



From the Chairman

First of all please accept my apologies for the long delay in sending this newsletter. The last one was in July 2022 and there has been a lot of water under the bridge since then. Personally I have been undergoing lengthy medical treatment which has meant me stepping back temporarily from many activities. I'm pleased to say that our wonderful NHS has put me back together and I am now fully recovered. In the absence of any offers to prepare Society newsletters this has meant an inevitable lengthy delay. If any HCS member would like to take on the role of Newsletter Editor I would be very pleased to hear from you. Just email me at chair@huddersfieldcanal.org.uk

In this issue we've taken on board feedback which asks us to use a single column of print as this would assist readers using mobile phones and tablets. I hope this simplified layout meets with approval. I'm grateful to Bob Gough for volunteering to do the layout.

If you've kept up with the waterways news, or read the front page of our website, you will know that there has been much concern raised about the reduction in Government funding for Canal & River Trust when the current 15 year funding arrangement comes to an end in 2027. HCS Council members have lobbied all five MPs along the Huddersfield Narrow Canal to raise our concern.

In this newsletter the text from the HCS website is restated under the heading 'Waterways in Crisis'. If you haven't already done so please email or mail your MP to raise your concern about the inadequacy of the proposed funding.

Alan Stopher
Chair HCS

Elsewhere in this edition:

- Both our shuttle boats in operation
- Link to the May 2022 video.
- Welcome to our new Trustee
- HERD Music event
- Huddersfield Narrow Canal - new Slaithwaite moorings and update on operations.
- Standedge Tunnel & Visitor Centre changes

Waterways in Crisis

Government announces reduced funding for the Canal & River Trust

The Government funding agreement for the Canal & River Trust ends in four year's time. The current annual grant of £52.6 million a year represents about a quarter of the Trust's income, the rest coming mainly from user licences, mooring charges, income from land holdings and charitable donations. As the grant is fixed and does not increase with inflation, it is already causing financial problems for the Trust and we are already seeing indications of spending restraints despite increases in volunteers taking on many roles.

On 10th July 2023 the Government announced the funding for the next ten year period commencing in 2027. Although they accept that the Canal & River Trust has provided value for money since its takeover from the nationalised British Waterways in 2012 the Government states that the Trust should not need Government support and should seek other forms of funding. They have, therefore, said that the grant will be reduced to £50 million in 2027 and be cut by 5% each year after that. At the end of the period in 2037 the annual grant will have reduced to £31.5 million. In total this means that the Canal & River Trust will lose £320m. This comes as maintenance costs for ageing canal infrastructure – 200-year-old plus locks, aqueducts, reservoirs, embankments – is increasing due to climate change with more periods of drought and extreme storm events. Such a drastic decrease in funds will inevitably result in a decline in the overall condition of our waterway network, and, alarmingly, the possibility of canal closures. It puts at risk invaluable natural habitats, historic infrastructure and cherished public spaces.

The Trust believes that the substantial reduction in support will mean that maintenance will have to be cut back and there are likely to be canal closures. The Northern canals and navigations with their low number of boats and high maintenance costs are most at risk. As it stands we are facing an existential threat to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

Please write to your local MP telling them how much you care about the canals and why they need to be funded properly. Urge the Government to reconsider their decision and protect our waterways for the future.

And how can you do it?

The best way is for you to email or mail your MP with your own thoughts. Personal representations are always best. Alternatively you can go to the Canal & River Trust website and follow the links here:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/donate/our-campaigns/keep-canals-alive>

Shuttle Boat Operations

We had our most successful season in 2022 with over 10,000 passengers on the two craft. 2023 is the second season in which we have operated both d(iesel) and e(lectric) Shuttles. The d-Shuttle did its customary run down to Stalybridge for the Festival weekend in late June, but this time paused at Uppermill on the return journey to gauge the viability of an occasional trip boat service there.

We have been surprised at the level of interest and, subject to our having sufficient volunteers to crew the boat, we aim to run it at Uppermill every weekend to late September.

The trips last about 15 minutes from outside the Saddleworth Museum & Gallery.



Moira steers the d-Shuttle at Stalybridge Festival 2023.



