

BEDFORD ROWING LAKE

July 2007 Newsletter

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BEDFORD ROWING LAKE CIC
A COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

In the beginning

The beginnings of the rowing lake project go back to a meeting fourteen years ago hosted by Sport England and bringing together local and national rowing bodies, plus Borough and County Councils to consider the increase in commercial and leisure activity on rivers and canals and crucially to relocate rowing onto the safer, improved facility of still water rowing lakes.

Growing support

From this meeting the Bedford River Valley Park Group (BRVPG) was formed to identify a site for the development.

In 1994, after much research, the Willington quarry, then worked by Redlands, was identified as the optimum site for the lake, nominated by the County Council.

The Poynter Charitable Trust, a rowing charity set up for the benefit of rowing, agreed to pilot the project with Andrew Rowe a Trustee of the Charity and the elected Chairman of the BRVPG.

Land purchase

A further step in the right direction comes this month with the purchase of the freehold of 14 acres of a land and water area in the centre of the lake site.

The purchase by interests backing the project now means that the entire lake site is owned by landowners supportive of the scheme including both the Borough and County Councils.

Delivery of this flagship project now comes down to ensuring that after fourteen years of work and hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of professional time (both paid and voluntary), there is sufficient will to overcome remaining obstacles and get to the finish line.

The lake

The lake is designed to be an athlete friendly, 'natural' facility rather than the more clinical ruler straight designs seen at Dorney or Nottingham. It is modelled on Lake Banyoles in Spain, a highly successful visitor attraction.

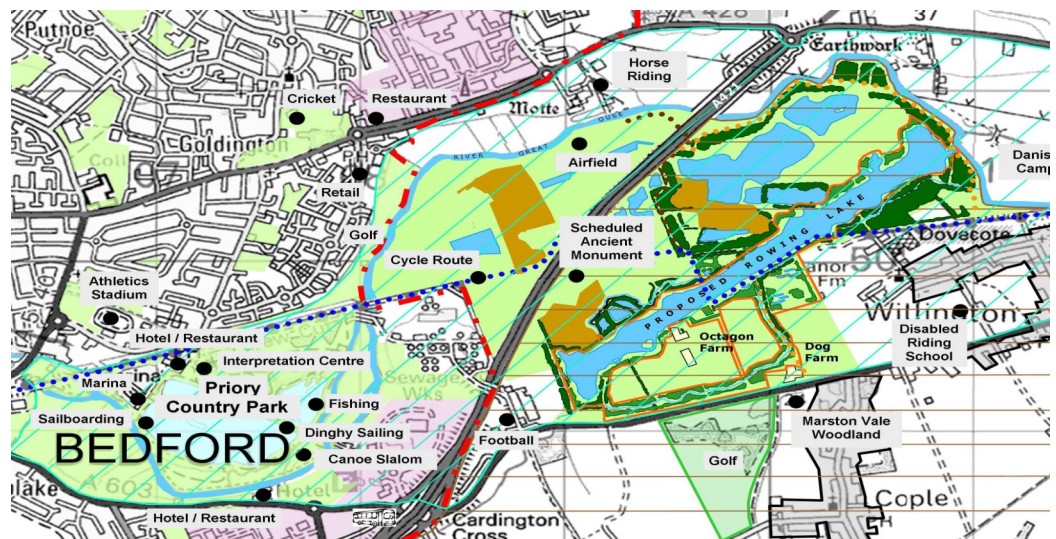
First and foremost it is a training lake providing for growth in rowing in and around the Bedford area and attractive to athletes from further afield.

It will be a national and international visitor attraction underpinning the viability and sustainability of the enabling development proposals that are required.

This is an asset that will enable Bedford to assert itself as the 'Centre Park' of the whole country and will fit with the other visitor attractions already in place such as Bodyflight, Bedford Autodrome, Box End Lakes, the Athletics track and so on.

