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Hanson becomes first sponsor for BMK Project Office

After three years of project management and administration by volunteers, the project is in desperate need of a small core team who can push the it forward on a daily basis. We're seeking 20 organisations who will commit to £6000 a year, for two years, in cash or in kind, to set this office up. We're working on this with Partner organisations and also looking for charitable funding and business sponsors. ... which is why one morning I find myself with Ian Clifton pitching the project to David Szymanski of Hanson Building Products. He's interested and can see what it would do to enhance the environment in Marston Vale; so he asks us to speak to his adviser; Bob Williams ... which is why at 8.30 one morning I find myself back there, squeezing in a meeting before my own day job starts, with Bob also kindly giving up early morning time. I use a map that shows the tide of already approved and likely future development sweeping across from MK to Bedford. I explain how the BMK Waterway is designed to be the centrepiece of a new local/regional park that will provide a vital sense of connection for new communities being developed in the Vale; a 'green lung' for local leisure; a boost to tourism; a vital corridor for wildlife; and add valuable wetland to the Forest of Marston Vale.

... then we wait ... and then arrives in the post a fantastically supportive letter from Hanson Building Products, a commitment to two year funding, and best of all the cheque for year one! A big thank you to the team at Hansons for recognising both the value of the project and the need to professionalise our core team at this stage.

Now on to the next visits. If you have any thoughts about our team could usefully visit, please contact me Jane Wolfson jane@wolfson.it

Jane Wolfson, Partnership Officer

Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust

The Trust was founded in 1994, inspired by the vision of its first Chairman, IVA member Brian Young, for a modern waterway for all that will benefit not just boaters but all water and waterside users and the people who will live and work alongside it.

The Trust vision is to build a broad waterway for all which will be part of a linear water park from Milton Keynes to Bedford. The waterway will be a 'thread' with 'beads' of sustainable development - houses, leisure facilities, commerce etc - along its route.

May 12, 2006

Our Ref: DJS1jzbrmkw120508

Jane Wolfson
 Partnership Officer
 Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust
 c/o Rushmore
 London Road
 Broughton
 Milton Keynes
 MK10 9AA

Dear Jane,

Thank you for your recent dynamic presentation on the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Project.

A linear Water Park, developed in conjunction with the Forest of Marston Vale, will provide enormous benefits to the area, in terms of stimulating the economy, providing people with attractive places to live and work, and improving the quality of the local environment.

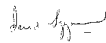
It is an exciting vision, that sits at the heart of development of this area in the 21st century, and one that is much in sympathy with Hanson's objectives for the future.

I understand from your presentation that the project now needs to create a core Project Office team to drive forward planning, fundraising and design initiatives over the next two years, at a cost of £120,000 per annum, and that you are looking for 30 organisations to support this development at a cost of £6,000.

Hanson Building Products are delighted to be the first business to provide this support to the project in 2006/7 and 2007/8.

We wish the project every success and look forward to progress reports and further discussions in due course. I am sure other businesses will be pleased to join in supporting such an exciting development project which will bring so many benefits to our area.

Yours sincerely,



David Szymanski
 Managing Director
 Hanson Building Products

Contact us Keep in touch and join a local group

As well as finding out what is happening through the website at www.bmkwaterway.org.uk and members' newsletters. You can contact the Trust through the secretary, Marilyn Leask on 01234 401 922 or by email at marilyn.leask@btworld.com. Help is welcome - particularly at the local level.

B&MK Waterway Trust,
 PO Box 3611, Newport Pagnell,
 MK16 0XN. Tel 07788 481 475

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B&MK NEWS

BEDFORD & MILTON KEYNES WATERWAY TRUST

JULY 2006
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Big lottery assesses BMK for 'Living Landmark' funds

Elation that our bid for an 'MK Waterway Park' got through to Stage 1 review was tempered by the fact that our bid for the 'Marston Vale Waterway Park' did not. We're seeking feedback and focusing on sources of funding so that we can develop both 'arms' as independent projects.

With notification on 13 April that the MK project would receive one of the first review visits on 24/25 April, we had just four working days after Easter to bring everything together. It's a tribute to the team that we did so!



