

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 30th JULY

BUSWAY SETTLEMENT AGREED

A dispute over the cost of building the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway has been settled with contractor BAM Nuttall agreeing to pay the County Council £33 million – a move of £76 million in the Council's favour. The settlement means the Council will have paid BAM Nuttall £84.7 million to build the Busway. The original price was £83.9 million. Cambridgeshire County Council's Cabinet agreed to the offer from BAM to settle the dispute following discussions and agreement among all political groups.

BAM were two years late in handing over the project and claimed the Council owed them around £70 million more than the price they had originally quoted, leading to a protracted legal dispute. This necessitated the Council finding extra money to protect the interests of local taxpayers and to get back the tens of millions of pounds owed to the authority. This included paying for legal and staffing costs to bring BAM to a point where they accepted the Council's arguments. The Cabinet agreed to accept BAM's offer to settle the dispute which will avoid incurring further legal costs in pursuing the case through the court process. The Cabinet also wishes to conduct a review to see what lessons can be learned locally and nationally from our experiences.

The contract the Council had in place has meant that BAM Nuttall settled with the cost of construction coming in within the range originally set by the Council. This is despite BAM claiming the Busway had cost them £152.5 million to build and that the Council should pay them an extra £43 million on top of the £117.7 million the authority had already paid them. However, following the threat of legal action and a mediation process, instead, the company has agreed to pay £33 million to the Council in addition to the Council retaining various monies that it had withheld under the terms of the contract.

Around £126 million had been budgeted to pay for the whole Busway scheme – including construction and other costs such as land acquisitions. Some £92.5 million of this money was provided by Government with another £26 million of section 106 monies from developers and the rest in transport grants and other income. Due to the legal process and the time taken to reach a settlement with BAM Nuttall, the cost of the scheme has risen – mainly due to the level of legal fees the Council has had to incur in order to fight the case. This means the total cost of the Busway, including land and staffing costs, as well as interest, is £152 million. Already the Council has found and paid £17.8 million of that gap with £8 million to find. This payment will be spread over 25 years through the capital budget.

Cambridgeshire County Council Leader Martin Curtis said: "I am pleased that this settlement has been agreed and that we can move on from what has been a difficult and time consuming dispute for us. "It is clear that the Council was right to take the bold decision to provide better transport options for residents in one of the fastest growing parts of the country; and right that we signed a robust contract with BAM Nuttall.

"The Busway is a huge success and way ahead of passenger and business case forecasts. What is deeply disappointing and frustrating is that it has taken this long and cost us so much money to win our arguments and stop BAM Nuttall from trying to take tens of millions of pounds away from local taxpayers. BAM's unwillingness, until now, to recognise their financial liability means they have tied up and cost Cambridgeshire taxpayers money which could have been better spent on our communities.

"We have always been very sure of our case and would have been willing to go to court to fight that case. However, following discussions with all group leaders, we felt that we would rather have certainty and settle the matter than risk mounting legal costs.

ROGUE TRADERS MADE TO PAY FOR THEIR CRIMES

A team of rogue traders and money launderers who were previously sentenced to more than 28 years in prison have been ordered to hand over £253,000 they made from their crimes. Norwich Crown Court ordered the confiscation of their assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act. These assets will be used to compensate the many elderly and vulnerable victims targeted by the team.

The case follows a three year investigation by Cambridgeshire County Council's Financial Investigation Team which supported the substantive criminal investigation conducted by the County Council's Trading Standards Service and Cambridgeshire Police (Operation Magpie)

It saw their powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 used to not only trace and restrain the defendants ill gotten gains and provide evidence of money laundering but also to uncover further victims who had not reported the crimes out of fear.

Joseph Henry Lee, of Chesterton in Cambridge, who was sentenced by Cambridge Crown Court to seven and half years in prison, was ordered to pay £148,634 by Norwich Crown Court today. His wife Beverley Lee £52,204, Joseph Bellman Jonathan Lee £40,000, James William Forrest £5,642, Kelly Gray £2,695. Trevor Nockolds £2,600 This follows the earlier confiscation of nearly £9,700 from launderer Phillip Carr in 2011 as part of the same case, which was returned to his elderly Cambridge victim.

The investigation revealed that the gang ripped off over one hundred customers, some of whom handed over their life savings as grossly-inflated payment for poor quality and often unnecessary work the conmen undertook. The prosecution also saw a number of the defendants prosecuted for money laundering, having cashed victims cheques through their own bank accounts on behalf of the ringleaders who wished to distance themselves from the criminality. These money launderers would take a cut of typically ten per cent for providing this service.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "We welcome the orders made by Norwich Crown Court today. It is important that these criminals are not able to benefit from the wealth they have accumulated at the expense of their victims. Furthermore, in many cases the victims had lost their life savings to these rogues, so I am delighted that as a County Council we were able to fully utilise the powers of our Financial Investigations Unit to claw back the money from these criminals and return it to their victims. "

If you think that someone you know may have been a victim of a rogue trader, please contact Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0845 4040506.

