

## **Notes of a meeting of residents of Rutland Road and Ropsley Crescent re the drying up of the Lady Bay section of the Grantham canal**

**5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at the Poppy and Pint Lady Bay**

Chair Cllr Penny Gowland

In attendance Canal and River Trust (CRT) Grantham Canal Society (GCS), Grantham Canal Water Restoration Group (GCWRG),

70+ local residents from Rutland Rd, Ropsley Crescent and Mabel Grove, local Cllrs Richard and Sue Mallender and a representative of Lady Bay Community Association

### **1. Relationship with CRT**

CRT advised that the Lady Bay section of the Grantham canal is a remainder waterway. CRT would like it to stay in existence but is very short of resources. This has been an unprecedented summer with problems of shortage of water all over England. CRT is keen to work with local residents to safeguard the canal and associated wildlife.

Q: change of status from being classed as a remainder waterway?

A: CRT confirmed the status of a remainder waterway cannot be changed except by Act of Parliament. Duties of CRT towards remainder waterways and some possible activities undertaken by local councils are set out in the link below

<https://www.canalworld.net/forums/index.php?/topic/62218-remainder-waterways/>

CRT confirmed that the response sent by CRT to Julia May was misleading and this needs to be clarified

CRT confirmed that they would like to work with Lady Bay residents to set up a charitable group which can bid for public funding to clear and regenerate this section of the canal

### **Actions**

- Follow up letter of clarification (with map showing sections of the Grantham canal affected by drought and information on Service Level Agreement) requested from CRT
- Consideration to be given to setting up a local charitable group which can bid for public funding – CRT to supply relevant background information
- CRT to provide SLA so we can be better informed the extent of the responsibilities

### **2. Reasons for drying up of Lady Bay section of Grantham Canal and possible actions to redress this**

CRT advised that supply of water to the Lady Bay and associated sections of the canal has been reduced by changes to water supply at the Cotgrave Feeder and Hollygate Lane.

Q: JM asked whether Thule Brook feeds canal sections 9 to 3

CRT confirmed actions by Severn Trent - at Cotgrave and they have diverted water from a culvert at Basingfield because of issues of deteriorating water quality due partly to new house building in the area.

CRT advised that at Hollygate Lane, the Highways Authority made changes to the A46 which required the creation of a new balancing pond which again diverted water supply

Query: Why should this reduce water supply - water normally flows through balancing ponds and exits. There should have been continued flow - or was it not built-in).

Action : to investigate how or if these changes were consulted upon, or if there was any requirement to do so?

Query whether CRT responds to consultation documents and/or how residents likely to be affected are alerted?

GCS suggested that in the case of Cotgrave Feeder the issue with sewage required changes to be made and impact on water levels and wildlife downstream would not have been a determining factor.

GCS advised that

Water supply from Polser Brook is good but dries up if there is no rain

There are a number of leaks to the canal including a very bad one at the Lime Kiln pub in Cropwell Bishop where there is a broken culvert. The full extent of leaks within the canal system in this area is not known. Culvert 39 at Kinoulton has been fixed but there are many more to go and this is expensive.

Query Do not have any effect of sections 15 (Hollygate Lane Feeder) down to 2 (Lady Bay culvert)

Peter Cadwallader from Grantham Canal Water Restoration Group (GCWRG), which had obtained public funding for the restoration project at culvert 39 offered to share his experiences with the Lady Bay group.

