

Linlithgow Paddlers throw heart and soul into Canal Challenge

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Forth & Clyde Canal re-opening as part of the £83.4m Millennium Link Project, one of the largest canal restoration projects ever to take place in Britain.

In the last 20 years the canal has welcomed the world's first and only rotating boat lift – The Falkirk Wheel, and the world's largest pair of equine sculptures, The Kelpies, along with millions of visitors who have enjoyed the canal by boot, boat or bike.



Linlithgow Kayak Racing's Gilly Macwhirter, Lisa Davie, Fiona MacBeth and Anne Moar

One of the highlight events on the canal since the Millenium works completed, is the annual Glasgow to Edinburgh Canal Challenge – a 2-day event in October, where canoeists of all disciplines, compete in individual and team crews, over the 55 miles to Edinburgh.

Day 1 starts at Speirs Warf, Port Dundas, Glasgow to the Millennium Wheel, Falkirk (approx 23.5 miles). Paddlers portage (run with their boats on their shoulders) around the locks between Banknock and Bonnybridge in the last 5 miles of this stage, which adds to the excitement and spectacle.

Day 2 starts above the Millennium Wheel and the locks of the new Falkirk Interchange on the Union Canal. The finish is at Lochrin Basin, Edinburgh (approx 31 miles).





This year's event saw 25 crews from clubs from all over UK participate in the event. One local club, [Linlithgow Kayak Racing \(LKR\)](#), had particular purpose in entering their 5 teams this year. Having witnessed first-hand the increased demand to learn to kayak during lockdown, LKR have determinedly supported their members to extend their skills and participate in all kinds of new experiences, including this Glasgow to Edinburgh Marathon.

Becoming a Scottish Charities Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in January 2021 enabled LKR to continue its mission as a flat water kayak racing club, whilst also developing its service to the local community and encouraging many new people to take part in the sport of canoeing.

Through a series of very successful "come and try" events in the summer, followed by multiple blocks of beginners lessons run by qualified kayak coaches, LKR have doubled their membership in 2021, whilst ensuring that all of their members

have fundamental paddling skills to ensure their safety and enjoyment on the water.







Overall winner Dan Johnston from Chelmsford (left) in a time of 7 hours 43 minutes and Linlithgow Kayak Racing club's Simon Dean.

This year's Glasgow to Edinburgh Canal Challenge overall winner was Dan Johnston from Chelmsford in a time of 7 hours 43 minutes. LKR is still rather proud that the fastest ever course record remains with their K2 relay team from 2012, in an amazing time of 6 hours 48 minutes (Sean Redmond, Lewis Fletcher, Oliver Carruthers and Balazs Lorincz).

There's plenty time to practise for next year's October 2022 event – so why don't you come and join in the fun? LKR warmly welcomes beginners and experienced paddlers alike, and looks forward to many more hours of learning and fun in 2022. [Find out more here.](#)