

## Press Release

**Embargo: Immediate**



PATRON  
Sir Samuel Whitbread KCVO

### **WHITBREAD FAMILY REVIVES 200-YEAR LINK WITH WATERWAY PROJECT –**

### ***SIR SAMUEL WHITBREAD, KCVO, BECOMES PATRON OF THE "B&MK"***

Just over 200 years ago Samuel Whitbread, Member of Parliament for Bedford, was the driving force behind the plan to create a waterway linking the Grand Junction Canal (now the Grand Union at Milton Keynes) with the River Great Ouse at Bedford. Today his descendant and great-great-great grandson is named as the first Patron of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust (B&MK) which is campaigning to deliver the project.

**Graham Mabbutt, chairman of the Trust, said:** "Last November the Trust held its bicentennial conference and dinner at the earlier Samuel Whitbread's birthplace, and today we celebrate the squaring of a remarkable historical circle with the appointment of Sir Samuel Whitbread, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, as our first Patron.

**"For more than twenty years, until his recent retirement as Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Sir Samuel has provided an outstanding record of service and achievement to the county, as well as to the wider community. Therefore, as another page in our history turns, Sir Samuel brings to the project an exceptional range of interests and experience which will be a tremendous asset as we see tangible signs of the waterway's delivery on the horizon."**

**Sir Samuel commented:** "Two hundred years ago, a fourteen-mile long canal linking Bedford with the then Grand Junction Canal was proposed at a cost of over £100,000. In spite of the support of the Duke of Bedford and Samuel Whitbread, there was some doubt as to whether the amount of traffic forthcoming could justify the expense and the canal never materialised.

**"At that time the income to the proposed canal would have been derived from the transport of corn to Birmingham and Manchester, with the 'back carriage' providing the county with coal, iron and manufactured goods. Today, instead of corn and coal, canals depend on leisure, sport and recreation and home-buyers are often keen to acquire waterside properties.**



**B&MK**  
BEDFORD &  
MILTON KEYNES  
WATERWAY TRUST

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**"I very much hope that the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust will be able to complete what my ancestor supported but failed to bring to fruition. It is indeed a very exciting project which I am glad to support."**

The B&MK Trust was formed just over a decade ago to resurrect the scheme to create the missing 26km link via a series of waterway parks which will eventually open up the national network from the River Severn to the Wash. The Trust is a founding member of the consortium of local authorities, agencies and community groups chaired by the Mayor of Bedford, Dave Hodgson, to drive the project forward.

It is expected that during this year the first stretch of waterway, which is recognised in all local and regional plans, will be dug as part of the Marston Vale Innovation Park.

**ENDS**

## Notes to editors

The earlier Samuel Whitbread (1758-1815) entered the family brewing business in 1786. He entered Parliament as member for Bedford – **his father's old seat in 1790**. But whilst his father had been a Tory, Samuel junior was a Whig. The original waterway scheme, which was driven and often financed by Samuel, was overtaken by the advent of the railways.

The current Sir Samuel is involved in farming and forestry companies in Bedfordshire.



*Caption: Graham Mabbutt (left) welcomes Sir Samuel Whitbread on board the B&MK project.*



Waterways Renaissance Awards  
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WATERWAY TRUST

PATRON  
Sir Samuel Whitbread KCVO

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