

Chairman's Update

July 2023

Here we are in late July and the news is filled with weather reports. We seem to be the wettest, whilst Greece is pretty much the hottest July with flash fires rampant. I suppose that's one benefit of the rain—can't see us suffering too many forest fires here. I know that David has been challenged with rained off working parties and it's not the best weather for Riverboat trips.

Perhaps more significant to the future of the canals is the news that the Government have offered a settlement for CRT going beyond 2027. My understanding is that they've been offered an average of £40m p.a.—down from over £50m at present. This is within a total spend of around £200m, but with a background of inflation of costs and an increasing workload due to climate change. CRT are suggesting that they may not be able to look after all canals without more money. I believe they have a statutory duty to maintain all their canals, but we are keen to believe they will take on ours—when it's built. So if you want to press for more money please go onto the CRT website and make your views clear.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/>

Working Parties



The working parties have been very active (between the showers). There's been a push to tidy up at Chelaston. We've been called out to sort out a fallen tree



there as well and have taken the opportunity to instal an interpretation panel, so that people recognise it as a past and future canal.

At Borrowwash the team have also been keeping things tidy. As you can see it is looking very attractive.



At Anglers Lane the areas alongside the path has been getting overgrown and we've had a team there bringing it back under control. I guess the extra rain won't be helping there either.



Also at Anglers Lane we've had to deal with a couple of trees that were threatening to drop branches.

We have a couple of people able to operate a MEWP (Mobile Elevated Working Platform) so we were able to take down the offending trees without damaging the telephone wires and buildings. So we met our safety obligations and saved money compared to hiring a contractor.

We are also keeping an eye on the Ash tree outside the Cottages, and trying to work out whether the early treatment to manage Ash die back has worked or whether we will have to take it down as well. Fingers crossed.

We are pleased to have had a CSR party of Rolls Royce managers at the Cottages, who were involved in extending the paving around the bench as shown, cutting grass and painting railings. They seemed to enjoy it and spent the afternoon in a management meeting in the cottages rooms. Looks like they were impressed with the project overall and we are hopeful of further support from them and other R-R staff.



Other Projects

There's been limited progress on the other projects. Holidays are starting to have an impact for us and third parties.

We still await a revised quote for Sandiacre from Severn Trent, but have pressed on gaining expertise for Draycott. Our new CE, Martin, has been reviewing where we are with the programme and producing a list of extras matters to be considered. We also have a quote from an independent project manager (as used by LHCT) to take control of the contracting and delivery of Draycott. We still await feedback from local landowners and are chasing so that we can tie down the project spec. Our MP Trustee has also intervened with Network Rail, and we hope to make progress on this soon.

We also entertained a group of 30 engineers from the Institute of Engineering and Technology at the Draycott meeting room—again with the aim of encouraging expert volunteers and probono assistance. They seemed very interested in the project and walked the line to see what engineering issues we were dealing with. We'll have to see if we get any continued interest to strengthen the team further. I was also delighted to meet the new Labour leader of Erewash Borough Council who attended the meeting and was very interested and supportive.

The Riverboat

The schedule continues to run smoothly with our team of dedicated volunteers really getting into the swing of things now. Take up is good, although as I write this we are expecting to cancel three trips as the river levels and flow rates look to be increasing dramatically. Another impact of the rainy July, but hopefully a short lived one. I was on duty last weekend as the rains came down and the

passengers stayed inside for the whole trip.

It was a great pity as it was a special trip for the twinning committee from Osnabruck in Germany. Fortunately they had an interpreter on board, but for some reason she didn't seem to pass on Mike's



carefully crafted jokes, and particularly the passage about WW2 bombers targeting Rolls Royce!

We've been working on promotional activity and looking to get more interest from groups and tourists. We have participated in the "Take a peak" promotion of many attractions in Derby and environs and were delighted to see us on the side of a bus coming to Derby. The city's tourism department has also been promoting the group tours aspect, so fingers crossed we'll see more visitors using us.



However, whilst the service remains popular with the public the city council isn't firing on all cylinders to develop it. We have been arguing for the last year that the licencing conditions are overly onerous. We need to licence the boat annually and meet a number of reasonable safety conditions. The challenge is that each driver also needs to be licenced annually, requiring a medical as well as proof of training, etc. Following our comments they have agreed to review the requirements and rates with a view to introducing any amendments next year. We are currently assembling information about conditions applying to trip boat licences to seek a reduction of rates and a move to self certification of medical condition. Anyone with information from other operations locally, please let me know. It could make a big difference to the finances and ease of recruitment of volunteers.

We have been getting increasing numbers of questions about the delivery of a pontoon to allow access by wheelchairs. We've had a number of older passengers who also find it difficult to descend the steps. There hasn't been much progress on the pontoon delivery since last month. Current. The city engineers have now extended the time to get their surveys complete and say we won't have them until early September. Once we have these we can get a quote for the work to be completed. Only then can we assess whether we have sufficient funding available to get it in place. This means that the previous promise of end of July is now running another 6 weeks late. Of course with this sort of timetable it means it will be 2024 before we are fully operable. It is very frustrating!

However, we were pleased that the CEO at DCC facilitated a meeting with St Modwens to discuss the Derby Arm development. It was a constructive meeting that raised a number of questions that we are now looking to address. Fundamentally it is apparent that St Modwens development is so well advanced that, particularly with so little funding available at present, we will struggle to locate the Arm and visitor centre on their land. We have been looking at a few alternatives, so watch this space.

Members' Meetings

The final members' meeting before the summer break will be a walk around Little Eaton from 7pm on July 25th. It will take around an hour and start and finish at the New Inn. We'll cover areas of interest to the Derby Canal, but a few other aspects as well. It will be hosted by Bill Hutchinson, who runs the local historical society. We'll meet at the New Inn car park and those who don't want to follow the whole walk can retire to the pub early to be joined by the main party later.

I hope to see you there.

Chris Madge