James Clifton, British Waterways, explains the vision to the Big Lottery assessors

Looking back, my memory is of a whirl of late nights, developing drafts, editing drafts, reproducing documents, locating background documents from 2001-2006, pulling together the latest publicity materials; plus the phone calls and emails to ensure a full house on the two days. We had to work to a set, intensive agenda, answering detailed questions in nine different areas of the project. We needed to focus on promoting the benefits, and dealing with the risks, all the time showing evidence to prove our case.

We rehearsed each day, with a panel chair and defined roles for presenters; and we created a five-stop site visit that looked at different areas and ended with lunch afloat - all timed to the last second by the team, so that as we'd turn a corner the next speaker would appear, accompanied by a team member, to speak passionately in support of the project.

We hear in August if we have been selected to go forward to Stage 2, which will involve intensive work on our plans September 2006- May 2007, then a resubmission and a further review visit, and final decision in Autumn 2007 as to whether the MK Waterway Park will become a Living Landmark. We hope so!

Marking the route

Back at the start of last year it was suggested to the MK Group that we might like to bid for an 'Awards for All' lottery grant. The limit for these awards is £5000, and we came up with the idea of waymarking the 4.5km route from MK to Kingston Bridge with a number of interpretation boards along the way. I put together a budget and Geoff put together the application and in what seemed a very short period we were up and running with an award of £4803.



Historic moment as the first hole is drilled

In the absence of anyone else coming forward I put myself up as project manager and set about lining up the various materials and equipment. Apart from the posts, the major investment was going to be in a post hole boring machine - the thought of digging 60 holes was too awful to contemplate.

On our first work party a few of us walked the route from the junction with the GUC through to Broughton to decide where the posts were going to go. As soon as the posts arrived we set our second work party early in April, where the real work was going to begin. I decided that 5 posts were as many as we should attempt at our first go, which with the difficulties of carrying all the gear over questionable terrain was I think a fairly sensible decision as it turned out. Starting at the junction with a bit of difficulty we got the drilling machine going, and set about drilling our first hole. And then half way down we came to what looked suspiciously like the crown of a pipe so we hurriedly abandoned that one and set about another. The machine certainly gets down through the ground quickly and in no time we were down to the 600mm we were aiming for. Then it was pour in a little concrete mix, add water and mix it up at the bottom of the hole, set the post in, and then more concrete around the post, add more water, prod it around a bit and hope that the water would percolate through.

Cont on p3



Marie and Vernon Draper put the finishing touches to the first post

In this issue ...

| | |
|---|--------|
| Big Lottery assesses BMK for Funds | page 1 |
| Marking the route | page 1 |
| Big lottery - The visit | page 2 |
| Big Lottery - The partnership view | page 2 |
| Bedford delegation ask government for support | page 3 |
| Trust metamorphosis complete | page 3 |
| Work in Progress | page 5 |
| Project management group update | page 5 |
| Fraternal Support from WAT | page 6 |
| Talks update | page 7 |
| 'Walk the Route' - Kempston to Forest Centre | page 7 |
| Membership | page 7 |
| Hanson becomes first sponsor | page 8 |
| Contact Us | page 8 |





Big lottery - The partnership view

The Lottery Panel Assessment showed the partnership work of the B&MK Waterway Partners at their best. For two days the Lottery Assessors met with different partners and listened to all the views and reasons as to why the lottery bid should be approved.

We felt that we needed to have a broad spread of partners present to convince the panel that we not only had an achievable scheme, but a great scheme that has widespread support.

With the volunteer members of the panel all the time were James Clifton and/or Andrew Stumpf from British Waterways. They were able to tell the assessors how the project could be achieved and how new or regenerated waterways in other parts of the country were put together.

James also popped up, in a bright yellow safety jacket, at the junction with the Grand Union, to talk about the benefits of the scheme to navigation; and later on the site visit, we were joined by Kapil Dudakia of Milton Keynes Hindu Association, an enthusiastic neighbour who talked about community integration and joint educational ventures, and Mike Street of Milton Keynes Parks Trust, who talked about benefits to wildlife.

Also with us taking notes and getting prepared for the Bedford end of the project was David Sands, Economic Development Officer, Bedfordshire County Council.

We were delighted to have Sir Bob Reid, Chairman of Milton Keynes Partnership Committee (responsible for the growth of Milton Keynes) come at the four working day notice that we had for the visit; he spoke most enthusiastically about the

waterway going through the Eastern Expansion Area of Milton Keynes.

