

Milton Keynes' parks are one of the city's greatest assets...

## Help the Parks Trust influence the city's quality of life by becoming a trustee.

THE Parks Trust cares for 4,500 acres of parkland and green spaces, including Campbell Park, Willen Lake, Caldecotte Lake, Linford Wood and the Ouzel Valley. As well as creating and maintaining inspirational landscapes, the charity provides environmental education and organises more than 200 community events in the parks every year.

As an independent charity, funded through its property and investments, the Parks Trust is not only the biggest landowner but also one of the largest commercial landlords in the city. Its breadth of activity requires a broad range of experience and

expertise and the Trust is keen to hear from individuals with a successful track record in business leadership, marketing, property or land management.

Volunteering as a trustee is a hugely responsible role. Trustees work to preserve the long-term future of the parks and landscape in Milton Keynes as well as managing an £80 million investment portfolio.

Trustee Smo Das is managing director of Change Driver Ltd, which specialises in change management and business turnaround. After ten years in agribusiness, Smo worked as a management consultant and business turn-

around specialist for PricewaterhouseCoopers before setting up Change Driver Ltd in 2000. He has lived and worked in the city for 25 years.

"My business experience complements a variety of skills and experience brought to the board by other trustees," Smo says. "We give our time for free to ensure that the Parks Trust remains healthy and flexible enough to protect its existing parkland and take on more green space as the city expands.

"We believe our advice should ensure that the parks continue to make a vital contribution to the city's quality of life and prosperity."

- **The Trust is looking for volunteer trustees who care about Milton Keynes and want to play a part in enhancing and expanding the parks at a time when massive growth is planned for Milton Keynes. For more information about becoming a trustee, contact The Parks Trust on 01908 233600 or visit [www.theparkstrust.com](http://www.theparkstrust.com)**

**TheParksTrust**  
MILTON KEYNES



## Trustee required

Play a major part in enhancing Milton Keynes' quality of life by becoming a voluntary trustee of The Parks Trust.

The Parks Trust is a charity and a limited company, that cares for 4,500 acres of parks and green spaces in Milton Keynes. The Trust owns 20% of the land in the city and has investments of around £80m, so being a trustee carries very significant responsibilities.

We are looking for individuals who care passionately about Milton Keynes and have a track record in:

- Business leadership
- Marketing
- Property
- Land management

For further details visit our website, or call Diane Liness on 01908 255391

[www.theparkstrust.com](http://www.theparkstrust.com)

# Protecting a labyrinth of freedom

**H**APPY New Year. As I look back on the year just ended and forward to 2008, there's a lot to be happy about. There are encouraging signs that Urban Eden, in its struggle to save Milton Keynes from the worst of the outrages planned for it by English Partnerships, is beginning to enjoy some good fortune.

Firstly Milton Keynes, the 'City of Trees', recently received the Peter Youngman Award for its "outstanding contribution to landscape architecture during its 40-year existence".

The award, from the Landscape Institute, is named after Peter Youngman, the pioneering landscape architect who died aged 93 in 2005. In the 1960s, as consultant for the masterplan for Milton Keynes, he created our much-loved town forest to absorb pollution and create a framework for the housing and recreational areas.

Landscape Institute president Nigel Thorne praised those who have helped protect Youngman's efforts, in particular those of the former head landscape architect Neil Higson. Thorne said: "Under Neil Higson's driving force and creative genius, Youngman's modernist design has become today's dynamically sophisticated and modulated landscape.

"It is remarkable that one of the most often repeated criticisms in the early development stages was that there was too much planting, parkland and green space and that it was unsustainable - if only the landscape architect's influence could be criticised similarly today. Sadly there can be no comparison with today's less sympathetic approach to property development..."

How very true.

The Parks Trust is a charity set up in 1992 to protect Milton Keynes' more than 1,800 hectares of parks and green spaces instead of the local authority. Neil Higson said: "The landscape in Milton Keynes is a place for people to enjoy themselves and the whole labyrinth of freedom that is landscape."

