

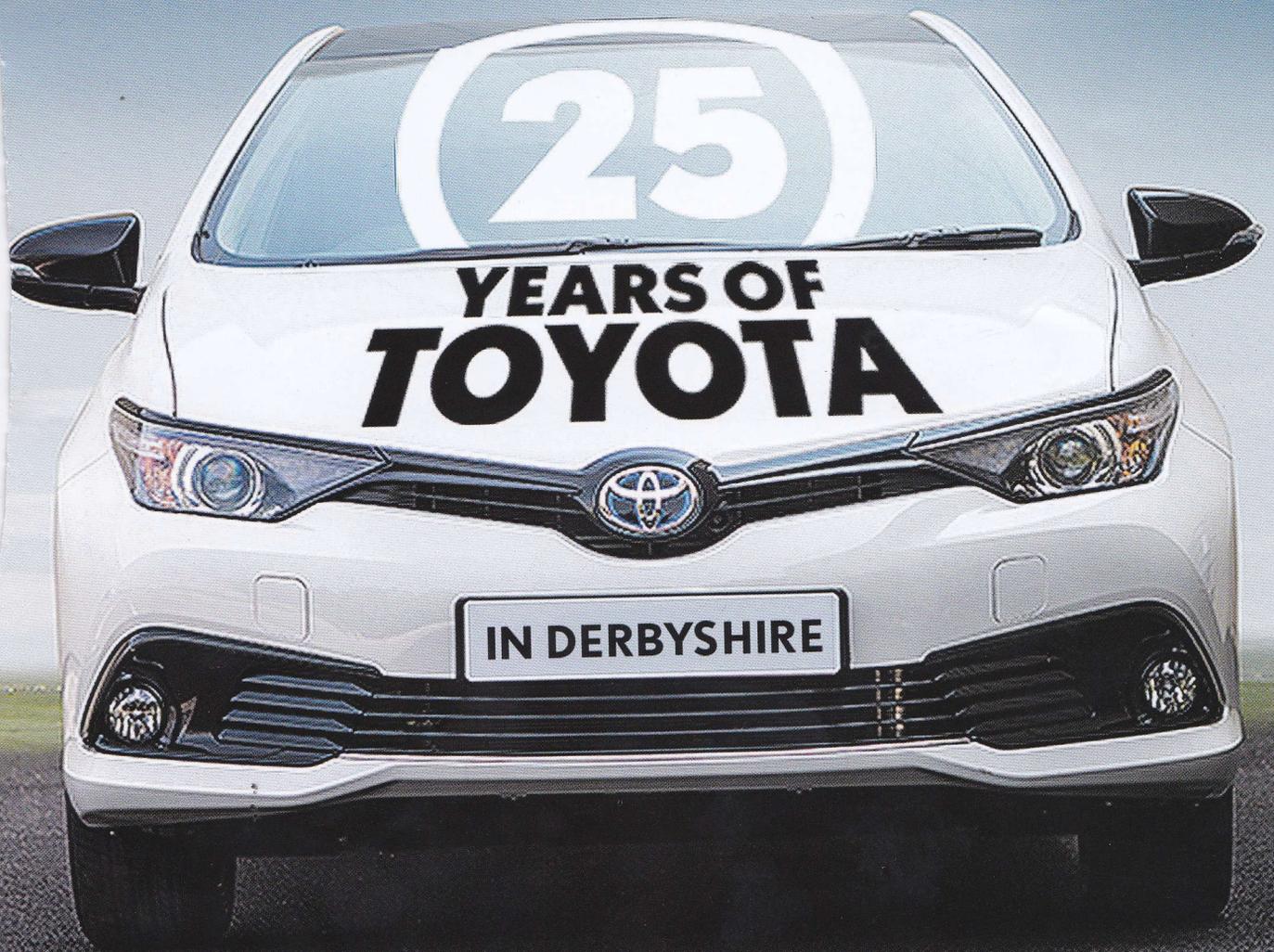
THE MAGAZINE FOR THOSE DOING BUSINESS IN DERBY ... AND THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO

