



## Planning Decision - First For B&MK

A landmark planning objection to protect the waterway route through Marston Vale has been made by Milton Keynes Council – the first time that one of the Consortium agencies set up to deliver the project has made such a decision.

The Council has objected to a planning application for a waste incinerator at Rookery Pit, near Stewartby, because it did not take into account a section of the waterway at that point. Although these plans are outside Milton Keynes, the Council made representations because the application would affect the waterway route between MK and Bedford.

The Council had been asked to make a representation to the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), which will make a final decision on the incinerator application later this year.

“This is the first time that one of our Consortium partners has needed to be proactive in protecting the waterway,” said trust chair, Jane Wolfson.

“The Trust is grateful to the Council for taking into account the failure of the incinerator application developers to consider the proposed route and provision of the waterway. The Trust has itself made similar submissions to the IPC and we hope that the planning inspector will take our submission and that of the Council into account when he makes his final decision.

“If approval is given, we have requested that the part of the waterway route which falls within the application area is considered by the developer as a community contribution,”

Jane said.

## Waterways Renaissance Awards – Project Makes The Shortlist

You may recall me reporting in the January issue that the Trust have submitted an entry for the 2011 Waterways Renaissance Awards. Early this year we were delighted to be informed that the project had been selected for the long-list. A team from the project met with Judith Grice, the panel judge nominated to assess and report to the judging panel about our project in February. The Trust thanks Tony Talbot at The Forest Centre in Marston Vale, for providing his Boardroom for the assessment session, with its views of the planned waterway route. Also, thanks to James Clifton from British Waterways and Drew Marchant from Renaissance Bedford for joining with Trust Directors; David Fowler and John Best, to give their accounts of the history of the project, its recent achievements and plans to deliver the A-Z sections.

We were also armed with 2 boxes of surveys, studies and maps, and the DVD: A Golden Opportunity, made by Geoff Wheeler, and David Monk way back in 2008. The sentiments pre-

sented by Kevin Whately still ring very true. There is a YouTube link to the DVD on the Trust’s website, if you missed it: <http://b-mkwaterway.co.uk/marstonvale.html>

Thanks also to Hilary Chipping from mksm, the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Growth body, involved in setting up the SE Midlands Local Economic partnership, who agreed to be the referee for our entry by providing an independent account of the project to the judge, Judith Grice. Everything combined to result in the project being promoted to the Awards shortlist, and we now await the results of the next round.

We know that there will be strong challenges in many categories from a wide variety of waterway restoration and regeneration projects around the UK, but fingers crossed that we can report even more good news at the Trust AGM in May.



Hilary Chipping

Claire Gathard



## View From The Chair



At the upcoming AGM, the Directors will talk more about our five key goals for the coming year. We need to ensure a strong Trust and play a full part in securing project progress through the Consortium. We need to constantly communicate about the Waterway to build community support, lobby key stakeholders, and undertake projects which involve local people. And we need to keep the right balance between all these activities – and keep them manageable.

Some ideas just take off - the energy generated by the plan to set up and run the Bedford Community Boat is a real testament to the vigour and talent of Trust volunteers! It will be a great way to let young people, community groups and businesses make better use of the river in Bedford, and give us a wonderful way to promote the benefits of the B&MK. So please do get on board and support the project in whatever way suits you best.

However exciting the latest project, there are many tasks that need to be undertaken week in, week out – for example, ‘planning watch’ to ensure that we spot all possible threats and exploit all possible opportunities to make the Waterway happen, including making sure it goes into all relevant plans and policies. We’ve done a lot over the last three months to ensure the Waterway is well represented in Local Development Frameworks, Transport and Economic Development Strategies.

We continue to provide briefings on the Waterway to Consortium members and others, most recently to John Lewis in Milton Keynes and to Milton Keynes councillors and officers. It’s heartening to see the Consortium Steering Groups start to get into their stride and in particular to see how Bedford Borough’s own full planning application for the Marston Innovation Park puts the waterway centre stage.

It was good to see new faces at the Members’ Walk on 6 March, as we explored route options in Milton Keynes. There’s nothing like thinking on your feet about inventive ways to make the Waterway happen! I’m sorry to miss the Talks Evening in April (but holidays beckon) and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM on 10 May. Do come for a general catch-up on the latest news, including how we’re doing with fundraising for the Bedford Community Boat - and also to hear from Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society about how to run a successful trip boat. They’ve been doing it for years and there is so much we can learn from their success.

