

Press Release

Embargo: Immediate Release

Waterway Trust welcomes Government commitment to create healthier, greener places in the Oxford to Cambridge Arc



PATRON
Sir Samuel Whitbread KCVO

www.B-MKWaterway.co.uk

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The Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust strongly support the government's new commitment to ensure that investment in the environment underpins the development of new settlements across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

In its response to the National Infrastructure Commission report on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, "Partnering in Prosperity", the government recognises that its long term proposals for the area offer a unique opportunity to invest in new green spaces and to ensure that sustainability is a high priority.

The Trust has, over many years, put forward the case for the creation of a new waterway park between Bedford and Milton Keynes, arguing that it will contribute to the transformational change which the government wants to see and support new homes and businesses at the very heart of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

Jane Hamilton, Chair of the Trust said

"We are extremely pleased to see the Government recognises that funding infrastructure across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc it is not just about road and rail schemes. If they are to be successful, new settlements need green spaces and water to create places which people can identify with and enjoy living. The Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park can do exactly what the government wants to see, deliver a transformation to this area which embodies the ambitions of its 25 Year Plan for the Environment, creating new habitats, opportunities for healthy lifestyles and establishing new approaches to water management and movement.

We are currently working with the Environment Agency to look at how the Waterway might help reduce flood risk as new development gets underway. We have already published a report about the economic benefits the Waterway can bring to the area but it can deliver so much more, especially for the environment. I would encourage all those involved in drawing up plans for this part of the Arc to look very seriously at our project and ensure that it is included."

In responding to the NIC report the government is setting out its approach to creating an economic "powerhouse" in which growth and housing delivery can be speeded up. The proposed Waterway Park sits at the heart of the Arc, between Bedford and Milton Keynes, and provides a unique opportunity for thinking big and planning across boundaries.



The NIC report recognised the Waterway Park as a unique opportunity

“The scale of growth and the opportunities created through greater arc-wide collaboration on planning means that there is unique opportunity to take a large-scale strategic view of natural capital and biodiversity net gain opportunities. Projects such as the established Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park could offer such an opportunity to create a green infrastructure asset which contributes to wider placemaking objectives.”

The Trust already works with partner organisations across three Local Authority boundaries. The route of the Waterway Park is protected in 3 local plans and work has started on sections of it in Milton Keynes and near Bedford. It also forms a key element of proposals for 5,000 new homes in Marston Valley as part of a planning application submitted to Central Bedfordshire by O&H Properties.

The Trust will be working to ensure that the Waterway is included in any new strategic plans for the area between Bedford and Milton Keynes and is extremely keen to hear from supporters and communities who can help ensure this exciting initiative becomes a reality.

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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/>

The Government’s response to the National Infrastructure report was published on 29th October 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cambridge-milton-keynes-oxford-arc-study-government-response>

The National Infrastructure Commission report was published on 16th November 2017

<https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperty-Report.pdf>

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