

Chairman's Update

February 2026

Welcome to another monthly update. The weather may not have improved much as the rain continues to fall, but I suppose we can expect the reservoirs to fill up ahead of better summer weather. Despite the rain our intrepid volunteers have continued to make progress along the line for which the Trust continues to be very grateful. Again despite the appearance of flooding the Cottages have remained dry and the car park drains have even meant that customers have a dry car park and that's good for business.

Working Parties

Work to manage hedges and trees continues. As the buds appear on the hawthorn and the days get longer we can see spring approaching at last. It means that we need to get hedge work completed over the next few weeks, so the trimming of the southern hedge by Hopwell Road at Draycott has continued.



At Breaston we've been in contact with the Navigation to discuss some tree planting. Apparently Thatcher's Cider are encouraging the planting of apple trees at pubs to produce fruit for public consumption. It's been tried successfully along the canal network in

certain places and I'm sure is a good idea. However it seemed important

that we avoided planting in a location that would interfere with the canal restoration. The land outside the pub is owned by the Navi so the call went



out and negotiations were successful. The deal was that we helped to prepare the area with our equipment and they planted in the "right places".

The team have continued with exploration of the canal line by Ullikers Bridge. It's not quite an archaeological site, but the wall is being discovered and mapped along the line. We've discovered the gaps and lack of a block wall on the offside. It's also a source of contact with the passing crowds. Everyone tends to stop and look down a hole that's being dug, don't they.



At the other side of Spondon Bourne Don and Tony have been clearing the path in readiness for further work and laying an MOT surface. We are still trying to take ownership of this stretch, but it looks like the change in Local Authorities is causing a review of the Council's land holdings and so delaying a decision. However, whilst one part of the Council vacillates another has been particularly helpful. We have the planned works agreed and permissions (and even help) to reduce the trees on the path and we will be supplied with the MOT from Council supplies. We just



need to supply the labour.

We often get interest from people passing by, but rarely attract volunteers. With this project we are setting up a marquee and "consulting with the neighbours" over the planned works. With this in mind we've put leaflets through local doors inviting them to come and talk to us. Fingers crossed. The plan is to straighten up the path alongside the hawthorn boundary, which is broadly where the towpath will be.

Close by this area the existing "Spondon Canal" has had a haircut. It is part of our obligations in return for taking ownership of the land after the canal had been dug out by the developer. Hopefully this will also encourage a few locals to offer their help.



I was in Spondon when I received a call during a particularly persistent downpour during the month to say that a resident of Longmoor Lane had a stream of water running through his garden. I visited to see we now had a canal in place behind his house. The old canal route was infilled, but the clay lining means that it now holds water between the raised old towpath and the hill on the other side. Unfortunately a few years ago a builder decided to provide a nice piece of flat lawn outside his property and flattened the bund. This resulted in a channel funnelling all the water through the property. He sold the plot and left the issue for others to sort out.

Whilst this was nothing to do with us our volunteers have repurposed some of the vole fence to keep the water at bay pending a more careful replacement of the bund in the summer. Hopefully



residents will appreciate our efforts and support our restoration and a permanent solution.



Riverboat Pontoon

The saga continues. The planning application is progressing well and we are expecting a positive decision in a few weeks. However progress with the high power cable continues to be slow. As previously described National Grid are coordinating the issues themselves. Given the long list of outstanding elements and a less informative than desired administrator it was useful to have the meeting organised by the local MP, Catherine Atkinson. She arranged the key people from NG to attend and we received a better update, but I'm not sure that the process speeded up as a result. NG demonstrated that they were pushing their contractor, etc, but also pointed to concern that the archaeologists that would oversee the works could bring works to a halt if artifacts are found. All we can do is to keep pushing and get it done as soon as possible.

We still await legal documents from the Council, although at least I've had an email response now. We'll be pushing Councillors, who are trying to move it on as evidenced by their influence over planning. We will get it done, but when is difficult to predict.

Progress on OCOR 2 flood defence in the city is proceeding apace. Our previous access to the boarding platform has been completely closed off and the new, higher bund is starting to take shape. It's just as well we didn't proceed with the previous pontoon!