*Jane Wolfson*

## Projects Group

Our first ever Projects Group meeting was held very successfully on 16<sup>th</sup> February. The purpose of this group is to oversee and progress our live projects, with activity currently focusing on our Heritage Project leading up to the bicentenary celebration of the origination of the waterway scheme in November this year, and on the set of sub-projects that together will fund, build, deliver and run our Trip Boat. We also maintain a list of potential projects – our back burner list – so that we are ready to launch them when conditions are right. In addition the Projects Group has briefings from time to time on partner-led projects, such as the off-road section of cycling Route 51 between Bedford and the Forest Centre.

This is the ideal forum for new volunteers to find out about our projects, to be updated on progress, and most importantly to get involved. The meetings are open to members, but please let us know if you would like to attend (by email to Claire at [Claire.Gathard@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:Claire.Gathard@britishwaterways.co.uk)) so we can ensure we have enough space to accommodate everyone. Our next few meetings are on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April, Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June and Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2011, and run from 6pm to 8pm.

**Hilary Goldsmith**

## Car Raffle

In this year’s Milton Keynes Community Foundation car raffle we sold 564 tickets. This will provide us with a very welcome £282 plus gift aid.

### B&MK News

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Editor.....Geoff Wheeler  
Proof Readers.....Don & Jill Allison  
Photo enhancement....Keith Malone  
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Comments or articles for inclusion in the next edition should be sent to

[editor@b-mkwaterway.co.uk](mailto:editor@b-mkwaterway.co.uk)

## With A Little Help From Our Friends

A big thank you to everyone who has helped with updating the Trust displays for the 2011 festival season.

We have refreshed the A-Z routemap, based on the Local Development Framework plans of the 3 Local Authorities through whose areas the waterway will pass. This was produced with much assistance (and persistence) by the following GIS (Geographical Information Systems) people; David Cook at Milton Keynes Council, Margaret Gawn at Bedford Borough Council, Drew Marchant and Andy Lewis's contacts at Central Bedfordshire Council, as well as Paul Williams at Halcrow and John Thompson in the GIS Team at British Waterways, who helped pull the whole route together, based on the existing planning consents and the lines of the waterway held in the 3 Local Development Frameworks.

Our sincere thanks to Steve Ashton and Stephanie Radusin from URS/Scott Wilson again this year, for updating the A-Z Progress Panels that accompany the routemap and which elaborate on the project's activities and plans, section by section. Also, our thanks to URS/Scott Wilson for a second print-run of the much-read and requested A-Z Status Report - first published for the Annual Partnership Conference in November 2010.

The high level summary B&MK Routemap - as seen in the Membership leaflet, on the Trust website and in the A-Z Status Report, has also had a refresh, to bring it up to date from the previous version in 2008. Thanks to Chris Johnson at Heron Maps for this piece of work,

As always, we would never have made so many steps forwards without Paul Williams and Mark Seward at Halcrow, who provide engineering help and consultancy to the project in all the key situations that arise, for example regarding the

### The B&MK Waterway Consortium

The Trust is one of 11 organisations that make up the Consortium responsible for taking the waterway project forward:

The Consortium meets twice a year through two steering groups which cover Milton Keynes and Central Bedfordshire/Bedford sections of the route.

After recent Government announcements, many of these organisations are changing their names, roles and responsibilities. Our next edition will contain the updated list of member organisations

impact of frequent planning applications along and near the route, e.g. the River Great Ouse hydro-electric generation plant and the Covanta waste processing plant at Rookery Pit. Our thanks also to Paul Maison, Area Planner at British Waterways, for his support in responding to consultations and planning applications that impact upon the agreed route for the B&MK.

We are also grateful to the Economic Development Team at Bedford Borough Council; led by Paul Vann and including Patrick Lyons, who have kept us supplied with all the news on Marston Vale Innovation Park, and the progress of that section of the B&MK - in particular the provision of landscape design plans and report to demonstrate these important steps forwards for the project to the assessor from the Waterways Renaissance Awards judging panel recently.

Finally our thanks to the Environment Agency for providing financial support to the Trust Project Office for both 2010-11 and 2011-12 enabling us to work closely together.

