

# Press Release

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## A Dream On The Way To Reality

Turning the dream to reality the Eastern Group of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust is continuing its hard work with the annual sponsored 'Walk the route' event on **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July**. It has invited all who participated last year and would also like to extend that invitation to **You**. The walk will begin at **Kempton Church End** and will be covering a 5 mile section of the proposed canal route from the River Ouse at **Kempston** to **The Forest Centre** at **Marston Vale**.

The idea of building a canal linking the Grand Union Canal to the Great Ouse in Bedford was first proposed by Samuel Whitbread, brewer and Bedford MP in 1810. In 1994 the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust was formed to resurrect the idea. The project now enjoys support from local MP's, all political parties, councils and the public. The canal has also been written into the local plans. This 'green corridor' will not only be a canal, but a walk, a cycle route and a natural breathing space between urban centres.

It is of course a major and very expensive project, the first completely new canal in two hundred years. The Trust intends to build the canal in three stages, connecting them via a series of linear lakes along the designated route. The first stage has already been submitted for planning in Milton Keynes and is subject to a Big Lottery Bid for £25million. So now is time to start work on the next stage in Bedford.

The walk is the first step of this exciting journey. We need to mark this section of the route and provide interpretation boards along it. We need to win over planners, to build funds and seek local support. People of vision are needed to leave not concrete but an exciting legacy for future generations.

There will be an exhibition about the canal at The Forest Centre, Marston Vale, on the day of the walk. More information can be seen on the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust's website at [www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk](http://www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk)

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Bedford & Milton Keynes  
Waterway Trust

www.  
B-MKWaterway.co.uk

Bedford Borough Council  
Bedford Group of Drainage Boards  
Bedford River Users Group  
Bedfordshire County Council  
British Marine Federation  
British Waterways  
Country Land & Business  
Association & NFU  
Countryside Agency  
Cranfield University  
East of England Tourist Board  
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Development Agency  
English Nature  
English Partnerships  
Environment Agency  
Forest of Marston Vale  
Great Ouse Boating Association  
Grand Union (South) Angling Club  
Inland Waterways Association  
Mid Bedfordshire District Council  
Milton Keynes Council  
Milton Keynes Parks Trust  
Renaissance Bedford  
South East England  
Development Agency  
Sport England  
Sustrans  
The Ramblers Association  
The Waterways Trust  
The Wildlife Trust for Beds.  
Cambs, Northants & Peterborough





## **Background details**

The trust would like extend an invitation to all recipients of this press release to join us on this walk. There will be various members of the trust available to talk and the MP Patrick Hall will be walking the route.

The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway is a proposed linear Water Park, to be developed in conjunction with the Forest of Marston Vale and Milton Keynes Parks Trust. It will provide enormous benefit 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.

The project has made significant progress over the last five years. Partners have invested some £200K in development studies, and nearly four times that amount has been contributed in pro-bono professional work and volunteer time. Last year the Trust became a charity and limited company.

The project has a 20-year timescale. The Waterway will be built as opportunities become available on an agreed and secured route, and funding can be found through public, business, charitable and development sources. Plans exist to build first in Milton Keynes, then in Bedford and finally through Marston Vale.

The Waterway is now securely in the Milton Keynes Local Plan, is included in the draft East of England plan, is in the draft L D F's of Mid Beds and Bedford, and is actively supported by the county in terms of contributing, along with the forest, to economic development and the 'green corridor' in the Vale. The Milton Keynes Waterway Park has been short listed under the Big Lottery Living Landmarks fund and the Trust has been awarded a £250K development grant to undertake further studies that will support a full bid for £25m in 2007.