

NEW SHOW HOMES TO GET THE CONSTRUCTION WORLD BUZZING!

New demonstration houses which will be built at The Hive training centre in Cambridge are expected to get the construction world buzzing!. The Hive is a partnership between Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge Regional College, and Future Business working together to develop an education and enterprise park in Cambridge. It is envisaged that there will be up to four SmartLIFE homes.

These will demonstrate a range of sustainable construction and green technological solutions for businesses, students and the wider public. As a first step, a management company is now being sought to help develop and manage the SmartLIFE Homes.

The SmartLIFE Homes will be designed to:

- Showcase technologies, products and installation techniques to contractors, technicians and building professionals
- Demonstrate to the public ways to reduce their energy and water consumption during new build and via retrofit applications
- To support the growth of low carbon development
- Improve the education and training opportunities for students, apprentices and building workers

CAMBRIDGESHIRE DIRECT HELPS RAISE £168,000 FOR WHICH LOCAL OLYMPIAN WILL YOU BE CHEERING IN 2012?

Will it be Goldie Sayers, Daniel Keatings or Emma Pooley? Tuesday 15 March marks 500 days until the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and will be the first chance to buy tickets for this once in a lifetime event.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a number of potential Olympians which people can cheer on by attending their events by buying their tickets at www.london2012.com. Here are some of the events they could be competing in:

- * Current world road race cycling champion Emma Pooley could be in the Road Race on the 29 July or in the Time Trial on 1 August.
- * Gymnastics take place between 28 July and 7 August when Daniel Keatings and Lewis Smith will be performing in team and individual events
- * On the 7 August, Goldie Sayer will be attempting to qualify for the final which will be taking place on 9 August. Tickets range in prices from £20 to £2012 and there will be a six week period to buy tickets to ensure everyone from across the country has the chance to see the Games.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will go down in history as a one of those must attend moments in life. There is real, genuine excitement about London 2012 with the chance to see the world's greatest athletes coming to give their all for a gold medal. In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough we are lucky to have a number of sporting stars who could have a great impact at the Games so why not go along and cheer them on?. With 500 days to go, I think everyone is becoming much more aware that London 2012 is no longer a distant event - it is rapidly approaching. What is most encouraging is the way children and young people are getting involved in the celebrations and planning the events. It is great to see the enthusiasm and I am sure it is something which will grow and grow as the countdown ticks down. The 500 day countdown is being celebrated locally through a variety of events including:

- * Assemblies are being led by Young Ambassadors at both Parkside Community College and Chesterton Community College in Cambridge
- * There is a Bottisham Family Year 3 and 4 Football Tournament at Burwell Primary School.
- * The Young Ambassadors at Granta School, Linton have planned an Olympic Sports Taster Day which will involve the whole school taking part in activities such as hockey, basketball, golf, football, relay races and throwing.

* Witchford Village College have five different sports/activities taking place, table tennis, basketball, football, dance mats and trampolining. They will also perform the Olympic inspired dance.

*At Abbey College, students will be having a 'keepy uppy' contest at lunchtime to see if they can keep a ball up for 500 seconds.

3000 PEOPLE SIGN UP FOR CAMBRIDGE'S BIGGEST EVER CYCLE CHALLENGE

Around 120 local businesses and over 3000 people have signed up to take part in Cambridge's biggest ever cycling competition. From Monday 14 March to Sunday 3 April 2011, organisations will go head-to-head to see who can get the most staff cycling for just 10 minutes or more. After defeating Oxford in 2010, Cambridge will this year battle it out against York to see which city can attract the most new cyclists to take part. Cambridge University, Anglia Ruskin University, John Lewis, Napp Pharmaceuticals, Play.com, Redgate, Cambridgeshire County and Cambridge City Councils are just a small selection of the organisations taking part.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said "It's been great to see so many Cambridge businesses and organisations signing up and supporting the Challenge this year. Cycling is a great way to commute to work and helps to reduce congestion particularly during the busy rush hour. Initiatives like the Cycle Challenge are a great way of encouraging more cyclists to choose to cycle to work and leave their cars at home."