Trevor brings the d-Shuttle to our mooring point beside the East Manchester Community Boat Project craft at the Stalybridge Festival 2023.



The Shuttles in convoy during the Marsden Jazz Festival, October 2022.

Trevor on the helm of Marsden e-Shuttle during the Tunnel End Music Festival, July 2022.



Welcome to Anne Goggin, our new Trustee

In January this year I was pleased to welcome Anne Goggin to our Council of Management. Anne hails from the Republic of Ireland where she, along with her late husband played a significant role with the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland. Now resident in West Yorkshire, Anne is a keen skipper for our shuttle boats. If you want to know what Anne looks and sounds like please view the video mentioned below as Anne has a starring role.

We're always on the look out for others to join our group of Society trustees particularly if they can bring new skills to the table such as communications, publishing, fund-raising and IT. Please contact me if you are interested and would like to be considered.

Video of last year's launch of the e-Shuttle and celebrating 21 years of the reopened HNC.

For those of you who missed this fantastic event last May here is the link to the video made for us by Kirklees Local TV:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0_A4OKEH7Y



HERD Music Event

We were invited to take part in this unique arts event which was the high point of Kirklees Year of Music 2023. 23 larger-than-life sheep, appeared in surprising places across the Kirklees countryside. Wired for sound, these musical sheep sculptures 'sang' original compositions into the landscape, moving from the rural boundaries of Kirklees as eventually were brought together in a finale event in St George's Square in Huddersfield on 16th July 2023. There were two waterway based parts to the event involving Safe Anchor Trust on the Calder & Hebble Navigation and our own e-Shuttle and crew from Slaithwaite to Marsden on Friday 15th July. It was quite a spectacle if a little challenging given the weather on the Friday.



The Society's e-Shuttle in Slaithwaite; taking their part in the HERD event, July 2023. *More pictures follow ...*



The Society's e-Shuttle in Slaithwaite; taking their part in the HERD event, July 2023.



Huddersfield Narrow Canal

New Slaithwaite moorings and update on operations

For many years the narrow road cum towpath between Lock 23E and Lock 24E at Slaithwaite had caused concern. The wash wall was unstable and temporary plastic barriers had been in place on the ramp up to the guillotine lock. The promised wash wall repairs, and mooring points have now materialised after a £5m project which ran over the winter months up to Easter 2023. It involved driving of a continuous sheet pile wall and removal of silt. You can see from the images that the work is to a high quality and incorporates many mooring rings. It's good to see this investment in our waterway.



Slaithwaite wash wall work in progress Jan 2023.
Three different views of the finished work on
Slaithwaite wall and moorings.



Huddersfield Narrow Canal

Update on operations

Although last summer's drought is behind us, availability of through navigation has been hampered by planned and unplanned works. Most reservoirs were full after the winter rain but Hilltop at Slaithwaite has been held 1.5 metre below spillway level to permit repairs to the spillway which has impacted on water availability downstream.

The continuing challenges of maintaining water above Lock 1E in Huddersfield have been exacerbated by this and CRT have conducted further investigations to establish how water is being lost and plan more grouting of the Lock wall as a result. Until the leakage is fully resolved passage through Lock 1E is available at 9am and 2pm slots for either direction of travel Monday to Sunday but has to be booked.

In addition a series of emergency stoppages have had to be put in place on both east and west sides to deal with broken cills and failed lock equipment.

Standedge Tunnel & Visitor Centre changes

During the winter of 2022 we became aware of moves to market the warehouse building and cease to run weddings by October 2023. The weddings have been a good source of income for CRT over the last few years and concerns have been raised by CRT's own volunteers and your Society about the likely impact on this special site which is run at a net cost to CRT.

We have been assured that CRT is still committed to running the sole remaining trip boat into Standedge Tunnel but they have made us aware that there are no funds for replacing the 22 year old tug and passenger modules. Meanwhile it is understood that five businesses have expressed an interest in leasing the warehouse building and we await the outcome of CRT's deliberations. We hope to be able to report positive news in our next newsletter.

*Many thanks for maintaining your membership
and your patience in awaiting this newsletter.
I hope you find something of interest therein.*

Alan Stopher
Chair HCS