

Chairman's Update February 2024

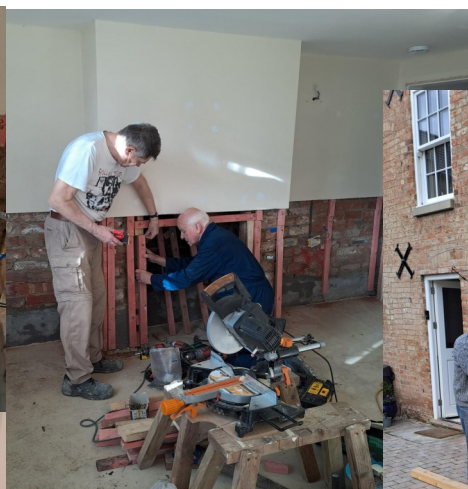
Here we are at the end of February. I'm fed up with paddling on my lawn and wondering when the rain will stop. It's causing issues with our neighbours at Draycott and making planning very difficult, but there are positive signs as the hawthorn that has always been a feature of our canal is blossoming in force.



Cottages

Another month has passed and work on flood recovery has moved on apace. So far all the trades have delivered on time, so not only has the volunteer team of Don, Tony, Brian, Anne and me continued with the basics such as rendering, tanking, plasterboarding and flooring,

but we've also achieved timely visits from screeders, electricians, plumbers



and plasterers. As I write this we have only some final fit joinery (kitchens, and doors) and painting to go. With carpets planned for 28th we should be

ready with two of the three cottages and therefore to welcome back one tenant and relocate those in No 1 so we can start remedials of the final cottage.



After the last few months we've finally managed to negotiate a settlement with our insurers and are confident that thanks



to volunteer effort we can cover the cost of repair and improvement and the lost rent in the interim. It will be a relief to get matters complete and tenants back to paying rent again. Hopefully we'll be finished within 8 weeks. Painters welcomed!!

Draycott



We have been undertaking the initial ground surveys for the Draycott canal works to provide data for contract tendering later in the year. The recent downpours have focused our minds on the need to secure the winding hole east of Hopwell Road and progress now seems to be happening with Sustrans. As part of this the working party team have been getting the land boundaries agreed with the neighbours and Sustrans in readiness.

We have been surprised to be told by our ecologists that they now don't feel they have the water vole expertise to continue for us, so we are looking for replacements,

which hopefully will help us in the long run—assuming we still have water voles of course.



We have experienced more rainfall on already high water tables so there have been floods around us, but mercifully the works we undertook earlier seem to have kept the water levels at bay for us. This has been helped by the attention that David and his working parties have undertaken to keep outflows clear of debris.

Further discussions are taking place with the County Council's Flood officer, although this remains to be a difficult process even with assistance from our County Councillor. We will continue to press for more constructive developments that use the canal as a means of flood relief for Draycott and Breaston. We are concerned that changes are discouraged for fear of upsetting the status quo.

Our application for significant funding for works in this area has been rejected, so we will continue to look at other alternatives.

Working Parties

We've seen excellent progress by working parties along the canal line.

At Borrowash the wall has continued to be built up with planting of whips as well as stones.

It's getting rave reviews on our social media. Unfortunately presence on social media also brings a greater recognition of our work and we've had another attempted





break in at the Borrowash container. There are no valuable tools stored there, but it means buying another couple of locks.

Perhaps it was also a mistake to improve the path leading up to it. Sometimes we can't win!



Down by Borrowash Lock we've been cutting back the overgrown hedges and it's looking much tidier now.



The team have also been working at Longmoor Road in Breaston where they have been cutting back ivy and dangerous branches. It's a particular problem when it's near to footpaths or roads.

So it's been a busy time dealing with all these items as well as undertaking surveys, clearing flood damage, etc.

Thanks to all our helpers, working whatever the weather throws at us.

Behind the scenes our **Engineering Group** has had several get togethers to reappraise the engineering solutions in the light of changing climate and funding conditions. They are reappraising canal levels, spoil management, and the impact of the Chaddesden Triangle development on plans for the Derby Arm. It follows on from the matters raised at the AGM before last and should allow us to be well prepared for opportunities brought about by a need to move water both to provide drinking water and to avoid flooding.

Sandiacre

Progress is underway to get the STW quote. We were surprised by a sudden request for a footpath closure to undertake trial pits, which David was able to turn around in double quick time and notify residents. We were even more surprised—and disappointed—to be told that the contractors hadn't properly understood the requirements and have requested a further delay. Sometimes it seems that volunteers are much more effective than the "professionals". We've complained and hope to get some compensation for the delays.

Derby Riverboat

Our new Derby City Councillors (Dhindsa and Rawson) have continued to actively assist progress for the Riverboat.

Firstly, we have been concerned that the largely unworkable licencing arrangements for the boat need to be reviewed. We provided comments in the autumn and after pressing by our Trustees we have had an update that proposals will largely reflect the improvements we requested. Most important is the option to go to three year licences, which would reduce dramatically the cost and inconvenience for drivers in gaining medical assessments, etc. Whilst we haven't got everything we requested the Licencing Department seem to have taken a more pragmatic approach. However, we await the formal confirmation of this in March, but at least it allows us to be prepared for the new season.

Secondly, we have discussed formally with engineers two other issues, namely the pontoon provision

and the design of the OCOR flood protection works. We met with engineers to discuss both of these aspects sponsored by our Trustees.

On the positive side the Council believes it can raise funding to provide the base and will provide a framework for us to fund and supply the pontoon structure. On the negative side the upcoming OCOR works are likely to restrict access for the pontoon during it's construction. This could take between 12 -24 months from 2025. We are now considering how we proceed on this as it is pointless having a disabled friendly pontoon if wheelchairs can't get to it due to contractors' works. We expect the Council to confirm funding formally in March, but they will be subject to us raising the required funding for the pontoon structure. More thinking and planning is obviously called for, but at least we now have more control over the progress.

Liz has a new volunteer timetable together for April and we have the first session of training (First Aid) due in early March. The boat clean up is also scheduled for March—water levels permitting—and we have a couple of new boat drivers that will be undertaking training in April so they can also be licenced and provide more capacity. Let's hope for a sunny summer and lower water at Easter, when we are scheduled to start.

Draycott Museum

Peter is making progress on the Museum presentation and the hardware has been provided and tested. Just the script and recording required now.

Members' Meetings

We were treated to a brilliant talk on James Brindley in January by Cliff Lea from Cromford. I hadn't realised just how many projects Brindley had been involved with until Cliff provided his entertaining explanation of Brindley's rise to national prominence. With Brindley's association funding was much more readily raised. There's a lesson there for us I'm sure.

On 27th of this month we turn to more local matters with a talk on the Friargate Line by Keith Blood. Keith has already been very well received by us on another topic, but with the current development of the Goods Yard it is likely that access to the station will be resurrected by the developers. It should be an interesting talk.

Future speakers are as follows:

March 26th	The Woodland Trust	by Gerald Price
April 23rd	The Ilkeston Tramway	by Stephen Flanders
May 28th	The Carlisle Ship Canal	by David Ramshaw

Meetings will be at the Cottages in Hopwell Road, Draycott, DE72 3PE starting at 7.30pm.

Thanks for your support.

Chris Madge