The Cambridge Cycle Challenge is being led by Cycle Cambridge, a partnership of local councils working together to get more people cycling in Cambridge and the surrounding areas. The project is being implemented by CTC Challenge for Change.

For more information or to register, visit www.cambridgecyclechallenge.org.uk

PUPILS COURT IN THE ROAD SAFETY ACT

Pupils from across Cambridgeshire will get the opportunity to sit as jurors in their very own courtroom drama designed to make them think about road safety and accident prevention. Cambridgeshire County Council Road Safety Education Team are backing a three week tour of the interactive play 'Courtroom' which will be performed at schools in the County.

The high energy, interactive play targets key stage 2 pupils (7-11 years) and takes the entire audience into a hugely entertaining, larger than life courtroom. Using the audience as jury members, the judge and lawyers go over events leading up to a road traffic accident and try to establish how this kind of accident can be prevented in the future. Courtroom allows the audience to think about road safety and reach their own verdict on what causes accidents and how they can be prevented. The play includes vital Road Safety messages relating to pedestrian safety and the use of seatbelts.

Local County Councillor, John Reynolds said: "Courtroom includes songs and gives the pupils the chance to interact and the opportunity to think about road accidents, their causes and consequences. Children learn more effectively about road safety through these type of events where they can come to conclusions themselves. We hope the play has a positive effect on pupils use of the road environment, whether as pedestrians, cyclists or as car passengers."

COMIC RELIEF

A whopping £168,681 was taken over the phones for Comic Relief by volunteers at Cambridgeshire Direct, a council contact centre. Volunteers from Cambridgeshire County Council and the centre as well as councillors themselves were taking calls through the evening and night as well as supporting the call handlers.

In 2010 the centre, which in the day takes calls for Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, took part in the Sports Relief charity day for the first time. Usually Cambridgeshire Direct deals with a range of services for the County's residents and answers around 440,000 calls a year.

Cambridgeshire County Council Chairman Linda Oliver was at the centre to take calls and help out and support the volunteers. She said: "I am really pleased that here in Cambridgeshire we were able to do our bit and help raise £168,681.

Our team of exceptional volunteers from the Council donated their spare time to staff the phones and take donations for this wonderful charity. Councillors from across the parties were also doing their bit on the night. This is another great way of our councils using their facilities to support the needs of our communities as well as the vulnerable people Comic Relief helps here in the UK and in Africa."

DIGITAL UK

Television viewers are being reminded that they may need to re-tune their televisions and other equipment to avoid a break in service when the analogue signal switches to digital from March 30. The DigitalUK website www.digitaluk.co.uk has all the information people will need or they can contact Digital UK for advice by telephone on 08456 50 50 50. This help and advice will continue to be available after the signal begins to switch over - starting with BBC 2 at the end of the month, followed by the remaining channels by 13 April.

For most people it will be a matter of re-tuning, and instructions on how to re-tune are available from Digital UK (including online), but for those with five or fewer channels, it may require additional equipment. In such a case, Digital UK can advise on what the options are, or, if viewers are over 75, have lived in a care home for 6 months or more, get (or could get) disability benefits, or are registered blind or partially blind, then the Switchover Help Scheme is there to assist them. The Help Scheme can be contacted on 0800 40 85 900 or visit the website at www.helpscheme.co.uk.

Anyone who finds they are not able to receive the new signal on their existing television, are urged to seek advice from Digital UK, rather than take the advice of a trader who calls at their door. If someone needs new equipment, Digital UK can also provide a list of registered installers. For more information, visit the Digital UK Roadshow outside Boots in Sidney Street, Cambridge on March 30-31 and again on April 13-14 from 10.00-4.00 pm. There will also be advice points in March and Huntingdon Libraries on the same dates.

