

Marston Vale Likely to See First Signs of Bedford–Milton Keynes Waterway

Detailed plans highlight ‘constraints’ at the Bedford end but scheme is deliverable

John Bunyan Community Boat declared an ‘outstanding success’ but more crew needed

Search on for new B&MK Waterway Trust Chairman as Graham Mabbutt stands down

Detailed planning for the B&MK waterway shows a ‘significantly constrained environment’ in the Bedford area. The final route is still not definitive: more work needs to be done, but the project is demonstrating deliverability.

This was the message at the B&MK Waterway Trust’s Annual General Meeting in Newport Pagnell, from Paul Vann, Economic Development Manager (growth) at Bedford Borough Council and Secretary to the consortium of local authorities (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes) and government agencies which will deliver the Waterway.

In his ‘steps to implementation’ presentation, Mr Vann ran a slide rule over the stretch of route taking in Wootton, Bell Farm and the Ridge Road area of Kempston. Locks, ‘cut and fill’, a new underpass under the old A421, drainage and water mains were among the challenges highlighted. He also pointed to the engineering works that would be needed around the weir at the head of navigation for the Waterway at Kempston. Other matters arising included the Stewartby landfill restoration, where it was proposed to create a linear pond alongside the waterway route.

The consortium was looking at how the pond and restoration scheme related to the cut for the Waterway. Another unexpected development had been the installation of a ‘batching’ (electrical) plant on the route of the project near the underpass built to carry the Waterway beneath the A428 near Stewartby. This issue was being addressed.

Finding the funding necessary for the Marston Vale Innovation Park had been unsuccessful. This meant that it might have to be disposed of to a private developer, which would have implications for the Waterway through the park.

These issues notwithstanding, Mr Vann considered that first delivery of the Waterway would be through the Marston Vale Innovation Park. The consortium was more confident about the route. A report on the ecological work carried out in the area is expected shortly.

In answer to a question from the audience, Mr Vann foresaw ‘a very green solution’ to pumping for the Waterway: ‘So I can’t see how it [the Waterway] cannot happen. We need to be vigilant, responsive, opportunistic and flexible in our approach,’ he said. (*Contd p.3*)





View from the Chair

It was good to see quite a number of you at our Information Evening in May, which incorporated our Annual General Meeting. Those present will have heard that I have just completed my third and final term as Chair of the Trust (see elsewhere in this issue for the report of the meeting).

At that time, the Directors had failed to appoint a successor to me, but since then things have moved on. Our newly appointed Director, Jane Hamilton, has agreed to share the role of Joint Chair of the Trust with me for the forthcoming year. For those of you who have not yet met Jane, I can tell you that she is a long-established Bedford Resident and a former Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Partnership, the government organisation which oversaw the expansion of Milton Keynes. In fact, it was Jane who signed the first planning consent for the Waterway through Milton Keynes. So Jane not only knows the history of the waterway but has a thorough knowledge of the Milton Keynes Eastern Expansion Area, through which the Waterway runs.

Jane will be a great addition to our team of voluntary directors and trustees. She will take responsibility for the operations side of the Waterway Project and will join Drew Marchant representing the Trust on the B&MK Consortium. Meanwhile, I will be responsible for the organisational side of the Trust.

In an effort to simplify the number of meetings the directors need to attend, we are now running the Projects Group on the same evening as the Board Meeting, so one will follow after the other. To make the meetings more accessible, we are rotating them between Milton Keynes at the Canal & River Trust (CRT) Offices in Station Square and Box End Park just outside of Bedford. The meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of every 'odd' month. I do hope that you will come and join us at the Projects Meeting, the next of which is to be held on Tuesday 22 July, 1900hrs at the CRT Offices, Station House, Station Square, Milton Keynes (entry via the door next to the railway station entrance and Costa Coffee, as the offices are above the station).

Many thanks to those of you who helped out or visited our stand at Crick Boat Show in May – a very interesting weekend.

Hope to see you at one of our forthcoming meetings or events!

Graham Mabbutt.



