

Walk the route day

B&MK Supporters: boots on and best foot forward!

Sunday September 26 10am – 2pm

MK group member Don Allison writes

The Milton Keynes group is deeply concerned that if the project is not pushed ahead now then it will be increasingly more difficult to find a satisfactory route through the new developments on the eastern side of Milton Keynes. So we are organising a big publicity day on Sunday 26 September with a variety of activities.



1 Walk the route

Various walks from 3 to 8 miles will follow, as closely as possible, the route from Campbell Park to the top of Brogborough hill, which is the site of the proposed Brogborough Whirl. This spectacular circular form of boat lift will drop the waterway down 50 metres on its way to Lidlington. Walks

start from 10 am and end on Brogborough hill. We intend to provide transport to assist the short walks and to return people to Campbell Park.

2 Boat gathering

Bring your boats and bring your boots to the area between bridges 82 and 82a.

Get there by 9.30 am.

3 Unveiling the signs

Signs are being erected on Childs Way Bridge and 82 to tell everyone that this is where the junction with the new waterway will be. We will be inviting the press, and representatives from the many organisations supporting the new waterway including local MPs and Councillors, British Waterways, and English Partnerships to name but a few. There will be an unveiling ceremony with speeches from just a few important dignitaries. Brian White MP is due to join us here before heading off for Party Conference.



4 Launch the Walks Leaflet

This new Trust leaflet will give details of a wide variety of walks along, or near, the whole length of the new waterway.

5 View the Whirl

The Brogborough Whirl's inventor Geoff Wheeler will display his model from the top of Brogborough Hill.



Please put the date in your diary, and tell any local, walking or boating groups you know. If you live in the central or Bedford areas – come to MK for a day out!

More information available on the Trust website in September, or contact Don Allison at donanjill@dalison.fslife.co.uk or 01908 610564 to receive further details.

MPs need our help

Geoff Wheeler, MK Committee Member writes

I bumped into Brian White, our local MP recently and as he is a keen supporter I asked him if there was anything more we could do. He said that he desperately wanted more letters from constituents to give him ammunition with the Deputy Prime Ministers office. They recognise that for every letter they get on a subject there are probably 100 people who share the same view but never bother to write, so 10 letters might represent 1000 people and, more importantly for them, 1000 votes!

So come on, don't leave it for others; if you haven't already done so, drop a line to your MP. It doesn't have to be a long letter, it's numbers that count. You don't even need to type it, hand written letters are fine. Points you might like to use are:

- You appreciate his support.
- The project is really worthwhile.
- It has economic benefits for the region.
- There are also environmental benefits.
- Leisure facilities help to mitigate the increase in housing in the area.
- We need help at national level to get through the local planning uncertainties.
- If the canal is not built into development plans soon the opportunity will be lost for ever.
- Most of the funding will come from private developers but only with government help.

Pick and choose the points you use and vary the order so that letters are not too similar.

Local MPs are:

- Brian White** (MK North East, Labour)
- Jonathan Sayeed** (Mid Beds, Conservative)
- Patrick Hall** (Bedford, Labour)



If you live further afield, you can still write to your own local MP about the need for the Waterway to build the national network and help to regenerate the Fens.

The address for all MPs is House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

Our MPs are willing to work for us so give them the backing they need.

PS: I'm trying to keep a tally of how many letters they get so I'd be grateful if you would let me know when you have written.

Contact Geoff at geoffwheeler@breathemail.net or 01908 665327.

Lobbying – do you know any of these people?

These are the members of the new Milton Keynes Partnership Board, who'll be making decisions about the new growth areas in MK, including the land to the east where the Waterway will run.

If you know any of them, please get in touch with Marilyn Leask, who's organising our lobbying campaigns, at marilyn.leask@ntlworld.com or 01234 401922.

Two independent private sector:

Chair: Sir Bob Reid (ex BR)
Ann Limb (Ufi - University for industry)

Three local councillors:

Isobel Wilson, MK council leader
Euan Henderson, MK council
Roger Bristow, MK council

Two staff of English Partnerships:

David Higgins chief executive
James Tuckey, non exec director

Three local strategic partnership members:

Wendy Lehmann, Chief exec MK CAB for the voluntary sector
Andrew Peck, former Fennemore solicitor representing business
Malcolm Brighton, chair of MK Primary Care Trust for the health service

Five other non-voting observers:

Sir Bevil Stanier, Aylesbury Vale
Cllr Hugh Carey of Bucks CC
Julian Lomas
Marianne Neville-Rolfe
Fiona Cruickshank

B&MK NEWS

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Progress report

Jane Wolfson, Vice Chair, writes:

All those flipchart sheets of great ideas from members at the AGM have been turned into a 22-point workplan for the year, under five main headings. Here's the progress so far:

1 Petitioning government and associated agencies, local authorities, to do everything they can to ensure early construction of the Waterway

We've got almost 5000 signatures in just 3 months – well on our way to our target of 20,000 by the end of the year. But we need 15,000 more signatures on the petition.

