

Chairman's Update

April 2026

I'm often reminded of the saying "you wait and wait for a bus to come then several come together", and the question "do you want the good news or the bad news?". Both seem apt this month as you'll see below. Whilst we've had the Easter holidays during the month we've still seen developments on several fronts.

Working Parties



The better weather has had a few impacts on our working parties—firstly we've not had to cancel dates and secondly the warmer weather has caused the grass to grow. So the tractor and flail has been dusted down and put to work again. The picture shows the trimming on the stretch west of Sta-



tion Road, Borrowash where bluebells to flower. We've also around the Breaston Navigation Sustrans.



At **Ullikers Bridge** the stones ble. Some comments have been are trip hazards, so we have to form an even path between bridge. This should also avoid

we've cut the grass, but left the given a first cut to the larger area pub, which is currently paid for by

have been located as far as possible by walkers that the holes bought some MOT and applied the Spondon Bourne and the mud next winter again.

Across the **Bourne in Spondon** further progress has also been made. The path has been straightened by extracting a few roots that have become major obstructions over time.

Tony and Don have been leading the project, which gained publicity in the Derby Telegraph under the heading "Spondon Residents help Canal Trust to restore muddy path" in the following link <https://share.google/NbdAnRSQiFASpCeg6>

All publicity helps. Tony has also persuaded the council to approve our plans and to donate some limestone for the path.



We're looking at raising a grant for the other costs and delivering with the help of new local volunteers over the summer. The Council are also looking at transferring the land to the Trust, so it should be another step forward in the overall restoration as well as attracting a few more volunteers and publicity.



At **Draycott** our volunteers have been clearing the section behind the vole fence to try to keep on top of it. Whilst we have no voles there to keep out any more, the possible removal of

the fence seems to be premature especially bearing in mind the cost of setting it up.

At Draycott we've also been looking after the whip boundary planted around the winding hole at Hopwell Road.

In recognition of planned progress with the sewer replacement at **Sandiacre** we know we need to fill in the lock with hardcore to support sewer dig out machinery. As there is currently a



small sewer outlet that runs through the centre of the lock we will need to make sure it doesn't break under the weight of the plant and infill, so our volunteers have been collecting clean hardcore and smaller stones to pack the pipe. It won't be a problem

when we empty the lock again as the infill will be uncontaminated for disposal and the sewer pipe will be redundant.

Riverboat

So the saga continues, but mostly in a positive vein. The good news is that we have the cable movement scheduled to start on 14th May and it should take two weeks. At that time we can investigate the structure of the path and prove that the concrete can hold the pontoon in flood conditions. The bad news is that we have been informed that we need to sign an indemnity taking responsibility for any damage to remaining cables in the river. Apparently National Grid have only just discovered that the Riverboat runs up and down the river! So we've had to get solicitors to fight our case and make sure we don't have to promise too much. Of course the cables are on the river bed and we've not experienced any contact over three years, so it hasn't been a problem, but in any case we have compared the cables location against the river bed depths to make sure that we avoid the cable locations and where we can't they are well below the boat's draught at all times.

The planning permission has required a specific format to get an independent engineer's check on the strength of the path, so we've discussed the data that will be needed to do the calculations and provided lots of information including a Rolls Royce calculation. We were also asked to assess the speed of the flow now so it could be pro rated to flood conditions as a cross check on the numbers.

That's where the oranges come in. Apparently timing oranges floating down the river is the method. They float, they are easy to see and biodegradable—much better than a duck race. A trip to the pontoon manufacturer in Hampshire and progress in having a grant document agreed and about to be signed by the Council means we are almost ready to place an order and get the manufacture of the pontoon started.



So in summary we have ticked off a few more boxes and we know better what we need to do. Just have to keep it moving.

It now looks like we're likely to be installing the pontoon in in June, so we will miss the planned date, but hopefully not by too much.

One thing is for sure—I'll be very relieved when it's completed.

As planned the boat is now back under Causey Bridge. Simon, Mike and Neil have been undertaking maintenance on the motor. Just a few more checks to be set for the new season. We've also started



the clean up exercise now that we have good weather. A winter under trees and then a spell under the bridge with the local pigeons means that Outram really is looking in need of a spring clean. Our first stint has now been completed, so we have a clean canopy, a clean inside



and a much improved outside. Thanks to Chris, Pauline, Roger, David and Anne for joining me. We'll need another session to complete the clean up and apply some paint, but we'll be ready to go pretty soon.



There's a great deal of eagerness to get the trips under way again and much concern that we don't have a firm start date. There's certainly plenty of interest by the public, especially now the sun is out and the boat is back in the city. Perhaps we'll try a few trips under close supervision accessing the boat from St Mary's Bridge—depends how we progress with the pontoon, I think.

Riverside



The works on the city's flood defences are moving on apace. Further piling has been applied around the planned wall. The old Nat West building has been demolished and piling has been installed all around the riverside flats by Phoenix Green, in Stuart Street, across Derwent Street and around Exeter



House. Presumably the wall will be built on top of the pilings in due course, with gates built on Derwent Street and Exeter Street to be closed in the event of floods.