Hat on for the Waterway!

Jane Wolfson, Trust Vice-President, was delighted to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in June, accompanied by her husband David. Hats were obligatory!

Jane was nominated to attend by the Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, in acknowledgement of her contribution to the development of the Trust and the Waterway project.

Jane says: 'I'm delighted that the progress of the Waterway is being recognised. We had a wonderful afternoon – ask me and I'll tell you about it!'



Jane Wolfson, B&MK Waterway Trust Vice-President, and husband David, waiting to enter through the Front Gates of Buckingham Palace.

B&MK News

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Paul Vann, Secretary of the B&MK Waterway Consortium, speaking at the Annual General Meeting.

(Contd from p.1)

Commenting on developments in Milton Keynes, Chairman of the B&MK Waterway Trust, Graham Mabbutt, highlighted that 'the Milton Keynes end is now in a critical stage for route safeguarding and planning obligations'.

DIG Project – Marston Vale

Graham went on to say that the next main project for the Trust was the setting up of the DIG project, where they hope to get route agreement, detailed route drawings and planning consent for a stretch of waterway, most likely in Marston Vale. They hope to launch a project working with the Waterway Recovery Group of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) and the Marston Vale Forest Centre, to dig out part of the Waterway route with volunteers.

IWA Waterway Recovery Group (WRG)

Steve Morley described the coordinating and hands-on work of this group, in particular the running of canal 'camps' at which volunteers undertake work on individual projects. The WRG had the resources, expertise, equipment and associated skills to carry out major projects with volunteers and work with various canal societies. He highlighted two particularly successful projects – rebuilding a bridge on the Chesterfield Canal, and creating a new stretch of canal near Hereford.

Wanted: more crew for cruises on the John Bunyan Community Boat

Graham Mabbutt reported on the delivery, launch and first successful cruising season of the *John Bunyan* on the Great Ouse in Bedford. He paid special thanks to Don Allison, Roger Crews and Steve Braund, 'who had turned what some perceived to be a crazy idea into reality'. 'The Boat has been an outstanding success in operating and financial terms. Of the £69,000 in loans received by the Trust, the first payment of £15,000 has been paid back to Bedford Borough Council a year ahead of schedule,'

Graham commented.

In her report to the meeting, Jane Wolfson, Trust Vice-President and Chair of the new Enterprise Board set up to run the *John Bunyan*, made an urgent plea for the recruitment, training and retaining of volunteers, not only in crew roles but also behind the scenes in sales, marketing, maintenance, cleaning and business support: 'Most pressing is the lack of deck, cabin crew and boatmasters,' she said.

Jane added that the aim for 2014–2015 was to double passenger numbers to 8,000 and double the funds raised to support the Trust.

Search begins for new Chair and Trust directors

Graham Mabbutt stood down at the meeting after three years as Chair of the Trust, but will continue as a Board director. Graham said, 'I have enjoyed the past three years immensely, although the volume of work, together with that from the Enterprise Board which I also chaired last year, and the commitment involved, is considerable. But the results have made it worthwhile'. Finding a successor to take over the tiller would be a priority for the Trust Board, he added.

Trust Vice-Chair David Fowler and fellow director Hilary Goldsmith have also resigned from the Board.

Patrick Hall and Drew Marchant were both re-appointed for a further three-year term.

Jane Hamilton, former CEO of Milton Keynes Partnership, was elected to the Board. Three director vacancies remain.



WE NEED CREWS FOR OUR CRUISE

Cruise the Great Ouse
Spring & Summer 2014

JOHN BUNYAN
Bedford's Community Boat

Can you help us?

Volunteers wanted – no experience is required as full training will be given.

Would you like to spend your spare time on the river? Come and join us at 'Team JB'

If so, call:
07411 997154
or email:
christine.tilneybmk@gmail.com

www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk



John Bunyan News

The *John Bunyan* is back in action for a second season, running cruises on the Great Ouse in Bedford most days of the week, with happy customers and crew aboard!

Having done a lot of business development this Spring, we are beginning to feel nicely afloat and on an even keel, and we're looking forward to a very busy Summer and Autumn.

Safety first

We operate under the regulations of the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA). Safety – of passengers, crew, bystanders, the boat and other elements of the Waterway environment – is our number one priority at all times.

We have just had an inspection by the MCA and were delighted to be commended in particular for our safety manual and risk assessments.

Operations

Adverse weather and river conditions meant that cruising was limited at the start of the season, not least because of limited access to the river for risk assessments and essential training.

In March, we ran five cruise shifts with a total of 206 passengers. In April, we ran ten cruise shifts with a total of 272 passengers and in May we ran 19 cruise shifts, carrying 558 passengers. The number of cruises and passengers is now starting to rise rapidly with the better weather in June, and by the time you read this it will be all hands on deck!

We are finding that Saturday is our most popular charter day (27% of charters), followed by Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday (equal at 18%). We reserve Mondays for maintenance, cleaning, training and meetings, while Thursdays and Sundays are used for public cruises.

We are pleased to see that many different community groups are hiring the boat for a day out – 31 groups so far have booked to be on the river with us. The *John Bunyan* continues to be popular for private parties (24 so far) and a growing number of businesses are booking it for their own customer events (20 current bookings). This includes the Swan Hotel's cream tea and champagne cruises, which are popular with people wanting a bit of luxury!

Sales and marketing

Successful negotiations with the Bedford Business Improvement District ('Love Bedford') have resulted in renewed sponsorship for noticeboards and Town Centre posters, River Festival publicity, banners and publicity on the boat roof, which can be seen when we are in locks. All these will help us to spread the word,



Passengers enjoying a cruise aboard the *John Bunyan*.

though we were pleased with the response at our stands in the Harpur Centre and High St 'Showcase' events in Bedford in June, where many people said they had heard of both the *John Bunyan* boat and the Waterway.

Pricing policies and catering services have been set for this year and new display cabinets put on board so that we can start to offer a range of low-cost souvenirs.

We are experimenting with routes and publicity for public cruises, to see which are the most popular. All of the cruise schedules, including special cruises such as 'Bat Watch' on 12 August and 'Town & Anchor' trips to Great Barford, are available on the Trust website (<http://www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk>) and tickets can be bought via the website, by phone through our volunteer bookings team or in person at the Tourist Information Centre in Bedford. Cream teas and ploughman's lunches can be ordered for groups of four or more people on public cruises, and these are proving popular.

We've developed a range of menus that charterers can have served on board, and we are in the process of obtaining a permanent licence to serve alcohol.

A new boat booking calendar, public cruise booking and charter booking systems have been developed, which are helping us to build profiles of particular types of customers to target with future sales and marketing. The more customers we have, the more money we raise for the Trust and the more people we can inform about the Waterway project.

Fabulous feedback

The Boat, the experience of being on the river and, above all, our wonderful volunteer crews, get great feedback. It can be hard work, but it is very rewarding to know how much our customers enjoy what the *John Bunyan* has to offer. Here is a typical sample from our inbox:

From Sharnbrook House: 'Our party had a very enjoyable afternoon on the river last Thursday, we would like to say thank you to your crew for looking after us'.

From Ampthill & District Lions: 'We had a really enjoyable trip on the *John Bunyan* Community Boat on Sunday afternoon and would like to pass on our thanks to the volunteer crew who made it so pleasurable'.

From Josie Maudlin: 'All your staff were tremendous, so bright and cheerful – all my guests had a wonderful day. We enjoyed David Fowler's commentary through the day, it was so informative and I know we all learnt new facts about the area. Please pass on my thanks to everyone involved. It was a very pleasant day on the river and one I would highly recommend'.

Volunteers

The new Board has swung energetically into action and achieved a great deal of systems development alongside getting the Spring season underway. At a rough estimate, some 250 volunteer days were given in Spring by the new Directors to develop Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Enterprises Ltd (BMKWEL) so that it has a robust business plan (see p.7 for details), as well as sound systems and processes for everything from sales and maintenance to training, finance and IT.

