

Press Release

Embargo: Immediate



PATRON
Sir Samuel Whitbread KCVO

www.B-MKWaterway.co.uk

Waterway Park blocked by new road scheme

The long-term future of a proposed 26km Waterway Park is under serious threat from the new A421 road scheme says the Bedford and Milton Waterway Trust who have been promoting the project since 1995.

The upgrade of the A421 from Milton Keynes to the M1 recently announced by Minister Chris Grayling crosses the route of the proposed Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park but leaves no possibility for a future route underneath the road for the Waterway and the pedestrian and cycle routes that will run alongside it.

Jane Hamilton, Chair of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust said

“This is an enormous blow for us. We have made a huge amount of progress in promoting the waterway park in recent years. Its route is firmly protected in local plans to prevent development blocking it. A number of new developments along the route are making positive provision for the Waterway and including it in their schemes. A recent study by Lord Adonis into the Oxford/Milton Keynes/Cambridge corridor recognised it as an important green infrastructure project. We believe it will be transformational and create a fantastic sense of place for new homes proposed in this area. It will bring significant environmental benefits, a much-needed boost to local tourism and direct pedestrian and cycle link from Bedford to Milton Keynes through the Marston Vale.

For over 2 years we have made a very strong case for a culvert under the A421 to be included in the new road scheme. We believe the decision to go ahead with the upgrade but without the culvert is extremely short-sighted and will close off a fantastic opportunity to make a difference to this region through creating the first new waterway for over 100 years.

The road upgrade as designed will make now it impossible to link the Grand Union Canal to the River Great Ouse in Bedford.”

New sections of the waterway are being built into Campbell Park Marina and Bedford Commercial Park near Wootton. A culvert was included under the A421 Bedford Southern Bypass when it was built and the Waterway Park is central to a scheme for 5,000 new homes in Central Bedfordshire. Proposals from O&H Properties Ltd will secure 6km of the waterway between Brogborough and Stewartby Lakes.

“With a number of sections of the Waterway going ahead it seems madness to block off the possibility of linking up the whole route between Milton Keynes and Bedford for the foreseeable future. With £9bn going towards new road and rail schemes in the



Oxford to Cambridge corridor surely must be possible to ensure the opportunity to create a wonderful new asset is not closed ” said Jane Hamilton.

ENDS -

Notes to editor

The B&MK Waterway Trust was established in 1995 to promote the development of a broad waterway park which will link the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes to the river Great Ouse in Bedford through a series of waterway parks. More detail can be found at:

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

2009 saw the first section of the waterway actually dug when a wide tunnel designed for use by the Waterway, a footpath and cycleway, was constructed leading under the newly dualled A421. It joined the Marston Vale Millennium Country Park with Berry Wood, Wootton.

For further details contact:

Name: Jane Hamilton, Chair, Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Trust

Email: jane.hamilton@b-mkwaterway.org.uk

Phone: 07891 827 948

Website: www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk