

Chairman's Update

February 2023

Things are brightening up. Here we are looking towards spring with a sense of optimism. The weather seems to be improving—I'm looking at bright sunshine as I write this. On a personal note I look forward to seeing activity at my beehives. As the flowers bloom my bees are tempted out of their winter cluster to explore and start to gather nectar and pollen. They'll be getting ready to start breeding and the queen will soon be laying over a thousand eggs a day to start a new generation of bees. They don't know it, but they'll be helping to generate a bit of cash for the restoration as their honey is proving a popular purchase at the café. Thanks for all who have invested!

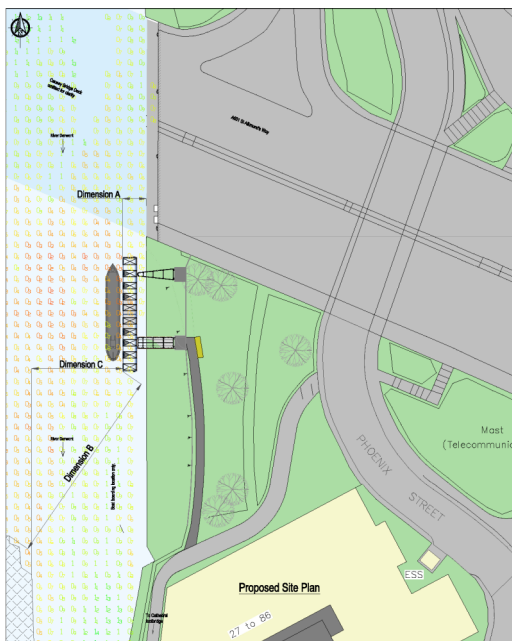
The news this month is about getting ready for the year ahead and finishing off some of the winter work that will have to stop to make way for wildlife shortly.

The Riverboat

Normally at this time of year I'm constantly looking at weather forecasts to check if we will be in flood conditions. Last year the water levels in the Derwent rose substantially so there was lots of checking that the Riverboat was safe and secure and that our knots were holding. Of course a lot of rain also caused concern about the Draycott section and the drainage away from the Cottages. But this year we've had minimal rain in the last few weeks, so I'm now wondering when there'll be enough to get the boat out of its winter mooring at Darley Abbey. Hopefully we can float out and won't need to be clearing a channel by hand to sail her out. That water is cold!

However this should be the last time we have these concerns as we should be at the new pontoon very soon—hopefully in June. I'm delighted to confirm that we were granted planning permission on

16th February. It has been a trial getting permission as there were many comments to deal with. We had to deal with wildlife conditions, especially after the Council decided we needed to take down three trees on site. We had to tread a line between heritage concerns to make the pontoon blend in and rowers concerns that it should be clearly visible. We also had a number of concerns that the river would be narrowed for other users. We consulted widely with rowers to work out and deal with matters raised. We even relocated the pontoon so that it was as near as possible to the bridge and avoided the island in the river, but also avoided the existing and planned high voltage power cables destined to power Smart Parc in Spondon. Duncan has shepherded the application through the process so we were wary when told we would have an objector speaking at



the planning meeting. We prepared to combat the possible challenges from one of the Rowing Club captains. We were pleasantly surprised to find out he simply wanted to thank everyone for the extensive consultation. We are obviously delighted as sharing the river is key to our success.

Our timetable has been set so that we operate on any afternoon, but we will start with weekends from April 1st and extend this to include Wednesdays and bank holidays from May and offer charters and group bookings on other days—volunteers permitting.

We will have a week or so to get the boat in good shape and spring cleaned during w/c 20th March.



Thanks to those who have already offered to staff the cabin, but there's plenty of space for those still wondering. I was delighted to be contacted by Sue, who is now helping us by developing an online schedule for volunteers, which will make management much easier.

Working Parties

The last month has seen the working parties making good progress. The Great Wall of Borrowash has grown as the pictures show. There's been a systematic process developed to transport, clean and install the stones retrieved from the Nutbrook canal.



