

Press Release

Embargo: Immediate

B&MK WATERWAY NOW FIXED ON THE HORIZON

Jane Wolfson stands down after a decade of campaigning

Graham Mabbutt takes the helm



Another chapter in the development of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust (B&MK) turned last evening (Tues 10th May) when Jane Wolfson stood down from its board at the annual general meeting in Newport Pagnell. This drew the curtain on ten years' close involvement with the project, the past four as chair. Jane becomes a vice president of the Trust.

Jane, who is co-founder and director of LMD Learning Solutions Ltd based in Milton Keynes, is succeeded by Graham Mabbutt, a former Milton Keynes councillor (transport and planning portfolio) and a retired record and music industry executive.

Jane said that she was bowing out owing to the combination of challenging work and new family responsibilities –“and I need more time to call my own!”

She said: “It has been a privilege and pleasure to work with so many committed individuals in a wide range of organisations, and a real delight to have achieved so much in our first decade as a Trust, to the point where the question, as always, is when and how we can make this waterway happen. Through our achievements the route is clearly fixed in all local development frameworks. It is fixed on the horizon and future developments can be required to contribute to the build.

“I have worked hard with the board over the past twelve months to ensure that the Trust is in excellent shape to go forward and I'm delighted that Graham has picked up the baton to help us build community awareness, involvement and pressure to create the ‘missing link’ of 26k of waterway between Milton Keynes and Bedford.”

Graham Mabbutt said: “I have been involved with the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway project since 2002, and feel highly honoured that the Trust's board of directors has asked me to succeed Jane Wolfson as chair of the Trust. I will be a firm hand on the tiller taking the project forward.”

Highlighting other extensive achievements of the past year, Jane hailed the successful founding of the Consortium of local authorities and agencies to progress project planning and design. She also pointed to the proposed Marston Vale Innovation Park, with the waterway at the centre of a development that could begin this autumn, together with the imminent Bedford Waterspace Strategy, which will promote greater use of the Great Ouse and encourage interest in the waterway.

The key recent development is the appeal for donors and sponsors towards the building of a community boat, which will create new and different ways to reach and engage many more people. Pledges and donations already stand at £33,814 towards the £60,000 appeal target. The total cost will be £120,000 and it is hoped for a 2012 launch ready for the next Bedford River Festival.

Jane, who will be closely involved in this particular project, added: “It is crucial to the B&MK ‘locking up to the next level’ in terms of growing our support, membership and volunteer base.”

Guest speaker was Pete Wright, of the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society, who told of their success in running a trip boat and as inspiration for the B&MK community boat project. He provided a real insight to the “nuts and bolts” of running such a boat.

New Directors

Three new directors were elected to the Trust board:

Patrick Hall, former Member of Parliament for Bedford and Kempston. He has supported the B&MK Trust by working to smooth communication with officials, ministers and the town’s former elected Mayor.

John Best, a former chief executive of Milton Keynes Council, who has an international portfolio of activities relating to place making and shaping. He brings experience of developing community-led, waterway-base projects, having been secretary of the Lee Valley Association in north-east London.

Drew Marchant is a business project manager with over thirty years’ track record in a range of industries. He first became involved in the waterway in 2007 whilst chief executive at Renaissance Bedford. He was involved in setting up the Consortium and was its first secretary.

Jane Wolfson also paid special thanks to Valerie Findlay, of Woodfines LLP, who stood down as the Trust’s company secretary.

ENDS

Notes to editors



Jane Wolfson and Graham Mabbutt chat with guest speaker, Pete Wright, of the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society.



Jane Wolfson with Graham Mabbutt, new Chairman of the B&MK.

For further details contact

Name: Neil Hayes, External Communications Director, B&MK Waterway Trust

Phone: 01234 826216

Mobile: 07968 097359

Email: Nhayes@aol.com or media@b-mkwaterway.co.uk

Website: www.b-mkwaterway.co.uk