

# Chairman's Update

## August 2024

As the holiday season comes to an end perhaps we can look forward to further progress in our many projects as people return to work at the various institutions we work with. Of course for local authorities we have suffered from election purdah when nothing seems to move forward.

We have a strong board of directors, working well as a coordinated team and each pursuing a number of different strands. We should be well placed to push on a number of fronts.

### Working Parties

Inevitably during the summer we have been concentrating on keeping the paths and canal line under control. As normal our working parties have been very active along the canal line in mowing the extending length of canal path we now own.



Over the month there's been substantial work at Borrowwash. Not only has the lock been mowed and tidied up, but major work has been undertaken on the canal line. The haircut at Station Road in particular is spectacular. Of course not everyone appreciates our efforts and we always get one or two, who think we should do nothing so we don't disturb the wildlife. Hopefully we balance the needs of human and wildlife habitat.



Thanks go to Peter Ball, our resident expert for keeping us up to date on some of the unusual biodiversity along the line. The one shown is a cinnabar moth on ragwort. Of course I'm told by our farmer contacts that Ragwort is a weed and needs to be controlled. So many differing opinions to balance!

The teams have also found time to clear out and explore Spondon Bourne and get a much clearer understanding of the culvert in anticipation of any restoration plans.





At Draycott the teams have been looking to reduce the growth in the Golden Mile. As you can see the area, particularly inside the fence, has grown rapidly. It's an ongoing challenge, but a good start has been made and in particular we've paid attention to keeping the drainage clear.



As part of these works we've been able to check the mink trap and confirmed again no recent presence of mink. We are about to survey again to assess the water vole colony ahead of the winter. We haven't seen evidence of them for some time, and their presence or otherwise has a big impact on planned restoration of that section.

We've also had more corporate volunteers helping out with working parties. During the month we've had two organisations that will play a major part in our restoration.

Firstly we entertained a group from the local Environment Agency, mostly based near Draycott. They joined our working parties with work at Draycott and seemed to enjoy their experience. Obviously, going forward we will be working closely with and needing approval of the EA, so any contacts are very valuable.

Later this month we were hosting a group from Network Rail. We were joined by the key members of a group discussing big solutions for flooding at Draycott and Breaston. With a prospect of them providing very significant funding any chance to work closely with them—especially out of a formal meeting—is potentially very valuable.



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We have been discussing opening up the winding hole by Hopwell Road for attenuation of flood water, but to do this we'll need planning permission. We've judged that any application should include all of the Sustrans land purchased recently including a long stretch heading towards Breaston.

A part of the land we have purchased is a stretch of woodland almost 800metres long, where the infilled canal line has been planted with trees around 50 years ago. We've therefore needed to undertake a survey of what we have so that we can work out how we route the restored canal.

We've already had a working party with tape measures, spray paint and tree identifiers to record what we have where and of course the condition. The trees are mostly ash and oak with some sycamore and hawthorn. So the NR team came along to complete the survey. Now its down to plotting a map and working out how and when we can take out trees and plant replacements. Normally the requirement is 4 new for each one lost, so we need to find a section of land to accommodate these new trees. So working closer with NR has been a good exercise, which included reviewing the watercourses (as shown), which need to be managed within proposed schemes.



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So we continue to put the pieces in place to enable Draycott to move forward. As reported last month the establishment of a clearway outside the cottages has been a blow, but we've tried to turn it to advantage by applying to reduce the speed of the road reasoning that the road has become more dangerous for walkers and cyclists now there is no reason for traffic to slow down. If successful this will help the later introduction of a lift bridge on Hopwell Road.

Progress at Draycott on flood alleviation is now awaiting the completion of a comprehensive model of water flows commissioned from Atkins by NR. It's taking them longer than expected, but once completed we can move the project forward knowing what we might need to do to minimise flooding across a large area.

### Other Projects

At Sandiacre we still await the repair of a cracked manhole cover and have received apologies and promises to resolve the delay. We were notified by a supporter in the area that our weight limit sign at Lock Lane bridge had been vandalised. The suspicion is that the bridge has been used by overweight trucks and the damage to the sign was to avoid them being found liable for bridge collapse, should the worst happen. Thanks to David for restoring it so quickly.

