

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 17th MARCH

PUPILS PUT AUTHORS IN THE PICTURE IN ANNUAL AWARD

The Eighth "Read it Again!" Cambridgeshire Children's Picture Book Award was launched on World Book Day (7 March). "Read it Again!" is a unique award, judged by Cambridgeshire school children, for a debut picture book where the words and pictures are the work of one individual.

From World Book Day onwards, thousands of school children across the county will be reading, discussing and then voting for their favourite book from a shortlist of eight outstanding new titles. The list includes a wonderful twist on "Jack and the Beanstalk", skateboarding monster, a moving environmental tale and a story of two jealous cats. Three of the shortlisted authors are graduates from the children's book illustration course at Anglia Ruskin University.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "Schools love taking part in this annual event, which appeals to all ages from reception to Year 6. It encourages children to explore words and pictures, create their own stories and to construct reviews. And for up and coming young illustrators, the award provides exposure to their work and honest feedback from children."

NORTHSTOWE UPDATE

The Northstowe planning committee at its last meeting did five things:

1.a) **Approved** key section 106 items namely financial contributions, and the provision of not less than 20% affordable housing for Phase 1, subject to minor changes that may arise from further negotiations regarding government investment.

b) **Noted** that a Business Case had been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government on 18 January, requesting Government investment to accelerate delivery of the first phase of Northstowe.

2. **Endorsed** the draft Strategic Action Framework as a workable structure for the delivery of Northstowe and for the purposes of further consultation and agreement with the joint promoters.

3.a) **Noted** progress on drafting the planning conditions for the outline application and the Land Transfer Agreement.

b) **endorsed** Condition 34 Land Drainage Solution for Uttons Drove.

We await the outcome of the application for government funding to help get the new town started in these straitened economic times. Many people wonder, given that much of the site for phase 1 is currently a golf course, why this is the most expensive part of the scheme. The reason is that the infrastructure required to support the first 1500 houses, both "hard" in terms of earthworks and "soft" such as education and community facilities, are disproportionately high.

While there may be some disappointment that we are having to settle for 20% affordable housing on the first phase, we are achieving management of both surface water flood risk and foul water treatment that are acknowledged to be exemplary, and we have listened to all those telling us we must learn from "mistakes" elsewhere by

insisting that the secondary school is provided from the fourth year of occupation of the first houses at Northstowe. These two priorities have rightly been given first call on the land value uplift from the first phase.

The current aim is for the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee to complete the sign off of the outline permission in the middle of March, and for the permission to be issued by Easter in the spring. The timing of these things would then mean a three-month wait-and-see period before starting on discharge of pre-commencement conditions, such as archaeology, ecological safeguarding, excavations and landscaping.

WORKS HAS BEEN COMPLETED ON LIGHTING UP THE BUSWAY

Works has been completed to install solar-powered stud lights along sections of the Busway maintenance track. Cambridgeshire County Council have been installing the studs between Orchard Park and St Ives, Oakington and Girton, and between Longstanton Park & Ride and Longstanton village. The studs have been used successfully on other cycle routes such as those between Over and Swavesey and on the Addenbrooke's to Shelford route. The Busway cycle track has been well used since its opening in August 2011 and new solar lighting will mean that it will be more attractive to use at night as well as in the daytime.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "This is excellent news for the many people that use the Busway cycle track regularly to commute to work, walk the dog or just go for a pleasant ride. The solar studs should really help people see their way on dark evenings or mornings and help make the track an even more popular route."

Funding for the works is coming from the Cambridgeshire Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) programme which includes a programme of measures aimed at 'Getting Cambridgeshire to Work'. £5m has been awarded by Government to spend over the next three years, which will unlock a further £4.2m to be spent on transport improvements.

Cambridgeshire County Council was awarded £5 million by Government (Department for Transport) in May 2012 to spend over three years. This was from the 'Local Sustainable Transport Fund', a fund established to enable the delivery by local transport authorities of sustainable transport solutions that support economic growth while reducing carbon. The fund also provides an opportunity to deliver additional wider social, environmental, health and safety benefits for local communities.

In Cambridgeshire, the funding will be used for a programme of measures aimed at 'Getting Cambridgeshire to Work' by making it easier for people to travel between home and work, and to other key destinations.

Programme measures will be implemented under three themes:

- * Improving links to transport interchanges and corridors
- * Improving links to employment areas
- * The provision of improved travel information

The programme incorporates projects which aim to:

- * Improve journey time reliability
- * Make journeys more attractive via sustainable, healthy and lower carbon contributions
- * Change travel behaviour
- * Reduce congestion
- * Improve connectivity and interchange facilities

CAMBRIDGESHIRE SIGNS SUPER BROADBAND DEAL WITH BT

Businesses and communities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will have some of the best fibre broadband coverage in the country following a deal with BT to provide a county-wide high speed network by the end of 2015.

Cambridgeshire County Council has signed a contract with BT that exceeds its, ambitious targets to bring better broadband to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The contract will build on the existing commercial fibre broadband network in the area meaning that many more homes and businesses will be able to get superfast broadband and no community will be left without better broadband access when the roll-out is complete.