Since March, we've had an active programme of events and publicity to recruit new volunteers. By May we had brought 13 new volunteers on board, bringing our current active pool to 74 people. Of these, 66 work as crew team members and between them they have so far offered to work 295 shifts on board. Since a shift lasts on average 4 to 6 hours, that's a massive amount of volunteer time being donated to the cause. This is of course in addition to the many hours each month the maintenance teams put in to keep the *John Bunyan* in good condition and the time that volunteers spend on bookings, marketing, events and training.

Refresher training has been completed satisfactorily and new volunteer training is ongoing. A new volunteer register and crew scheduling process have been introduced and trialled and we are working to fine-tune them. A private Facebook group for 'Team JB' has been set up for volunteers to share news and views and we've just started a bi-monthly newsletter for the team.

We undertook our first crew survey in May and were delighted with the results. Volunteers are broadly happy with the time they spend on the boat, which is great, and we've identified things we can do to improve training records and crew scheduling.

A huge thank you to all our volunteers, without whom the *John Bunyan* could not operate and BMKWEL would not exist.

Jane Wolfson
Volunteer Chair, BMKWEL

Volunteer with the *JB*



On 12 June, the *John Bunyan* carried its 1,000th passenger for this season and by the time you read this we'll be well over the 2,000 mark.

We could be offering more cruises and, in so doing, making more money for the Trust and telling more people about the Waterway project, if we just had more volunteers, both afloat and ashore. There's a lot to do behind the scenes to make the *John Bunyan* cruises happen!

Volunteers with 'Team *JB*' say they get a buzz from being part of a team which gives so much enjoyment to so many people. The commitment is two to four sessions per month from April to October for crew, and two to three hours per week for shore team members. Free full training is given and new team members are 'buddied' with an experienced hand, and we do take time out for socials!

We know that most Trust members who can help are already doing so, but if you find you have time to spare, we'd welcome you aboard. See our advert on p.3 for contact details or visit <http://www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk/volunteering-with-the-john-bunyan/>

Do you know someone who'd like to join 'Team *JB*'? We need:

Afloat ...

6 cabin crew to set the cabin ready, chat to customers and serve refreshments

6 deck crew to help with mooring, locking and ensuring passenger safety when boarding

3 helms with experience of handling river or canal boats

3 trainee Boatmasters wanting to train this year for 2015

3 qualified Boatmasters with a current licence who can help in July to August this year

Ashore ...

2 graphic designers to help produce volunteer information and marketing materials

4 display team members to chat to the public at boat shows and exhibitions

4 bookings team members to give customers information and take enquiries and bookings

2 Wordpress users who can help to update the *JB* website pages and Trust information

2 maintenance and cleaning team members to help keep the Boat in excellent condition

1 scheduler to help juggle 60 volunteer crew into 180 crewing slots each month

1 recruiter to lead our search for new volunteer crew and shore team members

1 interim Sales Director (September 2014 to February 2015) to cover temporary absence



Obituaries

Kam Ho

It was with great sadness and shock that we learned of the sudden death of our friend and colleague, Kam Ho, last month.

Kam joined the Trust early in the Boat planning stage and made a very generous donation towards the build. Kam spent many hours quietly going about his business on the Boat in a competent and reliable way. He only spoke when it was necessary but you just knew that if Kam said he would do something it would be done and done properly. His analytical mind provided a calm efficiency whenever he was aboard. He will be so missed by us personally and as an organisation.

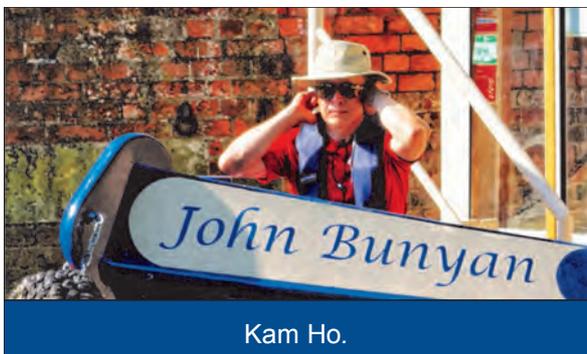
Kam was a quiet, gentle man who was generous with his time and expertise. Crewing on the *John Bunyan* was only one of the many interests Kam held. He was one of those people who only did things if he could do them well. He was an accomplished skier, a whizz at computer technology and at the top of his field in his primary passion of go-karting.

