

Crinan Canal Tourism Development Plan



Crinan Canal - Highland landscapes are an attractive setting for tourism initiatives on and next to the Crinan Canal

Encouraging new visitors to a rural waterway in Scotland

The Crinan Canal Tourism Development Plan comprises a partnership between British Waterways Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Heart of Argyll Tourism Alliance, The Waterways Trust and Historic Scotland. The work began in early 2010 with a two-fold remit to establish and implement a 'brand' for the canal, and to maximise the numbers of visitors with associated local economic benefit. The three main elements of the work are signage, cycle parking and mile markers.

Directional signage has been provided to and from the canal to ensure that canal users are aware of local services and places of interest. High quality and attractive signage has also been designed to attract visitors and tourists to the waterway and helps consolidate some of the existing information already available.

The Crinan Canal forms part of route 78 on the National Cycle Network, and the partners have been keen to encourage more use by cyclists. Cycle racks have been provided at four locations alongside the canal, next to locks and bridges and linking to both walks and services.

Ten mile markers have been produced using specially shaped Clashach stone, which was chosen by Historic Scotland for its natural texture and buff-coloured surface. These have been installed between Ardrishaig and Crinan – covering the full length of the canal – and incorporate a distinctive logo reflecting the heritage of the area.

A weekend Crinan Canal Water Festival has developed as an annual summer feature, with a wealth of activities including canoeing, sailing and boat building competitions. Local food producers support the event and benefit from the increased numbers of visitors.

Prior to the Tourism Development Plan a three year £2.8m Landscape Partnership project (called the Dalriada Project after the name of the ancient kingdom in mid Argyll) carried out a range of work to protect, manage and interpret the historic region around the Crinan Canal. Work included new footpaths, heritage routes, wildlife surveys and podcasts specifically about the canal's history and heritage.

In addition, a new 20km heritage trail has been developed as part of a wider access network which now links the canal to more than 800 ancient monuments and public access into a natural gorge which supplies water to the canal has been created through sympathetic construction of bridges and walkways.

Further work will look at ways of improving signage over a larger area, improving facilities for canoes and kayaks and assessing the scope for public art projects.