The new broadband infrastructure will contribute towards the Connecting Cambridgeshire programme targets so that superfast speeds of at least 24Mbps are available to more than 90 per cent of premises and a minimum of 2Mbps to virtually all premises over the next three years.

Combined with existing commercial broadband provision, completion of the roll-out under the contract will mean that 98 per cent of homes and businesses across the county can expect to have access to fibre-based broadband by the end of 2015.

Without the intervention of the Connecting Cambridgeshire programme around a third of premises would not have been able to access faster broadband services. The scale of the county-wide roll-out will mean some areas will be connected sooner than others, but by starting work now everyone will benefit from better broadband by the end of 2015.

BT was chosen by the Council following a competitive selection process. The company will contribute £16 million to the £45 million project with the rest of the investment coming from Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council and Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK).

Cambridgeshire already has some of the most innovative businesses in the world and investment in better broadband is vital to drive future economic growth. It is anticipated that the roll-out of the new broadband infrastructure across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will bring an additional £500 million to the local economy in the five years following completion. This means that every £1 invested will bring a return of £11 to the local economy. It will also help to develop new and more cost-effective approaches to the delivery of public services.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "This is a super deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, which will make us one of the best connected areas in the UK over the next three years. We have made it happen by joining forces with our partners and taking the initiative to bring vital connections that will boost the local economy and ensure that those living in isolated communities are not left out of the digital world. Better broadband will allow us to build upon the business and enterprise success of our region, helping to create local jobs and prosperity for the long term. It will help our communities to thrive and make public services more accessible for our residents, particularly elderly and vulnerable people, and more cost-effective for taxpayers."

Work on the project will start immediately with the first locations expected to get fibre later this year. The three-year roll-out will begin with a period of planning and detailed surveying, before Openreach, BT's local network business, starts work on the ground.

Regular updates and FAQs are available on the Connecting Cambridgeshire website <http://www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/>

SUCCESS CONTINUES AS MILLIONS CHOOSE A TICKET TO RIDE ON THE BUSWAY

Cambridgeshire's award winning guided Busway has carried more than four million passengers since it opened and traveller numbers are expected to grow by half a million this year. The latest figures confirm a year on year increase in passenger journeys and in 2013 the route is expected to provide three million passenger trips - up half a million on 2012. In January this year 253,355 people used the Busway as their preferred method of travel over using a car. In the run up to Christmas more than 280,000 passengers climbed aboard the Busway during October alone.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "Despite its detractors, the Busway has proved to be a great success since the day it opened and I am delighted that passenger numbers continue to grow. Four million passengers since it opened is proof that people, including myself, are choosing the Busway over other methods of travel and clearly the good news is spreading as more and more people turn to this clean, convenient and comfortable way to get to and from Cambridge and the surrounding areas of Cambridgeshire. The passenger figures speak for themselves and who can argue that the busway is not a success when the number of journeys will grow by more than half a million this year alone.

MORE PUPILS OFFERED SECONDARY SCHOOL OF THEIR CHOICE

More pupils in Cambridgeshire will be attending the secondary school of their choice in September than ever before, according to new figures released recently. Students in Cambridgeshire and across the country will be sent a letter today, detailing whether they have been offered a place at their first, second or third preference secondary school. In Cambridgeshire, 96.48 per cent have been offered a place at their first preference school.

A further 2.73 per cent have been offered a place at their second or third preference, while just 0.79 per cent could not be offered any of their preferences. In Cambridgeshire last year, 94.7 per cent of pupils received an offer at their preferred secondary school, and 3.45 per cent an offer at their second or third preference. The proportion of secondary school applications received online has also risen - from just under 80 per cent last year to over 90 per cent this year.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "I am grateful and impressed by the hard work of our admissions team in managing to get so many pupils into their first choice secondary school. We always try to meet as many first preferences as possible. I am pleased also that the number of applications made online is increasing - this makes the process of allocating places easier and more efficient."

Follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/CambridgeshireCC

BUY WITH CONFIDENCE SCHEME CELEBRATES FIRST YEAR OF SUCCESS

A County Council approved trader scheme is celebrating its first year of success after more than 5000 'hits' have been recorded by people who have used the site to find companies providing first class reliable services across Cambridgeshire. In addition to the enquiries via the internet, customers have also been directed to the scheme from Citizens Advice and the Library Service across Cambridgeshire.

Buy With Confidence was set up by Cambridgeshire as part of a national Trading Standards Approved Trader Scheme, designed to help protect people and businesses across the country. Since its launch in March 2012, the Cambridgeshire scheme has recruited more than 40 traders who have been vetted and quality checked, with another 14 currently going through the application process.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "Buy With Confidence has been a major success in Cambridgeshire and it is now a key part of the work of our Trading Standards team to protect both consumers and businesses in the county. I would urge anyone who is looking to have work done on their house or who simply needs advice to make the BWC website their first port of call."

Traders can be found by visiting www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk <http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk/> , by calling 08454 040506 or by visiting your local library where staff can help look up traders on the scheme for people who do not have internet access.

