

## Chairman's Update

May 2024

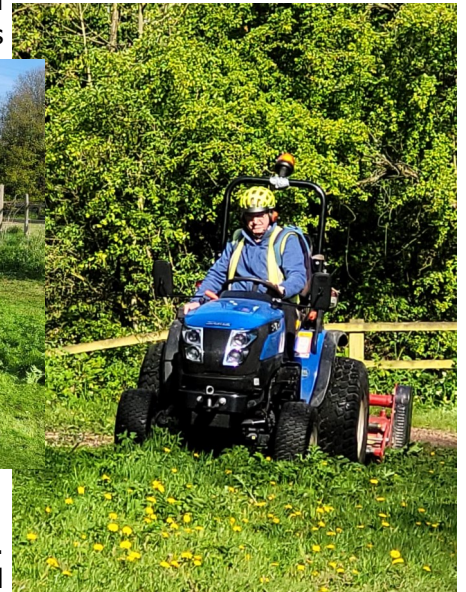
Welcome to the monthly update. I had hoped to have been recovering from a holiday in the sun, but an accidental fall meant Anne (and chauffeur) have spent a fair bit of time being "entertained" in various hospital departments in Northampton and Derby as she has her broken hand tended to. I'm in no doubt that the Derby service was a great deal better and it's reinforced my appreciation of the city.

Unfortunately not all people feel the same about Derby. A very recent poll of short break visitors put Derby bottom of over 50 cities in assessing the attractions on offer. Whilst it might be a biased report it does suggest that we should be making more of the city. Perhaps it will underpin our continued pressure on the Council to make more of the river and provide a more suitable and visible boarding platform for the Riverboat—one of a few new attractions in the city.

The recent surprise announcement of an election has us all wondering how this will affect our progress. We have been establishing good connections with the new Labour led administrations in Derby and Erewash over the last year. With the Derby city leader standing in the Derby South constituency, where Margaret Beckett is retiring, it will presumably mean we will need to get to know a new leader at the city council, but at least the Derby South MP will be more approachable and supportive of our plans. Fortunately our DCC nominated Trustees have already been helpful and we have a meeting with the deputy leader next week to brief her. You can be sure that we will do our best to renew and reinforce relationships with our politicians as we need them to support our ambition.

### Working Parties

As we all know the mixture of spring temperatures and substantial rain means the grass is growing fast. Our teams have been busy as



always managing the canal path. The tractor has been working hard trimming the path at Bor-

rowash, Breaston and Sandiacre. We've tried to compromise between people and wildlife by leaving areas for wildflowers to be addressed later, but ensuring that the paths are clear.

The area at Borrowash lock has been well maintained by our working parties. Thanks to David for the photo, but I can't help feeling there's a reference to Snow White there somewhere. Hope they don't start singing though!





Of course the wall at Borrowwash has continued. The repairs of blocks vandalised a month ago have been completed and new blocks added. It's a long stretch, but progress is becoming very apparent.



Our volunteers have completed the tidy up of the old scaffolding pipes, scrapping out a lot of pipes and adding a few hundred pounds from scrap yards.



At Spondon we've had a major tidy up alongside the Dial estate and we've set up a new information panel to explain what's happening.



In addition we've been to Sandi-acre where there's been some major tidying up of the stretch between Lock Lane and Longmoor Road. We are now expecting further surveys by the STW contractors so they can properly cost the sewer relocation. They'll be digging trial pits in the road and alongside the lock chamber. We've been waiting a while, but at last we'll get some progress.



And finally, at Draycott we've undertaken a tidy up of rubbish accumulated over the winter. Many of the bags of rubbish have been disposed of and the remainder contain rafts that we plan to set out to look for signs of water voles.



We have seen no further evidence of mink tracks and the traps set have found nothing and so have been removed. As we have seen no signs of water voles it will be important to know from the floats whether they are still there and active as it will have a major impact on construction plans and timings.

## Cottages

We are now looking for a second tenant after No 3 has now tendered his notice. Whilst it is a pity to lose such a good tenant at least we will be able to increase the monthly rent for the new tenant and there seems to be significant interest still.