Sandiacre continues to be pushed and we have finally clarified the position on the key neighbour. Next step will be back to Severn Trent and hopefully an accelerated rate of progress with him and other neighbours.

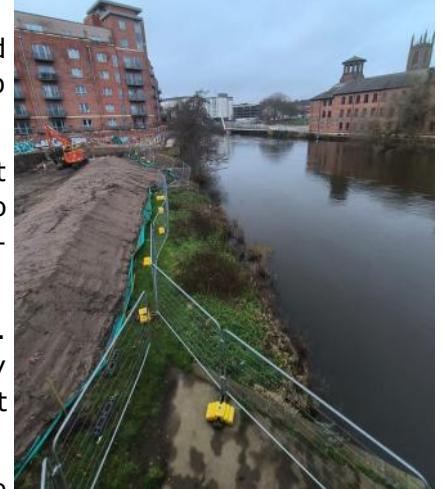
We seem to have some progress on the **Draycott/Breaston** stretch with EMCCA and our previous contact has now moved on and been replaced with a permanent employee, who has agreed to an early meeting with us. This could work in concert with the potential development described last month, which was received positively by the planners.



Our **land purchases** continue to progress in the Breaston area. Following a very positive meeting with our Trustees from Local Authorities, we were encouraged to push for land transfers from Local Authorities rather than have the issue tied up for a few years by the Local Authority reorganisation. With that in mind we have completed a full review of all Council owned sections and made an offer to buy two parcels from Erewash Borough adjacent to the M1. We have also agreed terms for a small section in Breaston as shown. It will require some work to bring it under control when we own it. In addition we continue slowly with the purchase of land from Sustrans. There are complications arising from them granting leases that is taking time to resolve, although with the activity on other plots it is useful to provide time to accumulate the funds required.

At the **Draycott Café** we've been talking to Garry and Joyce about providing some extra facilities for them. As our upstairs meeting room is rarely used, except for our meetings they are considering using the main room as a more casual area with soft chairs and access to a coffee machine. It sounds like a win/win situation as they get space for people if the café is full, especially when it's too cold or wet to sit outside, and we have access to softer chairs for our meetings. I've been noticing that some members have been bringing cushions! It looks like the café is full despite the weather and no doubt the success of extra drainage in the car park has helped.

Duncan is a key member on our team, especially with his planning knowledge. He normally responds to planning consultations and deals with our planning applications. It's great to have an expert on board. If you have a moment spare, perhaps you could comment on the Derby Local Plan by 9th March. It is good to let them know about our aspirations for boats in Derby and you can support us by accessing <https://letstalk.derby.gov.uk/local-plan>



I'm pleased to report that my involvement with an IWA working group has persuaded the IWA Trustees to support an initiative to recruit extra expertise and support for Restoration Trusts like us. We hope to see recruitment start shortly. I attend meetings of the Finance Committee for the IWA and I'm pleased to report that the organisation is looking much stronger now as the funding of the restoration initiative demonstrates. We need all the help we can get!

And on that note, I am pleased to report that our call for additional Board volunteers has already had some success with interest shown by an individual with engineering and army experience.

Members' Meetings

At our last meeting we were entertained by Martin Pilbin, who explained our strategy to use the canal for flood prevention, water transfer and grey water recycling. The audience was rapt and raised a number of technical questions, all of which were fielded expertly by Martin.

Our next meeting is on 24th February and we'll hear about the purchase and restoration of South Wingfield Station. This was a project taken on under the Historic Buildings Trust's control with Derek Latham a key driver. The presentation will be by Liz Best, who worked on the project. We think this will follow in the vein of Aqueduct Cottage, which was very well received.

Future meetings will be

24th Feb	Restoration of S Wingfield Station	by Liz Best
24th March	Chesterfield Canal and Staveley Basin	by Rod Auton
28th April	Erasmus Darwin—inventor of the boat lift	by Jenny Abnalls
26th May	Life as a Mill Worker in the Derwent Valley	

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

We may need to amend the March event. Our good friend Rod Auton, a long time supporter of the Chesterfield Canal, has just let us know of the death of his wife Kath. Those of you who know the Chesterfield will already be aware of the work that both Kath and Rod put into the restoration over many years. Our sympathies are with Rod and his family.

Thankyou for your continuing support

Chris