

**Note of second meeting re Lady Bay Canal
7.30 pm 3rd November 2022 at West Bridgford Methodist Church Musters Rd**

Chaired By Penny Gowland, speakers From the Environment Agency (EA), Canal And Rivers Trust (CRT), Grantham Canal Society (GCS), Grantham Canal Water Restoration Group (GCWRG) And Friends of Lady Bay Canal (FLBC).

The Chair was pleased to see that there is now some water in the three stretches of the Lady Bay sections of the Grantham canal. However, there is no guarantee that the same problem will not arise next summer. A group of people is needed to explore and take forward possible solutions. This group would ideally work with the existing groups and she was pleased to see these so well represented today.

1. Richard Cooper from the Water Resource and Planning Team of the Environment Agency gave a short presentation.

In discussion with GCS, his view is that the loss of the Cotgrave supply has created current problems with a shortage of water both to the Lady Bay and Gamston sections of the canal. When a higher level of nitrates and phosphates were found in the water going into the canal, Severn Trent had taken the decision to build one purification station at Radcliffe on Trent and to close off the supply of water from the Cotgrave section to the canal.

Queries from the floor –

Was an Environmental Impact Assessment carried out? and would it have covered consequent water loss in the Grantham Canal. It was **confirmed** that **EA to get hold of impact assessment.**

Re S106 and CIL funding should the recent new housing development at Hollygate Lane Cotgrave have had to make a financial contribution to help preserve water supply to the Grantham Canal (perhaps by funding a 2nd nitrate and phosphate treatment plant?) – noting that a 2nd phase is now planned and a possible s106 contribution could be requested if the S106 agreement has not yet been signed.

Discussion about sluice gate at Cotgrave Brook and Skinners Cottage. GCS believe that the siphon is not functioning so water now flows into the canal – but not in sufficient quantity to prevent the canal drying up. **CRT to clarify**

Richard Cooper commented that backfill from the Trent was one possible way to replenish water supply to the Lady Bay section of the Grantham Canal. The Trent has plenty of water. Historically, there was the infrastructure at Lock 1 for water to flow each way between Grantham Canal (Lady Bay section) and the Trent. It is not clear if this infrastructure has survived and is still functional. If a new pump is needed there is no obvious funding to provide one. **It was confirmed that EA is to investigate.**

Also need to establish who owns land between Trent Boulevard and the EA office. **EA seeking to clarify through discussion with County Council**

Query from the floor:

If taking water from the Trent at Lock 1 is not an option, can water come from Radcliffe on Trent to Lady Bay/Gamston section of the Grantham Canal. This is technically possible but not such a neat solution as access to the Trent at Lock 1. **EA and GCS to explore all possible solutions and report back to next meeting.**

It was confirmed that for some solutions there is no need for an extraction licence. That said, it was noted that there was a licence in place for the water flow to Cotgrave Colliery washing plant.

2. Richard Bennett from CRT took questions from the floor

Poor canal maintenance has contributed to current problems. Reeds within the Canal, overhanging trees from residents' gardens, Radcliffe Rd hedgerow has not been maintained and could be layered as part of volunteer groups training in hedge laying.

Discussion about reeds focussed on trimming – which can be done by volunteers but is not a long term solution – vs professional removal (inc roots) which is long-term but costly. Grantham Canal Society can advise on how to do voluntary work and co-ordinate work programmes if CRT will supply appropriate equipment, However CRT has a shortage of qualified staff (e.g. engineers who can document problems and authorise remedial works) and also has very limited funding which is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the range of needs – and CRT will always give priority to navigable waterways.

Reed removal is less expensive than silt removal which is also required (though is the silt protecting the clay canal bed?). In both cases disposal of waste is also an issue. **Richard Bennett to bring alternative costed solutions back to the next meeting (or provide as follow-up info to go out the with these minutes?) and advise on what if any resources CRT can put towards canal maintenance.**

GCWRG has also made use of volunteer labour attracted from the local area and beyond and can advise on what can realistically be achieved with volunteer labour.

Question from the floor – what kind of canal do we want? Currently a remainder canal with little access to public funding, If became a navigable canal (which would require an Act of Parliament) this would attract more funding but change the nature of the canal – what would this do to wildlife, is it what we want and how do we test local community opinion?

One option, also raised from the floor, is for the Lady Bay (and Gamston?) section of the canal to become an Urban Nature Reserve. This has the potential to attract funding from Rushcliffe Borough Council and other sources and would reflect the very real physical and emotional health benefits which this section of canal offers to local residents (and visitors). GCWRG are also exploring this as a possible option at Hickling and Kinoulton.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to be approached to advise on options for evolution into an Urban Nature Reserve.

3. Tony Osmond from the Grantham Canal Society (GCS) made a presentation

GCS has been very eastern-centric with a focus on the stretch of the Grantham canal from Woolsthorpe to the A1. GCS has carried out 2 lock restorations at the eastern end of the canal and is now keen to establish a base at the western end. An initial proposal is to establish a base at Adbolton cottages off Adbolton Lane and to work towards provision of a new Trent outlet for the Grantham Canal. This will require a lot of planning and significant funding including for a new route for the canal under Radcliffe Rd. The new stretch of waterway would become navigable, with a proposed Marina. The Lady Bay section of the Grantham Canal could potentially become moorings.

Further information on these proposals will be presented to the Lady Bay Community Association meeting at 2:00 PM on 19 November at All Hallows church hall.

Questions from the floor indicated that whilst these proposals were interesting they did not address the immediate problem of what to do about the shortage of water for the present Lady Bay Canal. However, it was clear that there was a wealth of enthusiasm, expertise and historical knowledge within GCS and any proposals for Lady Bay Canal should draw upon their expert knowledge.

4. Cllr Tina Combellack gave a presentation on behalf of GCWRG

GCWRG is an unincorporated association set up to lobby and campaign for restoration and maintenance of water at the Hickling and Kinoulton section of the Grantham Canal. Tina recommends that we too form an unincorporated association as this will increase our ability to bid for public funds.

GCWRG and Rushcliffe Council are lobbying DEFRA for funding to be made available to remainder canals having regard to their leisure and health benefits. This may entail becoming a Nature Reserve (see item 2 above). Lobbying by GCWRG has been successful in increasing access to public funding – volunteer practical action continues to be required but with additional financial resources can be made more effective and durable.

- Rushcliffe Council has made £40k pa available for towpath maintenance throughout the district.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund has allocated £100K for clearance of canal vegetation and repair of culverts.

Similar activity by the Lady Bay group could only be helpful – talk to Jenny Kirkwood at NRCAN (and Notts Wildlife Trust)

Tina also clarified that the £3.9m public funding referred to in the minutes of the previous meeting is a pot of money available to the incoming subregional Mayor as part of the Levelling Up Initiative. It is not yet clear what this money will be spent on and presumably it is worth lobbying for some of it to go to canals and nature reserves.

5. Verity Butler of Friends of Lady Bay Canal made a presentation

Verity provided background on the development of the FLBC as a facebook® group with over 100 followers. She advised on the previous canal maintenance undertaken by volunteers. She confirmed that FLBC was not a constituted group and could not bid for public funding.

6. Conclusion:

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and called for volunteers to carry out practical activities working in co-operation with the existing GCS and Friends of Lady Bay Canal networks.

She also asked for volunteers to join a Lady Bay Canal lobbying and fundraising group which would be constituted as an unincorporated association and would work alongside existing organisations modelling itself on the activities of GCWRG.

More than 30 names collected for each of these activities.

7. Date of next meeting

7th December at 7.30 pm - likely to be upstairs at the Poppy & Pint.