Trading Standards will work with all business to ensure that all members of the scheme have, where applicable, adequate terms and conditions, relevant insurance, suitable financial standing and professional approvals/qualifications. Criminal record disclosures are required for any staff that works within a customer's property. Nationally, 50 Trading Standards teams operate BWC and nearly two million 'hits' have been recorded in the last two years and more than 5,000 businesses have been approved.

MORE NORTHSTOWE UPDATES

PLANNING MATTERS

On 19th March the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee (NJDCC) will consider the proposed obligations that will be placed on the developer to ensure that the necessary planning and community requirements for the first phase of Northstowe will be met. NJDCC will consider Gallagher's proposed contribution of £30 million towards a range of facilities including new primary and secondary schools, provision for sports and play, transport and environmental mitigation and waste recycling. The developer has also offered 20% of the housing to be affordable in a mix of market and social rented and shared ownership. If the Committee agrees to the offer then the planning consent may be issued in the early summer. Before work can start, the developer will require consent for various activities and the discharge of planning conditions and we might expect to see the first earth moving on the site by the end of the year.

TRANSPORT

The first formal meeting of the Northstowe Transport Working Group took place on 13th March. An update was given on the Northstowe Transport Strategy for the Phase 1 development, as well as progress with the procurement of the new automatic traffic count sites that will be installed at several locations on the local road network in the vicinity of the Northstowe site. The next meeting will be held in June when it is hoped that the first set of traffic data from the new count sites will be available for discussion.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds has been appointed to this group by the county Council.

URBAN DESIGN CODES

We are working with the developer's design consultants, Terence O'Rourke, on the strategic town-wide design code. This identifies 3 - 4 major character districts for Northstowe, relating to their location, streetscape or landscape. The character areas might be:

*To the north broadly covering the Phase 1 application area and focusing on the local centre with a distinctive edge to Longstanton

*Around the new town centre with Rampton Drift, the former barracks area and the secondary school

*To the south around the second local centre and taking in the southern extension of the bus spine route and the edge with Oakington

*Possibly a fourth in the northern most part of the town (the Reserve land)

Ideas for the design codes will be discussed with the Parish Forum at its monthly meeting on 20th March where we will consider approaches to the design of Northstowe. It is hoped that a draft of the Strategic Code will be considered by the Cambridgeshire Quality Design Panel and the final version will be presented to the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee in the summer.

Follow us on Twitter www.twitter.com/CambsCC

FIRST COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEME IS JUST THE TICKET

A new transport scheme that has been designed by the community it serves is due to take to the road on 18 March 2013. The Cambridgeshire Future Transport 7a service will link Hinxton, Heathfield, and Whittlesford with Sawston and, for the first time, the Park and Ride at Babraham. This will help residents get to work, education, training and health services, such as the Sawston Medical Centre, as well as shopping and leisure facilities.

The new bus service for the Whittlesford area will not only be an improvement on the old one, linking to more places and being more regular, but will also save the Council tens of thousands of pounds. The service will run on a loop of every one hour and 15 minutes - the current service runs every two hours.

The Cambridgeshire Future Transport <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/cft/> scheme will see £1.5 million per year invested in transport services across the county which are designed by the community to meet their needs. Members of the community have worked with Cambridgeshire County Council to design a service that best meets their needs and will help reduce social isolation.

Cambridgeshire County Councillor Tony Orgee, Cabinet Member for Community Infrastructure, said: "This service has truly been designed by the community to most meet their needs and reduce isolation in rural areas. The solution emerged from work we did with a local working group which included local members, users, the district, local businesses and operators and I would like to thank them for all their help. Not only is the new service an improvement, linking to services that the Citi7 didn't, but it also runs at more regular times than the current service and costs less. This is part of the Council commitment to plan our services around the needs of the communities we serve."

Follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/CambridgeshireCC or on Twitter www.twitter.com/CambsCC

NEW CHAPTER FOR SAWSTON LIBRARY

The local community in Sawston are celebrating the re-opening of their village library. Sawston Library re-opened last week in a new temporary building on the grounds of the village college. The public library was destroyed by a fire last year and up until recently the community was served by a mobile library which visited the village twice a week. The new temporary home opened its doors to 60 visitors on the first day of opening, Wednesday 6 March, and is open 23 hours per week with a wide range of new books, magazines, free broadband internet access and WiFi, and children's area.

The official launch is on Saturday 16 March at 10.30am by local County Councillors Gail Kenney and Tony Orgee. They will be joined by representatives from South Cambridgeshire District Council, Sawston Parish Council, Sawston Village College and the Friends of Sawston Library, all of which have been instrumental in the re-opening of the library.

Cambridgeshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Learning, Councillor David Harty, said "The re-opening of the library is great for the community especially as the old library was lost so tragically and unexpectedly. The community has helped immensely with the re-opening and we would like to thank Sawston Village College and the Friends of Sawston Library. Local businesses are also supporting the re-opening with Cambridge Building Society donating £100 towards the launch event. Waitrose in Cambridge has Sawston Library as one of its Community Matters good causes during the month of March so, if you shop at Waitrose, please drop your green token in the Sawston Library box so the library can receive a share of the £1000. We'd like to thank both businesses for their support."

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 17th March