The large project to gather stakeholder support for a complete east west leg restoration is now well under way and we are hopeful we can convince the region of the many benefits that would come from its restoration. Watch this space, although it won't be quick.

### National Grid

We have responded to the consultation around a massive new power pylon route that will connect up Chesterfield to Willington. It is required to allow the transfer of "green" energy between power stations. It seems only to affect us where it crosses the route between Borrowash and Draycott and again where we join the Trent and Mersey at Swarkestone. We will be trying to use this development to our advantage if possible and certainly ensure we don't have a pylon in the way of the restoration.

### Cottages



At the cottages we have discovered a leak in the flashing around a roof valley and it's been repaired very quickly.

We are also expecting to welcome a tenant for the last vacant cottage following the floods. A couple will be moving in in early September.

Thanks are due to the team who have updated the display screen in the museum room at the café. We now have a tv screen with an ability to play a selection of videos providing info on the restoration.

### Derby Riverboat

August has provided reasonable weather and, as hoped, the Riverboat has been busy with most trips pretty much full. The wildlife has returned with many sightings of kingfishers together with an egret, cormorant and a heron. They don't seem to mind our boat at all.

Water levels have been low and we've seen a fair bit of other activity on the river. We were somewhat worried when notified that a recent storm had brought down a tree into the river, but fortunately there was plenty of room to pass. However I suspect our drivers are getting a little blasé as one tried to rescue a kiddy's spade and got stuck on a sand bank. Lesson learned—I hope!

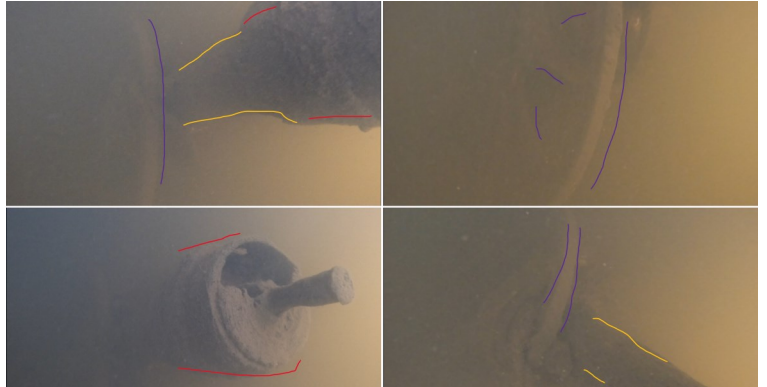


The free trips extended to journalists seem to be bearing fruit with an article from the Guardian giving us a brief, but favourable mention. Others are hopefully in the pipeline.

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/article/2024/aug/28/derby-uk-short-break-destination-buses>

## Fireboat

Our first investigation of the Fireboat was carried out with MSDS an international marine archaeology company based in Holbrook. They used an underwater camera to check the location we suggested and it looks like we've succeeded in locating the sunken boat. The water is a bit murky, but you can clearly see things that may have been the hose turntable. We're looking forward to a more extensive divers search in September.



## Pontoon

As I write this I have just had a response to our latest chasing of the boat pontoon. It looks like we have general approval for the pontoon on the basis that DCC provide a grant for the base and we take control - and fund - the rest. To have it in our control will be a blessing, although we'll now have to look for funding and assemble an engineering team. We are fortunate however in that we are attracting more civil engineering expertise as the overall project and progress becomes better known.

## Events

Please feel free to help out at the Shardlow Festival on 7th/8th September. Just let David Savidge [david.savidge@derbycanal.org.uk](mailto:david.savidge@derbycanal.org.uk) know if you can help. It's a real boaters' event.

## Members' Meetings

August will see no meeting, but please reserve the date for September. There will be a talk on the Friargate line that was cancelled last year and has been rearranged by popular demand.

Future meetings

Sept 24th        The Friargate Line                                by Keith Blood  
October 22nd    AGM  
November 26th Plans for Derby.                                By Mike Wingfield/Chris Madge  
December 24th No meeting—enjoy Christmas!

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

Anne is now working on next year's programme. So if you've any suggestions please drop me a line.

Thanks for your support

Chris Madge