Throughout the Monday afternoon we also had invaluable support from Roland Grzybek, Director of Halcrow, on the technical issues and how they would be dealt with.

We took a decision to make the Tuesday Lunch Break, a Partnership Lunch and invite partners along to meet with the panel. Tuesday lunchtime arrived and all went to plan. John Best, Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Council made a short impromptu speech, and so did Mark Lancaster MP for North East Milton Keynes. We also had a bit of a coup in getting Nigel Wellbourne, senior civil servant for the Government Office of the South East along, and he also spoke and gave government support for the application. Also present at the lunch was Caroline Madden representing Milton Keynes Partnership.

After lunch David Foster, Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Parks Trust did an impromptu and most helpful question and answer session with the panel on land acquisition. (Most of the land along the route in Milton Keynes is owned by MK Parks Trust, MK Council or MK Partnership.) And finally on Tuesday the Leader of MK Council, Isobel McCall, had a session with the panel on the importance of the waterway to the Council.

All in all - a very successful partnership event, showing what can be achieved by working together. Now we all wait for the result in August!

Graham Mabbutt,
Chair of the BMK Partnership Board

Big lottery - The visit

Our Mission was to demonstrate, over a period of just two short days, that we have the skills, resources and processes to make the Waterway Park a success if the Big Lottery were to favour us with the almost £25M we've asked them for; I was given the privilege of spearheading the presentation process, surrounded by a superb team of colleagues who took care of everything else; the domestic arrangements, timekeeping, the parade of VIPs, and all the answers to the really difficult questions.

It's one thing to show visitors an existing neighbourhood, and ask them to visualise how it will look with a waterway running through it. It's an even more interesting challenge to show visitors a green field, and ask them to visualise the neighbourhood that will be built there over the next few years, as well as to visualise the waterway. I suppose it helps that I'm a passionate advocate for this wonderful New City of ours, and I sincerely believe that we need the proposed Waterway Park to give the area a "wow factor", to make the neighbourhood well-known for good reasons, to make its residents proud to live there, and to help make residents and visitors healthy, wealthy and wise. The team created 100 pages of high-calibre documentation to give our Big Lottery assessors all the details of "inspirational design", "a sense of place", and the health, economic & educational benefits of the project.

We were the first project being assessed. The down-side of this is that the assessors had no benchmark against which to compare our work. The upside of course is that we hopefully set a good benchmark for them to use when visiting other applicants for their money!

I'm confident we gave it our best shot. Now we just have to wait and see what happens!

John Bint, Interim Chief Executive
for the MK Waterway Park project



Kapil Dudakia tells the Big Lottery assessors about his vision for the local Community Centre and the Hindu community retirement centre.

Lottery continued from p1

A BIG thank you!

... to all the volunteers who gave up evenings and Easter to write bid documents and put together the 2 day presentation to the Big Lottery Living Landmark team, when on 13 April they told us we'd be visited on the very first days of the review process on 24/25 April. We haven't tallied the timesheets yet, but I estimate that 70-80 volunteer days has gone into preparing and presenting bids since November

... to the partners who supported the project at the review visit

... to three partners in particular - Bedford Borough, Beds County, and Renaissance Bedford, who provided dedicated funding to support the development of bid documentation that will underpin our fundraising throughout the coming year. This enabled us to have valuable inputs from professional bid writers.

"Walk The Route" - Kempston to Forest Centre



Nearly 50 Canal supporters & Ouse Valley Ramblers members set off in April for six miles of "Walk the Route" (or as near as we could) starting from the Canal's junction with the River Great Ouse at Kempston, Church End to where it passes the Forest Centre. This section is very constrained by major projects - Bedford Western Bypass, Land West of Kempston Development, A421 Dualling, Fields Road Wootton Development, leaving only one route for the Canal still open.

Setting off on a crisp sunny morning, we were all interested in the archaeology exposed in the development of the Western Bypass & the steps being taken to deal with the greater crested newts, which will both be a problem for the Canal. Skirting Wootton we walked through the fifteen year old Berry Wood, which the Canal will just touch. It will then have to cross under the new dual A421 in a proposed culvert (if we can find the extra funding quickly enough!), which will also contain a bridlepath & Sustrans Route 51. After crossing a very busy A421, we were rewarded with a view of our destination across Stewartby Lake. Here the Canal will probably enter the Lake

& then travel around its edge, separated by a floating boom, locking up to pass the Forest Centre.

