

Councillor Peter McDonald Duxford Division & Ward:
District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.
County Councillor also for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow, Heathfield, Heydon, Chishills,
Whittlesford

Report for Parish Councils – April 2022.

South Cambs District Council

Supporting people from Ukraine seeking refuge

Both South Cambs District and Cambs County Council are helping to coordinate efforts locally to support people seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine. The SCDC website contains practical information on what you can do: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/support-for-ukraine/>

Cambs County Council's information includes a useful FAQ:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities-localism/support-for-the-people-of-ukraine>.

Zero Carbon Grants

South Cambridgeshire's community groups can now bid for a share of more than £120,000 from the District Council's popular Zero Carbon Communities Grant scheme.

The scheme, now in its fourth year, has so far provided £310,000 to 51 grassroots projects that work to tackle climate change in South Cambridgeshire. The deadline to apply for the latest round of grants is Wednesday 1 June 2022. This year, groups in South Cambridgeshire can apply for between £1,000 and to £15,000 from the District Council's total pot of £120,544. The process has been simplified to aid applicants, with applications invited under two categories.

The first category is for projects which reduce carbon emissions or lock up carbon in a measurable way such as low carbon, energy saving improvements to community buildings, or tree-planting initiatives. The second category is for community engagement projects which support and encourage lower carbon living. Read full eligibility criteria and ideas for projects.

The money for Zero Carbon Communities grants comes from business rates from renewable energy sites, like solar farms, in South Cambridgeshire that the Council retains and earmarks for use in green initiatives like this. Parish councils and non-profit groups or organisations that are based in the district can apply. Other groups, such as social enterprises and community interest companies can apply as part of a partnership led by a parish council or not-for-profit group. Groups can apply to the grant scheme online.

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/zerocarbongrant>

South Cambs Audit of 2018/19 Accounts

The audit of Accounts for 2018/19 is here:

<https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s126682/Full%20SOA%20V1.0.pdf>

This is the audit opinion:

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https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s126680/South%20Cambridgeshire%20DC_2018-19_ARR%2029%20Mar22%20final.pdf

Cambridgeshire County Report

Biodiversity Initiative

A scheme which will help increase the county's biodiversity and support the development of new homes, businesses and infrastructure was approved by Cambridgeshire County Council's Strategy and Resources Committee (29 March).

Under the Environment Act 2021, the biodiversity of an area resulting from new developments must exceed the pre-development biodiversity value by at least 10 per cent - known as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This should be provided onsite, but if that isn't possible it must be provided offsite, close to the development and within the local planning authority area. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Biodiversity Special Planning Document, adopted in February 2022, says that they expect to require developers to deliver 20 per cent BNG.

Under the new scheme, developers who are unable to meet BNG requirements on sites in the South Cambridgeshire area will be able to secure biodiversity units from the Lower Valley Farm BNG scheme in Fulbourn.

The 358-acre farm, which is part of the council's 33,000 acre rural estate, has been identified as the ideal site for the scheme as it is located within the Cambridge Nature Network and lies adjacent to the Roman Road Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It will also act as a stepping stone to other surrounding SSSIs, supporting habitat connectivity across the landscape from Trumpington Meadows through to Wilbraham Fen.

Cambridge-based Bidwells have helped establish the scheme and will oversee its implementation. The currently arable land will be converted to biodiverse habitats including botanically diverse grassland, native broadleaved woodland, scrub and species-rich hedgerows. The Lower Valley Farm BNG scheme will go beyond BNG requirements by providing public footpaths and opportunities for education. Developers will secure units through an Option Agreement which will commit the council to delivering the associated habitat creation and management for a 30-year period.

Highways Additional Spending

Highway Maintenance is at the early stage of transformation that given the breadth and scale of the maintenance service delivered is a big change. It could take time to produce results on the roads and outside people's front doors. Investment in two aspects of the Highways Maintenance Service would achieve faster sustainable change with immediate visible benefits to our road users, businesses and residents.

The two aspects are;

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1. Getting it right for our Customers today.

On the ground action where our residents want it.

- Removing the potholes – a programme of planned patching carried out this spring and summer to properly fix pothole hotspots in and around village and town centres. This would remove the patchwork quilt of multiple repeat visits having an immediate noticeable impact within our community centres. £400k
- Listening to our customers – Clean out our Report It tool and get back to our Report It customers. This would show we listen and feedback by providing a resource to monitor and respond to the enquiries ahead of implementation of a new up-to-date system (the current is around 15 years old). £50k
- Safe and dry – record, quantify, investigate flooding cause and implement an increased programme of highways flood hotspots to remove more of the risks of surface water on our roads. The programme would target those locations that also cause issues within the communities affecting businesses and properties. £400k
- Clear and Safe – improve the lines and road markings across the rural network. This would make driving our roads at night and in bad weather safer by providing the markings to support our road users. A targeted programme to deal with routes between towns and villages. £250k

Total investment £1,100,000.

The proposed levels of investment are scalable. The suggested investment would provide visible impactful improvement on the ground across the whole county. Scaling up would increase visibility of impact and down would reduce it.

Deliverability – We can engage with a range of supply chain partners to confidently deliver by Autumn.

Key is keeping it simple and focused. We have supply chain partners other than Milestone accessible via Local Council Roads Innovation Group framework of which we are a member.

Communications – To maximise the impact delivery would include communications through our normal channels to draw residents' attention to this extra investment.

2. Keeping it right for our customers tomorrow

Transforming at pace to achieve the sustainable change we need for the future

- Upskilling our Highway Safety Inspectors - a programme of training and education to ensure this area of service is achieving the most it can. Benefit to the public are safer roads and better value for money. Council benefit is less risk from third party claims. £30k.
- Local Highways Officer Review – Revamping the role to focus on community and customer needs ahead of the wider Highways Maintenance Restructure. £40k
- Highways workforce and succession – contribution to support the implementation and development of an accelerated apprenticeship/graduate/intern programme to bring forward a new cohort of staff into the Highways workforce during 2022 and 2023. £50k
- New Asset Management System – support to accelerate the commissioning and implementation of the system. Could reduce the implementation time from 18 months to 12 year by providing the one-off set up resources. £100k.

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- Intelligent data – implement the latest survey data collection technology and use it to make better decisions on where to do what and achieve better outcomes for the public and for value for money we invest into our highways assets. £60k.
- Baselining our Highways Service – a project to baseline the carbon in the ownership and management of our highways assets to raise Climate awareness and understanding across the service and provide the base from which to start our service journey to net zero. £50k
- Capacity to change at pace – one-off resource to support the transformation of the service. Capacity to get move the change tasks forward at speed. £60k.

Total Investment = £390,000

These are all one-off investments to accelerate the transformation of the highways maintenance service. They all bring forward key parts of the overall service system that will support better delivery into the future and help ensure the highways service is contributing to our climate change objectives.

Rail User Group AGM

The Meldreth Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group meeting will take place on April 20, 7:30-8:30PM, via Teams – please contact railusergroup@gmail.com for the joining link. The meeting will kick off with a brief AGM and then move to all the business that the Rail User Group is actively pursuing, first and foremost encouraging take up public transport to help boost ridership figures – which is needed in order to bring the full half-hourly service back into play.

Thakeham

New donation of £75k made to the Tory Party autumn 2021 taking total to £716k.

Peter McDonald

April 6th 2022