# AGENDA

WINTER 2017/18

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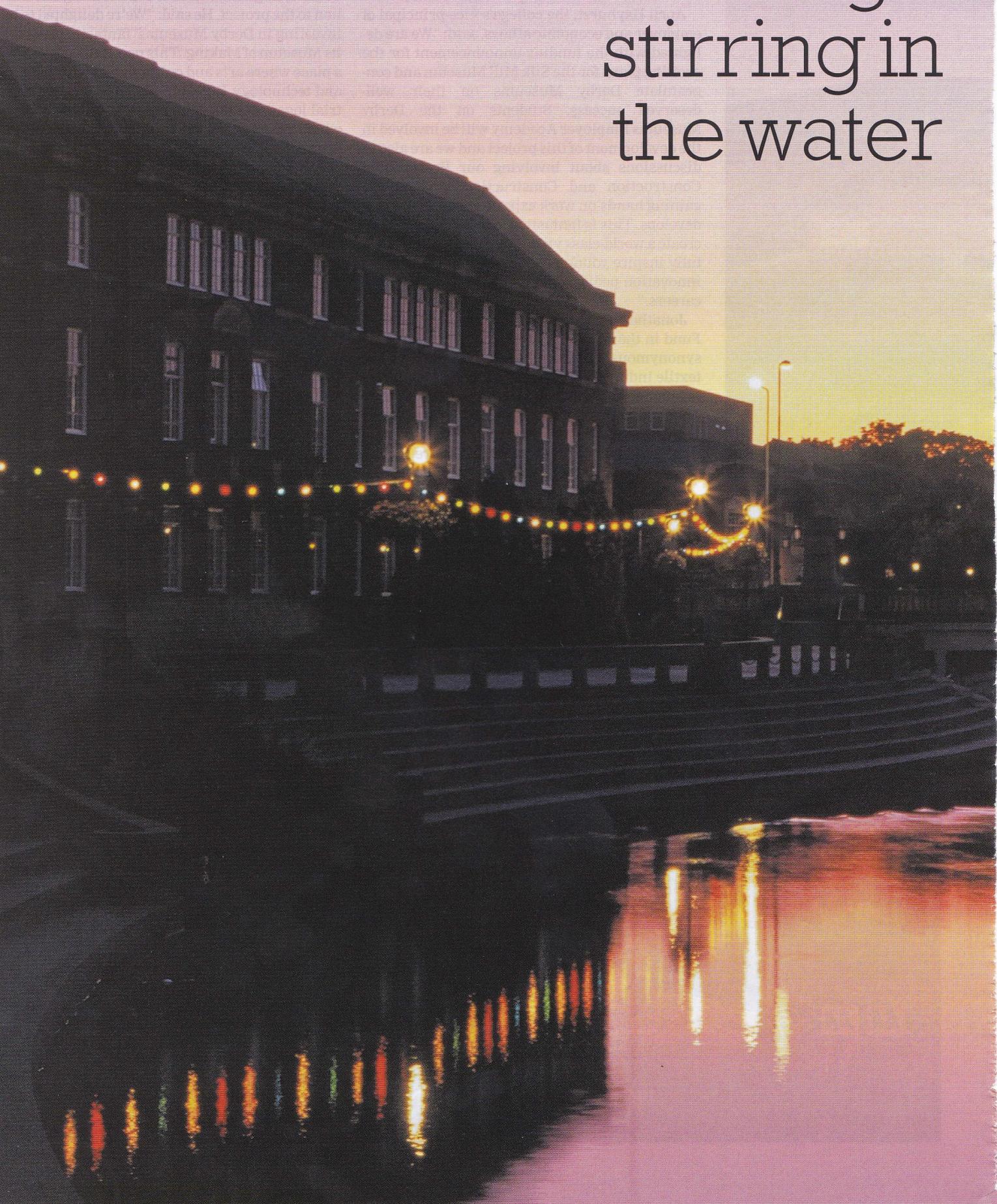
**BIG TALK: WHICH  
WAY NOW FOR  
REGENERATION?**



