

On-The-Ground Proposals at Both Ends of Waterway



We are pleased to carry exciting news at both ends of our proposed Waterway Park. At the Milton Keynes end, a project has been announced which will dig the beginning of the route at Campbell Park, to allow access to a new marina being built in association with housing and other facilities.

At the Bedford end, we are developing an idea to move the Head of Navigation above the weir at Kempston, and bring the Waterway into the river there. More details of both projects are in the centre pages.

Photo Competition Results

The John Bunyan Photo completion has now been judged. The entries were of a very high standard, and a calendar will be produced from twelve of the best. Check johnbunyanboat.org for details. The winner was Dennis Parkinson, below, and the runner-up is Paul Gray. Paul's picture is on page 7.



The winning picture in the John Bunyan photo competition, taken by Dennis Parkinson



View from the Chair

Welcome to our autumn edition! It seems no time at all since the last newsletter when I said goodbye to and thanked Graham Mabbutt and pointed to all the challenges facing us over the summer period. It is always hard over the summer to keep things moving forward when many people are away on holiday however, I am pleased to say, the Trust has made progress in a number of areas.

First, I flagged up in July that we were significantly under resourced and needed to fill a number of vacancies on the Board. We now have several people who have expressed an interest in joining the Board from a variety of backgrounds. A number of them joined our September Board meeting as observers and I hope by the New Year and our first newsletter in 2016 I will have some new names to introduce to you. I hope this will strengthen the Board and help take the project forward in a new strategic direction.

Sadly we now have one more vacancy as Marilyn Leask has stood down over the summer period for family and personal reason. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Marilyn for her many years work on the Board and wish her well in the future. Marilyn was instrumental in securing lottery funding for the project in 2007 which enabled us to undertake technical work on the route and ensure the vital step of the waterway's route being protected in Local Plans. Marilyn also played a major role in getting the John Bunyan built and launched both as a Board member and in a personal capacity. She has given endless time and support to the Trust and we have much to thank Marilyn for. So, on behalf of the Trust and all its members, I wish her well and offer her a great big "Thank You".

Turning to the future, when we have increased the number of Directors, the Trust has agreed that Board members will each take a lead role in a specific area of activity including running our finances, reaching out to and involving members and volunteers, running a programme of communications and media events which promote the project and fundraising/bidding for resources. It is important that we give attention to all of these areas as well as working with our partners on specific projects which will help get the waterway on the ground. In the past we have been very thinly spread across these activities and we will be looking for help from you, our members, as well.

The second step forward we have taken over the summer is agree to appoint a paid Project Manager to help us do two critical things

- Develop a credible and implementable Project Plan
- Establish a clear Business Case which demonstrates that the Waterway Park is an essential piece of infrastructure which will bring wide ranging economic, environmental and social benefits.

As a Board we are clear that we need both of these to secure much needed long term capital funding for the Waterway Park. We may still need to bid for funding for sections of the route on a step by step basis and also expect some sections to be delivered by enabling development over time. That's why we need a Project Plan to demonstrate that technically this approach can work. However to secure significant investment in the project we must convince our local partners and, potentially, regional and central government and private investors, that the Waterway Park as a whole will be transformational, not only for the immediate locality but much more widely across the region. There is a growing view that our project may not only boost the economy, bringing in new tourism related expenditure, new jobs and new businesses but that it will also be beneficial to regional water management systems, drainage and flood prevention. It can also provide a focus for a wide range of healthy activities and much needed access to open space and parkland.

Proving this requires extensive research, examples from elsewhere, hard facts and figures and rigorous financial analysis. As many of you will know, in 2009 we had an initial economic impact study done for us by SQW but the new study will need to update data and look far more widely. This will not come cheaply but as a Board we believe this is essential for us to move forward in a substantial way and be incorporated into wider regional infrastructure plans. I have spent a lot of time over the summer meeting with partner organisations in the wider Consortium and know that they support us on this approach.

As a result our current focus is on securing revenue funding to undertake this work. This is not an easy task. We are working with partners to find funding sources which will cover our costs. There are a number of current Government funding streams available to promote rural development (and we will be bidding for some of this – see the article on Mark the Route) but the majority of funding is for capital (to get things on the ground) not revenue (required to pay experts to help with our studies). However, the Board is determined to move the project forward so watch this space.

In the meantime we will be advertising for a Project Manager – a post which we can afford to fund ourselves for just over a year. We hope

to have someone in post by the end of the year. Last time we had a paid Project Manager it made a huge difference to what we could achieve so we know this is an important step.

