

Press Release

Embargo: Immediate

B&MK WATERWAY SHORT-LISTED FOR NATIONAL WATERWAYS RENAISSANCE AWARDS 2011



The proposed Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway (B&MK) has been short-listed for a national Waterways Renaissance Award by the Waterways Trust for its superb partnership and strategic planning capabilities. The results will be announced at a ceremony to be held in Birmingham on Wednesday, 25th May 2011.

Mooted nearly 200 years ago, the concept of a 26km waterway to create the missing link between the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes and the River Great Ouse at Bedford, was revived in the 1990s by the B&MK Waterway Trust. The Trust is now part of a wider consortium of local authorities, agencies and community groups who are driving the project forward in “bite-size chunks”. The route is protected in local and regional plans, together with crucial enabling engineering by the Highways Agency in the construction of the recently dualled A421 through Marston Vale.

From a leisure and waterways perspective the project will create a link for boaters as well as providing a “green corridor” for some 300,000 people on an off-road route that will also include the Sustrans Route 51 multi-access pathway.

It will restore and revitalise the western reaches of the Great Ouse through Bedford and to a new destination in Kempston. In Milton Keynes it will take the proud heritage of the past (Grand Union Canal) and create the heritage of the future with the construction of England’s deepest lock into Willen Lake.

The project transcends the commonly-held image of a canal and takes it firmly into the 21st century by creating a linear waterway park for visitors as well as boaters. Jobs, housing, place-shaping, green infrastructure, tourism, leisure, sustainable development, a catalyst for economic growth, carbon reduction are all part of the plan.

The Waterways Trust is a national charity whose vision is to see the UK waterways network supported, valued and enjoyed by everyone. It is the enormous variety of projects and schemes inspired by the waterways that these awards have been highlighting and celebrating since 2002. There are eleven award categories and the B&MK is nominated for two categories – ‘Partnership’ and ‘Strategy & Masterplanning’.

Roger Hanbury, chief executive of the Waterway Trust, said: “This is the ninth year of the Waterway Renaissance Awards and it is truly inspiring to see that, even in these very challenging economic times, people and organisations are continuing to work together to realise the benefits of our canals and rivers for communities across the UK. All projects reaching the finalist stage should be justifiably proud of all that they have achieved.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust. A limited company registered in England no. 5760839.
Registered Office: 16 St Cuthberts Street, Bedford MK40 3JG. A registered charitable company limited by guarantee registered charity no 1114294

1. The B&MK entry was compiled with the help of Consortium members and its professional engineering partners, Halcrow (Mark Seward and Paul Williams). Special thanks also to British Waterways (James Clifton and Paul Maison), Renaissance Bedford (Drew Marchant), The Marston Vale Trust (Tony Talbot and James Russell), Bedford Borough Council (Mayor Dave Hodgson and Paul Vann), Central Bedfordshire Council (Cllr Ken Matthews), Sustrans (Andy Knight), Beds & Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium (Laura Kitson) and to Hilary Chipping, Independent Referee, and former Growth Area Director at mksm, as well as all the B&MK volunteers who gave support on the project team.
2. An appeal for sponsorship has been launched across the B&MK membership, community groups, schools, colleges and local businesses seeking support for a Bedford Community Boat which we hope to get off the slipway and into the water by summer 2012. Pledges of support are needed by the end of this month so that they can be submitted to grant-giving organisations during the summer (press release 30.3.11).

Pictures



B&MK Waterway Consortium signing (24 May 2010)

The Signatories To The Consortium are, left to right standing:

Andy Lewis, Central Bedfordshire Council, Drew Marchant, Renaissance Bedford, Geoff Brighty, Environment Agency, Cllr Sam Crooks, Milton Keynes Council, Eris Vos, Environment Agency, Cllr Ken Matthews, Central Bedfordshire Council, David Hackforth, Milton Keynes Council, Philip Simpkins, Bedford Borough Council, Dave Hodgson, Mayor of Bedford, Richard Arthur, Renaissance Bedford and Hilary Chipping, Milton Keynes South Midlands.

Seated: Tony Talbot, Chief Executive of the Marston Vale Trust, David Foster, Chief Executive of The Parks Trust, Jane Wolfson, Chair B&MK Waterway Trust.



A421 Underpass near Wootton:

Under construction (July 2009) and completed (October 2009)



B&MK briefing trip on the Grand Union Canal (September 2010)

Left to right: David Foster, Chief Executive, The Parks Trust, Richard Glen, Waterspace strategist working on the Environment Agency's Bedford Waterspace study, Alex Constantinides, Assistant Director of Transport, Milton Keynes Council, Nick Fenwick, Assistant Director of Planning, Milton Keynes Council & Chair of MK Waterway Park Steering Group James Griffin, Owner, Wyvern Shipping Company.

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