

Chairman's Update

September 2026

Welcome again to the monthly update. I'm sitting in the middle of our village's scarecrow festival and for the first time we are participating. I'm pleased to say that most of the creative work has been passed to my daughter (a schoolteacher) and her daughters. Not sure the creative arts are my forte! However the theme is "What I want to be when I grow up". I couldn't persuade them that canal restorer would be a good topic. But then it was never my ambition when I was young and it's strange how life deals the cards.

I was asked the other day by another local restoration group how DSCT attracted new Trustees and it got me thinking how we'd assembled the current strong team. There are two features of past successes. Firstly, we need to positively ask new people, probably in person, because most people are shy and modest about their skills. Secondly, people test the water with small tasks initially and then either find it isn't for them or feel at home and gradually develop an area of expertise. It's good to see how our management team has slowly increased and how each of our management team has taken on duties, sometimes unfamiliar, and grown into specific roles. There's a particular pleasure in each small step forward and the camaraderie of working as a team.

The other lesson is that we shouldn't get complacent, but ensure we have younger enthusiasts ready to join the team to take over as the rest of us age. The benefit of having a strong team now is that it is easier for new people to find a role and to be encouraged and developed by the existing group. We have a few people in our midst who already readily preach the canal to friends, but if you think there is someone at home getting bored, who might enjoy what we do please contact me or another director and we'll make them feel very welcome.

Working Parties

Again Draycott has been one of the key areas. With considerable effort expended on the ditch bottom last month the



team worked on the banks in September. It was easy access on the tow path side, but getting across to the offside posed more problems with the absence of the concrete bridge. However with a bit of ingenuity a Youngman scaffold



board and a makeshift scaffold pole handrail passage with hand tools was enabled. Lots of effort were needed to bring the banks, including some intrusive roots, under control.

Also in Draycott we've been approached by the County Flood officer to amend the bund by the cottages. She's suggested that we should allow water to go to the west from Hopwell Road. Now that we've done the trimming work and because the restriction of the concrete bridge was removed



18 months ago we are confident that we won't get a flow from the west so we have simply lowered the bund altogether. It's now a couple of feet lower and should ease the worries of the kennels residents nearby.

The team have also made another effort to trim the lock chamber at Sandiacre. It continues to be a key area for us



and with the awful, but required palisade fence the least we can do is keep it tidy inside. With all the brush cutting work we have to keep the training up to speed with new volunteers so it's handy to have a compound to do the necessary induction.



Looking to the future it's also a good time to keep the new (ish) trailer in good condition so a new floor will help future loading.

You may remember that last month we went on a "big walk" with the Mid Derbyshire MP. It was a good chance to publicise the Spondon Bourne work. Since that time we've received his support in a letter of introduction to the new Severn Trent CEO as promised. However we noted that his local newsletter issued shortly after the walk to Ockbrook and Borrowwash constituents



showed his support for a tram to Borrowwash from Nottingham. We've written to him asking if he is proposing a different path as we don't want to lose our canal route. There is a very active tram supporting group that keep resurrecting the idea. We await a response.



A couple of days ago we were approached by STW consultants to undertake a CCTV survey on the drains at Borrowwash. We had mentioned to the MP that it was a safety hazard when it leaked by Dagley's Lock and suddenly STW are looking at a maintenance programme. Apparently we can also discuss suggestions for improvement with the consultants on site in early October. It does demonstrate that you can never gauge the

outcome of these meetings. Overall I'm sure we are ahead.

Riverboat

Its been another interesting, but frustrating month. We have failed to get the drawings we need from the contractors to satisfy the planning conditions. So in the interests of forcing the issue I went down to Farnham for a face to face meeting with the main and subcontractor in place of emails.

I think that proved to be a good move. By facing down both parties we got a clear picture of what is possible and also got agreement to talk directly to the background engineer company advising on calculations to prove it will withstand the river force when in flood. We tackled our concerns about design and they agreed to relook at those areas. The conclusions on timing are that there is no way that we can now complete this during the current season ending on 1st November and installation in the winter will need to avoid higher water levels. In practice this means March, although it could be earlier if water levels remain low.

So the saga continues and we have yet again had to revise the plan. With direct control over the engineering designers we can better manage progress with the existing contractors. However we need a back up plan and have now looked at alternative suppliers. The first alternative still hasn't quoted 4 weeks after taking details, so we're trying another who will quote when their big event—the Southampton Boat Show - finishes next week.

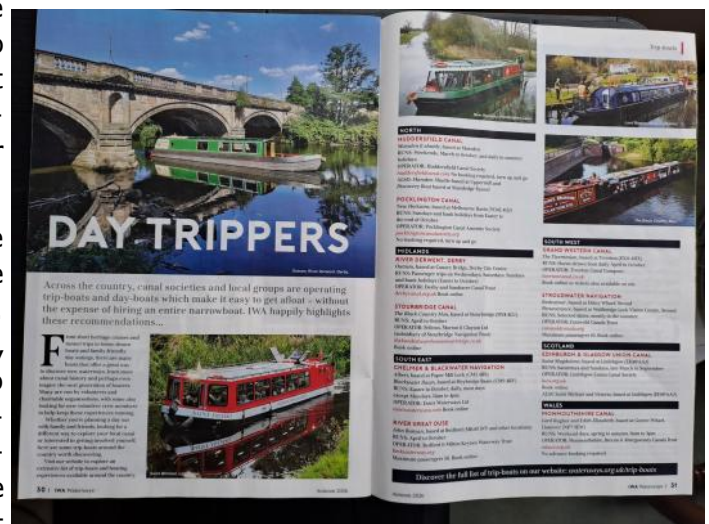
Still no grant, but DCC have checked our bank details, which gives us hope!

