

Chairman's Update

February 2022

Here we are again in a new year with hopes and prayers that it must be better than last year. As I write this it appears that spring is early with sunshine and temperatures over the norm. Everything looks more optimistic, and there's plenty of activity going on to keep us all busy.

Dave Savidge tells me that he now regularly sends working party updates to over 80 people. Obviously not everyone turns up to all events, indeed some people seem to find receiving the emails is sufficient, but either way it does show the increasing level of interest and support we are now seeing. Thank you all.

The Derby Riverboat

We feel we've made progress as we have now agreed a new location for boarding. The Council have offered that we use a concrete hardstanding under Causey bridge on the side opposite the Silk Mill. This has a few advantages to us in that it will be easier access for volunteers without having to go through a third party owner and it can be made secure reasonably easily—just block off at the sides of the bridge. Whilst there's reluctance to affect access for maintenance, the Council seem to think this is the better option. The major benefit for them is that it avoids the need for a boom upstream of Exeter Bridge—saving tens of thousands of pounds and for us that we won't need a formal pontoon in the river—we can board from the bank/hardstanding. That'll avoid us having to raise about £60k—whether via the Council or elsewhere—and means that the currently promised grant from the Council should cover our costs.



Causey Bridge — awaiting conversion for boats

Of course the other main benefit is that neither party will need to disturb the river bed, so we shouldn't be affected by the EA restrictions. On the down side it means we need a revised (but much simpler) formal application to the EA. ANY works within 8 metres of the river needs a permit! The other positive is that the Council have now formally adopted the project, so they will be providing access paths, power, etc. and as part of this they will handle planning. Perhaps the best outcome of this time consuming process is that we have established a much better rapport with officers that will hold us in good stead for future, bigger developments. We are also making good progress with conditions of licencing and expect to see a more pragmatic and safer set of conditions.

As far as timing is concerned we are holding on to a spring launch, but the list of things to do means it will probably only be the summer when we can get going fully. We have recruited a new volunteer to help Mike on the technical/electrical side. He's from R-R submarines, but working in the knowledge that it has to stay above the water! So we are taking advantage of the delays to review our charging options. While the solar panels are working well, we are holding off river training until we are sure we can get access to a recharge point downstream.

Sandiacre Bottom Lock



We have successfully negotiated the land dispute at the top of the lock. We were able to prevent the planned sale by the neighbour by registering our title challenge. The result is that the owner accepted our offer to provide a new fence in the correct line and we were happy to avoid legal fees. Hopefully our new neighbour will appreciate not only the fence, but the restored lock that is now more imminent.

We are still waiting a final quote from Severn Trent, but sorting out the land issue will help enormously to moderate their costs.

Working Parties

A great deal of work has been completed at Chellaston, We are now getting close to clearing the line between the A50 and Infinity Park Way (but of course leaving wildlife refuges along the edges). We had identified a few dangerous trees, which have now been felled together with a lot of the cracked willow growth in the bed. This prepares the ground (quite literally) for discussions with developers to position the canal restoration as the answer to their drainage challenge.

In addition the teams have started work in trimming back the newly acquired stretch between Breaston and the M1. It is al-

Wildlife refuges near Bostocks Lane



Paul disposing of a dangerous tree at Chellaston.

that's not enough We have also had a small presence at Sandiacre and Borrowash. The locals certainly know we are around and perhaps that's why we are seeing more support and volunteers.

The Cottages

Our first cottage has now been let so we expect the site to be occupied in a few weeks. The second is complete and the third goes for letting in mid Feb.

More to the point the Trust has now appointed a "preferred bidder" to operate the café, and he's expecting to open on 4th April. We still have some work to do, but this consists largely of staining floors, fitting the final doors, painting steps, final decoration of the outside toilets, final landscaping (some knee rails) and getting the floor covering in the café. Our nominated café managers are Garry and Joyce and it looks like it will be a family affair—just what we were looking for.

We've had some requests to have another look at the work as it nears completion. Members have two options if they want to do this:

- Have a look on the Robert Ellis (Long Eaton) web site to see internal photos of the cottages; and/or
- Come along to our next Members meeting, which will be held in the upstairs rooms. We might even be able to celebrate completion (assuming we don't need a liquor license!).



Draycott Canal

We are making slow progress and now await a recosting of the second phase works required to complete the canal. It's a race against time to see if we can get Network Rail to pay the cost of repairs and agree works that not only create a canal and railway protecting bund, but also pick up any land drains from the fields north of the line. Our engineering group has been working hard on solutions to cater for this and solutions at Chellaston in the light of the increasingly extreme weather conditions. Now we need to see how much additional cost this might involve and how we raise funds for any extras.

The Packet

The next Packet is planned for Easter, so if you have any articles or comments—or even questions—send an email to editor@derbycanal.org.uk. My thanks also to Peter, who has revamped our publicity leaflet to show the progress and new work under way.

Members Meetings

Thank you to the members who took the time to tell us how we could improve attendance at members' meetings.

You told us

1. Covid was a factor—hopefully as Spring approaches the issue should pass;
2. The date didn't work for some—we've moved back to the old fourth Tuesdays timing.
3. The venue was hard to get to – we've partially solved this by moving to the Cottages café, and for those who need a lift from the bus stop in Draycott centre we're hoping to offer lifts.
4. The disruptions by pub staff in meetings was also not welcome, although the beer may have been—no beer at the cottages just yet, but you can bring your own!
5. Publicity was poor— members wanted a variety of reminders and more (or less) notice. So our solution is to plan further forward (easing of Covid restrictions does help with this) and to notify you in this update and the next Packet. We may even get the dates on the website.



Cottages Members Meeting Room

So with that in mind I am most grateful to our meetings organisers Eileen and Anne and hope you can join us on the following revised dates. Meetings start at 7.30pm, although details for the walk to be advised nearer to the time.

Tues 22nd March	Bob Williams and Peter Buck	The Lichfield and Hatherton Canal
Tues 26th April	Anne Featherstone	The Curious History of Sweeney Todd
Tues 24th May	Michael Crane, Stewart Craven	Beeston Lock Cottages
Tues 28th June	Rodney Hall	The coldest place on earth
Tues 26th July	Annual Walk	Current candidates are Chellaston or Derby (perhaps with a tour of the River boat?)

We won't be offering a Zoom option.

And finally I'd like to congratulate past Society Chairman Eddy on his recent marriage to Linda.

look forward to seeing you soon at one of the upcoming meetings or at a working party.

Chris Madge