falkirk on Lochrin Belle.



Business Development and Promotion

In 2014 the revenue generated from the Lochrin Belle in Edinburgh was £34,037.78. In 2015 it was £44,802.85 an increase of 31%. This figure has been achieved through an increase in both private hire (up 42%) and ticket sales increases (up 43%). Jaggy Thistle hire (Falkirk) has seen a further increase in 2015 of 3% bringing boat sales income total to £54662.85. An increase of 25% on 2014 figures.

Ticketed Events: We have introduced History Cruises, Halloween Cruises and Teddy Bears Picnics whilst also reducing the cost of running our Tea and Cake Cruises.



Private Hire: Increase is predominantly due to the success of Solid Liquids' Gin Cruises. They hire the boat and manage all other aspects themselves which keeps our costs to a minimum whilst generating unrestricted income and promoting the boat as a venue however, we have also seen a significant increase in private hire bookings as a result of social media, TV appearances, word of mouth, Canal Festival etc. A Christmas Dining Experience was developed and we also negotiated a Pizza Buffet through Zizzi's as well as organising some private Santa Cruise bookings.

Community Use: Despite the increase in private hire combined with the continued agreements with Sorted, NHS and our own Community Health project we have still delivered 48 bookings from other community groups and charities. We have also supported the work of the Scottish Storytelling Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Fanfare Event and the Friends of the Children of Chernobyl.

Jaggy Thistle: Jaggy Thistle has been used to deliver our Falkirk project throughout 2015 making it unavailable to hire Mon-Thur. Despite this there has still been an increase from 54 to 61 bookings and a number of excellent reviews posted to our TripAdvisor page.

Promotion: Throughout 2015 we have continued to actively engage the public and volunteers through our Social Media sites and Email Newsletters. Our Facebook likes increased by 35% in 2015 and our Twitter followers by 63%. Stuart, our Business Development Manager, continually monitors the posts and activity to try and match the algorithms set on the platforms and provide links back to our website content where appropriate.

FCI and LCVG

Re-Union continues to play an active part in the Lowland Canal Volunteer Group which brings together groups along the canal to work in partnership with Scottish Canals for the benefit of the Lowland Canals as a whole. We have supported this group by playing an active role in arranging flotillas and events and are currently providing volunteers to help refurbish a workboat, donated by Scottish Canals, which can be used for more intense canal clean-up work in the future.

The organisation has also Chaired the Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative for 3 years, supporting the local community to engage with City of Edinburgh Council, EDI and Scottish Canals on the development of the ex-Fountainbridge Brewery site. This has involved participating in a charette and several community engagement workshops working on 'placemaking' and to try and get the best outcome for 'community space' in the new development.

Capercaillie Cruisers

Capercaillie's season in 2015 was extremely busy and the company has definitely turned a corner in relation to profitability. Business continues to grow and while this puts additional pressure on the team to deliver their excellent customer service the increase in profit helps to give Re-Union a more secure future. A huge thanks must be extended to the Operations Team and our partner Tim Ford without them this enterprise would not have become as successful as it is.

Funders

Re-Union would like to thank The Robertson Trust and People and Communities Fund for their continued funding and support and also thank DWP and Scottish Canals for their belief in Re-Union to deliver contracts on their behalf.



The Future

2015 was a good year for Re-Union although very stressful at times! The staff and volunteers rose to the challenge and the provision of training programmes continues in two areas alongside an employability programme in Falkirk and a contract for the delivery of Lock keeping. The increased sales of trips on both Lochrin Belle and Jaggy Thistle, combined with the Capercaillie success gives us confidence that the organisation is moving in the right direction after a few difficult years.

Re-Union continue to look for new opportunities both in funding and revenue streams and with the continued dedication of Board, Staff, Volunteers, Funders and Partners Re-Union are looking forward to an even brighter future bringing more people to the Lowland Canals who would otherwise not be able to access this wonderful natural resource.

Pat Bowie
General Manager
September 2016