

# Press Coverage from Beds on Sunday

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### Waterway gets the OK

BY GARRICK ALDER

A long-awaited project to link Bedford and Milton Keynes is underway at last.

The Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust aims to link the two towns with a series of linked bodies of water.

A planning application is now being prepared for the first 'linear lake' section, intended for the area between the Forest Centre and Berry Wood near the new A421.



A 30m-long tunnel with a five metres width of water space and four metres width of footpath, cycleway and bridleway is to be paid for from Growth Area Funding, which has an allocation for 'green infrastructure' projects.

The project is divided into 26 mini-projects - each of which can stand alone and be joined with other linear lakes as funds become available.

The funds for the first section will be made available to the trust next April 2009, so that it will coincide with the commencement of work on the A421.

Funding for the remaining sections is being sought from sources including the Environment Agency, and the East of England Development Agency.

In the photograph above, MP Patrick Hall is pictured at the moment he learned the funding was available.

With him are three directors of the Waterway Trust: Jane Wolfson, David Fowler and Marilyn Leask.

Trust director Richard Wood said: "We believe that the realisation of the waterway will make a defining contribution to the appeal of the region, through the creation of new green/blue infrastructure; providing the underlying rationale for environmentally responsible new housing development; and a dynamic location for new business and the creation of new tourist hot spots.

"It will also open up new accessible off-road access routes and contribute to the revitalisation and regeneration of Bedford."

Jonathan Shaw MP, Minister for Waterways, also expressed support for the Bedford-Milton Keynes Waterway at a meeting held by Mr Hall last week.

The minister promised to ensure that the project will be firmly on the Government's agenda.

Patrick Hall said: "I am very pleased that Jonathan accepted my invitation to come to Bedford and Kempston.

"Not only did he witness a thoroughly competent presentation promoting the waterway, but he saw for himself the enthusiastic support from local people and councillors from all parties.

"I will keep an active watching brief on this matter as it really will be good for our county.'