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World Canals Conference speakers & sponsors announced

The 2016 World Canals Conference is shaping up to be the best yet, with an array of world-renowned speakers and high-profile sponsors signing up to take part in the prestigious event in Inverness this September.

Hosted on the banks of the majestic Caledonian Canal, the conference will see business leaders and global professionals celebrate innovative thinking and cutting-edge delivery in a range of disciplines including sustainable tourism development, regeneration, heritage management, climate change and engineering within the iconic landscape of the Scottish Highlands.

The prestigious four-day conference, which will take place on the 19th – 22nd September, has already attracted a wide range of speakers, academics and experts at the pinnacle of their fields. Each keynote speaker will focus on one of the conference's four themes: Technical Challenges and Innovation; Safeguarding the Heritage of our Waterways; Waterways as a Driver for Regeneration; and Growing Tourism & Commercialising Waterway Assets. They include:

- Dr Jonathan Chambers, Team Leader in Geophysical Tomography, British Geographical Survey
- Professor Mark Horton, Presenter of BBC's Coast & Professor in Archaeology, University of Bristol
- Professor Steven Mithin, Deputy Vice Chancellor & Professor of Archaeology, University of Reading
- Professor Bruce Prideaux, Director of the Centre for Tourism and Regional Opportunities, Central Queensland University
- Dame Seona Reid, Deputy Chair, Heritage Lottery Fund
- Darren Parkinson, National SCADA/ICA Manager, Canal & River Trust

As well as a range of high profile speakers, the event has also attracted sponsors and partners from around the globe. Red Bull; KLM; Air France; VisitScotland; the Scottish Government; the Year of Innovation, Architecture & Design; Sustrans; Linssen Yachts; Highland Council; the Inverness Common Good Fund; Scottish Waterways Trust; Rabbie's; and the Inverness Business Improvement District have also offered their support for the conference.

Steve Dunlop, Chief Executive of Scottish Canals, said: "We're absolutely thrilled to be hosting the 2016 World Canals Conference and it's shaping up to be the best yet, with a host of world-renowned speakers set to join us amidst the myth and majesty of the Scottish Highlands in September."

“From Panama to Paris, there are a huge number of innovative projects taking place on canals all over the globe and waterways continue to play a vital role in the communities that line their banks. The World Canals Conference will celebrate those achievements, highlighting pioneering work in everything from water management and regeneration to climate change and engineering.

“With just over six months to go until the World Canals Conference, we’re taking this chance to remind everyone that tickets are now available and our abstract submission is fast approaching. The conference is set to be a fantastic event and we can’t wait to welcome the world to Inverness and the Caledonian Canal this September.”

Abstract submissions for the conference are flooding in ahead of the April 15th deadline, with a number of high-profile proposals already received from all over the globe. Tickets for the event are also selling fast, with the early bird day delegate package available at the reduced rate of £450 until June 24th. Full information on tickets and pricing can be found at <https://wccscotland.com/tickets/standard/buy>.

As the biggest event in the international waterways calendar, Inverness joins an illustrious list of past World Canals Conference hosts including the Grand Canal in China, Montreal in Canada and New York in the USA. As well as innovative projects from around the globe, the World Canals Conference will also celebrate developments along Scotland’s 137-mile waterway network, from the creation of The Kelpies – the largest equine sculptures on the planet – to The Falkirk Wheel’s role as the world’s only rotating boat lift and an iconic tourism destination.

Once the transport arteries that stoked the fires of the industrial revolution, today Scotland’s canals are home to cyclists and social enterprises rather than coal scows and Clydesdale Horses. Passing through some of Scotland’s most beautiful landscapes and the bustling cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness, the 250-year-old waterways are increasingly vital venues for business, leisure and tourism that attract more than 22 million visits a year.

For more information on the World Canals Conference, see www.wccscotland.co.uk.

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Notes to the editor:

- Scottish Canals is responsible to the Scottish Government for the management and development of the Union, Monkland, Forth & Clyde, Crinan and Caledonian Canals
- As well as the waterways themselves, Scottish Canals care for 251 bridges, 212 buildings, 256 locks, The Falkirk Wheel and 19 water supply reservoirs in locations across Scotland

- The reservoirs cover an area equivalent to 7,494 football pitches and supply the canals with the 332 million litres of water which flow through them each day
- The Forth & Clyde, Union and Monkland canals in the Lowlands, the Crinan Canal in Argyll and the Caledonian Canal in the Highlands together extend over 137 miles from coast to coast, across country and into the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness
- Built two hundred years ago to fire the Industrial Revolution, today the canals contribute to the Scottish Government agenda of developing a Greener; Healthier; Smarter; Safer and Stronger; and Wealthier and Fairer Scotland by acting as a catalyst for sustainable economic development, regeneration and tourism; contributing to education, biodiversity, heritage and promoting active living and healthier lifestyles
- The Forth & Clyde, Union, Monkland, Caledonian and Crinan canals are recognised as Scheduled Monuments and attract 22million visits per year
- For more information, visit www.scottishcanals.co.uk or follow @ScottishCanals