

Chairman's Update

October 2024

I'm writing this ahead of the AGM scheduled for Tuesday 22nd. It's a little earlier this year and that is largely due to the accounts being agreed much earlier. Thanks are due to Derek and Chris for getting this organised so promptly after the 31st March year end. Being a registered charity means we are able to benefit in fundraising and lower tax, but the need for clarity in reporting and following disclosure and other rules does take up a fair bit of Trustees' time. It is great that we can now go back to focussing on the main project rather than procedures and bookkeeping.

I apologise for the omission of the September update due to my spell in hospital. I'm pleased to say that it's good to be back even though my fellow directors kept all the plates spinning in my absence. Given the variable weather I think my timing seems to have been pretty good.

Working Parties

As we've worked into the autumn the work pattern has changed. The inevitable mowing is finally coming to an end as the growing season finishes and we turn our attention to bramble, hedge and tree management in the knowledge that nesting has finished for the year.

During the last weeks there has been a concerted effort to sort out all



areas. The Spondon stretch has been a particular challenge as can be seen from the before picture, but after a concerted effort it is all looking in fine fettle again ready for the winter.



The ongoing work to build the Borrowwash wall and maintain the canal line and lock chamber has continued. It is becoming a bit of a showcase area for us as it is so well kept, so regularly.



Efforts have been made to keep the stretch at Draycott clear, but these have been added to by the insistence of a car driver to use the new canal as a car park. Heaven knows how anyone could go off the road from a straight stretch, but someone managed it.

As you can see the car took out the roadside hedge and the Vole Fence and ended up in the water. The car has been retrieved, and our work parties have repaired the damage to the fences and David is trying to pursue the driver to pay for the damage caused.



Also at Draycott the cycle path gate post by the café seemed to have rotted through, so we were able to replace the sizeable timber gatepost and check out the rest. It gets a lot of use with all the passers by, so it's good for the public to see our efforts at upkeep.



Last time I mentioned that

we have been cataloguing the trees East of Hopwell Road. We've now sorted out the summary and identified those that are dead or dangerous. Roger's forestry team have now taken them down and we've had corporate teams from Rolls Royce to work at clearing out some of the undergrowth so we can be ready for the next stages, particularly near the old winding hole.



Those of you that have seen our Solis tractor in action will have noted that it isn't the largest (or fastest) vehicle around. It has been in full use over the summer and has proved a wise investment. As an effort to speed up the regular maintenance work we've looked at acquiring a second hand flail arm to be fitted onto it. This will enable hedges and sloping banks to be trimmed (whilst the tractor stays on the level tow path). David has negotiated a trade in with an underused trailer and made arrangements for it to go off to be fitted. Should make life much easier for next year!

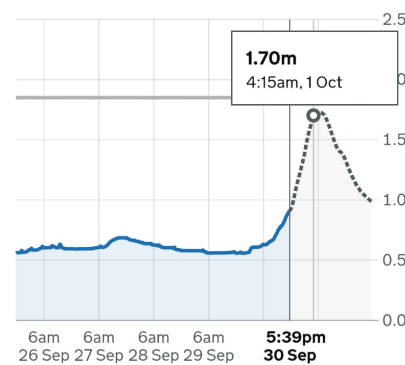
However we were a bit non-plussed to find out we'd received a speeding ticket for travelling at 38 mph in a built up area near Leicester. After much scratching of heads we realised that at top speed it gets overtaken by pedal cycles and it would have taken a week to get it to Leicester. Photographic evidence proved that a

transit truck had cloned our number plates and after some correspondence with the police they have revoked the ticket and apologised. Just some of the admin that we have to deal with now.



Height in metres over the last 5 days and up to 36 hour forecast

ⓘ This station includes an automated model. The highest level in the model is 1.73m on 1 October at 6:15am. [Read more about how we forecast river levels.](#)



Download data CSV (16KB)

Derby Riverboat

The Riverboat season is drawing to an end and our last trips will be at half term on 26th/27th October. Overall the weather hasn't been favourable this year, but the trips have continued to be well supported and we are seeing more charters. The weather through September/October has been very variable and each storm we get gives rise to increasing river levels. We keep an eye on the forecasts as we need to move the boat out from under Causey Bridge if water levels get too high. You can see the forecasts we get—not all turn out to be as extreme, but we have to react. Fortunately Mike has been on the case and moved the boat when needed.

As an extra working party Simon and Mike have re-established the winter mooring protection. As the river can rise by over 3m in flood we build a structure to keep the boat off the jetty, so that when the water subsides the boat isn't left high and dry on a jetty that is gradually sinking under the weight. Each year we hope it will be the last if the pontoon gets built, but each year the resident allows us to camp at the bottom of her garden. She and her daughter have poor mobility so at least she gets someone checking over the jetty condition. Anyway, it's now ready for the end of season mooring.