**A NEW VISION  
FOR OUR RIVER  
AND CANAL  
NETWORK**

**ASSEMBLY  
ROOMS AT 40:  
IT'S TIME FOR  
A NEW START**

# Something's stirring in the water



**In the past, Derby has failed to fully utilise one of its greatest natural assets - its river. Now the River Derwent has become the focus of ambitious plans to attract more visitors to the city. Robin Johnson finds out more.**

**W**e're pretty lucky here in Derby. As well as being a vibrant city that is home to some of the UK's best green spaces, we have a great natural asset flowing right through the middle - the River Derwent. But it would be fair to say that in the past Derby has not been good at utilising the river.

Indeed, at one time it seemed like all of our new

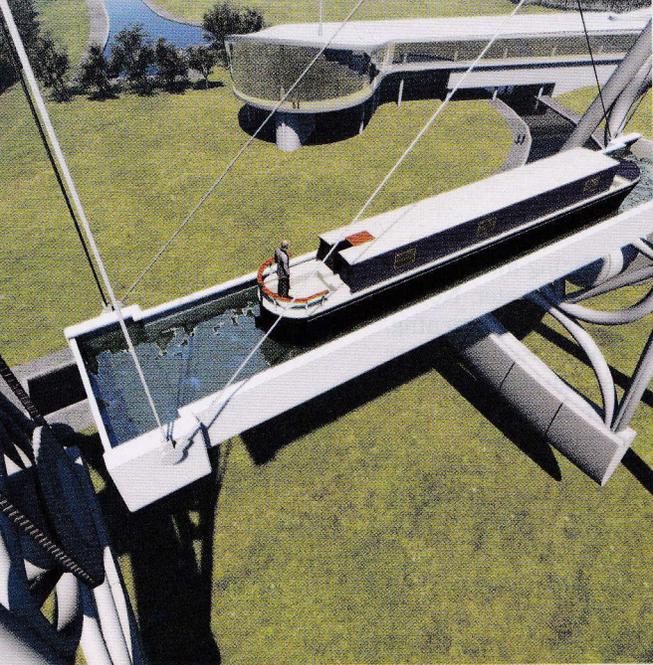
buildings were constructed facing away from - as opposed to overlooking - the water. Now it would appear that the tide could now be turning. People are realising just what an asset the River Derwent is to the city and its huge potential.

Other cities with rivers or canals have fully exploited the opportunities, with the restoration and use of their once neglected waterways attracting tourism and sparking wider regeneration. At present, in Derby, the only ones using the river are members of rowing and canoe clubs, along with an armada of ducks, swans and Canada geese.

However, all that could be set to change in the future if plans by the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust come to pass. It has a vision for the river and the local canal network which it believes does not deserve to sink without trace.

And that vision is to use the river and >>>P42





**Above, right and below, an impression of how the Derby Arm could look**

the local canal network to create a self-sustaining economic engine for job creation, tourism and environmental nature conservation.

The trust was founded in 1993 with the aim of restoring a 12.5-mile stretch of canal between Derby and Sandiacre to connect to the Trent and Mersey and Erewash Canals. According to the trust, this would create a 25-mile “cruising ring”, that would give access to more than 2,000 miles of navigable waterways across the UK.

**T**he vision does not stop there. As well as restoring the canal, it wants to create an elevated short canal stretch through Pride Park with an “arm” lift to take boats down to the river level so that they can then travel up the Derwent to the Silk Mill in the city centre. It also includes creating the Derby Canal Basin and Marina on an unused piece of land just outside the city centre behind West Meadows Industrial Estate and downstream of the Bass Recreation Ground. According to the trust, a canal basin in this location would have excellent boat, pedestrian and cycling links with both Derby railway station and the city centre.