Mike and I continue to be involved in setting the agenda for the river development in the city. In particular the establishment of a garden and moorings on the river in place

of the demolished buildings is key. We are now planning to make a presentation to the city businesses and are trying to get a pro bono project manager to take it in front of the Council and funders like EMCCA or perhaps corporate donors. As before our ideas around the river downstream of the city, which will be affected by the final stage flood

defences are being discussed with the EA before proposals are set in concrete. This could be very helpful in taking forward our ideas for the Derby Arm.

The main project plan for **Draycott/Breaston** looks like it is gaining momentum. Whilst EMCCA are still deliberating we've had positive interest from Network Rail, the Borough Council and are looking at the potential for development along the stretch. We are hopeful that we might get a small development in place that would deliver a stretch of canal with facilities and some flood defence in place, which could then be expanded by the public bodies to protect the railway and houses from worsening storms.

Thankfully we have a group of trustees who are keen to promote us and point others to us to deliver community improvement and a source of biodiversity development credits.

At Sandiacre Lock Severn Trent have issued a formal letter of notice of the sewer movement to neighbours. It is now time for us to chase this up with the neighbours to move matters on. Once this is cleared we will need to be ready to move forward quickly, so we are reviewing again the fundraising possibilities in anticipation of starting in the summer.

Land issues

We are indebted to Paul Turner, who is currently dealing with several land purchase opportunities. We may not be able to use the land immediately, but if we don't have control of it when we need it life could be very difficult—and expensive. We are currently close to finalising the purchase from Sustrans of a stretch between Draycott and Breaston, and we have another small stretch east of Breaston that is also crucial. We have had discussions with Erewash Council about their sale of parcels of land that they own to us prior to the local authority changes and we are hopeful this will proceed on a mutually satisfactory basis. We still chase an owner near Swarkestone, so that we can be ready for the Chellaston development moving forward, but so far without any progress.

However it's not just land ownership we need to deal with. We are fortunate to have a planning expert in Duncan, who with other directors responds to other plans that may impact upon the canal development. An example is the potential development on Risley Lane that would cause a traffic issue just where we need to go under the road. Action now could save us a lot of hassle later on, so we need to remain vigilant.

We currently store a lot of our equipment at Breaston, but the farm land is now being sold so we may be evicted. If anyone knows of some available space for rent to hold a container or so within a reasonable distance of the canal line it would be most helpful.

Personnel Changes

A lot of our activity centres around establishing trust with key people, particularly those in local authorities. When changes take place it needs a real effort to tell the new officers or representatives who we are and what we do and most importantly why they should support us.

The local authority organisation changes are one such hiatus, but this will be complicated because the Chief Executives of both key authorities at Derby City and Erewash are in the process of change. When I first got involved with the Trust, Derby City did not support us at all, but the current Chief Exec, Paul Simpson, has been there to help when things get stuck over the last five years. We will miss his help in particular and with the help of our Trustees will make efforts to get to know the new Chief Execs in each area.

Events

We are quickly approaching the event season and David is coordinating a few events to attend. We always welcome help and new faces at these events, which can be a great day out as well as a useful way to promote the restoration. Please contact David if you can help on any of the upcoming dates.

Breaston Gala Monday 4th May

Nottingham Yacht Club Saturday 9th May—this will be held at the lock on the Cranfleet Cut



Long Eaton Carnival Saturday 20th June
Derby Market Hall late August

Whilst the main focus for us is the restoration, there are a number of matters which take place in the background, but which are vital for the good running of a charity of our size. My thanks go to Chris, who as Treasurer has submitted the numbers for accountants' review within a week of the March year end. Also due many thanks is Peter, our editor, who has published the Packet, which should already have reached your inboxes or letterbox. Peter has also now joined Anne in organising speakers for our monthly meetings.

And on that subject

Meetings

Our next meeting is one I have been especially looking forward to. We have Jenny Abnalls, a Trustee of the Erasmus Darwin Museum coming up from Lichfield to talk to us about the man himself. He has relevance for us as a new Erasmus Darwin Physics Garden is in our plans for the riverside, just where his original garden was located. He lived by the river in Derby around the time our canal was built and was a member of the Lunar Society, which brought together most of the key brains of his time. He first formulated the concept of a boat lift and his grandson Charles picked up his ideas on evolution from Erasmus's writings, so it should be a most "illuminating" talk.

28th April	Erasmus Darwin—inventor of the boat lift by Jenny Abnalls
26th May	Life as a Mill Worker in the Derwent Valley presented by Mary Wilson
23rd June	A walk around the Severn Trent Water Raynesway plant and a presentation on the water transfer scheme on the Grand Union.
28th July	Finding treasure as a detectorist by Tim Mellor
23rd Sept	From the Trent to the Mersey' by Alastair Clarke
26th October	AGM

Meetings will be held **at the Cottages as usual starting at 7.30pm** for all but the June meeting.

Thankyou for as always for your continuing support

Chris