It was noted that at Skinner's Lock the lock keeper has used a piece of tin at the former sluice gate which had a dramatic effect on the supply of water to the Lady Bay section of the canal

Audience members queried why there was a plentiful supply of water for the golf course and none for the canal

Query: do they have extraction licence to divert water

Query: whether use of sandbags at the broken Wier section of the Lady Bay canal section between gate 4a Gamston Bridge and 3a might be an immediate short term solution. Feasibility/cost of repair to the weir to be checked

Access to water from River Trent is another possible short term solution. GCS held earlier discussion which established that Environment Agency also has a role

precedent of water main/pipeline from Trent to former Cotgrave Colliery washing plant still in situ. Advised that this overcame a gradient from 1m – 6m. Less incline if shortened to feed section 4a down to 3a, and 3

Q: It is possible that the prolonged dry spell has damaged the clay lining to this stretch of the canal – How can this be checked

**Next steps:**

A show of hands indicated overwhelming audience support for engaging in practical instant measures to enable the Lady Bay section of the canal to function more effectively as a watercourse, However it was not clear which actions are most likely to be effective

CRT confirmed that cutting down of reed mace will weaken growth. Further information on safe removal of phragmites is required.

**Actions:**

- Identify what immediate volunteer action can be taken – through initial discussion with GCS
- Work with GCS to follow up Trent connection
- Liaise with GCWRG
- Invite Severn Trent and Environment Agency to meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

**3. Action to safeguard wildlife in the event of a further drought**

Local residents expressed strong concern about the harm done to wildlife by the canal drying out. Dead animals had been found in peoples gardens. Residents in Ropsley Crescent had been active in keeping two Swans and their cygnets alive. Police Fire Brigade and RSPCA had been involved on more than one occasion.

There appeared to be no plan to safeguard wildlife, nor is it clear whose responsibility this is. No information had been provided to local residents and only very recently had any steps being taken to safeguard fish by moving those who remained to another location. Damage to the invertebrate population is unknown.

CRT expressed the view that the wildlife was likely to return when water levels improved but this did not cancel out the damage and loss of habitat already incurred. There was also a risk that the same issues could arise again if a contingency plan is not developed.

**Actions**

- Find out which (if any) agencies have responsibility for protection of wildlife
- drew on experience from elsewhere in the canal network where wildlife had been successfully rescued (possibly with GCS and GSWRG plus RSPCA)
- develop a contingency plan for wildlife rescue/management for Lady Bay canal

**4. Access to public funding – working with the district and county councils**

It was suggested that £3.9m had been allocated from local authority funding (or a bid by the local authority?) to spend on the Grantham canal. it is not clear what if any of this funding will be spent on the Lady Bay section and more information is required on the sources of public funding which are available to support regeneration of the lady Bay canal.

**Actions**

- Lady Bay councillors to advise on possible sources of public funding through the district and county councils

## **5. Access to private funding**

It was noted that the loss of the amenity value of the canal would have an impact on house prices and it was therefore in the interest of residents to consider entering into some form of financial commitment to safeguard quality of life in the area. a show of hands indicated that this option was worth exploring further.

### **Actions**

- Explore possible role for crowd-funding initiative - recognising that significant public sums will likely also be required to maintain the canal as a thriving waterway.

## **6. Next steps**

By a show of hands it was confirmed that the group wished to continue to meet and to develop a plan of action which would safeguard the Lady Bay section of the Grantham canal from future drying out and develop a contingency plan should a further drought occur. Residents were keen to take immediate action to improve the current situation.

It was important to recognise the good work done by existing voluntary bodies such as the friends of Lady Bay Canal and the Lady Bay Community Association. Any action plan developed must draw on the strengths of these organisations but it was not yet clear whether a new charitable body might be required in order to facilitate access to public funding.

Residents from Mabel Grove, who had heard of this meeting by chance, pointed out that interest in the Lady Bay canal goes beyond residents in Rutland Rd and suggested that the next meeting should be targeted at a wider group with advertisements being placed in public places and through social media. The comment was made that it is important not to rely solely on communication via the Internet as many people do not have access to these media and communication on paper would remain an important option.

### **Actions**

- Establish the most appropriate form for a local group which could raise funds to help preserve the Lady Bay canal (liaison with CRT and GCS)
- Call for potential committee members
- organise a follow up meeting to this one.

The chair thanked everyone for attending and the Poppy and Pint for providing an excellent venue. Given the high turn out a larger room would be required for the next meeting.

**Date of next meeting 3rd November 2022**

**venue to be decided**