As part of a **2000 acre country park** extending into Bedford, it will be a sport, fitness, leisure and well being development giving Bedford a lasting legacy.

The lake will be capable of storing half a million tonnes of floodwater, helping to protect Willington, Great Barford and Cople from flooding.



DELIVERY

Enabling development, land, contamination, flood protection.



The Bedford Rowing Lake Community Interest Company was formed to manage the lake in operation and the government local delivery vehicle, Renaissance Bedford, agreed to lead the project.

Renaissance appointed Bidwells Chartered Surveyors as project managers with the task of assessing the costs of the project and the potential of enabling development to fund those costs and provide for the

first 1300 metres of the lake.

There are also issues of **contaminated land** covering the east end of the proposed lake site. The intention is to clear that contamination, providing for the remaining 1000 metres of the lake, funded by further sporting village development.

During 2006/2007 the Forest of Marston Vale Trust, a key partner in the project, acquired **300 acres** of the park and proposed lake site for the Forest of Marston Vale using Government Growth area Funding.

The ivita Initiative



The ivita initiative has been created by Bedford Borough Council to promote the sport, fitness, health and well being sector of the local economy.

It's board members are from commerce, research, academia and sport and enterprise funding bodies.

Headed up by Alison Slatcher, ivita quickly recognized the significance of the rowing lake project to the future of the sport, fitness, health and well being sector for Bedford.

ivita, along with Business Link East, therefore funded and hosted a Keynote Seminar entitled 'Business Opportunities arising from the Country Park and Rowing Lake Development.'



Held at the Marston Forest Centre on 28th June speakers at the event were **Chris Watts**, Executive Director of Renaissance Bedford, **Tony Talbot**, Director of The Forest of Marston Vale, **Ian Peck** from Bidwells and **Simon White** of Bedfordshire County Council and Star Rowing Club. The Seminar was chaired by **Ian Rowe** of PR Matters and was preceded by an introduction from **Alison Slatcher** on the role of ivita.



Chris Watts

'Making Waves.'

Chris explained that Renaissance was the government's local delivery vehicle for Bedford with an aim to bring partnerships, project management, and fund sourcing.

With approximately **20,000 new houses** and **20,000 new jobs** planned Bedford must build on heritage, tourism, sporting, leisure and cultural bases with greening in the growth area. **Another 10,000 houses or more from 2021 to 2031** mean this forward thinking is essential.

Renaissance had identified the rowing lake and park as a key component of the River Valley Park and were excited about the potential of the project, and its part in the sustainable long term vision for the Growth Area.

Due to report to the Board of Renaissance shortly, following further presentations by Bidwells, the next step will be reviewed in August. In the meantime, a 'hearts and minds' campaign of public information will commence.

Tony Talbot

'The largest environmental regeneration project in Bedfordshire.'



The Forest Centre at Marston Moretaine

Tony Talbot presented on the background to the Forest Centre building being at the heart of a £6M Millennium Country Park, which in turn has engaged 80 businesses and organisations and owns **500 hectares across Bedford and Mid Beds**, on which the **one millionth tree** will be planted next year.

The Millennium Forest is delivering public access and greenspace on regenerated and reclaimed land which creates a basis for investment, jobs and opportunities for recreation and activity.

Funding comes from business income, grants, developers, and partnerships that include internationally recognized brands such as Timberland.

The Willington project falls within the designated area and hence the acquisition of the Grange Estate where enabling development can provide a 3 square mile park and transform the eastern approach to Bedford over the next 25 years.



A view of what the lake could look like

The Forest of Marston Vale also carried out a postal and newspaper poll to over 40,000 Bedford area households which produced an overwhelming (93%) response in support of rowing and other watersports, followed by space to walk and roam, and as a haven for wildlife.

It's a project Bedfordians want and show support for at many different levels from sport to environment.

