

Mick's Musings

Gagged

In writing this front page down the years, I usually have to be motivated by something external that “gets my goat” before the words can get on to the paper.

Round about 13 or 14 years ago, I wrote quite a strong piece (including photographs) concerning the three rainwater outfalls in Melton that were allowed, in times of high rainfall, to discharge raw sewage into the river.

I titled the piece, which detailed the stonewall attitudes of both Severn Trent and the Environment Agency, “Smellton Mowbray” as the stench emanating from the outfalls was very strong. However, certain members of our committee at the time, who later admitted that they were not interested in the restoration of the whole waterway, but rather just to beautify Melton, proceeded to pressure me to remove what I had written, as it painted the town and its governance, in a very poor light.

The page was removed, and rather prophetically, all these years later, pollution of our waterways has now become the political hot potato. Had we “published and be damned” at the time, I wonder if a change in attitudes could have been wrought then, rather than attempting to do that now.

I only mention the above, as my latest piece which detailed the rowing and trip boat side of the MOWS operation, painted certain people in officialdom, as obstructive and officious, and was an attempt to change attitudes towards tourism in the town.

Despite the “no names no pack drill” approach, it was still felt to be sufficiently hard hitting that I was asked to remove it. So, what you are reading now has supplanted the original.

I have made no secret of the fact that I feel that under the present rules and regulations the hire boating side of our operations, rather than raising essential capital, may prove to be a drain on our resources. The operation, in terms of manpower, also detracts massively from the original objective of the society which is to restore the Melton Mowbray Navigation in its entirety.

Let's hope that in a further 14 years' time when we read this again, with hindsight, we regret not publishing the article and trying to be more forceful in our approach to changing the things that will further our restoration ambitions.

Just my two penn'oth and not necessarily the views of the MOWS Committee.

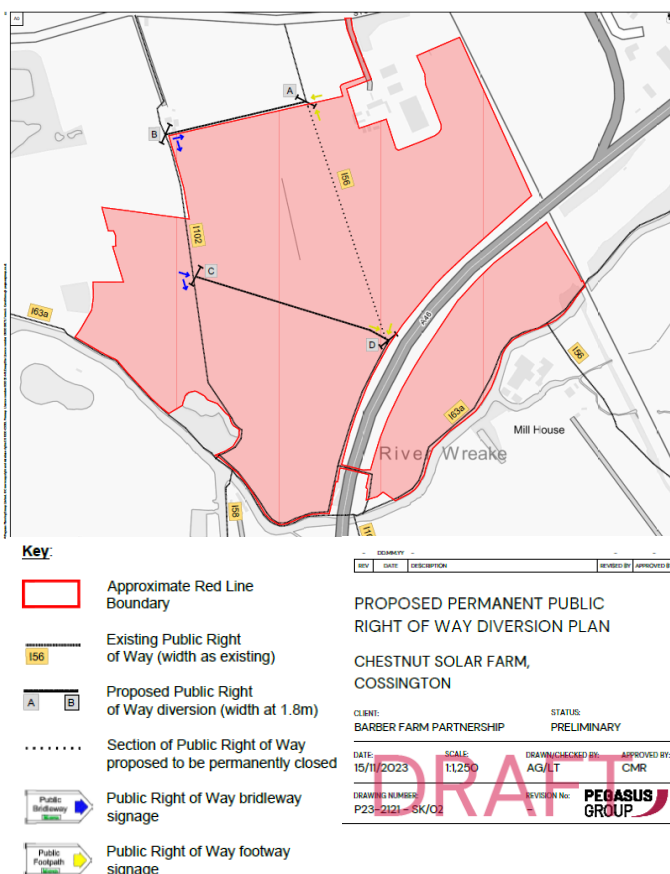
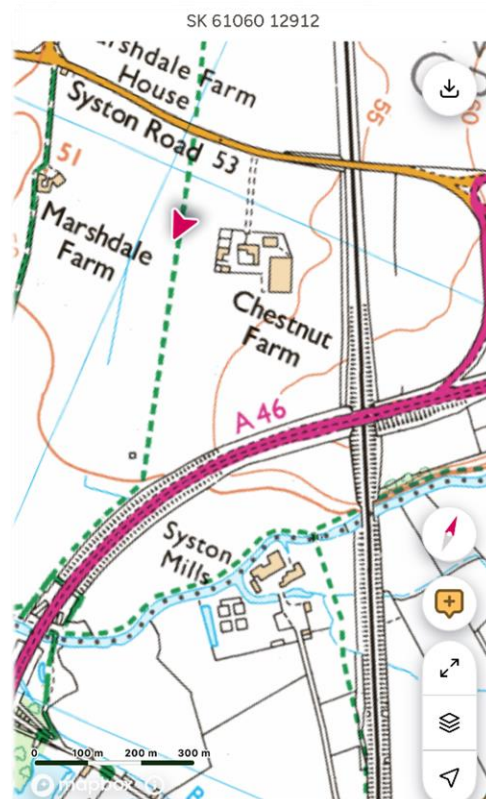
Mick

Temporary (or Permanent?) Footpath Diversion

On his walk from Rearsby to Three Ways Bridge, one of our Footpath Rangers came across a notice informing of a temporary restriction of Footpath No 156, which leads from close to the canal and for approximately 600m+ towards Cossington. The notice had the name of a company called Ethical Power and it seems they are installing a solar farm on Chestnut Farm. However, **Ethical Power has built solar panels across the line of the path**, despite their own design and access statement showing that all Rights of Way will be respected and, according to the planning permission conditions by Charnwood Borough Council, asserting that all Rights of Way across the site shall be treated in a particular manner.