Arriving at the Forest Centre we had the excellent lunch we had ordered in advance, quickly served by the restaurant staff.

After a tour of the Farmers Market and well laden with purchases we caught the minibus back to the start (kindly loaned by Ian Clifton and valiantly driven on multiple trips by Marilyn Leask).

Thanks to all who attended and to the group leaders who helped on the Walk.

David Fowler



NEWSLETTER

For this issue we are taking up the kind offer of the use of Sharnbrook School's franking machine - though I should point out that we are paying for the postage; it's not damaging anyone's education!

Membership

We need to increase our membership - each year we lose a few members, and we don't always recruit enough to replace them. We are making a priority of recruiting new members wherever we have a stand, for instance we gained 8 members over the two-day Wendover festival. We have great hopes for the Bedford Festival and for the annual Waterway Festival, which this year is at Beale Park Reading.

This isn't enough though. As the project moves on and grows, and becomes closer to being a reality, the amount of work involved grows at an amazing rate. The Lottery bids you read about elsewhere take a lot of work and money, for instance. So we need more members, because they are a valuable source of income and because some will be prepared to get involved in the work of the Trust.

I'm not asking all of you to get involved, many of you will not have the time or inclination, and that's fine, just being a member helps. What I am asking you to do is to consider whether you have a friend, relative or colleague who you could persuade to join up. More than one, if possible, of course!

Whenever a new member joins, they receive spare application forms in their welcome pack (as well as recent newsletters and other goodies), so you may well have a form around that you can use to recruit them. If not, there is one on the website, or you can write to me at the PO Box, and I'll send you some. Don't delay - sign someone straight away!

Leigh Willows

Talks update

The Trust is keen to spread the word and build support for the new waterway and gather questions and comments from interested members of the public. We are very fortunate in having a team of experienced and informative speakers. Their very important role is to keep the members and general public informed of the latest developments in the building of the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway.

Presentations to groups are offered in two forms - a talk illustrated by slides or by power point. The talk can be tailored to run from fifteen to forty-five minutes, plus questions, according to your time scale. So far over 120 groups have been informed of the latest news of the project, involving over 3500 people, varying from WI, U3A, boating clubs, Parish councils, etc. There will have been 19 presentations this year and already there are two scheduled for 2007.

Please contact us if you require a speaker. We do not charge a set fee but hope for a donation to the Trust. We look forward to hearing from you and will do all we possibly can to accommodate you.

We can be contacted by phone on 01234 305925 or by email oldgunns@ntworld.com

John and Sally Gunning (talks organisers).



Fraternal Support from WAT

Bob Wheel, Chairman of the Wendover Arm Trust (WAT), gave a stirring address to our AGM on 23rd April on the role of the volunteer and an extract is reproduced below. Bob combined shrewd comment and advice, with real encouragement. WAT is a glowing example of what can be achieved by dedicated volunteers in lobbying, fundraising and actual physical restoration. Phase 1 of the restoration of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union was completed in 2005 almost entirely by Trust volunteers, and Phase 2 is targeted for completion in 2011.

Bob began by stressing the importance of creating and maintaining a group momentum working towards what he called "bite size" goals. He pointed out that unlike B&MK, the Wendover arm already existed so did this mean that parallels between the Wendover Arm and the B&MK projects are meaningless? Over to Bob...

"Not really. Look at some of the similarities:

Both projects are long term. Likely cash flow for the Wendover Arm means that the restoration can only proceed at a measured and manageable pace. This does assume that our work is carried through largely by volunteer effort, rather than by contractors.

Both projects envisage spending money which so far has not been secured. Both projects therefore demand a level of trust from members and volunteers that the money will be found eventually; if that is not the belief then the support is for nothing.

Both projects can capture the imagination: One to put back what was once there, and one to create something worthwhile for the future. Both have interesting engineering challenges, at Brogborough for the B&MK and Halton for WAT for example.

