



INITIAL BUSINESS PLAN: 2025-2030

Vision *(Sets the aspirational, inspirational direction for the organisation)*

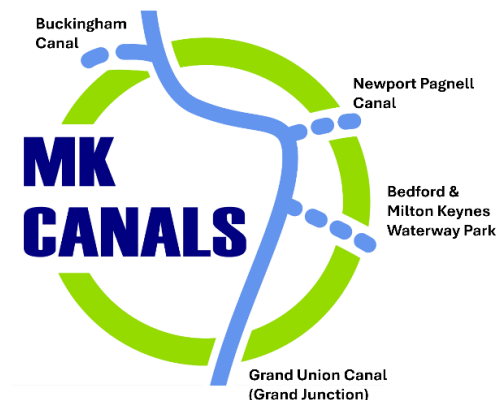
Milton Keynes' canals are better known, better used, and improved for the future

Mission *(Defines values, stakeholders, purpose)*

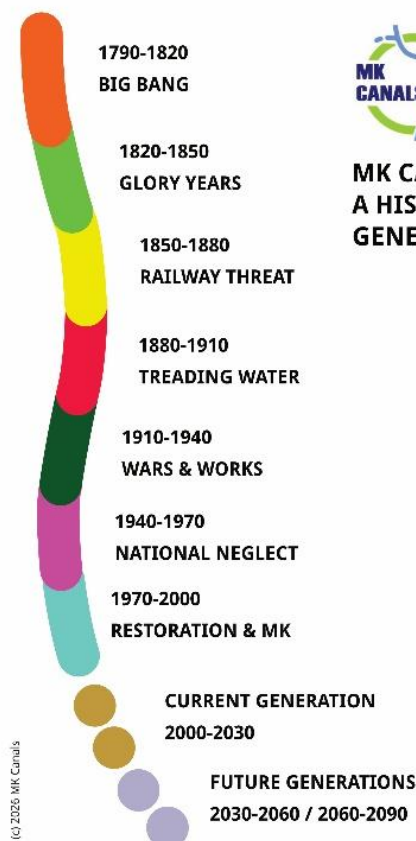
MK Canals is a place-based, partnership-driven organisation which delivers projects that benefit local communities and advocates for the contribution our canals can make to environmental sustainability.

Objectives 2025-2030 *(Outlines specific goals which will have measurable outcomes to be achieved)*

1. We will deliver the legacy of at least six projects which benefit local communities by providing better canalside access, information and facilities, with regular activities that increase use and enjoyment of our canals and canalsides.
2. We will undertake at least six communications and events projects which increase local awareness and knowledge of MK canals and encourage community and volunteer engagement.
3. Milton Keynes will become known for its canals, and we will be recognised at local, regional and national levels as a partner to be engaged in discussions on the use and future of our canals.



All four canals in our area have their roots in the 'glory years' of canal building (1800-1830)



**MK CANALS:
A HISTORY IN 7
GENERATIONS**

Our canals have had ups and downs over the generations. We want to build awareness of their past and create a brighter future for them.

Strategy 2025-2030 *(Provides our plan for achieving these goals)*

FOCUS ON PLACE IDENTITY We will focus on places where there is most canal heritage (Fenny Stratford, Great Linford, New Bradwell, Wolverton), and greatest opportunity to enhance environmental sustainability (Campbell Park, Eaton Leys, Galleons Wharf, GUC Water Transfer).

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP We will draw on MK Canalside Forum's legacy of project ideas and partner with councils, businesses, charities and voluntary organisations to create a 'projects pipeline', prioritised by fundability, social/environmental impact, and impact on our credibility and visibility.

GROW COMMUNITY AWARENESS We will increase local awareness of and knowledge about MK canals through communication, signage and interpretation projects which are grounded in thorough historical and environmental research, and events that draw people to the canals and canalsides.

BUILD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT We will engage with local canal users (resident passersby, walkers, cyclists, boaters, live-aboards) in both projects and consultations, with a particular focus on including younger people and achieving greater diversity in canal user engagement.

DELIVER THROUGH A NETWORK We will create, support and manage a Projects Pool of individuals and charity, voluntary and parish organisations, who are able to engage in project funding and delivery. In so doing we will build community proprietorship of our canals – they belong to all of us.

ADVOCATE FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR CANALS We will take part in consultations on water transfer and MK-wide planning, transport, access, and environmental issues, promoting the role that canals can play in tackling climate change and creating more environmentally sustainable places to live.

BUILD BOARD CAPABILITY To achieve the above we will increase our Board up to 12 Trustees with greater capability and diversity, enabling Founding Trustees to exit if they wish. We will ensure that project funding allow for full cost recovery, and secure funding for organisational development.

Fenny Stratford Landscape Project 2025, with the Town Council and Canal & River Trust:

Project Pool volunteers from five organisations cleared a derelict area of canalside, and replanted it for biodiversity, with a community herb bed. Site access was improved and heritage signage installed.



Tactics 2025-2030 *(Detail specific actions to be taken)*

Strategic area	Tactics
Focus on place identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate criteria for choice of places to focus on this period • Identify measurable indicators for our objectives in the chosen locations
Work in partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise agreements with key partner organisations in local government, charity, volunteering and business sectors • Maintain a dynamic projects pipeline across selected locations • With partners agree criteria for inclusion in projects pipeline, and for selection of projects to deliver
Grow community awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly update website and provide regular enews to partners, volunteers and supporters • Create a social media presence with interaction in Facebook and LinkedIn • Obtain funding to research and communicate heritage and environmental issues through varied outputs including place-based signage, schools materials, heritage cruises, website, etc • Take part in existing canalside festivals (eg Fenny, Cosgrove) and support the development of festivals/ events in other locations • Hold an Annual Conference for Partners and Public to highlight key aspects of canal heritage and environmental issues
Build community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey different canal user groups to ensure all interest groups are represented and included in communications • Call-out campaign to engage young changemakers (under 30s) in our work, as the next generation of community waterway custodians • Work with partners to achieve diversity in community engagement
Deliver through a network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a network database of individual volunteers and organisations as a Project Pool willing to take part in different delivery projects • Provide project management, training and support for the network • Create a pipeline of volunteering opportunities within MKC
Advocate for the future of our canals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain support to monitor planning documents/applications that affect our canals, and intervene early in development cycles to shape decisions • Advocate for open water transfer in national, regional and local plans
Build Board capability and funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put foundational governance in place • Develop and review annual plans • Undertake a Board Skills & Diversity Audit, develop Trustee Role Briefs, define roles for 7 more Trustees, to be appointed in 2026-27 and 2028-30 • Create a project-based fundraising plan encompassing national and local charities, stakeholder organisations, and high-net-worth individuals Ensure full cost recovery of 10-15%, and seek opportunities where initial investment can unlock much greater funding

Project partners and volunteers in 2025

Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust
 Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council
 Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Green Gym
 Buckingham Canal Society
 Canal & River Trust
 HC-GB (Wolverton Park property management)
 Inland Waterways Association (MK Branch)

Inland Waterways Association (Waterways Recovery Group)
 Milton Keynes City Council Bradwell Windmill Project
 Milton Keynes Community Boat Electra
 The Parks Trust
 Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council