BUSINESS ON TRACK FOR SUCCESS THANKS TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Cambridgeshire County Council has boosted rural enterprise after helping to open up the countryside in South Cambridgeshire. The council's Rights of Way and Access Team worked with the local community to build vergeside tracks between Newton and Harston and Stapleford and the Magog Country Park and now a livery business has opened up alongside the Newton-Harston track. The Shelford and District Bridleways Group was one of the main proponents of the new tracks and it has managed to expand the network after negotiating with the Diocese of Ely to add an extra length of path to the local network provided by the County Council. Local County

Councillor John Reynolds said: "The County Council is committed to opening up the countryside and encouraging rural business, so I am very pleased that by working with the local community in South Cambridgeshire we have been able to help achieve both ambitions."

YOUNG CAMBRIDGE PEOPLE BECOME COMMONWEALTH LEADERS FOR THE DAY

Young people from across Cambridgeshire will have the chance to be prime ministers and presidents to discuss global issues at the Cambridge Commonwealth Youth Summit next week. Organised by the Royal Commonwealth Society in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council and St John's College, the Summit on March 17 and 18 will bring together up to 120 young people aged 14 to 18 from a wide range of schools and youth groups.

Participants will play the roles of Commonwealth prime ministers, presidents, foreign ministers and journalists, to debate global issues such as health, education and poverty. This will be a unique opportunity for Cambridge's young people to voice their opinions. Selected representatives from the Cambridge event will then be invited to attend a National Commonwealth Youth Summit in London in April. There, they will meet with other young people from across the country and put their ideas to Commonwealth leaders.

This education initiative aims to promote understanding of the modern Commonwealth, international affairs and global interdependence, and to develop young people's leadership, public speaking and political literacy skills.

Dr Danny Sriskandarajah, Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society said: "Over half of the Commonwealth's 2 billion people are under the age of 25. They will shape our future and their opinions and ideas matter enormously. I very much look forward to seeing the views of Cambridge's young people put forward to local and Commonwealth leaders."

The Summit will take place at St John's College. Students, under the leadership of young facilitators provided by the Royal Commonwealth Society, will learn about the Commonwealth and be briefed on the Millennium Development Goals. Particular attention will be paid to the goals relating to health and education. In the morning, students will debate education and health issues and, in the afternoon, will give presentations to local politicians.

THE FUTURE OF STREET LIGHTING

About 4 years ago the County Council started to investigate the option of replacing the street lighting stock from Government funding under the private finance initiative (PFI) The council is now about to sign a 25 year contract. Set out below is some information about the scheme.

Why do we need to renew our street lighting columns? Nationally there has been significant under investment in street lighting over many years. As a result in Cambridgeshire we have over 20,000 street lights which are over their 25 year design life and within that figure about a 1,000 are over 40 years old. There are also a further 20,000 columns which within the next few years will add to that figure.

What is the liability on the Council with respect to the street lights? As street lighting columns age they deteriorate either, if made of steel, from the inside, by rusting or, if made of concrete, where the reinforcement rusts and spalls the concrete. Either the rusting weakens the column and they sheer at ground level or the spalling creates lumps of concrete which fall off, especially from around the top of the column.

Why do we light our streets? The role of street lighting is primarily to light up residential and town centre areas, roundabouts, road junctions and other parts of the network we call conflict areas. Our lighting is provided for road safety purposes. Inevitably street lighting also has a role in reducing crime and the fear of crime and we do work with the districts to support their initiatives where we can.

What criteria are used to design street lighting? Street lighting is designed to the appropriate European Standard and the design is based upon the type or road (road classification) the width of road and whether there are junctions, bends or it is on a straight. These factors are used to determine the light level on the road and the height of the columns. There is a little flexibility about lighting levels on residential streets (the largest part of our stock) and we are proposing the minimum levels allowed. On the busier roads, the proposed light levels are higher to reflect the traffic flows during the peak hours.

Could we switch off or dim lights in the future? The standard output specification does include for dimming up to 40%. Remotely each lantern light level can be changed or even switched off, it also reports whether the light is out.

What about the Impact on Carbon Emissions? Carbon emissions are produced as a result of producing electricity and the street lighting service is presently a high emitter of carbon. This project, through the PFI credit investment will be able to reduce the energy required for the street lighting stock at the end of the 5 year capital replacement programme. There will be a reduction to the carbon emissions by about 4,000 tonnes per annum, and at present levels of carbon trading, the future levels of saving could be about £48,000 per annum.