Both projects have a good level of local support. The support for the B-MK plan is actually more crucial, because it is the support which can be said to be driving and underpinning the project. However it is worth noting here that a significant part of the local support for the Wendover is identified and sustained by volunteers working on the ground at work parties. The Wendover route is a popular one for walkers and cyclists, and the ongoing and regular restoration work forms a focal point for discussion. Many misconceptions and false assumptions are put right in one-to-one towpath chats between our workers and the casual passer-by, and Trust membership numbers have even benefited as a result. Our collection boxes at worksites also benefit from the generosity of those same passers by.

Both projects were instigated by and continue to rely heavily on the role of the volunteer. I use a somewhat wide definition of the term volunteer here. In this context I include the rank and file supporter; I would argue that a passive supporter and an active working volunteer are simply degrees of the same creature. Thus a small active team and a large non-involved membership are just different varieties of volunteer support.

I have looked through the literature (especially the latest newsletter) concerning the B&MK link and what I miss is a clearly defined job of work (and especially in constructing the canal track), which is the sole responsibility of volunteers. The proposed 1km stretch at the Forest Centre or at the Hindu Retirement Centre may give suitable volunteering opportunities.

Another pending opportunity for hands-on volunteer effort will be the installing of waymarker posts along the route, this being the very first practical work to be undertaken by volunteers on the canal. I actually found it surprising that the

project has progressed so far without a basis of visible practical effort on the ground.

So there are similarities as well as differences between the Wendover and B&MK projects."

Bob went on to outline the value of both organisations keeping in touch and learning from each other and demonstrated this in a very practical way.

"I can tell you that at last night's WAT Council Meeting we unanimously agreed to put our support on a more formal level and apply for affiliate membership to the B&MK Waterways Trust.

Both the Wendover Arm Trust and the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust sprang into life thanks to the beliefs and actions of a relatively small group of volunteers. The two organisations continue to rely heavily on the volunteer. The Wendover Arm Trust perhaps leans more heavily on the role of the practical canal restoration team, whereas the B&MK Waterway Trust has relied up to now on the admin and public relation skills of its volunteers and founding members. Nevertheless it is vital for the long-term success of both projects that the volunteer continues to be valued, challenged, and that he or she is recognised. As Corporations and Councils, Companies and Agencies take an increasing role in the development and implementation of the project, it remains of vital importance that a healthy backbone of volunteer members continue to be involved at all levels.

As a volunteer you may only be a small cog on the wheel, but remember - cogs move the gears, gears moves the machine, and machines can move mountains.

In the early days of the Wendover, clearing scrub seemed a long way away from being able to view a completed cruising waterway. But our volunteers kept at it, and the results are clear to see today. What was once an overgrown wilderness is now a well constructed and attractive cruising stretch with well designed features built to a high standard. What was once more or less a line on the map following an unwanted and unloved drainage channel is now a well-accepted project progressing slowly but steadily towards completion. And all thanks to volunteer effort.

Now, if it seems that not much is happening on the ground between Bedford and MK, take heart - in times to come you will look back and find it hard to believe that the canal was not always there!

I do not think that your waterway will be built. This is because, based on the enthusiasm, professionalism and determination shown so far by our volunteers, I don't think it will I know it will. Consequently before the night is out I will have joined the B&MK Waterway Trust. In conclusion, for me the question therefore is not whether the canal will be built, nor even how it will be built. It is only a question of when."

(Bob did join and is now a family member as did the WAT as a corporate member.)

Rodney Evans

We had a successful B&MK Stand at this year's Tring Festival, a very impressive annual event staged by WAT, and recruited eight new members. Thanks are due to all our members who gave their time to staffing our stand.

Bedford delegation ask government for support



Bedford delegation meet with Baroness Andrews Front row: Jane Wolfson, Marilyn Leask, Baroness Andrews, Cllr Judith Cunningham Back row: Justine Leonard (Beds Boro Economic Development unit), Kathryn Askew-Smith, (Renaissance Bedford); Cllr Apu Bagchi, Liz Wade (Beds County Council)

The Bedford Borough Canal Advisory Group organized a meeting in June with Baroness Andrews OBE - Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government to update the department on developments. Baroness Andrews has responsibility for communities and neighbourhood renewal. Also present - as well as those in the photo was Andrew Whitehead, Policy Adviser for the Growth Areas Division at the DCLG and Neil McKillen from the Government Office for the East of England.