Centre of gravity and critical mass

Ian Peck

Bidwells Chartered Surveyors were instructed to scrutinise cost budgets, research planning potential for enabling development on 200 acres at Octagon Farm out of the flood plain, with access via the abattoir, sewage farm and football grounds adjacent to the A421 bypass.

They would advise on development land values, test the enthusiasm of developers, seek the views of the landowners, and consult with Planners.



The speakers - (L - R) Chris Watts, Simon White, Alison Slatcher, Ian Peck, Tony Talbot. Foreground: The Sir Steve Redgrave bust

Comparative analysis with Dorney, Caversham, Nottingham and Cambridge (proposed) was subjective because of different start points, minerals, and objectives.

Major cost issues were contaminated ground, diversion of services, excavation costs, and fees and contingencies.

The first phase of 1300 metres was relatively straightforward and Lafarge would commence mineral extraction later in the year.

The planners were supportive in principle and as a departure from the existing consent we must go through the Local Development Framework process and must put forward a credible case by the end of 2007.

Phase 1 could cost £10M over 5 years with subsequent phases over 5-25 years.

The sports village could include hotel, food, research and development, education, medical, renewable energy, holiday homes, relocated sports clubs, Local Authority Offices, university campus, extra care housing etc.

Fees over the next two years could exceed £200,000.

Simon White

**Head of Business Support,
Community Services, Bedfordshire
County Council**

The Banyoles Experience. Banyoles was unknown before the 1992 Olympics, for which it was created as a rowing and canoeing lake. It is now a small town of 15,000 inhabitants 90 minutes from Barcelona.



Banyoles—a model for Bedford Rowing Lake and Park

The lake is used for swimming, fishing, rowing and canoeing. The legacy from 1992 is hotels, hostels, walking trails and a nature reserve comprising 1031 hectares of recreational activity and sports training camps. It is now a European wide magnet for sports tourism 70% based on rowing.

Training camps run from 4 days to one month and a typical spend is £20,000 per squad of 40 and the local economy has been transformed by this sports tourism, 70% of which comes from the UK.

The rowing lake has the potential to drive forward a similar environmental asset for Bedford.

We could do it too!

Ian Rowe

Opened by unveiling a bronze of Sir Steve Redgrave plus an Olympic Medal. He made a comparison between Steve's career and the rowing lake project where major obstacles had been and would have to be overcome in order to achieve the end result.

Over 16 years Redgrave had risen from obscurity to be recognized as Britain's greatest Olympian. His five Gold medals in that time drew investment into the sport of rowing through sponsorship and facilities.

With the lake there was a clear, recognized need for a full 2300 metre lake to be constructed. This puts the facility on the map and creates the critical mass and centre of gravity to attract both investment and visitor numbers to realise its sustainability.

A lively question and answer session brought out the passion of local businesses, individuals, and resident representatives for the lake and park project to give Bedford a sustainable facility both for local users and visitors from around the country and abroad.

Other sporting representatives, some representing international sporting events, expressed the urgent need for safe off road facilities for sport and leisure.

Horse riding, jogging, walking, canoeing, triathlon, swimming, mountain biking, adventure races and of course rowing, Great Britain's most successful Olympic sport, all would contribute to sustainability and critical mass.

and finally.....

- park and ride access from Bedford bypass
- national cycleway access from Bedford town centre
- maintains integrity of Cople, Willington, Cardington and Great Barford and reduces flood risk
- mitigates pressure on A603 road
- part facilitated by removal of contamination near Willington from previously thought to be inert waste
- carbon neutral development
- enhanced house values
- sustainability
- **DESTINATION BEDFORD**

The crew

The Bedford River Valley Park Group, comprising landowners amongst others, had met regularly with Alistair Burt MP, as Chairman and Borough Councilor and Deputy Mayor Ian Clifton as Vice Chairman until Planning Permission was secured in July 2006 .

The consent was funded by the Poynter Charitable Trust through the Bedford Rowing Lake Community Interest Company.

