

Big lottery success gets closer

Milton Keynes Waterway Park – the ‘arm’ from the Grand Union Canal to the Eastern Expansion Area – is through to the last 23 shortlisted projects in the Living Landmarks category, and we are eligible to submit a revised, refined, Stage 2 Application by May 2007.

To help us refine the proposals for the project, the Big Lottery Fund has given us a Development Grant of £250,000, to be spent between now and May on studies that will help our application. Our first task has been to develop the programme, showing exactly what work we will be doing and when.



The lottery team taking lunch on board narrowboat ‘Ocean Princess’

Our final application will be much more impressive if the Waterway Park has obtained Outline Planning Permission, and many of the studies mentioned below are to be done by the end of December to support a planning application.

We have to ...

- **assess the various forms of impact the Waterway Park will have on the area** — It will have a possible environmental impact, affecting the habitat of some species and hopefully creating new areas of habitat for many more species of plants and animals.

- **check what impact it will have on rainwater drainage of the area** -This includes the increasing incidence of major storms that can be anticipated because of global warming.
- **check whether there are any archaeological or other heritage sites along the route.**
- **estimate the economic benefits the project will provide** – more jobs, more attractive neighbourhoods, residents leading healthier, happier lives, and increased visitors coming into the area and spending more money locally.
- **consult with all possible user groups and the local public in general**, to identify and meet all specific needs for access and amenities.
- **work out what a 21st Century waterway should look like**, to give a visual “wow factor” to the area.
- **produce the best possible cost estimates for constructing the canal and its surrounding parklands**, to give ourselves – and Big Lottery – every confidence that it can be built for the amount we say.

So we have several very busy months ahead! Inevitably, the work we want to do – to have the very best Stage 2 Application in May – exceeds the grant. One way we can bridge the gap is through donations of help “in kind” from individuals and organisations. The other way is to raise further funds from any other sources we can find. If you can help in any way, please get in touch with me in the British Waterways MK Office or on 07973 602000

John Bint

Trust now has its own office

Since our last newsletter the Trust is delighted to report that all four local authorities along the route – Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire County Council, Mid-Bedfordshire District Council and Milton Keynes Council have agreed to contribute funds to help us set up a Core Office with a Project Manager and a Project Officer.

We’re also very grateful to O&H Properties, Milton Keynes Parks Trust and Whitecap Leisure, who have joined Hanson Building Products as business sponsors, and to British Waterways, who are providing serviced office space in Milton Keynes.

We are negotiating a 3-month secondment of a civil servant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to work on a landownership project, and we are able to apply some of the Big Lottery funding to project management activities.

So – we are half way to our target! We hope to complete the fundraising for the Trust Office by January 2007. To do so, we need to find another 10 business or charitable sponsors who will contribute £6000 a year for two years, in cash or in services. If you have ideas about how we could do this, please contact **Jane Wolfson on 01908 505011.**



Flying the flag at festivals

The Trust has had stands at key waterways festivals during the summer, the Tring Canal Festival in May, the Bedford River Festival in July and at the Inland Waterways (IWA) 60th Jubilee Festival in August. In all cases our important aim has been to widen awareness, recruit new Trust members and swell signatories to our running petition.

Tring Canal Festival

The Tring Canal Festival is held over the late May Bank Holiday each year and run by the Wendover Arm Trust (WAT) as its major fund-riser. The Festival is held in a field running down to the Wendover Arm canal which the Trust is restoring. It has attractions for all the family, drawing massive local support, and some 150 boats. Prolonged downpours ahead of the Festival caused the organisers great problems in setting up and at the field entrance, but the WAT triumphed again to achieve a profit of over £40,000.



John Gunning points out the route

The B&MK Stand was transported to the Festival and back and staffed by a rota of Trust volunteers, to whom thanks are due. The Stand attracted a good interest with eight new members recruited and a large number of signatures collected for the ongoing Petition.

Rodney Evans

Bedford River Festival.

