



## Scottish Canals

Tourism development Knowledge Transfer Partnership

**Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) is supporting ambitious plans to bring visitors to Scotland's canals through the development of new visitor attraction and business opportunities in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Falkirk and Inverness.**

GCU and Scottish Canals are developing and implementing a strategy for increasing tourism on the canals throughout Scotland following recent work to transform the local environment of Falkirk through the award-winning Helix project.

Fort Augustus is the next development currently facing Scottish Canals, with combined challenges of a rural location, limited operating season and distance from key generating markets.

Funding of £96,700 has been awarded for the 18-month Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) between GCU and Scottish Canals.

KTP is a UK-wide programme, part-funded by the Technology Strategy Board with 12 other funding organisations, with a contribution from the company partner.

The project is overseen by Professor John Lennon, Director of the Moffat Centre for Travel and Tourism Business Development, which works on key consultancy and contract research projects in the travel, tourism, hospitality and events sectors. Professor Lennon has previously undertaken commercial projects for Scottish Canals in tourism business forecasting and worked on the successful Helix Park development.

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Scottish Canals recently opened a towpath along the Forth & Clyde Canal extension and completed a £1.3 million project to upgrade paths throughout Scotland's canal network. The Kelpies, 30-metre high horse-head sculptures, stand next to the new canal extension in The Helix, a parkland



project built to connect 16 communities in the Falkirk Council Area.

Professor Lennon has already examined the Falkirk Wheel, the Kelpies and Fort Augustus as cases in which different approaches to tourism and visitor development hold the key to survival and growth.

Professor Lennon said: "Such contrasting sites provide a unique opportunity to build a development and operating strategy built on contemporary practice, internally benchmarked as well as externally measured against international competitors. Scottish Canals is an organisation in transition making major changes to strategic direction and growth at a managerial and organisation level whilst growing real appeal in the tourism/visitor marketplace. The lessons provided in organisational and operational change offer useful benchmarks for other heritage waterways in transition and development."

Last year, the Scottish Government unveiled its new policy for Scottish Canals and the organisation published its ten-year vision of 'Safeguarding our heritage. Building our future'.

Richard Millar, Director of Heritage, Enterprise and Sustainability at Scottish Canals, said: "Scotland's canals were once the thoroughfares that stoked the fires of the industrial revolution. While today the waterways are home to cyclists and social enterprises rather than coal scows and Clydesdales, they are increasingly vital venues for business, leisure and tourism that attract more than 22 million visits a year.

"From the majesty of Neptune's Staircase on the Caledonian Canal to the iconic engineering of The Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies, there is no shortage of incredible sights on Scotland's waterways. By working with our partners at Glasgow Caledonian University, we aim to develop a strategy to

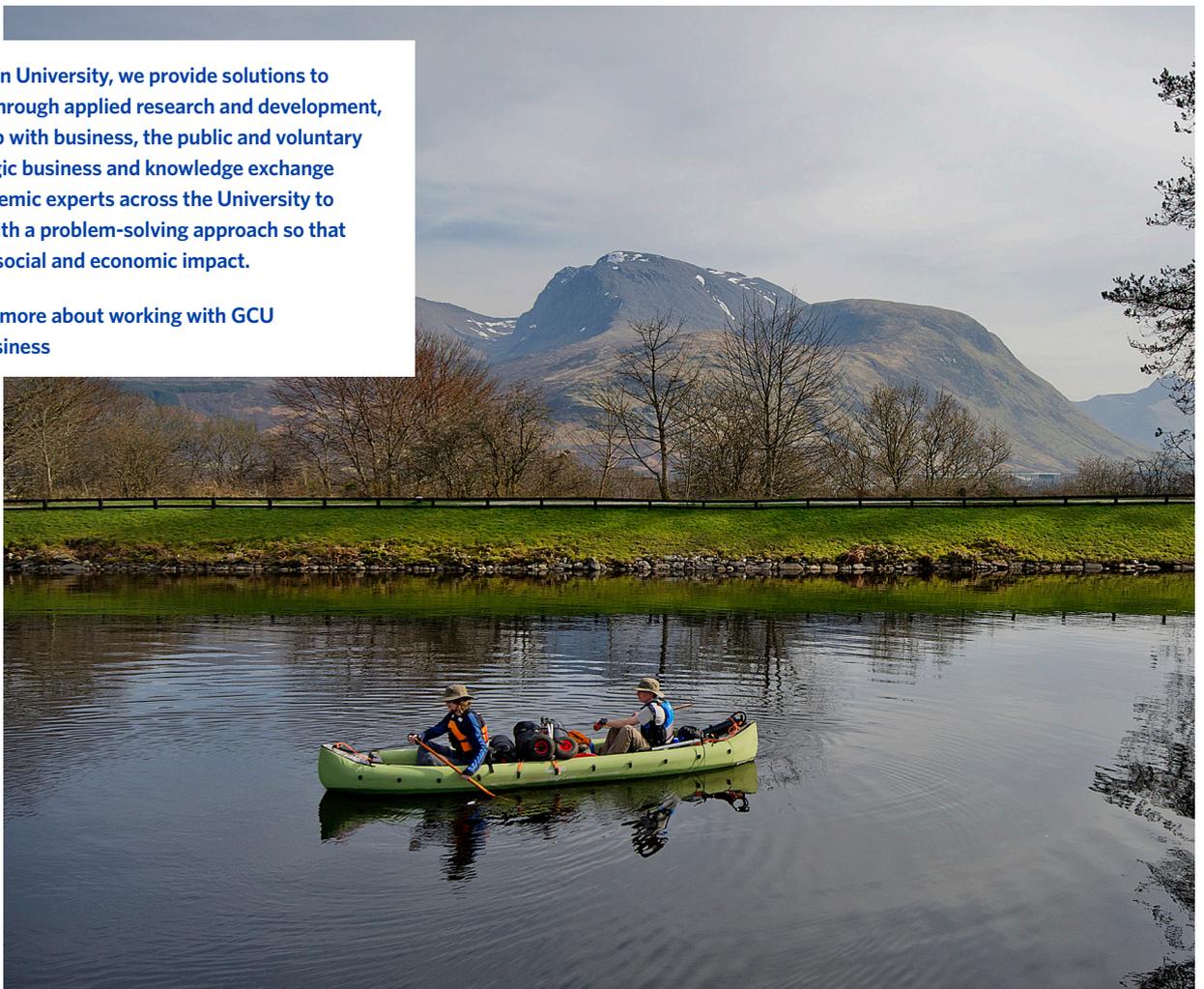
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encourage even more people to engage with the rich heritage and many attractions they offer.

"Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the university, I have no doubt we can continue the on-going renaissance of the canals and develop new visitor, business and community opportunities along their banks."

**At Glasgow Caledonian University, we provide solutions to real-world problems through applied research and development, working in partnership with business, the public and voluntary sectors. GCU's strategic business and knowledge exchange teams work with academic experts across the University to support businesses with a problem-solving approach so that they can innovate for social and economic impact.**

**Contact us to find out more about working with GCU at [www.gcu.ac.uk/business](http://www.gcu.ac.uk/business)**



## Further information:

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