Please ask friends, relatives, work colleagues and other members of groups you belong to – you don't need to be local, just supporters of the Waterway.

The best pressure on government comes from MPs – so please also support Geoff Wheeler's letter-writing campaign.

2 Lobbying partners, landowners and developers to work together productively under national leadership

Two big successes!

First, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, has responded positively to the submissions from the Trust and other Project Partners, saying:

'I am supportive of inland waterways and acknowledge the benefits that they can bring, from improving the quality of new residential developments to regenerating local communities [I am] willing to actively support the role of waterway schemes in the development of sustainable communities across the country, which could help facilitate private sector and developer funding into this specific project. I have asked officials to see if there would be any opportunities for me to this.'

Second, in the new British Waterways vision for Waterways 2025 (available on their website) we're still top of the pops – the B&MK is now in the Priority 1 group and the document recognises its importance for the national waterway network. Both Chairman George Greener and Chief Executive Robin Evans are actively supporting the BMK, and we're working together on lobbying activities and finding opportunities for Mr Prescott to help us!

3 Keeping the project in the public eye

We've been at Festivals (Bedford, Wendover, Linslade), in libraries, giving talks, collecting signatures on Scooby-Doo day at Marston, giving summer boaters publicity packs to take on board wherever they go, getting articles in the local press, and putting up local signs. We're investigating TV coverage and looking for a suitable patron and president - let us know your ideas.

September 26 will be a big day in Milton Keynes – get your boots on and join us (see page 4!)

4 Building Trust resources

Membership is growing, but not as fast as we'd like.

If you've not yet rejoined, please do so.

If each member could recruit just one member, we'd double overnight – and that would mean double the energy, double the funds, double the lobbying, double the chances of making progress.

5 Building the vision

We're working with local Partners to get the route into plans for the growth of Milton Keynes.

We've commented on the brief for the Cost-Benefit Study, which is about to start.

We're working closely with BW on the Business Case for the Waterway, which is crucial for convincing civil servants and developers to back the scheme.

The Trust has contributed £1,000 towards the Water Management Study, and are leading the search for the final £15,000 to ensure that this study can start soon too.

We've set up a 'Way Forward' Brainstorm Group to look at ways of making the project more feasible by breaking it into a series of mini-projects, phased over time, for which we can raise funds/reduce costs in various ways. The Project Board is interested and supportive, and we're running a workshop with them in September, before a full report-back in October.

Please will you do just ONE thing NOW!

Collect ONE (more) sheet of petition signatures by the end of the summer, using the sheet enclosed

If every member does this, we'll double the current pile and be well on the way to the target of 20,000 by the end of the year.

Write ONE letter, to your MP

This is the best ammunition we can have to put pressure on government! Geoff Wheeler tells you how on page 4.

Recruit ONE member, using the leaflet enclosed

This way we'll double our membership and be able to support more lobbying, more publicity, more technical studies.

Send us just ONE comment!

In this issue you'll hear from a Trust inventor and from the Trust Brainstorm Group. Give us your ideas about how we can best get started, by raising money, reducing costs, or finding ways to phase the building of the Waterway. We look forward to hearing from you. jane@b-mkwaterway.org.uk



Just imagine – making use of the cattle creep under J13 of the M1 ...



Just imagine – nipping through a tight corner by the Amazon building ...



Just imagine – on the way to the Brogborough Whirl!

Wanted! Supporters in Mid-Beds!

Covering the M1 to Marston stretch of the plans. John May is happy to chat about the Trust, and what we can do in this area, please contact him on john.may@tesco.net or contact the Secretary Marilyn Leask on marilyn.leask@ntlworld.com or 01234 401922

Low Bridges?

No problem with the Floating Lock™

Alan Cook, Bedford Committee member, describes his invention

Imagine a standard lock with chamber, mitre gates, side & end walls. The chamber is the same dimensionally as a standard lock but with steel sides with metal mitre gates at both ends, both pairs facing outwards, to seal under lowering chamber water level conditions. The side walls comprise buoyancy/ballast tanks, again of steel construction. The whole assembly of base & side tanks is welded together as an integrated unit and floats in the surrounding river or canal.