A hot & sunny weekend brought out vast crowds, with stands & stalls stretching half a mile alongside the River Great Ouse on both sides. This is a major event in Bedford's calendar and this year it excelled, from the enactments on Castle Mound to the funfair in Russell Park, not forgetting the opportunity to take a ride in a tower crane basket, looking down on the crowds across the Butterfly Bridge.



Leigh Willows becomes a radio star

At times it took 20 minutes just to cross the River!

We were well situated near the Suspension Bridge, taking space in the tent kindly provided by Priory Marina and alongside the Environment Agency van (who allowed us to store our gear overnight). We had many visitors and some success with enrolling new members.

The visit by Three Counties Radio hopefully spread the message to a wider public.

David Fowler

IWA 60th Jubilee National Festival and Inland Boat Show, Beale Park on the River Thames

This is one of the ten largest national festivals held in the UK and by far the largest run by IWA volunteers. It is always held over the August Bank Holiday weekend at changing venues around the inland waterways system. The Festival was blessed with largely fine weather, recorded a gate of about 28,000 people and attendance by nearly 600 boats, about 500 camping units and 300 exhibitors. So it was an important place for B&MK to be and be seen, particularly as news of our short listing for the Living Landscapes Lottery had been announced recently.

Noble transporters, Don & Jill Allison, once again ferried our Stand down to Beale Park on the Friday 25th, so we were all set up for business at 10.00am on the Saturday when the



Chris Fox and Rodney Evans ready for visitors

Festival site opened to the public. Sixteen Trust members had volunteered to staff the Stand in shifts throughout the three days of the Festival and many thanks to all. In addition, Andy and Diane Witt came on the last day to ferry the Stand back home.

There was a lot of competition as so many waterway and canal restoration organisations were there, but we held our own and had our fair share of visitors – pleasingly many knew of the B&MK and wanted an update, but we were able also to enthuse others not so aware. Four new members were recruited and 134 signatures added to the Petition. Wendy Evans had donated one of her Cross-stitch pictures for the Stand and visitors were invited to guess the number of beads on it at £1 a guess. Michael Mote of Surrey made the closest guess of 2457 (Wendy's closely guarded actual count was 2461) and on the strength of winning the picture joined the Trust and give a donation. What with this, sales of Walks Leaflets, two T-shirts and additional donations a useful amount, much of it eligible for Gift Aid enhancement, was generated for Trust funds.

Rodney Evans

Planning for Real

– consulting the community on the MK Waterway park



One of the important questions that the lottery assessors will want answered is how well we have consulted local communities and interest groups. John May explains the procedure we hope to use.

Planning for Real® is a deceptively simple, incredibly powerful, way of getting whole communities to plan the future of their environment. Developed by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation the power of the technique is that – although officials and experts are welcome to make their input to the planning process – “ordinary people” make an equal contribution right from the start. Consultation is brought to the community, using visual representations (models to you and me) to stimulate our imaginations and get us thinking seriously about the future of our environment.

So what is Planning for Real? Imagine an architect's model of Milton Keynes Waterway Park. Costs a bit, and takes ages to prepare, but never mind, it looks good. Now imagine taking the glass case off and pinning scrappy bits of paper on the model saying “park bench here”, “**POSITIVELY NO DOGS**” or “lousy spot for fishing – maybe give to canoeists?” Real pins of course, not post-it notes, because they fall off. Maybe pick up the model buildings and relocate them, just because you can! Break the model down every now and then and move it around the MK area, reassembling it in different locations so everyone can have their say. Now imagine letting children loose on it ...

Nightmare, isn't it? So let's start again. This time we will get a local school to construct a 3D representation of the area the Waterway Park will cover. It will be rough and ready (but nonetheless educational) and it will also be BIG, so people can walk round it spotting familiar landmarks. It will look like what it is – an invitation to the community to join in, have their say and improve on the original plans for the Waterway Park. So **do** walk on the grass, and **do** jump in the water (figuratively speaking anyway) if that helps you get a better idea of what the future will be like.

The model will show the Waterway Park proposal, and the major features of the present landscape, buildings, roads and so on. After that it is up to the public (with a lot of behind the scenes organisation and encouragement from BMK volunteers) to have their say. Is there enough provision for wild life? What about access for wheelchair users but not motorbikes? And of course dogs, boats, anglers, walkers, cyclists, all

have to be fitted in somehow. So stick pins in to show us how, what and where. And if you disagree with someone else's ideas, stick another pin in saying “rubbish!”. (Actually, don't – someone will think you are proposing a refuse tip.) Get the idea? It's simple, and it's fun.



Residents of Kenilworth taking a keen interest in their local plans

But not just fun. It is a sophisticated process of community consultation which moves by careful stages from identification of stakeholders through model building and public participation to action plans built on consensus. The process can embrace both the general public at Open Days, and also special interests such as the MK Hindu Association Community Centre in private sessions. The end result will be a Big Lottery Living Landmarks Fund-pleasing consultation that builds on an unprecedented breadth and depth of community involvement.

(For sale: architect's model of Water way Park. As new.)

John May

Photo by kind permission of NIF

The Trust urgently needs to recruit volunteers to help with the Planning for Real project If you could spare a few days between January and March please contact. John Hodgson on 01234 344884 Mobile 07867 558084 or jhodgson@rivouse.fsnet.co.uk Full training will be given.

Win a car and help the Trust

The trust has been given 2 slots to sell raffle tickets in Milton Keynes Shopping Centre on Wednesday 27 December 9am - 1 and Friday 5 January 1—5pm If you can help at these times or if you would like some tickets to sell to your friends please contact Don Allison on 01908 610564. Tickets are £1 each and 50p from each ticket goes to the Trust

MILTON KEYNES COMMUNITY FOUNDATION 2006 Community Car Raffle

DRAW TAKES PLACE ON TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2007

New Beetle Cabriolet Luna

1	New Beetle Cabriolet Luna with a 1.4 litre, 75hp petrol engine in Gecko Green (Graphics Optional)	2	£250 in cash	3	£150 in cash	£1
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PLUS 50 FURTHER CASH PRIZES OF £25 EACH



Big newsletter decisions

We constantly review the way we produce and send you the Newsletter. As you are probably aware, the Royal Mail has introduced a new way of charging for post, based on the size as well as the weight of an envelope. For a typical newsletter mailing, this does not make any difference, as the cost for the size and weight of envelope that we use hasn't changed. However – if we reduced the Newsletter from A4 to A5 size - it would be possible to make a saving in postage in future.

The Volunteer Committee has considered this, and was very firmly of the view that the size and paper quality of the Newsletter was important to maintaining the image of the Trust. The postage saving is relatively small compared to the total cost of producing and mailing the Newsletter, and we believe that the grants we can achieve by presenting a professional image will more than compensate for this.

I know one or two of you have received copies without stamps in the past – but I know that they left with stamps on, as we always check through to make sure we haven't missed any. Self-adhesive stamps haven't been a possibility in the past, because they weren't available in the weight band we needed. Amongst the ways I'm considering to avoid this problem in future, are franking (using a friendly organisation's machine, though we would still need to pay for the postage); "Smartstamp" where we can print our own postage labels; and the new postage rates may mean self-adhesive stamps are available at the appropriate rate in future. Watch this space!

Leigh Willows

John Scott joins the Board



Councillor John Scott has recently joined the Trust's Board of Directors. John is the Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development on Bedfordshire County Council. He's also a Governor of Robert Bloomfield Middle School, Shefford, a governor of Samuel Whitbread Community College, Shefford and a Member of Shuttleworth College Management Committee.

On the B&MK he said

"I support the project as I feel it will open up Marston Vale to additional tourism and leisure activities and thus provide additional local jobs. It is a formidable challenge to the Trust, both in the engineering and capital funding requirements, but it is well worth pursuing."

.....AND Y~NOT

Congratulations to Trust member, Tony Lenton whose boat Y~NOT won first prize at the Bedford River Festival for the best dressed boat with Morris dancers.



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