He had been competing in a veterans race shortly before he was taken ill. After initial first aid at the track near Beccles in Suffolk, he was treated at the James Padgett Hospital. Requiring heart surgery, he was transferred to Papworth Hospital where surgeons operated for nine hours to repair a ruptured aorta. Unfortunately, Kam never recovered from the anaesthetic and scans revealed he had suffered a massive stroke during the operation, resulting in brain death.

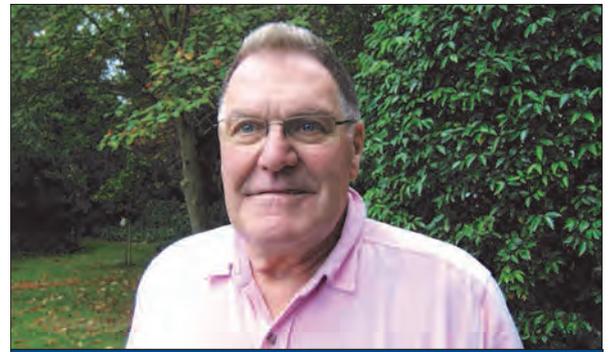
The painful decision was taken to remove life support after arrangements had been made to harvest the organs he had generously donated.

He was a very active member of his local church, St. Lawrence's in Bradwell Village, Milton Keynes. He was also a family man who leaves a widow, Karen, and who kept a watchful eye on his brother and sister, nieces and nephews and his mother until she passed away.

His funeral, held at St. Lawrence Church was 'standing room only', a testament to the popular person he was: a person who was greatly



Kam Ho.



Paul Leech.

respected and loved by so many people. I am pleased that the *John Bunyan* was also well-represented at the funeral, with 13 fellow crew members in attendance. The void he leaves in so many people's lives will be difficult to fill.

The Business has made a donation in his name to his favourite charity, *Save the Children*. God Bless and be with his family and friends at this sad time.

Chris Tilney
Volunteer Volunteering Director, BMKWEL

Paul Leech

We were sad to hear earlier this year of the death of Paul Leech.

Paul was an early member of the Trust and had an infectious enthusiasm and belief in the Waterway from the start. This made him an ideal founding member of our Talks Team, in those years when the Waterway was just a gleam in our eyes and we had to work hard to convince people of its worth.

Paul invariably cheered me up when the going was tough. When he went on to lead the Wendover Arm Trust in some difficult times, I watched with admiration as he brought the same dedication, enthusiasm and 'can do' attitude to volunteering there.

John and Sally Gunning, our Talks Team leaders, commented: 'Paul was a canal enthusiast and narrowboat owner for many years and a member of the B&MK Talks Team for over ten years. His knowledge and enthusiasm for the waterways came through in the quality of the talks he gave to many and varied groups. He was always happy to undertake visits to far-flung venues, often travelling from his home in Southend. He was a member of the Boaters' Christian fellowship, gave regular talks at the London Canal Museum and was an ardent supporter of both the IWA and the B&MK Waterway Trust. He will be greatly missed'.

Jane Wolfson
Volunteer Chair, BMKWEL

Events Calendar 2014



Saturday 19 – Sunday 20 July	Bedford River Festival One of the biggest free family festivals in the UK, on the picturesque Victorian Embankment, Promenade and the River Great Ouse, Russell Park, the Festival is a unique combination of carnival, the musical and, of course, the nautical!
Tuesday 22 July	Projects Group Canal & River Trust Offices, Milton Keynes, 7pm
Sunday 14 September	Heritage Open Day Join us at St Lawrence's Church and Old Rectory Gardens in Broughton, 10am–5pm, for talks followed by a BBQ in the grounds of the Old Rectory (NB: small charge for refreshments)
November (date TBC)	5th Annual Partnership Conference

What is the Enterprise Company Here to Do?

