



Waterways - Ways of Value ©

World Canals Conference 2011 in Groningen attracts great interest

The 24th World Canals Conference, entitled 'Waterways – Ways of Value©' is to be held in Groningen from 19 to 22 September 2011. This annual international forum covering everything to do with canals both old and new will come to the Netherlands for the first time. The event, which will showcase the richness of the Netherlands' waterways, has attracted a lot of interest from abroad, as evidenced by the list of prominent speakers. The conference itself will consist of four intensive days of meetings, with presentations and ten working visits by coach and boat to the northern provinces and Germany. Participants may then join an optional post-conference tour which will end in Zaandam.

The World Canals Conference (WCC) is held in a different country each year. These international conferences are facilitated by Inland Waterways International (IWI), a non-profit organisation which promotes the preservation, use, redevelopment and sustainable management of waterways all over the world. The Groningen conference will focus on economics, spatial planning, heritage, technology and ecology. The goal will be to permanently raise the profile of the water infrastructure. As well as a forum for sharing knowledge and expertise, the WCC also provides an opportunity to forge new ties and establish new, future-oriented networks to foster the sustainable development of shipping, water-based recreation, and hydraulic engineering.

The conference will highlight the latest developments associated with inland waterways and recreational navigation, including the Zuidlaardermeer – Oost-Groningen route, the Erica – Ter Apel canal (part of the international recreational route to Germany), the diversion and upgrading of the Zuid-Willemsvaart to Class IV and the revitalisation and upgrading of the Lemmer-Delfzijl waterway to Class V-a. The latest developments concerning waterways in other countries will also be explored, including plans for new canals in South Africa and Turkey. The Mittellandkanal and Saale – Elster Canal in Germany, the Augustov Canal in Belarus and the 'Dutch canals' in Sri Lanka will also be discussed. The main conference venue will be Martiniplaza in Groningen.

Communications

The *Declaration of Groningen*, which will be signed at the conference, will call for a sustained focus on canals as elementary features of the water system, drivers of regional development and repositories of cultural identity. The ultimate aim is to have the European Union adopt the Declaration. The *Top 12 Canals in the Netherlands* and the *Canal Map of the Netherlands* showing all the canals in the country (no fewer than 1050!), including those that have now disappeared, will also be launched.

New information material was recently posted on the World Canals Conference website www.worldcanalsconference2011.nl giving further details of the conference. This includes flyers, a six-page brochure, programmes and a description of the post-conference tour. All material is available for downloading in both Dutch and English. The site also features the impressive waterways map of the Netherlands developed specially for the 24th WCC by Menne Kosian of the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency, showing all waterways in the Netherlands in great detail. The map, which also features in the brochures, is truly unique.

Partners

Preparations for the conference began two years ago when the Netherlands' candidacy was announced at the 22nd WCC in Serbia in 2009. Once the 2011 conference had been awarded to the Netherlands, the Cultural Heritage Agency immediately set to work. The non-profit organisation Stichting World Canals Conference 2011 commissioned JanPieter Janse of consultancy Golfslag Advies to draw up a project plan and lead the organisation. Gradually, more and more partners have joined, pledging financial or substantive contributions to ensure the conference is a success. They include Leader; Hunze en Aa's, Nooderzijlvest and Fryslân water boards; the *Agenda voor de Veenkoloniën* project to develop the former peat-cutting areas; Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe provincial authorities; Emmen local authority; Groningen Seaports; water sports association Hiswa; recreational navigation organisation SRN; Royal Dutch Motorboat Club KNMC; Dutch motorists' association ANWB and water management association NLWKN in Germany.

Non-profit organisation Stichting WCC2011 and the specially formed WCC2011 Project Team are responsible for organising and realising the World Canals Conference 2011, in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage Agency. The organisation is pleased to note that more and more participants are registering for the conference, both from the Netherlands and abroad. A major delegation from China is expected to attend, because the 25th World Canals Conference will be held next year in Yangzhou, China. It will be based around the 'Grand Canal' which ends in Beijing. A delegation from Toulouse, France will also make a presentation, as they will be hosting the 26th WCC, where the focus will be on the Canal du Midi.

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