

Refined entry process is boosting numbers for awards

THE SEARCH is now well under way for Milton Keynes' leading businesses, which have until November 30 to submit their entries for the prestigious MK Business Achievement Awards.

The awards return for the third consecutive year on March 10. They are organised by the Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership in collaboration with full service marketing agency Interdirect and event manage-

ment experts Evolution Live.

This year the process for entry has been split into two stages: Stage 1 simply requires businesses to answer ten simple questions, including basic details about their company and information about its key attributes and achievements.

The closing date for Stage 1 entries is November 30. Applications will then be reviewed and approved for Stage 2,



which may require further details to be submitted by January 20. The judging



process will then commence and a final shortlist of businesses announced.

Success

MKBLP chair Dr Philip Smith said: "There are 12 awards categories this year that are open to all businesses in the MK postcode area.

"For the first time we are also introducing the opportunity to nominate a

company other than your own for an award. This could be a supplier, customer or a company that you feel should be recognised for their accomplishments.

"We have seen a large increase in the number of entries compared to this time last year which, I am sure, is a result of both the streamlined process and of the growing success and rising profile of the awards."

To enter the awards, or nominate a company that you believe is worthy of recognition, visit www.mkbaa.co.uk.
To find out more follow @MK_BAA on Twitter, and join the discussion on LinkedIn.

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Station expansion is a gateway to a muddle

BLETCHLEY Station... Oh no, how boring. But wait - Bletchley Station might just be the most important underdeveloped site in Milton Keynes.

It already has many rail lines running through it and advanced plans exist to add two new platforms, bringing its total to eight - more than Milton Keynes Central station - as Bletchley provides the key central focus of the new and fully-funded East West Rail Link.

The revived route, when complete, will reinstate the old Varsity Line between Oxford and Cambridge and link Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge with Letchworth, Bedford, Milton Keynes, Bicester and Oxford, allowing connections to Swindon, the Thames Valley, South West England and South Wales, with a spur to Aylesbury and now possibly a direct link to Heathrow. Other links to Southampton and even York could also be available.

And it is already under way. On October 26, rail links opened between the brand new Oxford Parkway station and London Marylebone, running over the first phase of the line between Oxford and Bicester.

Preparation work on the Oxford-Bletchley section has begun and a new station is to be built at Winslow, causing mas-

sive rises in house prices.

There are still big issues for Network Rail to resolve, not least the dysfunctional level crossings at Woburn Sands and Bow Brickhill. When the high speed trains on the East West Rail line are in full six-an-hour flow, along with two-an-hour low speed services, regular freight traffic and services between points such as Bristol and York, serious traffic jams await.

But let's be positive and trust Network Rail to resolve these issues given that they exist within just a few miles of their new head offices.

Deserve

Bletchley will be so important because it will provide an easy-to-park 'Parkway-style' high-speed hub for local commuters to nearly all points West, East, South, even North, adding both breadth and complexity to the choices already available from Milton Keynes Central.

However, Milton Keynes Council is only putting in a measly £1.2 million to develop facilities at the station instead of the possibly £5-6 million required to totally transform Bletchley's future.

We are told Bletchley helped win the war. Does it not deserve a world class station? And do

commuters not deserve better options than those at the hard-to-park and congested Milton Keynes Central?

The existing plans for 'Bletchley for Bletchley Park', as it's currently snappily monikered, are a pig's breakfast. They require passengers to traverse stairs and bridges over six lines between the current unprepossessing entrance and the East West lines. However, a new concourse leading on to Saxon Street with ready access to the bus station, taxis and drop-off points and close to shopping in Queensway is easily possible.

Wheelchair passengers are even more discommoded by the current plans, having to power themselves over perhaps a quarter of a mile to avoid stairs and reach the buses.

A leading local town planner has already drawn up alternative plans which show that Bletchley Parkway (as it might more properly be called) could be a more successful hub than Milton Keynes Central.

Come on Milton Keynes Council, you are already throwing away opportunities to provide a new gateway to our city at the junction of the old Grand Union canal and the planned Bedford Waterway.

Here is another great opportunity. Please do not waste that too. Cheerio.



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This year's categories:

Innovation and Technology
Hospitality
Professional Practice
Leisure & Entertainment
Environmental
Private Business
Logistics and Distribution
Community Impact
Manufacturing
Design and Creativity
Independent Retailer
New Business

Business of the Year
Lifetime Achievement Award

Know a great a company that you think deserves recognition for their achievements?

You can nominate them for an award at

www.mkbaa.co.uk/nominate

in association with:

