

Planned canal's massive boatlift 'could resemble the London Eye'

BRITISH Waterways is considering the construction of an enormous boatlift on a canal that it plans to build between the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes and the Great Ouse river in Bedfordshire.

Last week British Waterways chose the exact route for the canal, which will be the first to be built in Britain for 100 years. The selected route presents major engineering challenges, including scaling the 150ft Brogborough Hill and crossing the M1 motorway.

British Waterways said it was seriously considering building a massive boatlift that would eliminate the need for a bank of 30 locks near Brogborough Hill. Encouraged by the success of the recently constructed Falkirk Wheel boatlift in Scotland, British Waterways is considering a design competition which would offer engineers a "blank canvas to come up with a

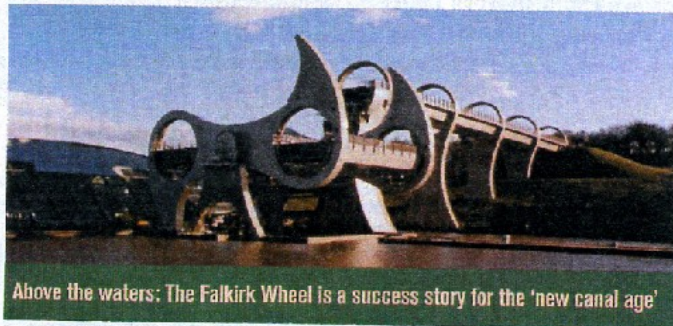
really innovative solution". It said the boatlift might, for example, resemble the London Eye, raising canal barges in a sweeping circular motion.

The route for the 32km canal runs from the Grand Union Canal at Campbell Park in Milton Keynes (close to Gulliver's Land), crosses the M1 between junctions 13 and 14, runs near to Brogborough Hill, through Marston Vale and connects with the River Great Ouse at Kempston.

Chris Mitchell, British Waterways' regional director, said: "The chosen route has

emerged as the clear favourite. It runs into both town centres and offers the greatest opportunities for bringing the full benefits of waterside living, working and recreation to this area of the South East where there are plans for population growth. The 'new canal age' is transforming communities across Britain."

The initial feasibility report into the project estimated that the cost of building the chosen route is £150 million, although British Waterways hopes to instigate savings to lower this bill. Building work could start in 2007.



Above the waters: The Falkirk Wheel is a success story for the 'new canal age'