The *John Bunyan* Boat is operated by a separate trading arm of the Trust, known as Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Enterprises Ltd (BMKWEL or 'The Enterprise' for short). The Trust Board, as our parent body, approves our Business Plan each year, and this becomes the guide for what we do – and don't do! Below are the opening sections of the Plan, concerning our vision, aims and objectives, and in future editions we'll report to the Trust about our progress against these.

Our vision

The Enterprise offers safe, enjoyable and satisfying cruises for passengers and volunteers, offering a unique view of Bedford, Kempston and the surrounding countryside, and allowing us to promote the benefits of the planned B&MK Waterway to all local people and visitors. A short version for marketing purposes is: *great river cruises for all in support of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway*.

Aims and objectives for 2014–2017

Our aims are to raise public awareness of and engagement in the Trust and the Waterway project and to raise funds to support the work of the Trust. To achieve these aims we have a set of ten objectives as follows.

- 1. Safety first:** to put 'safety first' at the heart of our cruise operations at all times, to ensure the wellbeing of all involved and so maintain the reputation of the Enterprise and the Trust.
- 2. Customer satisfaction:** to give passengers a unique and very satisfying cruising experience which will encourage them to return and/or 'spread the word'.
- 3. Inclusiveness:** to reach out to individuals, groups and businesses, with a focus radiating

out from the Waterway route, and offer all sectors of society an enjoyable and affordable cruise experience.

4. Informing and engaging the public: to promote the Enterprise and inform customers and passengers about the B&MK Waterway project and the work of the Trust, to encourage their involvement as volunteers, members and supporters.

5. Engaging volunteers: to recruit and retain a diverse volunteer workforce who are valued, trained, informed, involved and recognised for their efforts, thereby ensuring they enjoy the experience of volunteering with BMKWEL, provide a happy service to passengers and sustain the business in the long term.

6. Boat condition: to maintain the boat in a first-class condition and to improve its facilities when finances allow. This will enable us to achieve a safe and comfortable environment for passengers and volunteers that meet the needs of our target markets.

7. Stakeholders and partners: to maintain and develop positive relationships with all stakeholders in our operations, including partners and sponsors who can help us to achieve our business goals.

8. Business sustainability: to ensure we fulfil all our legal responsibilities and obligations and proactively and effectively manage the risks we face across the entirety of our business operations.

9. Financial support for the Trust: as a result of achieving the above goals, to generate sufficient trading profit to repay the four-year commercial loan and ten-year member loans on or ahead of schedule, and provide a growing stream of financial support for the Trust's activities from 2015–2016.

10. Enhancing the Trust's assets: once loans have been repaid and the Boat is contributing to the running of the Trust, to help the Trust fund enhancements to meet market needs, eventual replacement of the *John Bunyan* Boat and the development of other Enterprise ventures.



Bedford River Festival “John Bunyan Cruises”



See the River Festival from the river.

Thirty minute cruises along the Embankment from the Victorian Suspension Bridge on

SUNDAY July 20th leaving at:

approx. 5.00pm - 6.00pm - 7.00pm -

Tickets £5 a person or £15 for a family ticket (2 adults & 2 children)

Enjoy an hour & a half Sunset Cruise with complimentary Champagne and Canapés **SUNDAY @ 8.00PM** Tickets £20 a person.



Make sure you get your cruise by booking in advance.

Tickets from bmkboat@gmail.com or 0800 3282 803 or

www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk

**Or pop into: Bedford Tourist Information Centre, Old Town Hall,
St. Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SJ**

Volunteers needed!

Members wishing to help on the Trust stand should contact laura.jones@canalrivertrust.org.uk; volunteers willing to help out on the Boat or give out Boat leaflets can contact christine.tilneybmk@gmail.com

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