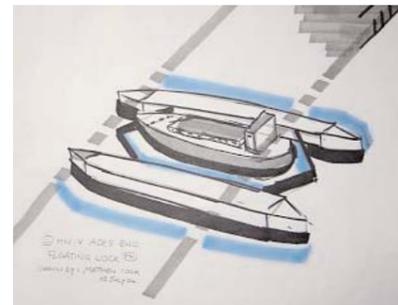
The Floating Lock works like this:

1. With the lock water level the same as the river, the gates open at one end and the boat enters the lock. The boat displaces the same amount of water as its underwater volume, as in Archimedes' Principle (as in Eureka!) The gates close.
2. Water is pumped from the central chamber into the side buoyancy tanks, causing the boat to descend in the lock to a lower height. There is no change of total mass or weight of the whole assembly so the lock remains at the same flotation height. (This was the Eureka moment for me as the inventor of the floating lock!)
3. The boat should now be sufficiently low to pass under the low bridge(s). If necessary, further water can be admitted to the buoyancy / ballast tanks from the river causing lowering of the lock in the water while maintaining a safe amount of "free-board" at all times. Propulsion will probably be by a "service" boat which will also house the pumping and control equipment.

4. After passing under the bridge(s), reverse water transfers take place restoring the boat to the normal river level. The gates open, allowing the boat to exit, ready for the next boat to enter. The Lock may need to reposition to meet this boat depending on position and direction of next boat.

Advantages for Bedford

1. This would be a "First" for Bedford: use of a new waterway invention.
2. It would stimulate boats to visit Bedford & Kempston from the wider East Anglian Waterways.
3. It would stimulate interest in the whole B&MK project generally.
4. A Visitor's Centre would bring visitors from the UK and overseas, creating jobs in Bedford.
5. Economic – the Floating Lock does not take up any 'real estate' where space is tight, as in Bedford.
6. Environmental – the Floating Lock "adjusts" the boat floating height to that required to pass under the bridges, so there is no additional water loss nor any additional water drainage channel required.
7. The Visitor's Centre could be extended to include a "hand-on hydraulics workshop" where schoolchildren from all over the country could see how a practical approach to "flotation & stability" in practical maths, physics & mechanics has resulted in the invention of the Floating Lock. This "workshop" could be a valuable selling point for the Trust and could attract funding.



Alan Cook's sketch for the Floating Lock™

Seeing is believing

As well as technical models, I would like to have an "Artist's Impression" of the river in the vicinity of the low bridges, with an assortment of river craft including a Norfolk Wherry or similar, and various rowing boats, with a setting of stylish housing and riverside developments. This would capture the imagination of the public and demonstrate what the river area of Bedford could look forward to.

People have said that sailing barges have made trips to Bedford in the past, although my information was that, since the river has a towpath, long distance river transport was mostly horsedrawn. There must be some old photos / paintings of this. It would be good to be able to compare past, present and futures views of the river.

If you have comments, relevant old pictures or know an artist, please contact Alan Cook on Tel (01525) 712433 Mobile (07774) 466083 email aces9@aol.com (and then type "B&MK" or "Floating Lock" in the subject line).

Wanted!

Volunteer designers with skills and equipment!

All the Trust publicity takes about 40 days a year to design and produce.

We're looking for new team members who could help with just one or two items a year.

If you could help, or could introduce us to someone, please contact Rodney Evans our Volunteers Coordinator at Rodwen@scythia.fsnet.co.uk or 01908 376449.

Positive signs

The Milton Keynes group of the Trust are commissioning signs to go on bridges 82 and 82a of the Grand Union, either side of the point where the new junction will be. The signs will boldly declare that 'The Bedford and Milton Keynes Canal will start just south (north) of here' and will carry the Trust's logo and website. The signs are to be sponsored by Lionhearts Cruising Club to whom we are extremely grateful.

We hope to have them ready for an unveiling ceremony at the start of the **Walk the Route day** on September 26.

Where will that sign go?
Jane Wolfson of the B&MK Waterway spots the spot



Have you got a bit of loose change?

Tony Newey, member of our Way Forward Brainstorm Group, writes

Do you happen to have a spare £180 million? You do? Please call us so that we can build a canal!

The **reality** is that we are not going to have that sum drop into our laps! If we are going to build the Waterway, then we have to take a very different look at how to do it.

Having spent almost a decade successfully selling the idea of the B&MK so that it is in plans and talked about, we – the B&MK Trust – now need to move on and start raising some real money, and get out those spades and start cutting sod!

