



STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK

Members Newsletter Nov. 2025

It's been quite some time since we've updated members on what's happening with SRL, but we're intending this newsletter will become a regular feature to let you know what's going on. Meanwhile, I hope you've been keeping up to date with our excellent Facebook page and through our website, but a lot more has been happening behind the scenes.

Local members may well have noticed that work seems to have slowed down at the site, though our Groundwork Team has been working to keep it looking tidy and attractive. The basin is finished as far as possible, and there is no more to do there just yet. The next project is getting the bridge over the entrance to the basin underway. We are very much ready to go on this one. The Canal and Rivers Trust have been out to inspect the site and have approved the project in principle. However, paperwork for the CRT has taken longer than expected, but our Clerk of Works, Brian Hales, confidently expects to resume operations within the next few weeks. Before we can start on the bridge though, we first need to realign the pipework for the weir into the Forebridge drain. We already have the new paddle gear, and the massive pipes needed for this new spillway, and it will probably be the first task when we recommence operations.

One thing you may be seeing soon on site is a light tower trailer, partly due to the generosity of the Finney family, to help us combat the episodes of vandalism we have been experiencing recently. The last episode of fire setting resulted in the loss of our onsite Portaloo - a real blow to our work teams! Fortunately for them, a generous member of the public stepped in and donated a replacement. We hope the movement activated light tower will ultimately carry WiFi and cameras also, enabling real time viewing of the site at all hours. The local Community Police team is also patrolling more frequently.

Our Chair, Paul Bryan, and our Clerk of Works, Brian Hales recently had a very encouraging meeting with Gregg Stott – the Deputy Chief Exec. – at Stafford Borough Council and Martyne Manning – the Enterprise Growth Manager. The meeting raised awareness of everything that is going on with SRL, opened up new links to explore and reaffirmed old ones. Both Gregg and Martyne were enthusiastic about the project, and felt it very important that the Stafford Riverway Link should be included in the Stafford Town Centre Masterplan which is being developed. Paul will be attending a meeting about this in the near future. Proof of SBC's genuine commitment is that the SRL display board that Brian took along with him is now fixed to the central wall in Greg's office! A similar meeting with the office of our MP, Lee Ingham, is being arranged.

There will also be an important change for SRL next year, in the way the group is legally structured. Currently the group's status is that of a Community Interest Company. Whilst this system has worked well so far, with much larger financial sums involved in the future, SRL needs to look at a new construct. We are now in the process of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, which will have many advantages for us, including tax breaks like Gift Aid, and wider funding opportunities.

Fund raising - as ever - continues apace. Some of the cost of the bridge has been raised by our Buy a Brick campaign, which you may have seen featured on our website. Purchasers of bricks (£2 each, or 3 for £5) will have their names recorded for posterity in a time capsule which will be buried within the structure of the bridge. If you'd like to contribute to this, you can donate through our website at <https://www.stafford-riverway-link.co.uk/index.html>. We continue to be supported by donations from local and national businesses, but we have a long way to go, and some major costs coming up.

Still on the subject of fund raising - we've already fixed the date of our next Open Day, which is 16th/17th May 2026. Put it on your calendar, and please come along to celebrate with us the achievements of 2025-26. The Open Day last summer was a great success. We had an amazing number of visitors who enjoyed to the full everything the boat traders and stall holders had to offer, and - most importantly - learned a lot about the SRL. You'll have seen lots of happy pictures of the event on Facebook. It was very successful as a fundraiser too, and we're hoping to do even better in 2026.

Finally, some more dates for your diary:

- Our next monthly social evening will be at Stafford Boat Club on Tuesday November 18th - 8pm for 8.30pm. John Hibbs will be the speaker this time, talking about his love of all things boats, boaters and canals. The bar will - of course - be open.
- Our next date for the Groundwork Team work party is Saturday Dec. 13th from 9.30am. The team keep the site tidy and well maintained, and old and new hands are very welcome to join in. Tea and biscuits are provided! Further details from John Potter at thistlejohn@outlook.com
- I'm sure that many of you are aware that we have a travelling exhibition about the history and development of the SRL, including historical artefacts. The exhibition was recently at Stafford Library, and will shortly be at Holmcroft Library (Monday 24 November 2025 until Saturday 17 January 2026) and then it goes to Rising Brook Library (Saturday 31 January until Saturday 28 March 2026).

With very best wishes,
Denise Arthur
Secretary. Stafford Riverway Link
Nov 11th 2025