The Trust's short term goal - to protect the route and support gradual development starting with key development sites and the creation of linear lakes eg M1 widening, Wootton village development, to take run off and act as balancing ponds for new development.

The urgency of protecting the route through Bedford was raised. There are two major housing developments and four major roadworks being planned now (Wootton village and land west of Kempston, Western bypass, dualling of the A421, widening of the M1, Ridgmont bypass, relocation of Fields

Road). The point was also made that there is now only one possible route left for the waterway into Bedford and this could be lost as development plans are being finalized now which would mean Bedford being bypassed by opportunities once again.

The need for full time staff the possibility of secondment from DCLG was discussed. We are waiting for a response to our follow up letter. Further news in the next newsletter!

Marilyn Leask

Trust metamorphosis complete

The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust is now a Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered No. 5760839 (as from 29 March), and Registered Charity No. 1114294 (as from 19 May). The Trust is now the legal entity heading the B&MK Project and has full Memorandum and Articles of Association defining the objects, powers and operation of the company.

The Extraordinary General Meeting of the former unincorporated association Trust on 21 April passed a resolution to wind-up and pass its net assets and membership to the new company when its charitable status had been achieved. This action has been implemented and the net assets and membership accepted by the new company at the first Board Meeting held on 19 June at the offices of Woodfines Company Services Limited who are the legal Company Secretary (the work being most kindly done pro bono by Valerie Findlay, Solicitor).

The Board may comprise up to ten Directors who are also Trustees of the Charity.

The initial six are Ian Clifton, Chairman; Don Allison, Financial Director; Rodney Evans; Graham Mabbutt; Marilyn Leask (also Joint Company Secretary) and Jane Wolfson. The Board intends to recruit four more Directors from Partner Organisations. The Directors have responsibility for all actions and operations of the Trust in accordance with the legal constitution and are able to exercise all its powers. At the first Board Meeting, in addition to taking over the assets of the former unincorporated Trust,

the Board received all the official documentation; elected the officers and Membership Secretary (Leigh Willows continues in this role); established the membership classes and adopted the Health & Safety, Grievance & Disciplinary and Equal Opportunity Policies of the former Trust.

The Board will meet quarterly normally and business will be progressed through three major Committees on which individual Directors will chair and sit. These Committees are:-

1. Volunteer Committee, formerly the Executive Committee. It will continue to meet six weekly initially and operate as the former committee, but will not have the former ultimate executive powers. Leigh Willows has volunteered to chair the next few meetings after which a Director will chair (other volunteer Directors will attend). The Committee's vital prime responsibility will be communication and publicity for the B&MK to the general public, but it will also promote lobbying; smaller practical projects (such as the Way-marking by the MKtoM1 Group) and smaller fundraising. Personal members of the Trust should rest assured that their membership class, voting rights and subscription rates remain unaltered, though the latter could be altered by an AGM in the future.

2. Partnership Board. This is a continuation of the body incorporating the 26 Partner Organisations and will continue to be chaired by Graham Mabbutt, formerly MK Councillor, but now a personal member and Director of the Trust. The "Board" is in effect a Committee and will comprise the Partners who sign up as Partner Organisation members of the Trust and other Partners who feel unable for various reasons to become members of the Trust. As with the Volunteer Committee, ultimate responsibility for this "Board" will lie with the Trust Board.

3. Project Management Group. This Group is chaired by Director Jane Wolfson: Marilyn Leask is another Director on it. The function of the Group is to progress specific action plans for the building of the Waterway and bring in selected Partners and other organisations dedicating time and resources to the actions in hand.

A Summary of the Objects and Rules can be seen on the website or by sending an A5 SAE to the Trust's postal address.

Marking the route cont from p1

Level up the post, put a bit of earth around the base and there we were, and time to move on to the second. This whole exercise had taken one hour, and to show how quickly we were learning, the next four took us another hour.

