

## Chairman's Update

June 2025

Welcome to the June update, bringing you news of progress (or otherwise) on the canal restoration and associated matters. I hope you find some encouragement and distraction from the worrying world news bombarding us currently. You can be assured that the Trust continues to push forward for positive outcomes despite other events.

We've had lots of news about the weather causing water shortages, with a drought being declared in the north west. As someone looking forward to a week on the canals I wonder whether we'll be hit by water shortages, but at least there's a silver lining. Droughts mean money is put to finding water and that means we have a better chance of funding for canals to transfer water around the countryside. Whilst the means of restoration remains pretty much unchanged the means of raising funding is always under review and this is where the value of affiliation to national bodies such as the IWA and connection to other restorations in the country can pay dividends.

### Working Parties

Spare a thought for our diligent volunteers. It's a good job we have equipment like the tractor and flail, especially during summer heat waves. In fact our tractor has attracted interest from at least one of our sister organisations and we're happy to recommend our solution. The work at **Borrowash** lock has continued and we now have a shiny new gate in place in the repositioned fence to enable access for maintenance in future.



Further down the line at Borrowash the tractor has now made inroads into the growing weeds. Can you see the tractor in the grass and reeds? You'll need good eyesight.

The team has also been working at **Draycott** alongside the water vole fence and towards Hopwell Road. We've made

some progress with the outstanding survey and now hope to get it resolved by a new provider in the next week or so. This may then allow us to modify the fence depending on the survey findings.

We've made no real progress on dredging, as Network Rail are still



prevaricating so we've told them it will now have to wait until the reeds die back in the autumn. Conversations about pylons (and biodiversity support) with National Grid have been postponed, so Martin, our Civil Engineer, has seized the initiative and set down an agenda to direct their attention, so watch this space!



And at **Sandiacre** the lock has also been worked upon. As you can see, the work has made a big difference. This will also help with the ongoing conversations with the residents there, especially as progress has been stalled for so long.



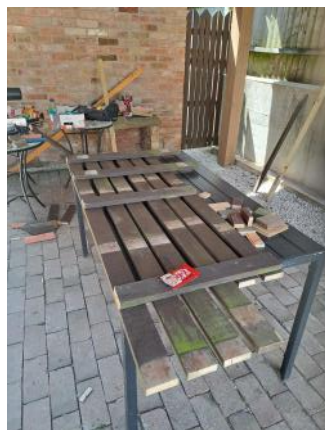


The team have also been working with the public around the area towards **Breaston**. Firstly, we have worked with bereaved relatives, who wanted to install a bench along the path. The deal has been that they pay for the materials and we install it at a pre-agreed place that suits our future restoration.

Further along the stretch, on the land that is in the process of being bought by us from Sustrans,



there's been a fallen tree that has breached the neighbour's fence. Whilst this wasn't our problem, as the fallen tree still belonged to Sustrans, we undertook the work to ensure good relationships with the canal path neighbours and of course with Sustrans, who will pay us for the work undertaken on their behalf.



At the **Cottages** the work on the waste system smells has had a significant impact and the Cottages team has found another job to undertake. The site has always funnelled winds around the toilet blocks and this discourages customers sitting in the outside area. The team has therefore created fencing to block the winds. Obviously this helps us in that the more successful the café is the greater the income we can generate.

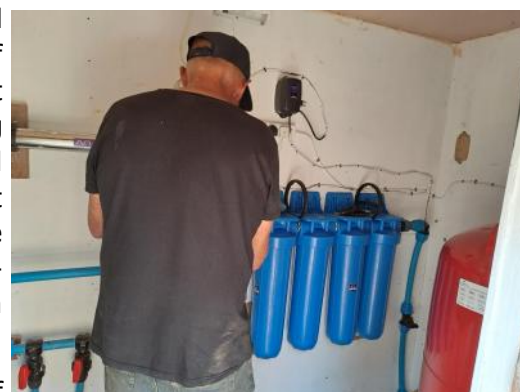
We have also been contacted by the borough council who have notified us that they have an additional duty to monitor water supplied commercially and

apparently they have discovered this includes us. So we've had a visit from their expert with a list of matters to look at, one of which will be a formal risk and maintenance scheme. Whilst this is a pain to deal with, particularly as we've been working without issue for over three years, it is something that we will work to meet the requirements as quickly as possible. In fact we were able to deal with their biggest comment regarding the water filtration process within a day of it being raised. It's fortunate that as a charity people are happy to support us when we call upon them.

In truth having more extensive paperwork will I'm sure be of value and will be welcomed by our insurers.

