

## Changes to Working on the Crinan and Forth & Clyde Canals for 2016.

Scottish Canals (SC) has published their decision following our discussion in FYCA committee in January this year, my discussions with Richard Millar of SC and with Graham Crawford who continues to feed me welcome scuttlebutt from the West Coast. Of course we users would prefer a 100% continuous service but the compromise set for this season strikes me as reasonable in the circumstances. It should permit reduced transit cost on the Crinan, a re-start of dredging on the Lowlands and supervised user-working of the locks, it allows 10 days for the F&C transit (so that you can part- or fully-transit in one weekend, leave the boat and continue on the next) but restricts us to transiting the western section of the F&C only during a 4-day weekend but in either direction on all of these days.

The Carron Sealock crane has been upgraded and is now operational, with SC lockkeepers operating it under instruction by the skipper of customer yachts. Access into the Carron sealock is also being improved by jetting away the obstructing mudbank and approach is safe above half tide. Approach should be made directly towards the lock gate, keeping well clear of the "waiting pontoon" which is still obstructed by siltation. Please contact the sealock keeper on 01324 483034 as soon as you can to ensure he is available, and read the Skippers' Guide and new operating and safety documents at [www.scottishcanals.co.uk](http://www.scottishcanals.co.uk)

Scottish Canals released the following notice:-

**From:** [Josie Saunders](#)

**Subject:** 2016 update for Scotland's canals

Dear friend of Scottish Canals,

Apologies for the round-robin email but with the new season getting underway on Scotland's canals, we are keen to bring you details of key changes taking place on Scotland's waterways this year. They include a new pilot scheme that will offer more flexible, lower-cost transits on the Crinan Canal and increase the amount of staff time and resources devoted to dredging the Lowland Canals.

This season will see the price of transiting the Crinan Canal reduced to £11.95 per metre (£9.32p.m. for the return passage). This change in pricing is a direct response to boater feedback and follows a decision by Scottish Canals to no longer provide the Crinan assisted passage scheme.

Scottish Canals does, however, recognise that some boaters require support and has agreed a partnership with Yot Spot, a local business based in Ardrishaig, to offer an independent assisted passage scheme.

The Crinan Canal continues to attract boaters from all over the world keen to take a journey through 'Britain's most beautiful shortcut,' with almost 1500 vessels transiting the waterway last year. We hope these changes will encourage even more boaters to pay a visit to the Crinan in 2016.

Reflecting customer usage of the Forth & Clyde Canal, the trial will also see Scottish Canals carry out a four day, Friday to Monday, transit operation from Maryhill to Bowling (Locks 21-38), with the resulting savings re-invested in dredging key sites along the network, prioritising high spots identified by boaters. The sea locks, Carron to Maryhill and the Union Canal will continue to operate seven days a week.

Another key feature for this season, which is a direct result of boaters' feedback, is the return to a two-way transit system. It's hoped the change will provide a more flexible operation and will ensure customers experience a better level of service.

Whilst interest in The Kelpies and The Falkirk Wheel has ensured the eastern end of the Forth & Clyde Canal remains popular throughout the week, statistics show that transits in the western end of the waterway mainly take place over the weekend.

This new pilot project, coupled with our recent £250,000 investment in dredging and weed-cutting, will allow us to deliver a more flexible service and devote our resources to where they're needed most. The savings generated by the project will be re-invested in the Lowland Canals, providing a better experience for our boaters and improving the navigation channel of the waterways. We hope these changes will encourage even more people to explore the many wonders of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals.

It would be great if you could share this information with your customers and users in whatever way you feel is appropriate (via newsletter, social media, internet etc) as it may directly impact them. I would also be grateful to work with you more closely in the coming months to ensure that boaters from at home and abroad have the best possible experience when they enter Scotland's canals.

With kind regards, Josie.