Wow, 'labyrinth of freedom'.

● *FOLLOWING your article published in December's Business MK issue, I would like to point out an inaccuracy in Theo Chalmers' editorial.*

*Mr Chalmers refers to "John Walker - just resigned but not yet replaced (EP)." This is factually incorrect as John Walker is English Partnerships' chief executive and remains a member of Milton Keynes Partnership*

What a line that is and how well it sums up not just the landscape of Milton Keynes but also, in a sense, its very ethos.

It's clear that Urban Eden's publicity initiative has had another effect. This column notes that Milton Keynes has now, somewhat cynically, become a brand. According to a recent job advertisement placed by Milton Keynes Council, the town apparently needs to counter the efforts of Urban Eden with a Communications Officer - Growth, tasked with developing and delivering a communications programme in support of the biggest building project in the South East.

"You will bring a proven track record of developing communications strategies and delivering a communications message within a brand," the advertisement adds.

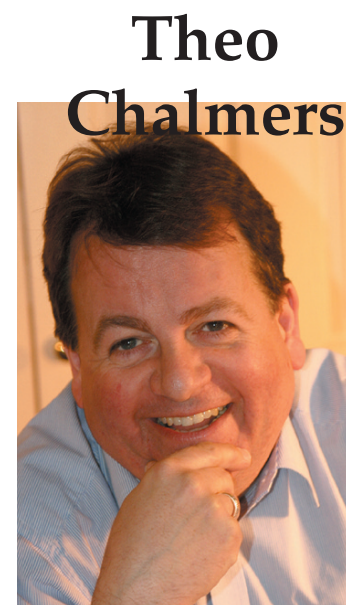
Apparently the expansion is now a 'brand' which has to be forcefully sold to us like some kind of mechanically-recovered meat product; a sort of Turkey Twizzler you can live in.

I don't hold out much hope for the poor fool they take on when presented with the task of persuading the intelligent citizens of Milton Keynes and those who might move here from elsewhere that a gridlocked Central Milton Keynes and expansion areas, a savage programme of tree removal and road closures; blocks of high density, unlettable flats; schools over car parks are going to give us a better world.

They won't need a communications officer: they'll need a hypnotist.

Talking of flats, has anyone else noticed how empty the new flats are? Could the combination of pressure from Urban Eden, the credit crunch, softening home prices and the very welcome adoption by English Partnerships of larger room sizes (beyond Parker Morris standards) mean the end of some of the more horrendous building projects in Milton Keynes?

Common sense tells us that all development must now be revised in terms of funding but also, for all new housing, its likely purchase when



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complete is a serious issue. I cannot believe that the roof tariff will now work.

Under this system, some ten per cent of the per-unit contribution will be effectively 'front-loaded' and paid by developers once they obtain reserved matters approval with a further 15pc paid once development starts. The remaining 75pc will be due on completion or occupation of each consented phase of development.

At the current rates of borrowing, that first 25pc will prove costly at the start. But what happens if the completion/occupation cannot take place? Will the city become a mud-bath of half-completed, bankrupt sites? If 10,000 housing units have been given outline planning this year and only 3,330 are affordable, that makes almost 7,000 'unaffordable' units. Who will be buying these? Not the buy-to-let market, which has been so badly burned, I'm sure.

If developers only pay up at the detailed planning stage, I presume there is a vast number of those 10,000 new homes still waiting for approval of reserved matters and therefore tariff contributions. By Milton Keynes Partnership chief operating officer Jane Hamilton's own admission in these pages last month, there have only been 2,373 housing starts.

Most of the money Milton Keynes Partnership keeps announcing is, so far as I can see, merely underwriting the tariff so I wonder to what extent this will continue.

It's suddenly beginning to go our way. Love Milton Keynes, Love Urban Eden. Cheerio.

*Committee. The John Walker to whom Mr Chalmers refers was the chair of CMK Board which was disbanded in December 2007. The two gentlemen are in no way related.*

**TINA SURTI**  
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Milton Keynes Partnership