What about parish and district lighting? At present we have service level agreements with parish and district councils where they wish to have the County, through its present service provider, maintain and arrange the energy provision. Through the new contract, these arrangements can continue, because the preferred bidder is keen to renew these arrangements. The County Council will continue to procure the energy and as before the County is happy to arrange for the energy procurement arrangements to continue where the parishes or districts also sign up to the maintenance of their street lighting.

NEW BRIDGE FOR WOODLAND WALK

A new bridge has opened for Mansell Wood, Oakington, as part of Cambridgeshire County Council's work to improve the health and environment for local communities. Thanks to a Woodland Improvement Grant from the Forestry Commission, Cambridgeshire County Farms Estate has carried out woodland management in Mansell Wood and built the new bridge. The Wood was planted on the Farms Estate about 15 years ago, but was in need of some management to help improve the woodland structure for walkers and wildlife. As well as the woodland works, the grant funded a new footbridge. This bridge provides access to a brand new permissive footpath, creating a countryside walk between Oakington and Histon. The new path runs over County Farms land and links up to the new Centenary Woodland, planted last year with Forestry Commission funding, to celebrate 100 years of the Farms Estate.

The new bridge was officially opened today Thursday, March 10, by Cambridgeshire County Councillor John Reynolds who is local member for the area. He was joined by Parish Councillors, Officers from County Farms and the Forestry Commission, and the tenant farmer, Peter Freeman, who farms the holding the new path crosses. The new path allows walkers to enjoy a quiet walk away from roads, and a loop can be formed by returning to Oakington along the public footpaths or the Busway bridleway / cycle path. A plan showing the new route is available on our website at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/property/estate/farms

The County Farms Estate now has a 100 year track record of providing and protecting jobs in agriculture while also improving our local countryside. This new bridge and woodland helps provide communities a unique opportunity to enjoy their local countryside, keep healthy and protect our local wildlife. I am very pleased to open this new community based project which is just one of the ways the County Council is helping to make sure Cambridgeshire is a great place to call home.

The woodland management included coppicing, a traditional practice of cutting the tree down to the base. The tree then produces vigorous regrowth, improving the structure and benefitting woodland biodiversity. Thinning was also carried out, allowing room and light for trees to develop. As well as the woodland works, the grant funded a new footbridge

Cambridgeshire County Farms Estate is the largest of its kind in England and Wales, consisting of 13,500 hectares of land and supporting 250 tenant farmers. As well as providing an opportunity for young people to get a start in farming, the estate works to provide countryside access, biodiversity improvements and generates important financial returns for the County Council.

GOVERNMENT BACKS CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PLANS

Transport ministers have endorsed Cambridgeshire's County Council groundbreaking plans to improve community transport with a £258,000 cash boost for the project. The County Council, has been leading the way in the country in looking at boosting community transport and other locally targeted transport options in the face of tough savings being made to subsidised bus services. Now the Government has confirmed their backing for such an approach by announcing a new £10 million cash boost for authorities nationally to develop community transport.

Cambridgeshire has already pledged an extra £220,000 over two years for Community Transport but will now also get a £258,208 cash boost from the Department for Transport. Ministers have also said the County will be given an extra £2,600 to support the process. Cambridgeshire Future Transport was launched with a summit last month in the Fenland Town of March. Since then representatives from public services, the NHS, business, voluntary sector, bus operators, councils and community transport have met to take the project forward.

The review will not just look at buses but also engage with communities to come forward to find local solutions that could work locally and improve transport and access. Schemes such as community transport, car sharing or pool vehicles which are successful elsewhere could all be looked at if local communities think it could work for them. This will lead to a joined up public transport strategy that will be community led to help provide services to meet the needs of Cambridgeshire's current and future communities.

