

Press Release

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Government support for the Waterway

The Department for Communities and Local Government are supporting the project for a new waterway between Bedford and Milton Keynes by providing a Project Officer on an eighteen month secondment to push forward the scheme for a Bedford and a Marston Waterway Park.

The Bedford and Marston Waterway Parks will connect with the Milton Keynes Waterway Park which at the moment is shortlisted for funding of £25 million from The Big Lottery Fund.

The Project Officer is Richard Woods who is based at County Hall. The appointment is also co-funded by Bedfordshire County Council and the B&MK Waterway Trust. Commenting on his appointment, Richard Woods said: "I am excited to be working on this project. The Waterway Parks will be of great benefit to Bedford and the Marston Vale both economically in terms of creating jobs and encouraging tourism by widening the access to the countryside, but also environmentally by creating a continuous green corridor as well as a waterway from Bedford to Milton Keynes. This will encourage new wild life habitats, footpaths, and cycleway in partnership with Sustrans, and other forms of environmentally friendly leisure pursuits."

Richard's main objectives will be;

- to secure the route in all relevant local and regional plans,
- develop a strategy to secure the land
- lead the development of studies which will result in a successful planning application

ENDS.



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
East of England
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





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Background details

The Bedford & Marston Vale Waterway Parks, together with the Milton Keynes Waterway Park, form the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway - 24km of entirely new continuous linear park and navigable waterway through the whole Milton Keynes & Bedford growth area, connecting the Grand Union linear park in Milton Keynes to the River Great Ouse, the Bedford River Valley Park and the Fenland Waterways beyond.

The Bedford Waterway Park connects the Forest Centre to the River Great Ouse (6km) and the Marston Waterway Park (12km) connects it to the Milton Keynes Waterway Park to the west. The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway has an exceptional record of community engagement and public support, and is supported by over 20 local project partners.

Project partners determined the line and level of the route in 2003, and the Waterway now features in the draft East of England RSS and in draft Bedford and Mid Beds LDF core strategies. It is expected to be central in the emerging EA Waterway Recreation Strategy for Defra, due out end 2007. It has central government support, primarily via Communities and Local Government and in particular commands the interest of Baroness Andrews.

Milton Keynes Waterway Park has already secured the necessary land and outline planning permission, and while funding is sought to complete the design and construction of the waterway and associated park, a way-marked path has been created along its route so that walking, cycling and running can take place. The project is supported by the Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium and will help deliver green infrastructure aspirations as captured in the Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan.

The **aim of this 18 month project** is to bring the Bedford & Marston Vale Waterway Parks to the same status as the Milton Keynes section, by securing the route, submitting a successful outline planning application, creating an interim green corridor, optimising synergies with compatible growth area targets, exploring funding sources and preparing for the initial design and build.