

Chairman's Update

November 2024

We've just seen the end of a really cold spell. Now as the temperature is recovering we're enjoying seasonal rain. We're all hoping that the high rainfall doesn't cause flooding as it has before. At least we should be better prepared for the future. Of course it has posed a problem for our working parties with a few cancellations required. Hopefully we'll be back to normal leading up to Christmas.



Working Parties

A lot of this month's work has been focussed at Draycott. We've made sure the drainage is as clear as possible. The team has been clearing the banks and the waterways wherever possible. As you can see there is a clear reduction in bankside grass and the ditch under the concrete bridge has been opened up. It's been a lot of work to cover the kilometre length and it's generated a lot of cuttings. Lucky we've had John to supervise its disposal on the bonfire!



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It's a hard job, but someone has to do it!

Fortunately the new flail has been fully operational and has made a substantial difference.

It also looks as though Network Rail are getting ready to clear the concrete bridge and dredge the ditch, which will complete the job. As we expected, we have received written confirmation that water voles are not present at the Draycott length so we will be able to undertake the works. We may consider removing the vole fence if we get a further confirmation in the spring, especially following the breach by flying vehicles making it less effective.

The team have also collected a donation of building materials. The breeze blocks, bricks, cement and sand were left over from a home building project, so were added to the pile of available materials for future use.

There are plenty of smaller jobs that will use materials. Thanks to Charlie for the use of his tow bar and the team for hefting the blocks.



Derby Riverboat

As planned Simon and I moved the boat to its winter mooring and winterized her. We had completed our final trip on 27th October and our original plan to move her on that day backfired when we had passengers for an extra trip. With the clocks moving back there was no light left, so the following week we completed the move. It's an art to judge when there's sufficient extra water to get over the underwater bar around the mooring, but not too much to prevent control. It was still a little shallow, but with a bit of cajoling we succeeded. Simon and Mike will have a final visit before the winter just to tidy up.



Simon has also given the electrics an inspection and protection against floods at the main terminal. This should prevent any shorting, which last year caused a problem and necessary repairs.

We'll have the traditional gathering of volunteers at the end of the month to talk about how it went, what we could do better and any planned developments. So that we are ready for next season.

Pontoon

Progress with the Council has been no quicker, but we keep pushing and get the right sort of encouragement, but not anything really concrete.

We've been working on fundraising the gap and I'm pleased to say we have trimmed it significantly, so that we are somewhere around £100k depending on what's included. We have again received a verbal commitment from DCC for the £65k grant. We've had a couple of very productive meetings with the fundraising expert and progress looks good.

The survey has received a seal of approval so if you haven't already please complete the survey below. <https://forms.gle/xGqAtJkiT28NWGLt7>

Just before we closed down the boat service we gave our local politicians a free trip. We attracted the MPs for Derby South and Derby North, the leader and deputy leader of DCC and our two trustees. We were wary of the weather as we wanted to show them all what a great visitor attraction we had created.



The weather held out and we were more successful than we hoped. Mike and I were able to show people how underused the river is, how people enjoy the trips and what a wonderful organisation they had in the DSCT. I think we were successful on all counts. Mike was able to outline some of our plans (not least the pontoon) and received encouragement from all. The two MPs have also offered their support, although on a needs basis rather than attending regular Trust meetings as Trustees.

I mentioned last month the "Riverside Group" formed by Mike with the intention to push for positive and canal/boat friendly development in the city centre. This group met for the first time and agreed a priority for items to promote. We were delighted when the two MPs appeared for an hour to lend their support. Given that the current city Council leader, Nadine Peatfield, who was on the boat is also deputy regional mayor it means we have the ear of the right politicians.

Other Developments

At last we have the Atkins report on water flows around Breaston and Draycott for presentation and discussion in a few days time. That will tell us whether there is scope for working with Network Rail.

Sandiacre

Progress is slow as we await detailed plans of the new sewer location. Once we have the accurate plans we can move with the garage removal, etc with Dave Lockley, our helpful neighbour. On the subject of helpful neighbours we have been in contact with the Erewash Conservation, Preservation and Development Association to understand if the works will disturb them at Sandiacre Lock Cottage. It looks like we can manage to avoid disturbance. Next is the public meeting to explain to everyone else what is happening. And of course we need to raise the missing funds and work out how to temporarily shore up the lock chamber to make it safer for contractors.

Land Purchases

Following the loss of the bid for a field at the SW corner of the Hopwell Road/canal path crossing we looked at an alternative field adjacent to the canal path and nearer to Breaston. This time we were successful and acquired just over 4 acres from a supportive local farmer. Given the predictions that the budget would increase tax on this type of activity the farmer was keen to sell before the budget, so we were able to achieve a quick deal and one at the right price. The challenge however was that we couldn't get our normal solicitors to handle it quickly enough. However we managed to get it through and are now tidying up the documents and looking at a new firm to file the returns.

On the subject of solicitors we have been struggling for a while to get a comprehensive service. We have essentially looked at different firms for different tasks. In our networking in the city we've come across a firm that works well with other charities and have been talking to them about them coordinating all the issues we come across. While land purchases have been key over the last year we will be needing contract advice and possibly input to constitutional and tax matters. We've a presentation in a week or so to sort out the possibilities. It would be really helpful to have access to a team who all know what we are doing and can consider the whole of our activities in any advice given.

Website

We are also looking to fully review our website. We have a comprehensive website, but over the

years things have become out of date. Our website is normally the first step for any outside organisation looking to understand us. Of course with the need to raise funding it is important that the website not only gives a good impression to potential supporters, but also provides details of our accounts, policies and approach to meet funders' expectations. Any comments and help from members will be gratefully received, but at present Peter Warmingham and I are working with our webmaster Andrew Baird to get us up to date.

Peter is also part way through writing a new publication for sale at future events. We currently have a few walks publicised around and along the canal line in our "Route Maps" section. He is pulling together sufficient options to constitute a full publication. Again ideas are very welcome—an example can be found on this link

https://derbycanal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Draycott-Walk_v2.pdf

Members' Meetings

We held our AGM on 22nd October and had a full house at Draycott. Thanks to all who came. We finished a little more promptly this year with not too many hard questions of the directors. Minutes of the meeting and reports are available on the website at <https://derbycanal.org.uk/the-trust/>

One of the best parts of the evening was awarding the Kate Birtles Trophy for the volunteer who has made the most impact over the past year. We were delighted to recognise Charlie Forbes, who has been a stalwart of working parties, including tree management special parties and events throughout the year. Thank you Charlie.

At the AGM we asked for comments about Members meetings and Anne was thanked for the excellent programme and encouraged to do it all again. She has been busy and has only a few speaker dates to confirm. Below are the next few dates. Thanks again Anne.



Our final meeting for this year is a talk by Mike Wingfield on what's happening in Derby. Mike wants to show you all the way he's promoting ideas for the city. Be prepared for a video and some excellent slides of what is coming.

November 26th	Plans for Derby.	Mike Wingfield
January 28th	Restoration of Aqueduct Cottage	Ian Hooker
February 25th	TBC	
March 25th	DSCT Volunteers Stories	our own volunteers
April 22nd	How it used to be at DSCT	Past chairman Judy Flack
May 27th	Cromford Mill and Arkwright	Cliff Lea

Meetings will take place on the fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7.30pm at the Draycott Cottages unless specified otherwise.

Thanks for your support.

Chris Madge