Our Way Forward Brainstorm Group is working on three key ideas:

1 Micro projects phased over a longer timescale

The Trust Management Committee has come to the conclusion that the most likely way to make it happen is to build it as a large number of "micro projects" over a longer timescale, starting by 2010 certainly, but finishing in the 2020's.

By "micro projects" we mean splitting the entire length of the canal into bits as small as 100 yards

or maybe as long as two miles! We can then set up action groups to look at which sections we should start on, how to raise the money, and how to start cutting.

Since we know the 'line' of the canal, there will be sections we will prioritise. These include a fully watered arm from the Grand Union; sections that are currently part of some local housing or land development; transport projects such as the improvement of the A421 or reworking of Junction 13 of the M1.

2 Serious fund-raising

We are reviewing the option to become a charity (at the outset we chose to be a voluntary organisation to get going quickly). And we're trying to build a volunteer fund-raising team who can look at every opportunity to get money from large and small foundations, private groups and individuals around the Region or nationally! We will of course include national and local authorities and the Lottery, but these need careful preparation and time to bid.

3 Building a volunteer technical/build team

When it come to building the canal we will accept

help from every person that offers, approach every local and national builder to assist us with equipment, and scour the local architects, surveyors and specialists for all the help we can get!

Next steps

We know can learn from waterway restoration projects and how they manage to build small sections within the frame of a larger plan. We're making contact through colleagues in the waterway world, and are working with other Project Partners to brainstorm ways to reduce costs, raise funds, phase building.

We are building a register of people who can help us in all three areas.

If you want to see the Waterway built in your lifetime, or that of your grandchildren – we need you and your skills. Together we can make it happen! We just need some loose change and your time!

Contact Tony Newey at anewey@attglobal.net or 07831 665986 if you've got comments on the micro projects approach, or can help with fundraising or technical/build aspects.

Singing in the rain!

Tony Newey reports on the Bedford River Festival 3-4 July

Our main aims at the Festival were:

- To listen to people from Bedford and area
 - To explain the project to those who had not heard of it
 - To update those who had heard of it
 - To receive and answer questions of those who had concerns
 - To understand why so many people like and want the canal
- And finally....
- To get them to sign the petition!

A great event!

Not only was the Festival well organised, with some 200 stands and events over the two days, but the crowds were huge and enthusiasm quite amazing – despite the weather! Aside from our stand, the various events on the River Ouse with Dragonboats, canoes and other craft, the quite wonderful street procession ("Second only to Notting Hill" said the local TV station), the sporting activities, the music and entertainment, were some of the best it has been my pleasure to behold. The fireworks on Saturday evening were oooooohhh! aaaahhhh! geeeeeesh! The very best!!

On the B&MK Trust stand, we were almost overwhelmed with interest. Most people we talked to knew about the proposed canal although they were all keen to hear about the new plans and when we would start building it! Sadly there were a significant number who, having (mis)read local press,

thought that the project had been dropped. We were happy to disabuse them!

I was ably helped by several stalwart members including Geoff Wheeler, who talked about his Brogborough Whirl, our membership secretary Leigh Willows, Chris Fox, David Fowler, Alan Cook demonstrating his floating lock, and talks organisers John & Sally Gunning.

Positive feedback

In 20 hours we got over 1000 signatures for the petition that we intend to carry back to the Government and its doubting civil servants. That speaks volumes for local support.

I used the festival as an opportunity to sound out local opinion about the canal. You might be interested to read my analysis of the **top ten comments** of the people who came to the stand, and our responses

Glad to sign the petition (90%)

Great! Go to your local library and sign-up!

Tell us more about the project (60%)

Watch the papers!

When will it start (50%)

Sooner than you think!

How are you getting over Brogborough Hill (25%)

The Brogborough Whirl!

Where is the money coming from (20%)

Various sources but a lot of local effort!

Surely the canal project is dead! (20%)

It is most definitely not!!

Are you building this huge bridge [the Falkirk Wheel on the display board] (15%)

No!!

Haven't heard much about it recently (10%)

We are changing that!

I would like to 'get involved' (10%)

There is a form at the library and write to us!

Don't know anything about it (10%)

You do now. Come and join us!

Existing river users still have concerns that need to be addressed in plans that ensure that all users can successfully share the river. But the key thing is that the people of Bedford are very keen to see this new canal built. So let's get on with it!

Crowds at the Trust stall at the River Festival
Tony Newey centre, in green, back to camera