He was concerned that the security fencing installed looks to be a permanent closure of the path. He has also noticed that since the closure of this well-used path, the sections of footpath nearby have been used less due to fewer people approaching via the closed path. Some sections have become overgrown due to lack of use. One section near to Three Ways Bridge is now impassable.

He has written to Ethical Power and Rights of Way Officers at LCC. There has been no reply from LCC yet.



Alexandria Morley from Ethical Power wrote back to him saying that, whilst this project is nearing completion, there are still works that will require this footpath closure into September/October. She could confirm that they were still on track to facilitate the reopening of the footpath by the 29 October in line with their project programme and completion date, however, cannot confirm an earlier reopening for this footpath.

Despite the Planning and Access Statement (Clause 4.9) and the permission granted clearly back up what Ethical Power state about reopening the full original length of Footpath No 156, after going through all the planning documents on CBC Planning Portal, our Ranger doubts that the footpath will open in its entirety.

He will, of course, will be keeping a close eye on this project.

Work Parties

Our most recent work party saw the group taken by our older work boat “Badger” to attend to a fallen branch that was almost completely blocking the canal section behind the pavilion in Egerton Park. Once the smaller branches had been taken off the scale of the task could be seen, but the team set to work and soon had everything cut back to the main trunk.

The cuttings were taken to be composted at the footbridge site further downstream, and the group returned via the ring which in places was blocked by the massive reed growth, giving us food for thought about winter work parties in this area.



Interpretation Boards

The long-awaited interpretation boards are now being constructed and the text composed and checked for accuracy. We have permission to site several, although the positioning of the odd one or two could prove problematic, but the society are in discussions with landowners to try and get the best positions approved.

Eye Kettleby Lock Clearance

One of our recent grants has enabled us to begin the process of having contractors clear Eye Kettleby Lock and repair or replace the broken fence there. Agreement has been reached with the landowner for the work to be carried out and an appropriate quote selected. We now await for the contractors to get in touch before starting work.

MOWS Talks

Made possible through a grant from the National Lotteries Heritage Fund, on 16 October 2025 the society will be hosting a presentation on the Melton Navigation to be given by the award-winning local historian, Brian Fare.

This open event will be held at the Melton Carnegie Museum. The talk will start at 7:00pm for around one hour. Doors open at 6:45pm. It is free to enter but pre-registration is essential, via telephone or email directly to the museum, contact details: 0116 305 3860, meltonmuseum@leics.gov.uk

Brian will also be leading guided tours around the historical sites of the Melton town canal infrastructure, on 3 October at 10:00am and 6 December at 13:30pm. These two tours will be free of charge for members of the public but pre-booking is essential as numbers will be limited on a first come, first served basis. Other tours will follow next year.

Boat Trip with LCC Officials

An inspection trip of the local waterway was taken recently with officials from LCC.

Our aim was to show them first-hand the problems we face in both clearing the waterway, whilst being mindful of flooding risks, and at the same time preserving the heritage, and fauna and flora. We used the new boat “Toad” for the trip and even with the new 6hp motor purring away our passage became stop-start due to the excessive weed growth.

The object of the exercise was to show that reports arriving on their desks concerning (amongst other things, flooding) can look vastly different when viewed actually down on the water. We also hope that this trip has strengthened ties between the society and those whose help we may need when major restoration work needs to be approved.

Trip Boat and Silt Removal

The essential silt removal work to enable our trip boat “Wreake Voyager” to operate remains in the pipeline due to the difficulty meeting multiple conditions imposed by the Environment Agency. Along with a very expensive water framework directive and several vole/otter/crayfish surveys, agreement has to be agreed with landowners as to where the removed spoil can be spread. It has to be no more than 100mm thick and needs to be a good distance back from the bank edge. Discussions with landowners will take place soon.

Without this work the waterway remains too shallow between the boat compound and the deeper water in the canal section and beyond to allow the boat passage. The trip boat fit-out and preparation remains on schedule with a representative from Pilling’s Lock Marina due to come and quote for a full boat removal and survey. But without the remedial work to the waterway, alas this could all be for nothing until an amicable compromise can be reached between those ordering the work and those carrying it out.

2025 AGM

Please note that this year’s AGM will be held on Saturday 1 November at the Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, commencing at 10:00am.

New Members

Welcome to new members ...

Jason Davies
Jake Harrison
Stephen Hewitt

Society Contacts:

Chair: Sharon Butcher
e-mail: sharonbrown987@icloud.com

Secretary: Jerry Filor
(Acting) e-mail: jflor@talktalk.net

Treasurer & Membership Secretary Diana Patterson
e-mail: dj.patterson@btopenworld.com

Website: <http://www.meltonwaterways.org.uk>

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