



Friends of Lady Bay Canal (FLBC)

An Update after a Busy Summer

Opened in 1797, the Nottingham to Grantham Canal, which passes through Lady Bay & Gamston before meandering onwards & upwards through the Vale of Belvoir, has faced many threats over its existence, not least its abandonment in 1936 & plans for infilling of the W. Bridgford Section in 1970. But no previous threat to the canal has been as potentially avoidable from an engineering perspective as the one that it faces today – a water shortage! Particularly when considered in the context of climate change & our warmer, wetter weather patterns that wreak havoc across Nottinghamshire.

But as with all engineering challenges that interface with the environment, the economy & our societal/political system for managing change, the devil is in the detail & a water shortage in a canal is not such an easy problem to solve. This has been discovered first hand by our growing team of individuals from the local community who share a passion for rejuvenating the Grantham Canal to its former glory – FLBC.

After considerable investigation & head scratching over the summer of 2020, & with the invaluable support of canal-side landowners & representatives of the Grantham Canal Society (GCS), FLBC have developed a good understanding of the water balance in the Lady Bay section of the Grantham Canal. Based on our current knowledge, much of the water input has historically originated from feeder streams in the Cotgrave area whereas much of the output is assumed to be via leaks/percolation through the 223 year old canal bed which remain undetected & hidden from sight.

Like any wealthy person's bank account, where the inputs exceed the outputs, they can rest easy as the bank balance grows. Applying this to the Lady Bay section of the Grantham Canal, where the water inputs exceed the outputs, the water levels rise & we see the satisfying flow of water over the overspill at the end of Rutland Road indicating that all is well. However, due to an unfortunate chain of separate events over recent years, the inputs of water have dropped considerably below the outputs & we're seeing the saddening decline in water levels, which is having a devastating impact on wildlife. FLBC are steadily unravelling the reasons for the decline in water inputs into the canal. However, it is fair to say that the decline reflects a combination of residential development, 'upgrades' to a Severn Trent

Water treatment facility & highway infrastructure upgrades, all of which have occurred around the Cotgrave area & have very likely contributed to reduced water levels in the Lady Bay section of the Grantham Canal.

In recent months, & in response to regular contact from FLBC, the Canal & Rivers Trust have issued a Position Statement on water levels in the Lady Bay section of the canal. This statement advocates an attitude of acceptance of the low & fluctuating water levels & their impact on wildlife (or at least for the fish!). As guardians of our industrial heritage waterways, more should be expected from the CRT on this matter, but with 2,000 miles of waterways to prioritise and maintain, one can understand their initial response to the issue.

But in the Grantham Canal's time of need, all is not lost. In fact, there is a significant amount to be gained. FLBC have offered support to both the CRT and GCS to help maintain & restore the Lady Bay section of the canal. This unconditional support is testament to the strength of the Lady Bay community & our willingness to put our environment & wildlife 1st. As a result, you will see the occasional working party advertised through FLBC to conduct physical clearance work that the CRT deem to be suitable & safe for community volunteers. Furthermore, some members of FLBC have been 'prospecting' for new water resources that could be used to supplement the declining water levels in the canal. Whilst unproductive so far, this element of our work has exposed the ingenuity amongst our members, which is of course that same type of ingenuity that led to the canal's existence in the first place. This is an area in which we are very passionate &, if conducted through the right regulatory procedures, could be vital to the canal's future.

Looking ahead, the ambitions of FLBC are not humble! Working in close collaboration with the GCS, we are pushing for reconnection of the Grantham Canal to the River Trent in the Lady Bay area, ensuring that the Lady Bay section remains a joyous green corridor that contributes to the wellbeing of our community & to that of future generations. A route has been identified by the GCS & we are assured that work is going on behind the scenes to further evaluate its viability for potential future construction.

As with all community groups & projects, FLBC is just an acronym without continued & renewed engagement & involvement from our community; so please get in touch with FLBC if you want to know more. Your support is not just desired, it is absolutely necessary to enable us to make a difference and protect our canal.



@friendsofladybaycanal