

DYNAMIC NEW STRATEGY FOR THE BEDFORD-MILTON KEYNES

WATERWAY PARK

The consortium spearheading the ambitious 200-year old plans for a new waterway park linking Bedford town centre and Campbell Park in Milton Keynes has launched a dynamic new strategy for the project in order to promote it as part of the key infrastructure required to promote growth in the Oxford/Milton Keynes/Cambridge growth corridor.

Building the proposed Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park will transform the region, bringing not only economic, environmental and social benefits, but also improved flood prevention and waterway management. Now is the time for top level commitment to create the project, say its supporters.

Provision of the "missing link" in the nation's waterways network will provide a vital route linking the River Severn to the Wash. The 24km waterway park between the Grand Union Canal at Milton Keynes and the River Great Ouse at Bedford will boost tourism and economic growth as well as facilitating the movement of water to help manage flood risk and at times transfer water to areas where it is most needed.

In seeking to promote the benefits of the project local charity, the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park Trust, is supported by the wider B&MK Waterway Consortium, which includes the local authorities of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes; SEMLEP (South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership); Canal and Rivers Trust (C&RT); Environment Agency, the Forest of Marston Vale and Milton Keynes Parks Trust.

Jointly they have commissioned a new brochure which summarises the new strategy for the Waterway Park. It highlights the route between Bedford and Milton Keynes and emphasises the positive impact the project would have on the area. At the same time the Trust has approved a 3 year Business Plan which sets out the tasks it is aiming to undertake to help make the Waterway Park a reality. The brochure and the business plan will be launched at the B&MK Waterway Partnership Conference in Milton Keynes on 26th May and will be posted on the Trust's website b-mkwaterway.co.uk

Jane Hamilton, chair of the Trust, commented: "We have set ourselves some big challenges in order to strengthen our case to partners at local, regional and national level that ours is a project which can have a positive and transformational impact on the region. With the recent increased emphasis given by Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, to infrastructure and economic growth across the west-to-east Oxford/Milton Keynes/Cambridge corridor we believe that now is the time to demonstrate that the project is a must. The new brochure will help take that message to a much wider audience

"I urge everyone interested in what we are doing to look at our business plan and note the targets we have set ourselves. We need support in funding and if people think there are tasks where they can help, then they should get in touch. We need you!"

Hilary Chipping (Deputy Chief Executive at SEMLEP), said: "The Chancellor has asked Lord Adonis and the National Infrastructure Commission to develop a plan for unlocking growth,

housing and jobs in the Oxford/MK/Cambridge corridor. The Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park Consortium believes this project can make a significant contribution to growth in the area”

Nick Webb, Chief Executive of The Forest of Marston Vale Trust said: “We’re proud to be an active member of the Consortium and to be playing our part in supporting this ambitious project. The Waterway Park will be a major asset for the area, helping to deliver the vision of environmentally-led regeneration, which is at the heart of transforming the area through creating the Forest of Marston Vale. The Waterway Park will provide a ‘spine’ of greenspace, paths and cycle-ways, as well as a new waterway, all running through the heart of the growing Forest of Marston Vale – together they’ll create a thriving, attractive place to live, work and play.”

Notes to Editors

The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust was established in 1995 to promote and assist in the provision and maintenance of a new 16 mile long Waterway Park connecting the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes to the River Great Ouse in Bedford.

<http://www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk/>

The Trust works with partners through the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park Consortium, which was formed in 2010 and is made up of the following members:

- The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust
- Bedford Borough Council
- Canal & River Trust
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Environment Agency
- Forest of Marston Vale Trust
- Milton Keynes Council
- Milton Keynes Parks Trust
- The South East Midlands Enterprise Partnership

<http://www.bmkwconsortium.org.uk/>

On 16 March 2016, the Chancellor asked the National Infrastructure Commission to make recommendations to government to maximize the potential of the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor. The commission has launched a 12 week call for evidence and encourages all interested parties to submit evidence, ideas and solutions.

[Open consultation: Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford: 'growth corridor' call for evidence](#)

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