## Draycott

We've had a further meeting to discuss the canal as a means to effect flood prevention with Network Rail and others. The second meeting was a success and we are now expecting to share the results of hydrology work undertaken by NR over the next month. This will inform any thoughts on the potential use of the canal as an attenuation tank and desirable water and canal bed levels. I'm pleased to note that there is urgency shown by all to find a solution.

Independently of this we will be looking at using the newly acquired winding hole alongside Hopwell Road to provide some attenuation of flood water. Designs have been commenced and we will be submitting planning permission as soon as possible. We are also discussing with Sustrans the acquisition of the final stretch of land between Draycott and Breaston. Sustrans seem happy to pass on the land at a reasonable price if we provide leasehold guarantees for the ongoing use of the cycle track.

In my last notes I mentioned the availability of some Levelling Up Funding. We were encouraged to submit a bid for around a million and tasked to secure this funding for a project in the Borrowash area. We planned to spend this on creating a cycle (tow) path through from Spondon to Draycott. This would provide the land ownership that is currently missing between Borrowash and Draycott. After a lot of work we produced a bid and have been told we were a near second in obtaining the funds. We don't yet have any details on why we didn't win, but we'll make the most of all the thought that went into it.

We also have another significant discussion ongoing, but under a Non Disclosure Agreement, so watch this space. There are certainly a few significant opportunities around that could have a massive impact on restoration.

## Derby Riverboat

Popularity of the Riverboat is improving with the weather. I've just completed a Sunday with three full trips even though we were expecting thunderstorms! Fortunately the forecast wasn't fulfilled. Licensing is continuing as expected with new applications in process and training going on apace. We've seen a few unusual additions to the river on our trips. I think we have an egret taking up residence and a couple of grebe families. I've tried to take a photo of



the grebes, but the challenge of driving and the amazing speed of a family of grebes scooting over (or under) the water have defeated me.

However no such problem with the deflated canoe that we pulled from the river. Not sure what we are going to do with it, although I noticed today that the Rowing Club had also pulled a similar deflated canoe from the river. Not sure how some-

one loses two canoes without noticing?

We've also started a few charter trips. I was delighted to be on a trip with a special needs school. The kids were delighted to join the challenge to get waves from passers by and sounding the airhorn.

We also had a visit from East Midlands Today with some filming taking place for an report to be aired in the near future. We were able to point out the continued delay in the Council's funding decision. We have a meeting with the deputy leader this week, so we hope this might move things on. We will also look to discuss how the Derby Arm fits to her brief of regeneration and hope to get them to think through how the flood defences will be built around and interact with the river-side improvements we and other Derby stakeholders want.

## Events

We were well supported at the Breaston gala on 6th May. As usual we had a lot of interest from



people who hadn't previously come across us, but of course this time we had a different conversation as we have acquired land near Breaston and are possibly going to help mitigate the future flooding of the village.

We are also attending Elvaston Village Fete on 27th May (at the Elvaston Cricket Ground) from 10.30 until 4pm. Hopefully the weather will be kind.

Following that we will be at Long Eaton Carnival on 8th June at West Park. We haven't attended this event for years so it will be interesting to see how we are received and how much interest we attract to the canal network. The local council has already been successful in enhancing a bridge over the Erewash canal, so it demonstrates an interest by those in power at least.



### **Members' Meetings**

Last month we had a talk by Stephen Flinders about the Ilkeston Tramway. As always it was a well researched talk and very well received. I couldn't help feeling that some of the inefficiencies in getting the project into place a hundred years ago reminded me of HS2.

We will have a talk on the Carlisle Canal on Tuesday 28th. Again I didn't know there had been a canal in Carlisle, but the speaker has been arranged by our editor, who has persuaded David Ramshaw to tell us all about it.

Anne would like me to thank you for suggestions of speakers for the future.

The Future speakers are as follows:

|           |  |                  |
|-----------|--|------------------|
| May 28th  | The Carlisle Ship Canal  | by David Ramshaw |
| June 25th | A walk between from Draycott to Breaston to show plans and progress. Meet at the Draycott Café at 6.30pm |                  |
| July 23rd | Lichfield and Hatherton Canal  | by Bob Williams  |
| August    | No meeting   |                  |
| Sept 24th | The Friargate Line   | by Keith Blood   |
| Oct 22nd  | AGM  |                  |

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

Thanks for your support.

Chris Madge