In this announcement Local Transport Minister Norman Baker backed authorities, such as Cambridgeshire, for looking at ways to fill the gaps with community transport where commercial bus services are not viable. We are already ahead of the game in looking at community based transport solutions while meeting the tough savings all authorities across the country are faced with. With budgets being squeezed in all public services and no dedicated money from Government for running subsidised bus services this extra money is much appreciated. Initiatives such as community transport, like Dial-A-Ride, will play a vital role in bringing forward local transport solutions. It is time to roll up our sleeves and put politics aside so that we can deliver what is best for Cambridgeshire and our communities, with the limited funds we have."

Local Transport Minister Norman Baker, said: "Where commercial bus services are not viable, community transport can play a valuable role in preventing isolation in rural communities. I know that there are already many good examples of community groups and local authorities working together to deliver innovative solutions to rural transport needs and this is something we wish to see more of. Today's package of support - secured despite the financial constraints facing Government - demonstrates our commitment to community transport and represents an important opportunity to invest in the future to provide more sustainable transport for local communities."

INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS COMMISSION FINAL REPORT

Lord Hutton has published his final report on public service pension provision, which sets out his recommendations to Government on how public service pension schemes should look in the future. The report, press release and a set of frequently asked questions can be found on the HM Treasury website

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/indreview_johnhutton_pensions.htm

Responding to Lord Hutton's review of public sector pensions, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

"Everyone agrees that public sector pension schemes need to strike a balance between what is fair to staff and affordable for the taxpayer, and we will look closely at the detailed recommendations Lord Hutton has made in his report. We support a system where pension payments are linked to career average earnings. It addresses the inherent inequalities of the current final salary arrangements which favour those who progress through the salary scales and, in particular, those who get a promotion just before retirement. It is pleasing that Lord Hutton has listened to our core arguments that the scheme should be linked to average earnings, and also that there should be no cap on pensionable pay.

"Lord Hutton has recognised that there are significant differences between the funded Local Government Pension Scheme and the unfunded schemes provided in other parts of the public sector. We will consider closely the points Lord Hutton makes about the administration of the LGPS. As well as being fully funded locally, the LGPS is governed and administered by locally elected members representing the interests of council taxpayers. The LGPS is fully transparent and more accountable than any other public sector pension scheme."

NOTES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

The Local Government Pension Scheme is a final salary, defined benefit scheme with 4.33 million members (1.81 million contributors, 1.21 million pensioners and 1.31 million deferred pensioners). The average pension paid under the scheme is £4,235 a year. Employees make a significant contribution to the Local Government Pension Scheme. Employee contributions to the LGPS in England and Wales currently vary between 5.5 per cent of salary for the lowest paid (those earning up to £12,600 a year) to 7.5 per cent for staff earning over £78,700 a year. When the new LGPS was introduced in 2008 this equated to an average employee rate of 6.3%. This compares to an average employee contribution to defined benefit schemes in the private sector in 2008 of 4.9%

Unlike most of the other public sector pension schemes, the Local Government Pension Scheme is a funded scheme, with contributions from employees like private sector defined benefit pension schemes. It is a well-managed scheme with contributions from employees and employers and its Funds are invested in business, property and the markets.

The Funds have more than £140 billion in investments and assets, enough to pay benefits for over 20 years. Given the size of the LGPS funds, they are a significant investor in the UK and world economies. A copy of the LGA's response to the review of public service pensions is available from <http://www.lge.gov.uk/lge/aio/9065328>.

PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO ESTABLISH SUPPORT AND SERVICE NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY

Cambridgeshire County Council and NHS Cambridgeshire have launched a new website which will help establish support and service needs across the different communities in the county. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will help the council, health providers and relevant partner agencies to prioritise services for the most vulnerable and those that are most in need of support.

The JSNA provides a valuable source of data on health and well-being of people living in Cambridgeshire and will be available to both health professionals and the local communities to assist individuals to make healthier life choices and to steer services to communities most in need. The website - www.Cambridgeshirejsna.org.uk - will be part of a range of tools used to establish the needs of the whole community, and will include local information gathered by district/city councils, voluntary agencies and public surveys, as well as a range of relevant statistics. .

The JSNA website enables all of the data, findings and supporting information from the JSNA to be accessible in one location. Cambridgeshire's Director of Public Health, Dr Liz Robin, said: "The JSNA provides an accurate picture of the health and wellbeing of local communities, including information on the views of local people."

"In the current economic climate the way public services are provided will change, some may end or be provided through other partners and the voluntary and community sectors. This means we have to make sure that we have good information to support decision making, and can prioritise services for the most vulnerable and those who most need support. We will be putting the needs of communities at the heart of everything we do."

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment forms the basis of a duty to co-operate for Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and local authorities, formalised in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It is the means by which PCTs and local authorities describe the health, care and wellbeing needs of the local populations, now and in the future, and identify the strategic direction of service delivery to meet those needs.

CAMBRIDGERSHIRE GUIDED BUSWAY UPDATE - 10 March 2011

It has been a number of weeks since the last update on the status of The Busway project, but as BAM Nuttall are now nearing completion of their contract I wanted to remind you of the various steps required from that point before the route will be ready to open. The first step in the process, which will determine the timeline for the subsequent events, is for BAM Nuttall to complete the contract. BAM Nuttall have now said they have finished all their major work on site and are in the process of submitting the design and construction certificates. These are mandatory and demonstrate the route has been built to the required standards.

A frustration for residents, councillors and everyone at the County Council has been that BAM Nuttall could have submitted a large number of the certificates required some time ago. It is standard industry practice for construction certificates to be supplied once each part of works have been completed and BAM Nuttall's approach of submitting documentation at the end of the project has been delaying the completion of the contract. The latest report to the County Council's Cabinet has been published this week giving more details on the certificates: <http://tinyurl.com/ccc-cab-070311>. As you will see in the report, the date for contract completion is in BAM Nuttall's hands.

The County Council has continued to deduct damages of almost £14,000 a day from BAM Nuttall for late delivery and will do until contract completion. Damages deducted are now in excess of £10 million. Once the contract has been independently certified as complete, BAM Nuttall will then have 28 days under the terms of the contract to correct any outstanding defects.

This will include the defects between St Ives and Cambridge which have been well documented. If, as we expect, BAM Nuttall do not rectify the defects to the Council's satisfaction then a new contractor (Jackson Civil Engineering) will be appointed to carry out the work. The costs being deducted from BAM Nuttall.

In addition to the works to correct defects, some works were always intended after completion. As these were not part of BAM Nuttall's contract the County Council does not need to wait until the 28 day defect correction period elapses before they begin.

These tasks are:

- * Blacktop surfacing of the cycleway between Longstanton Park & Ride and Milton Road in Cambridge, as well as the southern section.

- * Removal and infill and soil to allow toads and other small animals to pass under the guideway near Chivers Lake in Histon. This will be part of the cycleway surfacing.

- * The creation of an additional junction on the southern section for the Clay Farm development - between Trumpington and the Addenbrooke's spur junction.

The cost of providing the Clay Farm junction is being met by the developer.

The works to be carried out following completion will take a number of weeks to complete and part of the process of appointing a new contractor to correct the defects, for example, has been to ask them for a detailed programme and timetable for the work to be carried out. Everyone is quite rightly keen to know when the route will open, but until BAM Nuttall's contract is complete, and the work to fix the defects is well underway, we will not be able to make any announcement.

As always, if you have any further questions at any time please contact the Council's Busway Team - guided.busway@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or 01223 716972.

BUSWAY PROGRESS' WHOLLY DEPENDENT ON BAM NUTTALL'

Contractors BAM Nuttall have once again missed the dates they pledged for submitting construction certificates required for the Busway contract to be certified as complete. BAM Nuttall have submitted more of the required construction and design certificates over recent weeks and days, but Busway bosses have said today that five are still outstanding and are holding up completion of the project. On top of the outstanding certificates, a further 46 design and construction certificates recently submitted - that document the work has been completed to the required standard and act as a guarantee - are in the process of being checked.