Roger and his team have continued to tidy up a few dangerous trees. At Chellaston and in Borrowash behind Manor Road.



Chellaston

We have picked up the pace at Chellaston and had a further meeting with the developers there. Our last meeting took place 9 months ago, but progress has been interrupted by the elections last year voting out our key champion. We had hoped that our new Trustee from Chellaston, Councillor Ingalls, could have picked up the pace, but personal issues have precluded this. We are now indebted to Harvey Jennings for picking up the ball. A very interesting meeting with the developers discussed the value to them of drainage solutions and the use of spoil from the canal line to help level and develop the large site. Apparently the access road from the A50 is under way and housing alongside the canal is likely to be completed within 5 years with the remaining houses taking a further 10 years to complete. We were encouraged that the developers set an early date for a follow up meeting. We have issues to resolve to get to and under the A50, but after that the prospects are very good.

We are talking with South Derbyshire District Council to work out how we resolve the section south of the A50 and promote the marina plans with the landowner. We hope we can reach a positive consensus and together drive a solution in this area.

Smart Parc links

We have been consulted about an urgent need to find a route for a high voltage electricity cable to Smart Parc. This is the other end of the one from the generating station at the Museum of Making that caused us concern with the pontoon. However, using the engineering links developed through the Raynesway and Pontoon projects we've been able to minimise the disruption of the cable running alongside the canal line from Spondon Roundabout on the A52 to Station Road. It is perhaps a sign that we get involved before decisions are made and that helps all parties in the long run.

Draycott

Further work has been undertaken at the Draycott canal site. We have investigated the proposed drainage. Fortunately we were able to do that before the land dried out. Water flows could be seen to follow the lines suggested in the design plan as can be seen in the photo. We've now used that to open discussions with the land owners to see if we can at least organise the water to the north—and up-hill—from the canal at Draycott.

David and Chris are making progress with contractors to check and refine the quotations for the work planned. We have also checked progress with the ecologists, but it is apparent that there is no longer time to organise the water vole removal within the constraints set. The ability to get contractors quotes lined up, funding raised and contractors ready to go in the summer is also beyond us. This means we will need to reset to next year. It is disappointing, but perhaps inevitable.

In the meantime we have started negotiations to acquire another stretch of canal path from Sustrans across Hopwell Road from the Cottages. This area used to be a winding hole and wharf and once we own it we can plan some longer term restoration.



Engineering Issues

Our call for engineering expertise has been answered and we are now talking to a potential Civil Engineering volunteer and a consultancy that is considering offering us pro bono assistance in some of the more technical areas. We are directing this expertise to planning how we cross the Motorway as there is a specific funding pot that may be available for us.

Events

We have looked at events to support next year and are planning the following:

Breaston Gala Monday 1st May

ECPDA at Langley Mill Sat 27th to Mon 29th May

Spirit of Chellaston Sat 17th June

Breaston Navigation TBA

This will depend on your support on the stall, so please let me know if you are available and would like to help.

Members' Meetings

We had an excellent turn out for a very entertaining talk on the use of railways in World War 1 and I am hopeful that we get good support at the following meetings organised by our team. I believe the speakers are both relevant and interesting, but we need your support if we are to continue them.

Meetings will continue to be held at the First Floor, Canal Cottages, Draycott DE72 3PE

The next meeting on February 28th is entitled Little Eaton Canal and the Clock House—past, present and future by Clare Howard and Sue Stone. It is a chance to see what is happening and proposed for the Little Eaton Arm of our canal.

March 28th David Jennings The Derby Canal in Derby City

April 25th Bennerley Viaduct—Restoration and into the Future

Mick and Carol Golds from ECPDA have asked me to publicise a talk at Sandiacre Lock Cottage on 25th March from 3pm outlining some of their canal adventures.

I hope to see you soon.

Chris Madge