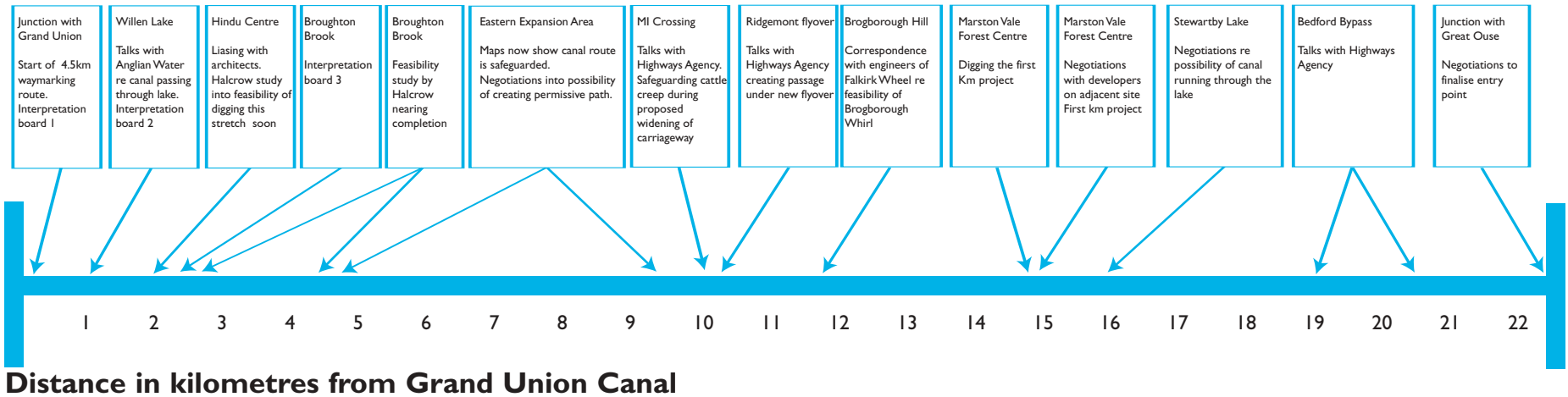
We have had two more work parties since and have now reached Childs Way. We've got it down to a fine art now and can put all five in within the hour. If you would like to help, give me a ring on 01908 312239

Vernon Draper



Work In Progress

Building a new canal is a huge undertaking. This map gives an idea of the extent and complexity of the task. It represents just some of the work that is being carried out, mainly by volunteers from the Trust.



Project management group update

This group meets 4-6 weekly to progress the project in practical ways. The first half of each meeting focuses on urgent planning and technical issues in each of 17 'reaches'; and then we turn to broader issues around work planning and priorities.

The group is made up of volunteers with skills to offer in these areas, and representatives from key agencies with interests along the route - the local authorities and navigation authorities, Sustrans, etc.

Currently we are extremely fortunate also that Halcrow are providing 'pro bono' input on key design issues, and members of their team lead on specific development projects.

Every meeting sees us agreeing how best to respond to planning applications, deal with the design of road underpasses within new highways developments, make input into local and regional plans, and organise discussions with landowners along the route, as well as plan the next steps in developing the project.

We then take key issues back to the quarterly Partnership Board, which has a wider membership of partners, to share information and gather ideas and help in moving issues forward.

So, for example, since the last newsletter, at PMG (Project Management Committee in the new structure):

In February, we focused on land ownerships and proposals for the new project structure.

In March and April we concentrated on preparation for the MK Waterway Park Big Lottery review visit, but also discussed issues of concern about how to thread the route through new development around Bedford and in particular the Western Bypass, which seems to have become a protected paradise for news!

In May, we scoped in detail two key projects - one to develop a demonstration site at the Forest Centre, the other to seek early funding for the stretch of the MK Waterway Park that bounds the MK Hindu Association site, which is coming forward for development very soon.

In June, we considered how best to secure funding to develop the studies we will need to undertake for the MK Waterway Park Project. Halcrow proposed an outline 'scorecard' that will help to inform project planning by highlighting opportunities and threats within each of the 17 reaches along the route - and Andy Knight of Sustrans offered to pull together all our varied activities into a project plan in MS Project. Both these will go to Partners in July for further comment and input, along with progress on funding for the Core Office. So the project moves forward, at a steady and increasing pace.

WOOTTON VILLAGERS NEED TO ACT NOW!!!!

The planning for the development at Wootton is being done now. Villagers in Wootton who want to see the waterway intergrated into thier village rather than skirting around it need to lobby for this. If you are interested in taking an active role in this matter please contact Marilyn on 01234 401 922.

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