And it is envisaged that the canal basin could host some exciting new venues such as a five-star hotel, short-term family apartments, family entertainment venues such as aquariums and activity centres as well as additional bars and restaurants.

It is ambitious stuff, but at the end of the day dreams cost nothing. To make these plans a reality would cost a lot of money, tens of millions of pounds in fact. The “arm” lift, also referred to as the Derby Arm, would cost around £20 million alone. The outlying canal section would cost a further £40 million.

The figures do not faze the trust. It believes the Derby Arm would pay for itself with increased income from tourism in just five years, while the rest of the work would be funded through a combination of grant and commercial funding.

According to the trust, discussions are ongoing with development partners to progress the ambitious plans for the Derby Arm.



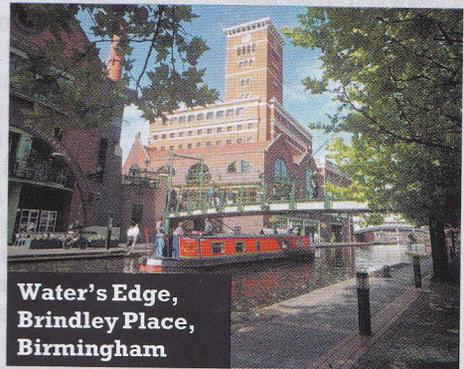


## Going with the flow

Other UK towns and cities have been quick to realise the untapped potential of their waterways and their success has given Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust even more motivation to see its plans for Derby come to fruition. In some cases, these schemes have helped spark wider regeneration.

One example is Birmingham. Since 1983, millions of pounds have been spent on improvements on the city's canal network. This has been hailed as a significant catalyst for further public and private sector investment with developers recognising the advantages of building alongside improved canals.

A prime example is Water's Edge, in Brindley Place. Plans for the 26-acre derelict site were changed to embrace the canals. The final proposal was for Birmingham's first purpose-designed leisure venue overlooking the canals. Today, it consists of the National Sea Life Centre, bars, restaurants, 100,000 sq metres of office space, 178 apartments, a gym/leisure club, two art galleries, a theatre and two hotels. In total, around 10,000 jobs have been created.



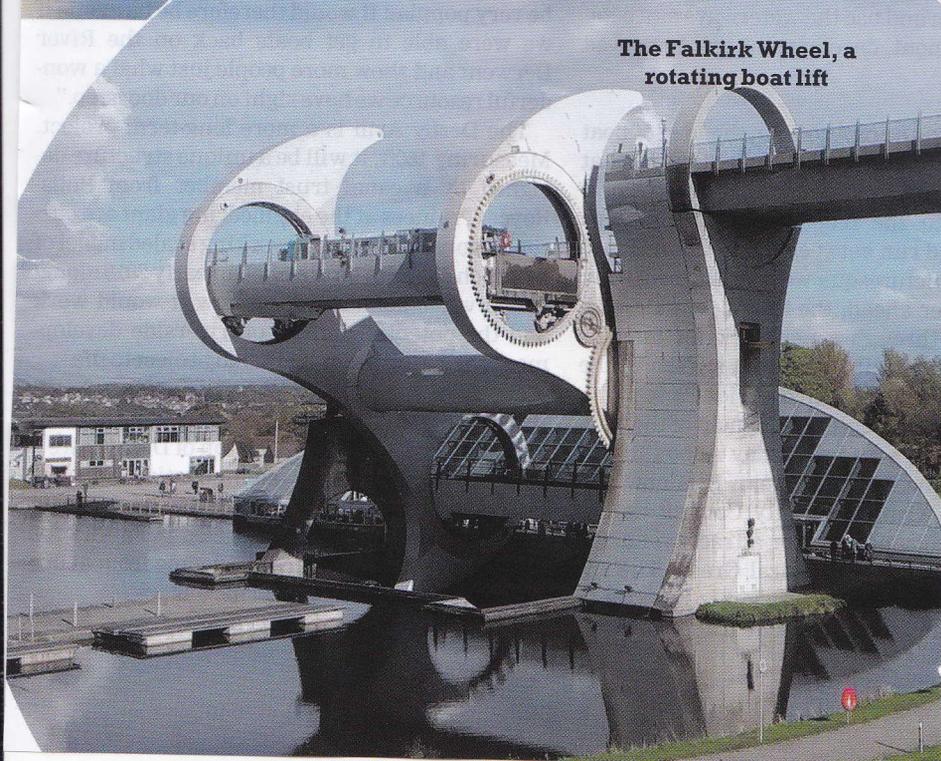
**Water's Edge,  
Brindley Place,  
Birmingham**