The most important mandatory certificates - including one guaranteeing the design and construction for a retaining wall in Trumpington Cutting - must be submitted and accepted by the Project Manager, who is independent of both the Council and BAM Nuttall, before the project can be certified as complete. BAM Nuttall had pledged to submit the final certificates this week, but Busway bosses have said many dates have been missed by BAM Nuttall and that the contract can only be certified as complete if the documents have been completed correctly.

BAM Nuttall has pledged to submit the final certificates required this week, but time will tell as they have consistently missed the dates they have stated. They are getting closer to completing the contract but the timescale is still wholly dependent on BAM Nuttall as the quality of the information they submit will determine if it can be accepted.

The independent Project Manager has a maximum of 21 days once all the certificates have been submitted to certify the project as complete - but Council bosses hope this will not take as long. Once the contract is certified 'Complete' BAM Nuttall have 28 days to fix all notified defects on the route (see notes). If, as expected, BAM Nuttall does not complete the work within the time permitted councillors have approved bringing in a new contractor to fix the defects - the costs being charged to BAM Nuttall.

Outstanding issues to be addressed on the St Ives to Cambridge section:

Maintenance track - some areas of the track have been built at too low level which means rain water has collected and the maintenance track is flooded. These areas of the track need to be raised without affecting the flood balance in the area.

Beam expansion gaps - The County Council requires the contractor to show that the gaps between the beams will allow for expansion of the beams during periods of hot weather while giving a smooth ride for passengers.

Foundations - The County Council requires the contractor to show that the use of shallow pad foundations on some short sections of track where deeper piled foundations were originally planned is appropriate. The County Council need calculations to show the track will not move over time reducing the ride quality.

St Ives Park & Ride car park - the car park has been built with less than the specified gradient and water is ponding on the surface of the car park.

River Great Ouse Viaduct - rain water is leaking through an unsealed expansion joint onto the steel below. If this was not fixed now council taxpayers would pick up future bills for additional maintenance costs.

FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT

The Flood and Water Management Team manages a programme of work to respond to the Council's new legislative responsibilities as a 'Lead Local Flood Authority' - primarily responding to new duties emerging from the Flood and Water Management Act (2010), and the Flood Risk Regulations (2009). They have established the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Partnership, comprising of the County Council, Anglian Water Services, the Environment Agency, Districts and the City, Cambridgeshire Horizons and Cambridgeshire Internal Drainage Boards. The partnership oversees the programme of work.

Under the 'Flood and Water Management Act' the Council has a duty to undertake Surface Water Management Plans (SWMPs). SWMPs identify areas at significant risk of flooding. These areas will then be prioritised for further investigation and mitigation measures put in place, where economically viable. Currently the team has undertaken a County wide strategic assessment that has identified areas of significant flood risk in the County. In conjunction with this, the team has undertaken a detailed assessment of flood risk in Cambridge and Milton and this is currently being reviewed by the partnership.

The team is also undertaking a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment' to comply with the 'Flood Risk Regulations' (2009)

Defra has also recently published details regarding the commencement dates for new duties as Lead Local Floods authority from April 2011. From this April new duties will include the duty to investigate and report on floods as well as the duty to maintain a register of structures or features which, in the opinion of the authority, are likely to have a significant effect on a flood risk in its area and update on the condition of these assets.

STRENGTHS HIGHLIGHTED IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES INSPECTION

Inspectors have praised the work done by Cambridgeshire County Council's children's services to minimise the possibility of child abuse and neglect. A recent unannounced inspection by OfSTED - the Office for Standards in Education - sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements.

Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including electronic case records, supervision files and notes, observation of social workers and senior practitioners and other information provided by staff and managers. They said that most areas for development identified by the previous inspection had been addressed and recognised as a strength the considerable and effective action that had been taken to improve recruitment and retention of staff, resulting in a stable and appropriately qualified workforce and increased capacity in the service.

"Staff morale is now good and staff report that they are well supported by managers," added the inspectors' report. They said arrangements for responding to contacts had improved significantly and praised partnership working, particularly with the police. Inspectors added that newly qualified social workers received good support and that staff were well motivated.

The findings of serious case reviews had been widely disseminated and staff were aware of the lessons learnt, the report added.