On the events front we have had to make some difficult decisions because of limited resources. We simply did not have enough volunteers to staff a stand at the IWA Festival of Water in Northampton over August Bank Holiday weekend. Limited resources also mean that we will be postponing our Annual Partnership Conference until the spring when we hope to run it on the same day as the AGM. This will mean significant cost savings and less volunteer time than we would incur in preparing for two separate events. The Trust believes it will be better for us to host two successful and well run events on the same day than stretch ourselves too thinly over two completely separate events.

We also want to find a way a keeping our members better briefed on all the Trust's activities. We had been running a Projects Meeting prior to each Board but concluded it was not effective. Few people were able to get to the meetings and we know we need to do better. Our Communications Group will be looking at how we might do things differently such as holding informal briefings on the John Bunyan or using our website but we would welcome views from you, our members. We need your involvement to make things work. Meanwhile progress is being made on specific projects see – the articles on Mark the Route, The Head of Navigation and Campbell Park.

Two final points I want to draw to your attention - both of them very important. Firstly I would like to welcome Amber Halliwell to the Project Office. Amber has taken over from Laura Jones who we said goodbye to in August. Amber is in the Milton Keynes office Monday to Thursday mornings, and is very ably supported in the office by David Gibb who works as a volunteer two days a week on Tuesday and Fridays. Welcome on board both of you!

Secondly, and finally, the Trust has received a very welcome and unexpected donation of £10,000, a legacy left in the Will of the late Margaret Harden. Margaret was a passionate supporter of the Waterway and a founding member of the Trust. She generously helped fund the John Bunyan and took out one of the first charters on it for her 92nd birthday celebrations. We are extremely grateful for her very generous gift and will find a suitable way to publicly mark it.

Jane Hamilton

John Bunyan News



The Barns Hotel , Bedford, makes a perfect setting for wedding photographs.

The John Bunyan Boat is coming to the end of its season of cruises.

It has been a fabulous 2015 and we have all had a ball with some of the special charters and cruises we've hosted. Wedding drinks, Birthday parties, Hen parties, business networking, choir practice, cheese & wine tasting, educational school trips and many more.

The fish & chip suppers and monthly jazz cruises have been very successful and we will be building on these for next season.

Our partnership cruises with The Swan and The Barns hotels have been for afternoon teas, both on the boat and cruising to the hotel - great results. Our passenger numbers have passed 15,000 - onwards and upwards!

Team JB is made up of volunteers who happily give their time, expertise and experience towards the end goal of 'Closing The Gap' between Bedford and Milton Keynes. 2016 is looking good.

Lynne Gray

B&MK News

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Comments or articles for inclusion in the next edition should be sent to:
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Digging to Begin at Milton Keynes end?

Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP) recently announced that Crest Nicholson Regeneration has been chosen as the preferred development partner for the mixed use 15 acre site at Campbell Park Canalside. The site will include a 100 berth marina and will form the start of the proposed canal link from Milton Keynes city centre to Bedford. It will also have over 300 homes of various styles and sizes with car parking, a local convenience store, a café, a restaurant, a nursery and a pub.

Jane Hamilton, chair of Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park Trust says:

“Clearly it’s early days, but I am very excited by what is planned and what it could mean for the waterway link. We are working closely with MKDP, Canal & River Trust and Crest Nicholson to ensure that the new facilities are built in the most appropriate way for the people who visit the waterways and the surrounding pathways and greenspaces from boat users and walkers to cyclists and fishermen.”

MKDP chief executive Charles Macdonald says:

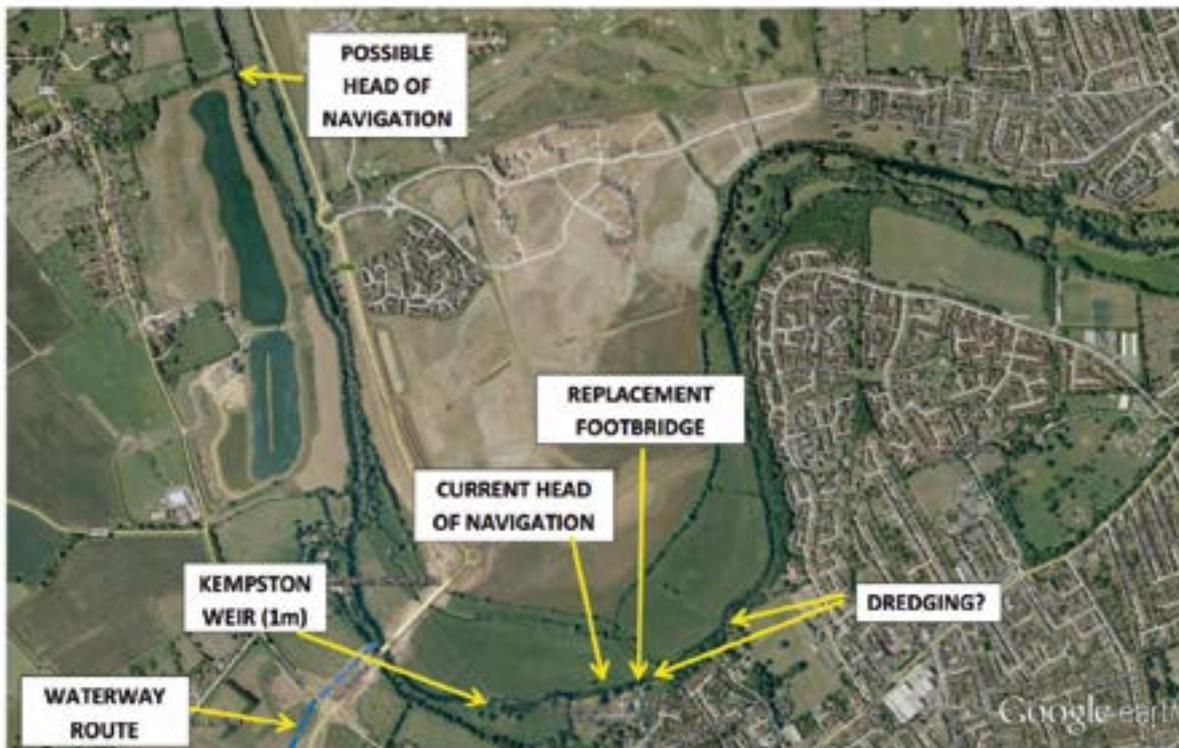
“We are incredibly excited by Crest’s proposals for the site and the positive impact this development will have on Campbell Park, the surrounding area and Milton Keynes as a whole. While a lot of detailed design work needs to be undertaken, the commitment from Crest to deliver a wide range of facilities early in the scheme’s construction will set the tone for the development to follow. This process wouldn’t have been possible without the input of many interested, local parties and we are grateful for their time and their valuable opinions.”

Peter Cusdin Crest Nicholson Regeneration’s development director says:

“We are extremely pleased to have been chosen to work on this prestigious and exciting project that will help to transform the centre of this iconic city. We are keen to share our proposals through more detailed public consultation and hope that people who live or work in Milton Keynes and beyond will be as delighted as we are with what will be built on the site.”



The proposed Campbell Park development



Kempston Head of Navigation Project
Thanks to David Fowler and Google for image

Head of Navigation at Kempston



The Trust is working with the Environment Agency, the Canal and River Trust and Bedford Borough Council to see if it is feasible to extend the Head of Navigation on the River Great Ouse at Kempston. This would be a key stage in linking the River Great Ouse to the Grand Union Canal. By extending the navigation upstream at Kempston by approximately three kilometres to Box End Water Park, it would provide a destination for boats and the B&MK trip boat The John Bunyan. Dredging will be necessary, a new or raised footbridge, and probably a new lock at Kempston Weir.

Floods over the years have deposited sands and gravels in the river which will have to be removed and placed elsewhere where they can benefit fish spawning. The existing footbridge needs to increase its headroom by 1.6m. This could be achievable by raising it but would involve new ramps in the flood plain. However, as this section of the river will be the link to the new waterway park a new and iconic bridge could mark that point.

The most challenging part of the project is whether to go round or through the weir with a 1m deep lock. The through route would provide a different type of lock, but removal of a section of the old weir (built 1978) and a design that does not impede flood flows, will be a challenge! The extension of the Head of Navigation from the old mill site up to the Waterpark will need the agreement of the landowners and other partners. It has the benefit of being a discreet project in that, if feasible, it could go ahead in advance of the rest of the Waterway Park and still bring with it many benefits. In the meantime the Trust will continue to work with partners on the technical issues.



Marooned on The Ouse!

When Olney Jazz Club fans took a cruise on The Ouse the adventure surpassed all expectations! The weather was gorgeous and Julian Marc Stringle, Alan Haughton and Bobby Orr were brilliant, mesmerising fans into mellifluous waterborne fantasies.

Until... when manoeuvring for the return journey the boat's propeller became snarled up by debris and everyone – fans and band – were ordered to *abandon ship!*

In the words of Graham Mabbut representing the John Bunyan: "What an eventful night we had! The weather was just right, Julian, Alan and Bobby played beautifully and it was a most enjoyable cruise until we turned the boat and picked up an anorak wrapped around our propeller.