Chris Madge, chairman of Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust, said: "Birmingham is a perfect example of how improving the canal network acts as a catalyst for further investment and particularly development. We envisage that a similar innovative approach to inward investment could transform Derby and its riverside areas."

The trust has taken its inspiration for the Derby Arm from the Falkirk Wheel, a rotating boat lift in Central Scotland, connecting the Forth and Clyde Canal with the Union Canal. It opened in 2002, reconnecting the two canals for the first time since the 1930s. A visitor centre is on the east side of the lower basin, with daily boat trips - and has attracted more than 650,000 visitors annually.

A Canal and River Trust and Inland Waterways Association report in 2014, highlighted that the Forth and Clyde had created 12,800 jobs, with the Falkirk Wheel as the major attraction on the canal generating a visitor spend of more than £4 million a year.

**The Falkirk Wheel, a  
rotating boat lift**



An artist's impression of the waterfront next to the Derby Arm.



## What is the canal trust?

The Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust is supported by four local authorities – Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council, Erewash Borough Council and South Derbyshire District Council – as well as local MPs.

These bodies have appointed a board of trustees who, alongside a range of local business people, bring a range of diverse skills and expertise to the project.

In terms of its work so far, the trust has already restored bridges at Swarkestone and Borrowash to demanding heritage standards and undertaken hedge-planting along the route so that it can be enjoyed by walkers and cyclists.

It has also achieved outline planning permission for the whole 12.5-mile canal.

According to the trust, the original Derby Canal was completed in 1796 but was abandoned in the 1960s and filled in during the 1970s. Competition from railways and roads led to a general decline and the Derby Canal was closed to traffic in 1946 and abandoned in 1964, to facilitate the building of the M1.

After abandonment, the line of the canal was filled in and donated to local authorities who have retained it in most cases as a multi-user trail. Those local authorities support the canal restoration to complement existing uses.

launch boat trips on the River Derwent to raise the profile of the project.

Chris Madge, chairman of the trust, said: “Although this has been in discussion for many years, I feel that we are making real progress now to bring together the passion, expertise and vision that will capitalise on the beauty, heritage and ‘pulling power’ of the River Derwent and the canal waterways. We continue to have constructive talks with our private and public sector partners, which is vital to raising the necessary funding. A key aspect of these discussions are recent studies which show a return of £7 for every £1 invested in canals.

“With Derby’s engineering prowess and growing profile as a visitor destination, this programme is both timely and potentially lucrative for the city and beyond. We dare to dream that we can emulate the stunning success of cities such as Birmingham and use the waterways as a catalyst for investment, development and improved quality of life.”

**T**o start the ball rolling, the idea of boat trips on the River Derwent is one that has caused some excitement. According to the trust, initially the trips would run between the Council House steps and the picturesque weir at Darley Abbey. Looking further ahead, the full trip would ultimately travel through a new lock in the weir alongside the Council House and stretch to the planned Derby Arm boat lift on Pride Park.