In the last issue I referred to visiting journalists who benefited from free boat trips. You may be interested to read further words of wisdom here

https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/travel/born-uk-city-rated-worst-tourists-heres-why-love-3329413?ico=most_popular

The Tourist office were grateful for our support on this as most reports "set the record straight"

Fireboat

During September MSDS Marine visited again and with their underwater drone pretty much proved the presence of the Fireboat. The next steps will be divers, but that will await the spring and lower, predictable water. You can hear Mike's interview with Radio Derby here.

[Andy Twigge - Becky Measures sits in \(24/09/2024\) - BBC Sounds](#)

Pontoon

Whilst there's been little extra input from the Council we've been pushing matters forward. Don and Tony have undertaken some major tidying of the otherwise overgrown site. The boat is now a lot easier to see.

Mike has also been moving the pontoon build forward. We now have an agreed detailed design and a cost estimate (hopefully to be reduced). We also have an unwritten promise of a £65k grant from the council—if we can prove we've raised the rest. We have engaged a fundraising expert with a view to funding the gap of about £140k and are hopeful of progress on this. We have a number of possible donors, both charitable and private sector. It will be a challenge, but the process has started!



The first piece of fundraising advice has been to get feedback on who wants a pontoon—to "define the need". We have developed a survey to gather that information. We already have over a hundred replies with a good level of support to get the pontoon done. You can participate in the survey at this link. <https://forms.gle/xGqAtJkiT28NWGLt7>

Mike has also formed a group of interested parties to discuss the city centre and this includes people from the Museum of Making, Rolls Royce, Down to Earth Derby (backed by the Eden Centre) and Marketing derby. Hopefully this can help to put the case for a more active city centre riverside, which will promote our project generally. The first meeting is in a week's time.

Other Developments

Progress at Draycott on flood alleviation still awaits the presentation of a comprehensive model of water flows commissioned from Atkins by NR, but we understand it is now complete. We continue to rely on NR and STW to push this forward as they have the larger amounts of capital and the need to improve their position. This has now enabled us to settle the outstanding NR claim. Whilst we have settled for half the cost incurred at least we have £21k in the bank. Original advice by lawyers was not to take it to court, so we think this is the best we could do—the alternative would have been to carry on haggling with no sight of a solution.

We are currently awaiting NR to fund the removal of the land bridge at Draycott and the dredging of reeds in the ditch to reduce potential flooding. This would go some way towards bridging the reimbursement gap above. We also have the preliminary results of the water vole survey, which indicates no evidence of their presence, so that might make works easier in the short term and if confirmed with a spring survey the full project will be much less complicated to put into place.

At Sandiacre our working parties have cleared the area, and the timing has been very good as we received a quote for moving the sewer a few days ago. We are still trying to understand the detail, but it looks like it will be more expensive at over £400k, but it is feasible to fund and to move the project on. This will be a great relief to all concerned and while the sewer removal will be by contractors it will open up the possibility for volunteer and WRG led restoration of the lock and bridge.



A few days after receiving the quote we met at the newly tidied site with Erewash Borough Council to discuss the possible grant of a S106 award for around £100k. It looks very promising and if received would mean we need to raise perhaps another £150k for the sewer relocation and a further £150k for the restoration. It's a large number, but we already have some ideas on where we might find the funding.

At the cottages matters have progressed well and we now have all the cottages occupied and no sign (yet) of any road clearway signs.

We have continued to push forward with land purchase on the stretch towards Breaston. We also put in a bid for a field at the SW corner of the Hopwell Road/canal path crossing, but were outbid. On the subject of land purchase we have been trying to police land encroachment along the Breaston stretch. Sometimes the encroachment is minor, but it can lead on to others following suit, so we have to protect our rights. Pictured is an example of one such event. With this and challenges with aggressive horses currently using the path for grazing under a licence we need to be ever vigilant to protect our assets and the public.



Events



I'm pleased to report yet another successful event at Shardlow on 7th/8th September. It generated considerable interest and David even entertained the new East Midlands mayor.

Following the Rotary walk organised in June we have strengthened ties with the local Erewash Rotary Club. I attended a "Hillbilly" event with them, organised by our resident Rotarian, Paul Turner, and they raised over £500 for us. They have also decided to nominate us as one of this year's charities and provide a further £1,000 donation. Hopefully this might then see a longer term connection, possibly with some volunteering support in the vicinity.

Members' Meetings

We now have only two meetings planned to complete the year. The AGM notice has already been distributed separately with accounts and an agenda and I repeat that all are welcome to attend in person. Both meetings will be at the Cottages in Hopwell Road, Draycott, DE72 3PE starting at 7.30pm

October 22nd AGM

November 26th Plans for Derby.

By Mike Wingfield/Chris Madge

We currently have no further meetings booked into 2025 and Anne plans to discuss again who is interested and in what topics with members at the AGM. She is also concerned that after so many years she is running out of fresh ideas and would welcome some assistance in finding speakers—assuming that is still what is required.

Thanks for your support and to all those who have sent me encouragement over the past few weeks!

Chris Madge