### Focus Meeting

During the month the directors held a brainstorming meeting to check how we are organised and our priorities. You already know that we are an aging group and need to bring in younger people at all levels. Our conclusions were that we would focus our activity on fewer key projects and delegate more authority to specific directors to move things on and spread the load more evenly. Furthermore we will progress the work at Spondon Bourne, using this as a concerted effort to connect to local residents and if this proves a success then it should encourage more volunteers from this approach.



This is ready to go as soon as we get assurances on legality from DCC. Hopefully this will see new volunteers who will gradually work up through the organisation. If it succeeds we can look to replicate it in other locations. It is certain that making a difference on the canal path (and meeting the public on the Riverboat) is a way to sell our project. With that in mind we have made a commitment to push harder in Sandiacre, Draycott and Derby city centre, which should provide visible improvements.

Members may have noticed recent publicity about the East Midlands Mayor having a devolved sum of around £2 billion to create better communications within the East Midlands, and particularly between Derby and Nottingham. The press have raised again the possibility of a tram extension to Derby and of course this is a potential problem for us as previously the canal route has been suggested as a very handy stretch of land to use. Since the last time this was raised we have improved our position by putting two stretches into water and acquiring a lot of land on the line. As we have already reported we are pushing for the East Midlands Combined Authority to promote and support the canal as a flood defence and water transfer option, so this would preclude a tram. So the news is good in that it provides money to the region, but a potential issue if it provides it for competing interests. All the more reason to keep close to the authority. And on that subject.....

## **Derby Progress**

Mike has been leading discussions around development of the riverside in Derby. Our Trust is leading a group that comprises senior university personnel, a museum director, designers, Down to Earth Derby (attached to the Eden Project), Marketing Derby and the local MP. Ideas for the development are now advancing steadily and will be reviewed by local officers and the Council leader in the next day or so. A large part of the design will be promoting Derby as a river destination for canal boats. This could lead on to a significant pull to complete a canal to Derby, thereby achieving our objective. Of course this contact with key thinkers in the city will also enable us to input on the use of funding described above.

Part of the demonstration of this is our "Phase 1", which is the new pontoon for our Riverboat. After matters stalled for 5 weeks around the High Voltage cable in the river, we have seen rapid developments over the last few days. We now have a quote for all the works to move the cable AND a potential alternative supplier, who is suggesting they can better that quote. The other supplier is the contractor for the Flood works (OCOR) and we are now also hopeful that they might provide access for passengers to the boat well into the autumn. However we await a site meeting in the next day or so to firm up possibilities. If this comes to pass we can get works in train, so that we continue operation until October from Causey Bridge and instal the new pontoon ready for next season. We aren't counting chickens just yet, but it is looking a lot more positive. We will still need to find some funding to cover the electric cable, but we are already working on that issue.

With the improving access Mike has been successfully pushing the marketing of Riverboat trips and has already seen a marked upturn in interest and charter sailings. As ever thanks go to all our volunteers who keep the passengers happy and recommending us to their friends.

## **Events**

We have just attended the Long Eaton Carnival and will be visiting Chellaston next weekend.

As always the stall looked good with enough interesting material to get people to stop and chat. Inevitably a lot of interest is in the activity of the Trip Boat—even for residents of Long Eaton, but as ever anything that generates interest is a good result for us. We have a number of supportive Trustees, particularly in Erewash and Derby, so it is good to be seen promoting the cause.



## **Trustees**

After the recent elections we have had notification of a change in Trustees appointed by the County and South Derbyshire. With the change in control at the County we now have a Reform councillor, so we look forward to understanding his views and how they might support our project.

## **Members' Meetings**

Our last talk was on the topic of Richard Arkwright by Cliff Lea and it was a comprehensive and entertaining talk with a number of canal references added for our benefit.

## Our Next Meeting

Members Maxwell Craven and David Jennings and I will be leading the next meeting. We will be undertaking our annual walk and this time it will cover the city centre **starting outside the Silk Mill at 6.30pm**. We expect it to last around 70 minutes and finish at the Royal Standard Pub (previously the "Tap") by Exeter Bridge where we can chat over a drink at the bar. As you'll realise from the comments above, there is a lot of change being planned in the city and we will cover both the original course, location and use of the canal. We'll also cover all those plans outlined above aiming to improve the city and, we hope, embrace the river at last. Whilst we will be ambling around Derby we won't be travelling far and it is level all the way.

Our final meeting before the summer break will be at the Cottages from 7.30pm on 22nd July when we will welcome Robert Mee, who will talk to us about the Derwent Valley Heritage Way, a path that ties together a lot of history, heritage and locations all leading to the start of the Derby Canal!

Thanks for your support.

Chris Madge