"We did eventually get the propeller freed and cruised back with Alan and the equipment to Priory Marina for quite a late night finish. The Boatmaster and the Crew would all like to thank the fans for their kind consideration and response to a difficult close to the evening."

Not so much difficult as eventful, Graham, and I'm sure Olney fans will want to thank you and the crew for saving the situation.

For sure they went home savouring the adventure and especially Alan's, Bobby's and Julian's wonderful waterborne music!



Julian Marc Stringle

This report, with thanks, from Peter M Butler
www.jazzandjazz.com

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Marking the Route of the Waterway Park



Over the past few months we have been working with partner organisations to develop ways of making the proposed route of the Waterway Park more visible. These are the principles which we have jointly adopted:

- Mark the route for as much of its length as possible
- Create a metalled cycleway/footway (NCN51 largely and referred to as 'The Towpath') plus bridleway alongside, for as much of its length as possible (bridging drainage ditches etc as and when necessary and linking to nearby greenspace)
- Create an aggregate footway plus bridleway alongside if a metalled path is not practicable (eg if an alternative route for a metalled path is significantly less costly) again linking with nearby greenspace
- Where appropriate, eg for landscaping and/or possibly Sustainable Urban Drainage within a housing or business area, create linear ponds along the route
- Where practicable (eg major tree cover/productive agricultural land is not present), and as an alternative to linear pond creation, create a wildflower meadow matching the proposed water surface

area, if possible planted with a significant blue flower content.

- Provide a pathway/bridleway through tree-planted areas or over agricultural land where required to provide a footway/cycleway/bridleway link to mark the route (ie where a close alternative does not exist)
- Generally, leave trees on route intact to continue to grow, sequester carbon etc. or agricultural land intact to grow crops.
- Provide safe crossings of highways for footway/cycleway/bridleway.

We can only do this as land comes into public ownership, generally via the planning process so it will take time. However, this is one project for which some funding may be available. The Trust is submitting a bid to Bedford Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) who are the local partners managing a funding initiative called LEADER - part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). It's a French acronym which roughly translates as 'Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development'. The aim of the fund is to boost rural economies and we very much hope that we will qualify and be able to take this initiative forward.

Events Calendar 2016

February (Date TBC)	Briefing and Social - A new style of event for all members, with an update from a Director on progress, followed by an opportunity for socialising. This is an opportunity for you to meet the directors, and ask those questions you have been wanting answers to. Milton Keynes, Venue to be finalised. (Bedford later in the year)
June (Date TBC)	AGM & 6th Annual Partnership Conference - We plan to hold these as separate events on the same day in the same venue. More details to follow. Milton Keynes, Venue TBC



Runner-up in the John Bunyan photo competition, submitted by Paul Gray



Volunteers Required

This edition of the B&MK News has been produced by your membership secretary, as our previous editor has had to resign the post. It really needs someone with appropriate skills, to maintain the standards we have set. Can you help?

As Jane mentions in her View, we also need volunteers to man stands and help out with admin tasks. Unfortunately we were not able to be at the IWA Festival of Water in Northampton this year, because we had only two volunteers to cover the three day weekend, many of our regular volunteers being on holiday.

We are planning to re-organise our briefing meetings to make them more attractive to members, and to allow you to learn more and feel confident about volunteering. In the meantime, if you would like to help the Trust in any of these ways, please contact me on membership@b-mkwaterway.org.uk

Thank you in advance. If you would rather help on the John Bunyan, see their advert in the next column. Or do both!

We need more volunteers!

You don't need previous experience!

We've got a heavy schedule of public and private charter trips booked for 2016.

Volunteers say they get a buzz from being part of a team which gives so much enjoyment to so many people, whether they're out on the water as Boat Crew or helping keep the boat running smoothly as part of the Land Crew.

The commitment is 2 to 4 sessions a month April to October for Boat Crew and a couple of hours a week for Land Crew.

Have you some time to spend on the river?

We need

Boat crew:

- Cabin Crew to set the cabin ready, chat to customers and serve refreshments
- Deck Crew to help mooring, locking and ensuring passenger safety
- Helms with experience of handling river and/or canal boats
- Boatmasters prepared to train, or with an MCA current licence

Land crew:

- Display team members who can chat to the public at shows and exhibitions
- Scheduler who can help juggle our 75 volunteers into 180 crewing slots every month
- Volunteer staff recruiter and manager
- Wordpress users who can help update our website
- Maintenance and cleaning crew to keep the John Bunyan in great shape

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We look forward to hearing from you

More information at www.johnbunyanboat.org



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