Inspectors said all children subject to child protection enquiries were allocated to suitably experienced and qualified social workers, and that children were routinely involved in case planning where appropriate and their views taken into account. Inspectors identified areas for development to improve the service further. They pointed out that whilst there has been improvement too many assessments were not completed within the required timescales, and that in some cases child protection enquiries were started by one worker and completed by another. There is an ongoing need to further improve the electronic recording system used and some children in need plans and child protection plans were not sufficiently specific.

This is an encouraging and constructive report, which recognised the many strengths we knew we had, as well as recommending areas for development. We are in the process of making exciting and challenging changes to our arrangements in Children's Social Care which will leave us well placed to secure further improvement. The implementation of the Unit Model will mean more time for social workers and other staff to work directly with families, will promote consistent practice and reduce bureaucracy.

COUNCIL APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: ENVIRONMENT SERVICES

Cambridgeshire County Council has announced that Cambridgeshire Horizons' Chief Executive Alex Plant is to be the Council's new Executive Director: Environment Services, with responsibility for the authority's work on transport, economic and housing growth and the environment. In addition to his Horizons role, Alex is Interim Strategic Director of the Greater Cambridge - Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), a Non-Executive Director on the Board of NHS Cambridgeshire, and a Governor at Cambridge Regional College.

Alex will be taking on this new challenge. Growing Cambridgeshire's economy, developing a transport policy that supports the needs of people and businesses in our area, and preserving the quality of our environment will be at the heart of my new role. Despite the financial pressure on public services, the opportunity to help shape such fundamental issues is hugely exciting. Having an Executive Director of his calibre and track record leading work on one of our three key priorities is an exciting prospect and while there are clear challenges ahead.

Alex will be a valuable addition to the Council's Strategic Management Team and his knowledge of Cambridgeshire, of how the Government machine in Whitehall works, as well as his strong links with all those who are helping to shape the County's future will be a huge asset.

HOUSING GROWTH

The Cambridgeshire Local Investment Plan (CLIP) – Cabinet endorsed the final draft of the CLIP on 22nd February. The CLIP contains 9 County pro-formas (all rated as priority 1, the highest priority), representing a total County funding bid of around £100m. Work is now underway to prepare and submit with the CLIP a brief cost-benefit analysis for each County Council project (relating to economic activity, community growth and financial benefits). The Horizons Board will consider the CLIP bid on the 23rd March 2011 (the total bid is in the region of £690m). The level of available HCA funding and whether it will all be used for affordable housing grant remains uncertain.

Local Enterprise Partnership Neville Reyner was appointed Chair of the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership on 9th February 2011. The deadline for applications for board members was 25th February.

A14 Transport Minister Mike Penning has responded positively to the proposal for Local authorities to work with the Department for Transport to find a solution to the current issues relating to the A14 corridor. There was also a pledge to make Department for Transport resources available to lead a study. The DfT hope to have the work concluded by the middle of 2012.

The County Council and Highways Agency have produced a brief for technical work to identify the necessary improvements and other measures needed to allow individual development sites along the Cambridge to Huntingdon section of the A14 to continue. This approach has been agreed with SCDC, HDC and Cambridge City Council and discussions to secure funding for the technical work are taking place.

SITE SPECIFIC ISSUES

Cambridge Southern Fringe

- Joint Development Control Committee (JDCC) - On 23rd February 2011 JDCC approved the Clay Farm Design Code (thus discharging the planning condition). This moves the developments closer to commencing the delivery of housing. The first occupations are anticipated in late 2011.

Next Steps

- A planning application for the Trumpington Meadows primary school is anticipated to be submitted in mid March 2011.

Cambridge North West

- Cambridge University pre application consultation - Cambridge University has commenced an informal pre-application consultation of its proposals with public bodies. A presentation to officers took place on 4th February 2011. The University intend to make a decision in late March on whether to proceed with a planning application on the basis of the response to the consultation and further transport modelling.

Next Steps

- University site planning application to be submitted mid 2011.

Cllr John Reynolds 4 Hollytrees Bar Hill March 23rd 2011