**Claire Gathard**

## It's Time For You To Spring Into Action

We're seeking enthusiastic volunteers to help us in a wide range of activities. As you'll see, there's a lot going on, and existing volunteers are stretched to the limit. So we need you! Whatever your experience or interest, I'm sure there's a role to suit you. In particular at the moment we are looking for volunteers in the following areas:

### Display Materials:

Our wonderful Displays Kit Manager, having done a sterling job over many years, is handing over the reins so that he can concentrate his time on the Trip Boat project (of which more below). If this sounds interesting to you, and you're conveniently placed for Bedford and/or Milton Keynes, have a little bit of storage space and a bit of spare time, please get in touch. Otherwise we'll need to spend at least £600 a year on storage costs!

Our wonderful displays also need continuous updating to make them look enticing. We have some professional design help, but we need a Display Design Manager to look across the lot and work with others in the Communications Group to make sure our displays have maximum impact. If there's an inner designer/marketeer in you, let them out!

### Exhibitions:

We want B&MK to have a significant presence at a number of important exhibitions through the year. These are great opportunities to recruit



Continued on page 4



## Float our boat by 2012

A sponsorship appeal has been launched across the Trust membership, community groups, schools, colleges and local businesses seeking support for the Trust's latest venture – the Bedford Community Boat – which we hope to get off the ground and into the water by summer 2012.

“The venture has been inspired by the summer VIP trips we have run over several years on the Grand Union Canal at Milton Keynes and the Great Ouse at Bedford. We know how powerful this has been in demonstrating the benefits of a canal/river environment, as well as enthusing people about our own “waterway for all” project between these existing waterways.” Jane Wolfson, Trust chair, explained.

“The Great Ouse between Bedford and Kempston is a particularly beautiful, under-used stretch of river. Both Bedford Borough Council and the Environment Agency want to see it better used and appreciated, and we want to support that objective by opening people's eyes to how much fulfilment and educational opportunity the riverside can offer.”

Now the Trust wants its own boat to cruise throughout the summer season in Bedford to build community support and involvement in our 21<sup>st</sup> century waterway campaign. The target is to set up a trading company and launch a 60-foot, 50-seat broadbeam boat in time for the Bedford River Festival in 2012 and to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original plan for the B&MK waterway.

The cost of getting a new boat built, fitted out and ready to cruise is £120,000. There are grants the Trust can bid for but it needs to raise matched funding. So the initial target is £60,000 and we're asking the membership and the local community to get on board with sponsorships. Details of how to do this, together with the benefits of sponsorship to individuals and organisations are set out in individual letters.

Families and individuals can get on board with a sponsorship gift or loan – bronze (£100/£500), silver (£250/£1,000), gold (£500/£2,500) or platinum (£1,000/£5,000).

It is hoped that businesses will come aboard with sponsorships of £500 or £1,000, whilst community groups and educational establishments are being asked to commit £250 each. However, the Trust needs a promise of sponsorship by 22<sup>nd</sup> April so that we can show this to grant-giving organisations this spring.

The deadline is critical to our application for the Jubilee People's Millions, organised through ITV. If we are successful in the preliminary rounds we will need you all to vote for the Trust to win the grant. Should this fail we have applied for other grants which will also require us to demonstrate your support in practical ways.

So, if you haven't already responded to the Appeal letter please do so before 22<sup>nd</sup> April with the offer of a gift or a loan, and suggestions of community groups and businesses who can also be invited to support the boat venture.

Copies of the letter and briefing are on the website if you'd like to download them and forward to others.

**Neil Hayes, Publicity Manager**

## Volunteer appeal cont.

new members, and to spread the word about the waterway project and the work of the Trust. They're also a really good day out for volunteers, in exchange for a few hours' work. To get up to date on the project, and learn answers to the common questions asked by visitors to our stands, come along to our Talks Evening on 13<sup>th</sup> April. (see back page)

Every exhibition we attend needs someone prepared to organise and co-ordinate our presence. We have a number of events in our 2011 calendar which don't have an organiser yet. If you think you could manage one event, with help from Claire and the Comms Group, let us know.

### Walks:

We have a number of walks scheduled for this year, and we frequently get requests to schedule additional walks, particularly as part of some of our partner organisations' events calendars. If you like to walk, and would be interested in helping on one of our walks, or indeed in running a walk for us, please step forward.

### Projects:

We have two major projects under way right now. The first is our heritage project, preparing to tell the story of the B&MK from 1811 to 2011, and build towards the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of the waterway scheme in November of this year. For this we need budding historians, researchers, communicators and party organisers. Could this be you?

Then there's the **Trip Boat** project. In the short term, we need people who will help with fundraising, with marketing the trips and getting potential customers on board, and with planning and developing the boat itself and the logistics around it. Once the boat is on the water, we will need everyone from skippers to general helpers.

Contact Don Allison  
([donallison@btinternet.com](mailto:donallison@btinternet.com))

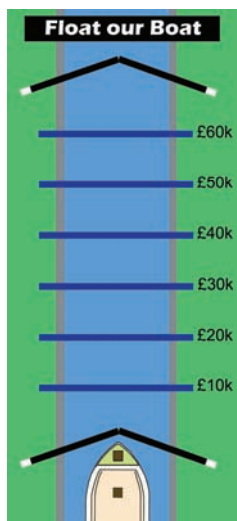
Are you an experienced **Project Manager**? Or are you developing your Project Management skills, and looking for challenging projects to extend your experience? If we are going to keep all our projects on the straight and narrow, we need more project management expertise. If that sounds like your kind of opportunity, give us a call.

### Members and Volunteers Manager:

We are looking for an enthusiastic and capable person to look after our members, to organise our rolling programme of member events, to engage more volunteers, and keep them excited and motivated. Could that be you?

Intrigued, but not sure where you fit? give me a call so I can talk you through what's involved (01223 233247 or email to [hilary@hilaryg.com](mailto:hilary@hilaryg.com)).

**Hilary Goldsmith, Projects Manager**



### STOP PRESS

*We've just heard that Bill Joyce and Christian Taylor, both members of Taverners Boat Club, have just volunteered to become the first skippers of the Community boat. They will train to take the Boat Masters Licence for carrying passengers.*

# Walk The Route



**Sunday 26 June at 10.30am**

**STARTING AT  
Kempston Mill Car Park  
MK42 7BD**

**Sustrans and The Trust join forces to promote a walking/cycling/  
waterway route around Wootton**

*This year's route starts at Kempston Mill and is a mostly urban walk of approx 3 miles. Those of you who walked with us on this section of the proposed route in 2006 will be amazed at the changes. The Western bypass is complete and a section of the A421 is now a Dual Carriageway. We weave between the new roads and housing developments following the proposed waterway and Route 51 cycleway route. There are some busy roads, quieter on Sunday and occasional rough track. We end the walk at the Black Horse pub Potters Cross Wootton where we are welcome to have refreshments. Minibus available for those who want a quick return to the Mill. Wear sensible shoes.*

Contact **Andrew Eardley (01234) 217621** or email [andrew.eardley@ntlworld.com](mailto:andrew.eardley@ntlworld.com)

## AGM

**Tuesday 10th May**

**United Reformed Church**

**Newport Pagnell**

**7.30pm**

**(Note this is a revised date)**

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# Completing The Circle

**John Farmborough joined the Trust last year. His cruise to the head of navigation has confirmed his enthusiasm for the B&MK Waterway**

Eaton Socon Lock was scheduled to close for maintenance on 25<sup>th</sup> October. If I was to reach the head of navigation of the Great Ouse I had to pass back through this lock before its closure or be trapped! As I conveniently had two weeks leave encompassing this date, I set off from Brandon Creek the week prior. Although not in a particular hurry, narrowboat 'Kaimy' made steady progress in pleasantly mild autumn weather. Five days later, having narrowly avoided losing my chimney passing under the two very low railway bridges upstream of Bedford Lock, I was thwarted about two miles short of my goal by a fallen tree. Nonetheless I considered that the voyage was essentially complete.

We bought our 43 foot narrowboat from a marina at Blisworth, near to Gayton Junction on the Grand Union Canal in late 2009. The intention was to self-deliver the boat to our 'home' mooring, Brandon Creek on the Little Ouse. We set off hopefully, only to be halted three days later at Titchmarsh on the Nene, due to last winter's lock maintenance programme. Expecting to be stopped for some two to three weeks we actually remained guests of the Middle Nene Cruising Club for the whole winter as a combination of bad winter weather and high water levels, in addition to lock closures, prevented further progress. Our compensation was some occasional short, but very picturesque, cruises along the Nene and visits to some truly excellent pubs. It was only at Easter that we finally managed to negotiate the remaining section of the Nene and the Middle Levels to arrive at our destination.

