

Chairman's Update

January 2026

Here we sit at the start of another year. After the droughts of the spring and summer last year it seems we've had rain most days and particularly during January, but despite this we have so far avoided any hint of flooding around Draycott or elsewhere. Fingers crossed!

I was able to take up a week on the canals in my share boat in December. I've never known it so quiet and I think we met half a dozen boats over 5 days. Despite the forecast we had some sunshine, but it was very cold. Setting off from the marina after a night on board we had a beautifully clear morning, but had to prize off the heavily frozen ropes. Whilst we didn't see many boats we did see quite a bit of dredging activity, which suggests that maintenance work continues even though the network is struggling to deal with major storm and climate change damage such as the Whitchurch breach.



New year is also the time for new year's resolutions. With that in mind we organised a brainstorming session for the directors to get back in action after the Christmas break. We reassessed the projects and tried to rank them by likelihood and possible timing. We also looked at our current position on the Derby Arm and the options available especially in the light of other developments around the river and Pride Park. The Arm may not be the most immediate project, but like all parts of the project we need to know what we'd do if and when the opportunity arises.

Most important was looking at our organisation, especially the Board, and determining how we manage succession. Inevitably this started with a comparison of medical condition; apparently that's the norm when older men get together? I'm pleased that we came out with a plan to identify younger recruits. Whilst the Board is strong at present it is so much easier to attract and recruit new people before the need becomes critical. So for all those members out there, who may be coming up to retirement or want to get more involved in delivering the canal please get in touch.

Working Parties

Over the last month or so the weather has impacted on the working parties with a few dates being cancelled when the weather necessitated it. However the teams have had considerable success on the dryer days. It's been a good time to maintain some interpretation panels at Harvey Road and Shelton Lock, areas that we don't get to very often as we



don't own the land.

Of course we are in the season of the year when we are allowed to maintain hedges and trees. It makes a big change from the constant mowing required in the summer. Roger and team have been managing the trees. We've had a few fallen trees to respond to. They were able to clear a fallen tree blocking the Chellaston path within a day of it being reported.

They have also been busy with hedgerows. At Draycott the short section of hedge along Hopwell Road has been laid—a difficult job given the size and age of the hawthorn—and work has started cutting back the south hedge heading towards Breaston. We are also looking at a stretch leading to Spondon Bourne, although that too will be difficult and may need to be carried over until the autumn.



The teams have also been busy towards Sandiacre. Following on from clearing the bridge under Longmoor Lane at Sandiacre the teams have been tackling ivy growth by ring cutting the larger trees and clearing the grassy areas. Further along stakes have been installed to prevent vehicles from driving



along the path parallel to Longmoor Lane between the bridge and Bostocks Lane.

One of the teams has also been working at Spondon Bourne. The section west of the Spondon Bourne is exceptionally muddy in winter. Working with the Council they have cleared vegetation around the pathway. The plan is to straighten the path and lay MOT, but before that we plan to consult with neighbours to try to get a few more community minded residents to help out. We'll be setting up a gazebo to talk to them and aim to get a few names to help finish the job. The request to "buy" the stretch of land from the City Council is still being considered.



As a departure from the norm one team has undertaken some investigative work on our land between Spondon Bourne and Ullikers Bridge. As you can see they were successful in locating the canal wall in a number of trial holes.

Whilst full restoration is a way off just yet it is useful to know what's there in readiness.



And finally there's been work at Borrowwash. In another break from the norm we haven't tackled Borrowwash Wall, but have been trimming hedges on the access track.

It's all looking good now and was a good site for the official renaming of Dagley's Lock. We were pleased that Nigel was able to join our volunteer party and friends from his many years involved in the restoration to celebrate the event.



Riverboat Pontoon

It's a case of good news and bad news with this. The good news is that we've submitted the planning application and the Council validated it within 24 hours. Thanks to Duncan and David for getting together all the reports and documents. We've had some responses already, which seem to be straightforward to deal with and show DCC Planning is pushing it through. With a 16 week timescale we should have a decision by mid April.

On the other hand moving the cable is definitely well behind the 5 weeks quoted on National Grid's quote. We are having to deal with the possibility of Himalayan Balsam contaminating the works, of Council permissions and path closures and a matter that we didn't expect, which is that there is a small patch on unregistered land by the Museum and there's a six week notice period before works can start. They have also discovered that there is a cantilevered section within the path and the contractors are concerned about how to dig a trench through it. We've had a reasonably clear dialogue with NG, but as you can tell there's a lot to do in a limited time so we've coopted the MP to put on some pressure. We now have a meeting with a senior person there, but it's in 3 weeks time! It's getting tight to hit the June deadline.

On the matter of legal documents and again with the MP's help we have got a response—just need the documents now. The Engineering department that is controlling the project has got an increased workload trying to sort out Darley Abbey bridge—again. All access across the bridge is now prevented as they've found settlement on the bank, so it's a priority!



We've been keeping an eye on the OCOR 2 works that are now in full operation. As the picture shows Phoenix Green works to install the flood wall are well advanced and definitely prevent our access. The long delayed demolition of the first office building has also been completed as you can see by the gap!



Other Projects

We are still awaiting a formal response from EMCCA on the drainage project between Breaston and Draycott and understand that EMCCA are looking to find some funding, but haven't been told that officially as yet.

However, we have been approached by a local developer to see if they could offer a similar scheme to the one completed at Spondon. The thought is that we could get a section of the canal built by them as part of a significant housing development. Obviously that provokes a number of questions for the planning authority, but it seems like a good deal for us and should enhance the amenity for locals considerably. Of course the other benefit is that this type of project would probably mean the spoil could be reorganised on the combined site—if it is uncontaminated. There's a long way to go, but it's good to have a back up possibility. We will be talking to the planners to see if this has legs before we do too much work.

We continue slowly with the purchase of land from Sus-trans and have the potential for another small piece to consider.

Sandiacre is progressing slowly. We have had a couple of meetings with the key neighbour and are expecting to start a three way negotiation of terms shortly. It is complicated by the fact that the property is held in Trust for three people, but hopefully this will move on now. We have noticed that large blocks have been moved onto our land by an "unknown" neighbour and are trying to discover the reason for it.



At Chellaston our focus is on gaining access to land and whilst we had a promising start the are now trying to get the conversation moving again with the landowner. With the new year we'll also be looking to restart the conversation with the developer, although they seem to be focussing on the A50 access route at present.

Mike and I have been progressing the Riverside project and have met with various stakeholders from the university to discuss options. We have now seen the Riverside walk that we've been proposing incorporated into a longer option that stretches into the Peak District and potentially could get national government funding. It's more networking with key people including the Mayor.

And finally at our meetings on the Derby Nature Collective we have been briefed by the EA on proposals for OCOR phase 3. This is looking to cover the river flood management from the city centre to the Spondon loop. We are expecting that by being involved from the start we might influence the river works in our favour and perhaps get them to build some of our infrastructure to get into and/or cross the river.

Members' Meetings

Our Next Meeting on 27th January will be a presentation by Martin Pilbin, our resident water engineer. As you may recall, Martin has been involved in our strategy to use the canal for flood prevention, water transfer and latterly for grey water recycling. He'll explain why these options are so exciting as a way to accelerate our progress and also on progress at the Buckingham Canal, who already seem to be succeeding in significant fundraising from these options.

Future meetings will be

24th Feb Restoration of S Wingfield Station by Liz Best

24th March Chesterfield Canal and Stavely Basin by Rod Auton

Meetings will be held **at the Cottages as usual starting at 7.30pm.**

Hope to see you soon.

Chris