I'm not sure if it's good news, but Duncan has also confirmed that the government revisions to planning regulations now mean that we are too small for the BNG requirement. We've already paid £5k for special surveys, but still have to buy BNG credits at £3k, so we are weighing up whether a new application is a better idea, but I don't think I can face another application given the history.

Of course the latest delay means we can't moor on the pontoon over winter, so we have yet again had to ask for a temporary mooring in Darley Abbey. Thank heavens our friendly resident has agreed, because there's no obvious secure alternative.

On the operation of the Riverboat we've had a reasonable September. Trips are less popular in the rain, but we've still been at about 70%. One lady I spoke to has been on for the fourth time with a different group each time. She confirmed that being next to the Museum would make a joint trip much more attractive. As we get into October we expect to see a lower uptake so we've reduced to 2 trips per day and will use a weekend to sort out the motor prior to putting it into winter storage. To compensate we'll run until 1st November to be available throughout the school half term.

Meanwhile our volunteers on the Riverboat have been brilliant as usual. I'm sure that the welcome they give is a major reason why people return. We've had a number of influencers on board, who have been attracted by the Tourist Office, so the welcome they get from crew is really important. More than that we've received some favourable waterways press—not only did the Riverboat get main billing in the IWA mag, but we also had a brilliant article in Waterways World with editor Bobby Cowling taking a trip. Yet again I send thanks to Bobby for supporting us.



Draycott/Breaston

National Grid have undertaken surveys on our land at Draycott to assess current status of wildlife and habitats, which is a necessary step in their process if we are to get funding under BNG.

We understand that Peveril have now sent in a pre application request for guidance on their proposals. They have talked to us about how the canal might best fit within the development and will now get local authority feedback. Of course the national government's pause on local authority reorganisation may end up giving us more time (at the very least) to address the developments with an authority that understands very well the benefit of canals. We will just wait and see and be ready to react.

Land purchases

Progress continues as before—slowly, but it seems as though Sustrans solicitors have finally started to respond. There's still an issue for them to deal with regarding clarity of title, but we don't plan to spend money on our solicitors sorting out their issue. Fortunately it isn't yet time critical, although

we will be marking out the boundaries to avoid issues around adjacent land, which is currently being sold. There's no news on the other purchases currently being dealt with.

Hidden Ivy The team are also managing a planning application by Risley Lane crossing, where a local business is seeking permission to operate where customer access will interfere with the canal line. It is really important to identify these aspects and deal with them before they cause us a greater problem in the future and thanks go to Paul for this item and more generally Duncan, who keeps a watch on all planning matters.

Sandiacre

We've been contacted by a few people at Sandiacre, who are concerned about access at Lock Lane bridge. Signs have recently been set up preventing free access to the unmade road now said to be privately owned. The person now claiming title owns property and operates a business there making life difficult for the boats in the Derby canal end and other residents. We've searched land registry records and cannot see any proof of title.



We plan to work with the Erewash Canal group's help to understand what is happening and try to get it resolved amicably. It could be argued that this road does not preclude access to the Derby Canal, but we have been informed that the same individual has been responsible for depositing boulders on our land and taking down our weight limit sign. We will no doubt have further issues when we look to close the bridge for restoration works and narrow the access with a new bridge parapet. It will therefore be important to have land title clarified before that takes place.

Mike Snaith has been pushing on with fundraising, but we are now considerably overdue in hearing from our remaining funding application. With this in mind the Trust directors have called a special meeting specifically to look at alternatives to get this over the line, which in turn will enable us to sort out any compensation issues and get the job moving. The idea of a grant to move a sewer is not easy to finance, so we are looking at raising more money to complete the restoration as well. If you or someone you know would like to help please let me know. We could even name the lock after a significant donor!

Legacies

A large proportion of the funding we already have for Sandiacre arose from a legacy of £150k. You will have seen in our last Packet that we have been asking for supporters to remember us in their wills. I'm pleased to say that we received another small legacy this month and thank the past members responsible. It really makes such a difference for us.

Other Matters

We have now had a tidy up in the Cottages museum room, which had been cluttered with café equipment and a local business sales desk. We have reclaimed the space and are now looking at improving the offering.

We are also running out of the 10,000 leaflets we printed a few years ago and will be organising a refresh and reprint that reflects the forward thinking of restoration plans around water transfer and flood prevention.

Many of you will know that Andy Savage has been a long time supporter with films about the canal shot with his drone camera. When I met him recently at the Derby event he suggested he was working on more films showing the transition from past to current layouts. I'd recommend a visit and you'll find one of his works at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EunfHoK37j8>

If you like the work please subscribe and you'll see a lot more of his excellent work in support of our restoration.

We have been reminded that not all donors become members and so they don't have the benefit of this Update and the Packet. We have therefore sent a summary of Draycott progress to these donors so that they know we haven't given up and that restoration is still being pushed hard, even though progress is slow.

Meetings

Our next meeting at the Cottages will be from **7.30pm on 22nd Sept** and is a talk tracing the route from the Trent to the Mersey "In the Wake of the Narrowboat Cressy" given by Alastair Clark.

In 1939 Tom and Angela Rolt set out to explore the canals of England in the narrow boat 'Cressy'. The account of their cruise was a book called "Narrow Boat", and this inspired the national movement to preserve and cherish our inland waterways. Eighty years later Alastair Clark set out on a bike to follow the part of their voyage which followed the Trent and Mersey canal.

Future meetings are

27th October AGM

24th November Railway accidents caused by Human Error by Brian Dale

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

Thanks for your support.

Chris