The trust recently enlisted the help of the Midland Canoe Club, based at Darley Abbey, to test the depths of the River Derwent. It is now discussing plans with Derby City Council with a view to creating a new visitor attraction for the city and particularly Cathedral Green. The 2.5-mile stretch of the River Derwent is integral to the trust’s plans to bring boat traffic back to

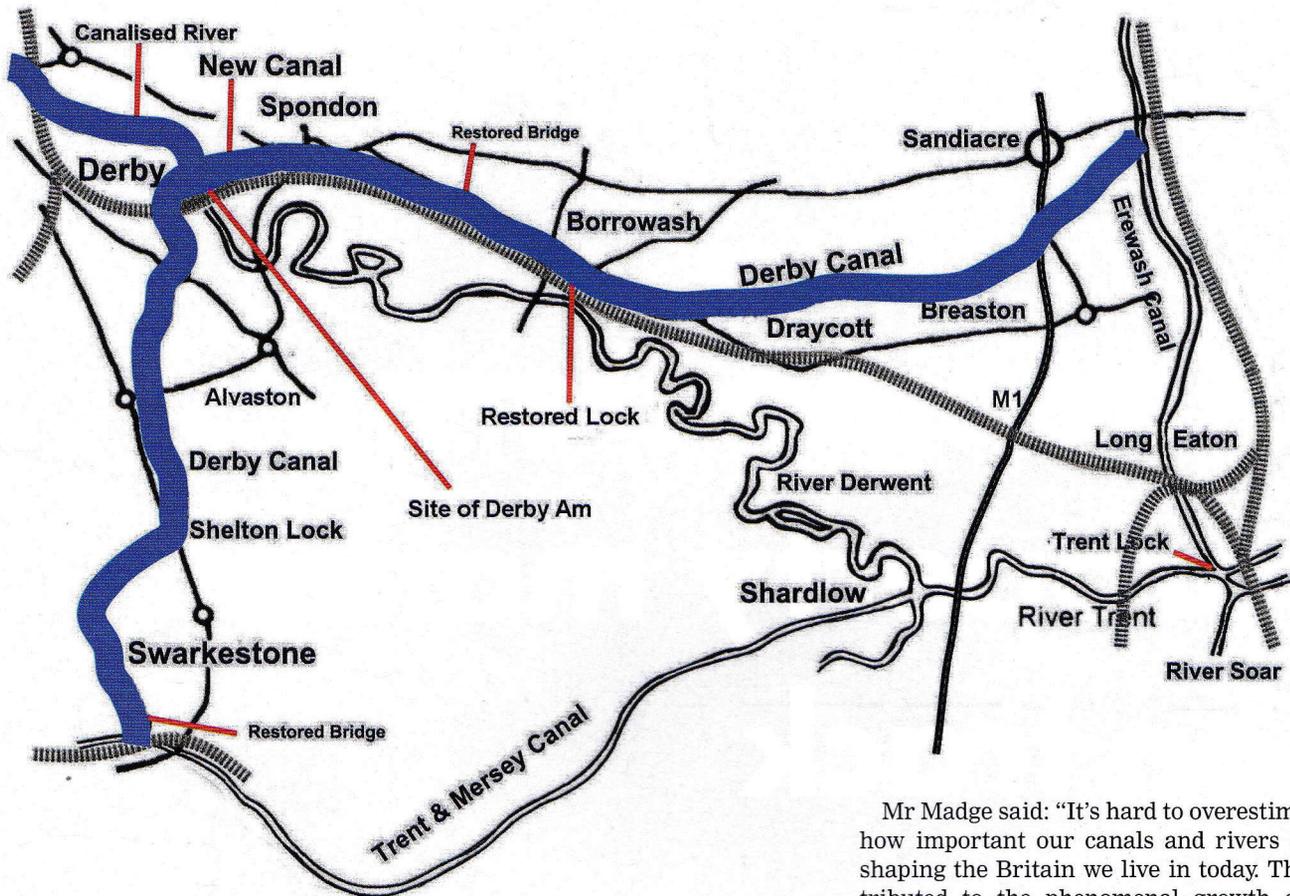
Derby and the restoration of a 12.5-mile stretch of canal from Derby to Swarkestone and Sandiacre.