This has as its Board former Olympic rower and Star Club Vice President Peter Mulkerrins, Transport Consultant Gavin Dods, a member of Bedford Rowing Club and Bedford Regatta Secretary, Chief Executive of the Harpur Trust, David Russell LLB, and Kate Watts FCA.



Chris Watts and Richard Arthur of Renaissance Bedford, Tim Foster, Andrew Rowe and Ian Clifton raise a glass of champagne after Planning Permission was granted in July 2006.

Andrew Rowe

This is a personal note, a chance to say thank you to everyone who has put in their time and effort to progress this project to where we are, including especially, the many organizations who gave grants to the Charity towards this project. A wider team is taking it forward from here to ensure the whole community is part of a successful outcome.

I would also like to mention John Smith who recently died. John was a former President of Bedford Rowing Club, a founder member of the Bedford River Valley Park Group who had always been a strong supporter of the project.

**61—63 St Peter's Street
Bedford
MK40 2PR**

Planning Permission

The first step in this process was getting the project adopted in the Council's Local Plan for the future of Bedfordshire followed by a Planning Consent in 1997 for Change of Use to leisure and recreation for the whole 600 acre site.

After a further 9 years of work a detailed Planning Application was submitted for a 2,300 metre rowing lake.

In July 2006 following submissions by Bidwells and with direct support at the Planning Meeting from Bedford's Olympic Gold Medal winner Tim Foster, detailed Planning Permission was granted for a 2300 metre lake, designed to be both athlete and environment friendly.

Landowners

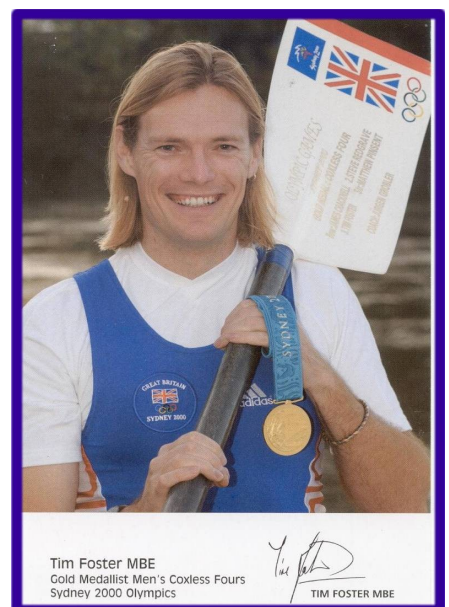
The Planning Permission followed discussions with the landowners, advice from County and Borough Planners, a protracted consultancy process with grant aid from numerous local bodies **totalling £150,000.**

Any future development would now have to have regard for the existing consent for the lake, which is being part implemented by on site mineral extraction, some starting this autumn.

Olympic support

Substantial moral and practical support has been given by Olympic Gold medal rower Tim Foster MBE, now head Coach of the Swiss Rowing Federation. (right)

In addition old Bedfordian John Beresford, the son of multiple Olympic rowing medal winner Jack Beresford, himself an Old Bedfordian and Great Britain's most successful Olympian until one Steve Redgrave came along, has lent his support to the scheme.



Tim Foster MBE
Gold Medallist Men's Coxless Fours
Sydney 2000 Olympics

TIM FOSTER MBE

What they said:

- **Alistair Burt MP;** 'With you all the way. Please keep me in touch.'
- **Tim Foster MBE,** Olympic Gold medal winner: 'Rowing in Bedford at the moment is like David Beckham training in a cow field - this lake is essential to greater participation and also retaining top coaches and athletes.'
- **John Beresford,** son of five times Olympic Medal winner Jack Beresford; 'Good luck with the project!'
- **'Martin and Liz Yelling, Active Futures:** 'The rowing lake and park would really help promote physical activity, fun and sport within the community. It would be a real asset to Bedford's growing and sporting assets.'

www.bedford-rowing-lake.com

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