



Press Release

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B&MK WATERWAY RECOGNISED FOR "OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT"

TRIPLE WINNERS IN NATIONAL WATERWAYS RENAISSANCE AWARDS 2011

The proposed Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway (B&MK) made a big splash in the Waterways Renaissance awards this week (Weds) by scooping a surprise extra award for outstanding achievement, as well as winning first place for strategy and masterplanning. The project was also runner up in the partnership category.

The awards competition, which is run by the Waterways Trust, recognises exceptional projects that are using canals and rivers to enrich people's lives across the UK. Nineteen outstanding projects were recognised at the prestigious event in Birmingham. Jane Wolfson, former chair and newly-elected vice president, accepted the awards on behalf of the project.

Explaining why the B&MK was selected for the special award, Helen Carey, chair of the assessment panel, said: "This year we wished to give special recognition to a project that has shown considerable dedication and resilience in achieving some remarkable success and their work to sustain the project in the face of many challenges and setbacks over the years.

"This is a very inspiring project, mostly because so many people have said over the years that it couldn't or wouldn't ever be done. There is now a long term plan to build it and the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway is now unequivocally regarded as an established and deliverable entity."

Accepting the awards, Jane Wolfson said: "We are delighted that the vision and achievement of the project in its first decade has been recognised as nationally significant. It is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the volunteers and project partners, and in particular the project consortium. Over the next few years, as partners make a reality of the masterplan on the ground, we all look forward to being on or beside the waterway."

First proposed 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 by the B&MK Trust in the 1990s. 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 project transcends the commonly-held image of a canal and takes it firmly into the 21st century by creating a series of waterway parks to create a "waterway for all" – a green corridor for some 300,000 local people.

The B&MK appeal for £60,000 towards the cost of building a community boat to enable more local people to enjoy the river in Bedford currently stands at over £33,000. The appeal for sponsorship is aimed at individuals, community groups, schools, colleges and local businesses. It is hoped to launch the boat in summer 2012 in time for the next Bedford River Festival.

ENDS

Notes to editors



Jane Wolfson (centre) receiving the "outstanding achievement" award from Helen Carey, chair of the Awards Assessment Panel (left) and Jim Hancock (host).



The B&MK team with their awards (Jane Wolfson third from right) with Helen Carey, chair of the Awards Assessment Panel (far right).

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