Mr Madge said: “We have already had some very constructive conversations with key officers and cabinet members at Derby City Council about the restoration and particularly about running river boat trips along this stretch of the River Derwent. Thanks to the Midland Canoe Club, we now have a much better idea of the overall river depths, which prove that trip boats on the Derwent can become a practical reality. We are hopeful that we can have the Darley Abbey trips in place next summer, but the extended service will await completion of the Derby Arm project itself.

“As well as creating a wonderful new visitor attraction for the city, it will help to raise the profile of our overall plans to restore the full Derby canal. Public feedback indicates that this would be very popular. It would therefore be fantastic if we were able to get boats back on the River Derwent and show more people just what a wonderful resource we have right on our doorstep.”

The Derby Arm is a more long-term project. Measuring 180ft, it will be a unique structure designed by a canal trust member from Rolls-Royce. Trainees at the engineering giant are currently constructing a 3D working scaled model of it, which is due to be unveiled in early 2018 alongside a video demonstrating how it would work and the potential impact on riverside development – bringing the entire canal project to life.

Derby engineer Mike Wingfield, who is heavily involved in the project, said: “The Derby Arm will be a physical demonstration of Derbyshire’s engineering excellence and innovative in its use of low energy piston technology. A different design of boat lift was constructed in Falkirk for the Millennium and attracts income from about 650,000 visitors each year. There is well established and growing interest in >>>P46



**The thick blue line shows the route of the Derby Canal and sections that the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust wants to restore to its former glory. Below right, Members of Midland Canoe Club testing the depths of the River Derwent on behalf of the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust**

Derby as a leisure destination and the Derby Arm will complement the football stadium and velodrome nearby.”

Mr Madge said: “There will be an opportunity for canal interpretation at a visitor centre, which will directly face the “Arm” for viewing purposes. The visitor centre will provide retail facilities for visitors and corporate events and chronicle the history of the Derby Canal and its restoration and development up to the rail and aerospace centre of excellence of today.

“Around 20 million people visit the Peak District each year and, if just a small percentage of those visited the Derby Arm, we could have a massive £10 million impact on the local economy each year. It would also be an anchor feature in the Derby Triangle and assist the open market viability of the site – encouraging adjacent retail and leisure development opportunities. We are keen to work with the lead developer – St Modwen – to take this project forward.

“We know this project can generate excellent returns and we are looking to find a development partner with the vision and resources to make it a reality and change our city forever.”

**S**ecuring financial backing will be key to the overall project holding water. The trust believes that restoration of the Derby and Sandiacre Canal is likely to take 10 years and cost around £60 million but it believes it will be worth it. It says that continuing success stories like Mercia Marina, near Willington, underlines the renewed interest in canal holidays and boating in general.

Mr Madge said: “It’s hard to overestimate just how important our canals and rivers were in shaping the Britain we live in today. They contributed to the phenomenal growth of trade between the 18th and early 19th centuries and brought prosperity to villages, towns and cities.

“It’s funny how things go full circle. Here we are in the 21st century and canals still have the ability to attract investment, stimulate growth and create jobs. Today, this growth is fuelled by people rather than freight. We want to live by waterways, work alongside them and spend more of our free time by the water.

“In today’s Britain, it’s clear that waterways have the potential to touch all aspects of our daily lives as well as providing valuable habitats for a wide variety of species. From research by the Inland Waterways Association, house prices were boosted by around 20% alongside restored canals restoration and the restored canal encouraged the reuse of land and buildings.

“Commercial developments have gone hand-in-hand with residential developments and again provided a boost to jobs. As well as the impact on the local economy, restorations were seen as bringing increased vitality to town and city centres with the boost in the numbers of visitors and the attractiveness of areas and provided connectivity between village and city.

“Similar projects elsewhere in the UK have generated impressive results. Isn’t it time we did the same in Derby?” □