During the summer, mostly over long weekends, we explored the fenland Ouse and its tributaries. Being only 43 feet in length means that we are able to turn easily and to pass Brandon Lock with care. A couple of trips to Cambridge were also on the itinerary, nonetheless the Old West River upwards from Pope's Corner beckoned. So passed a very interesting and picturesque cruise, including working two surprisingly deep locks at St. Neots Papermills, and Castle Mill. Having reached the river above the final lock at Bedford, I reached the slightly premature limit of navigation. Being unable to pass the offending tree, there was no alternative but to turn for home, running aground in

the process. Once freed I was however able to reflect on the journey since leaving Gayton Junction. I had covered some 170 miles and worked 75 locks to end up only 20 'crow flying' miles from where I had originally set off. It would have been nice to have been able to complete the circle. This puts the plans of the B & MK into some perspective. Not only would a link from here to the Grand Union Canal create a shorter access to the connected inland waterway system for those of us based on the Ouse system, and vice-versa, but an excellent cruising ring would also be created. In so doing the upper Great Ouse would undoubtedly become a more vibrant boating destination leading to a general increase of commercial activity. The scheme has my wholehearted support.

**John Farmborough**



Hemingford Church



Moored at St Ives



Great Barford Bridge



Premature Limit Of Navigation

# Bedford Waterspace Study



The aim of a Waterspace Study is to inspire, influence and present a clear vision for the development of a water body, whether that is a canal, river or lake. Waterways animate our towns and replenish our countryside, but above all, rivers form part of a larger pattern of landscape which connects people, wildlife and ideas.



This year the Environment Agency is working in partnership with Bedford Borough Council to develop a waterspace study for the Bedford Great Ouse, to show how the river and associated facilities can be improved and developed for the future.



The jointly-funded Bedford Waterspace Study focuses on all aspects of the river corridor and will form the basis for the town's development and regeneration as an important waterways destination. It considers future increases in the use of the river due to the creation of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway and Fens Waterway Link and other strategic waterways, together with nearby land uses and transport routes within the Borough.

The study area comprises the navigable corridor of the River Great Ouse from Bromham Bridge downstream, to the future junction of the B&MK Waterway link in the vicinity of Kempston Weir, eastwards through Bedford town centre to Willington Lock. The final document

will be published as a master plan for the river corridor comprising detailed maps and schedules of potential projects and developments such as new moorings, enhanced cycleways and footpaths and other facilities. This will be accompanied by an economic benefit study. Both parts of the study are intended to be 'living documents,' which can be easily updated and used to guide all those with an interest in the river.



The consultants appointed by the Environment Agency and Bedford Borough Council have completed extensive consultation with local parish councils, boaters, rivers users, local businesses and other key groups with an interest in the Bedford Great Ouse. Publication of the final study is anticipated by May 2011, after which time the project partners hope to consult further and begin implementing some of the proposals. For more information or to get involved contact: Erin Vos at [erin.vos@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:erin.vos@environment-agency.gov.uk) or 01733 464552.

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## **Hear the B&MK Talk**

Talks and Social Evening

Weds 13th April 2011

6:30-8:30pm

Lidlington Church Hall, Church Street, Lidlington MK43 0RJ

This will be your chance to see and hear the B&MK Talk, with presentation, that the Trust's Talks team regularly give to groups in the area and further afield. The groups who have invited the Trust to speak over the past year have ranged from Engineers to WI Groups to Canal Trusts to U3A to Cyclists and beyond.

Just for this occasion, the B&MK Talk will be delivered by each of the members of the Talks Team presenting a section, covering the 200 year History, Engineering Challenges, Routing, Partnerships and Current Progress of the project. We hope that, armed with this wealth of knowledge, Members will feel more confident in volunteering to help man the Trust's exhibition stand at festivals and events, and will have plenty to share with our supporters and everyone who visits our displays.

Tea, coffee and refreshments will be served (donations welcome to cover costs) - do come along and enjoy this evening with us.

Map and directions: <http://www.lidlingtonchurch.org.uk/index.php/about-us>

Limited parking spaces outside the Hall, plenty of on-street parking available locally within the village Lidlington Rail station is only 100m from the Hall with Trains running between Bedford and Bletchley

Please RSVP to [claire.gathard@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:claire.gathard@britishwaterways.co.uk) or 01908 302592 if you are planning to attend, so that we can plan seating and catering for everyone.

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