CASH FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE BUSINESSES TO GET CONNECTED

Connecting Cambridgeshire has secured multi-million pound funding to help local businesses get on the superfast highway and drive economic growth by making the most of the latest digital technologies.

The partnership of local County and District councils has successfully bid for £1.173million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support businesses in making the most of digital opportunities as part of its programme to boost connectivity and technical innovation across the county.

The announcement comes just weeks after an award of up to £3.43million from the Government's Urban Broadband Fund for a new voucher scheme to help businesses afford faster broadband connections and to make Cambridge and its surrounding economic areas 'super connected'.

Together the extra funding sources mean Connecting Cambridgeshire will be able offer a county-wide package of support to hundreds of small and medium sized businesses improving their connectivity and use of digital technologies to increase productivity and create new jobs.

The additional investment will complement the roll-out of superfast broadband to over 90% of homes and businesses across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with better broadband reaching all communities, by the end of 2015.

Work has already begun on setting up the new business support scheme, which will offer match funded grants and one-off payments for eligible companies to upgrade their connections to high speed broadband and invest in digital technologies.

Due to be launched in January 2014, the scheme will use events, online learning networks and one-to-one specialist support to highlight opportunities for businesses to use the latest technology to work innovatively and reach new markets, whilst reducing their carbon footprint.

Welcoming the announcement, Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "I am delighted that Connecting Cambridgeshire has secured this extra funding, which is a testament to the strength of the partnership and its determination to boost Cambridgeshire's economy by supporting local businesses and creating opportunities for growth. We know it is vital that our small and medium companies, many of which are in rural areas or home-based, get the support they need to make the most of fast-changing technology so they can compete and thrive."

Councillor Nick Wright, South Cambridgeshire District Council's cabinet member for economic development, said: "We are very committed to helping businesses set up and thrive in the district and this funding boost is excellent news all around. Good quality and fast broadband is one of the issues our residents and businesses talk to us about most frequently and the partnership is aiming to resolve frustrations and give our local companies a real boost."

TRANSPORT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

New railway stations and priority for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport in Cambridge are some of the proposals included in a new transport strategy.

The County Council is consulting on a draft strategy to meet transport needs in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire till 2031 to support the growth and economic prosperity of this area. Proposals also include improving rail and bus services as well as extending the walking and cycle network in the city.

The County Council started the consultation in July with a series of exhibitions and after a short intermission are now running further events to enable more residents to provide feedback on the strategy, which are being consulted on at the same time as the draft Local Plans. 44,000 new jobs and 33,000 new homes are forecast for this area over the next 18 years. The road network is already very busy and to accommodate future growth, many more journeys will need to be made by bus, train, bike and foot. The County Council are keen to hear from residents on the plans.

Transport modelling evidence predicts that the strategy will have a positive impact in improving accessibility and reduce growth in car trips into Cambridge by 10%.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "We are concentrating on practical measures to create more dedicated cycle routes and public transport facilities.

We need to look at how we can make the city more accessible for more people - prioritising buses, cyclists and pedestrians on some of the key routes - and enabling people to travel more efficiently in and out of the city centre. Our long-term aim is to create a more comprehensive network and better accessibility to key employment sites and public services."

Residents can tell the Council their view on the plans by attending public exhibitions in the Cambridge area:

- * 27 August, 2.30-7.30pm, Castle Street Methodist Church
- * 28 August, 2.30-7.30pm, Queen Emma Primary School, Gunhild Way
- * 4 September, 2.30-7.30pm, Guildhall
- * 5 September, 2.30-7.30pm, Histon & Impington Recreation Ground
- * 6 September, 2.30-7.30pm, Brown's Field Youth & Community Centre, Green End Road, Chesterton
- * 7 September, 11am-5pm, Bharat Bhavan, Mill Road (Old Library)

Detailed information on the strategy and an online survey is available on the Council's website: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/tscsc

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE STAYING ON IN LEARNING BUCKS TREND

Young people across the country receiving their GCSE results last week will for the first time be required to continue in some sort of learning. In September, the national participation age will be raised to 17, meaning young people will have to continue their learning until at least the end of the next academic year.

The change does not necessarily mean students staying on in school or doing A-levels. Young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training after the age of 16.

This could be through full-time study, a combination of part-time education or training with work, or as part of the ever-expanding range of apprenticeship opportunities. Cambridgeshire County Council wants young people to leave the education system with the skills, knowledge and qualifications to succeed. The authority's aim is to ensure that there are enough college places, training opportunities, apprenticeships and other options available so that every young person can choose the option that's right for them.

Cambridgeshire already bucks the national trend when it comes to young people continuing to learn. At the end of June, 93 per cent of 16-year-olds were in learning (compared to a national average of 91.7 per cent), and only 4.5 per cent were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) - compared to 5.9 per cent nationally.

The majority of young people collecting GCSE results this week will already know what they plan to do in September, but if any don't have a course, or an apprenticeship or a training placement lined up it's not too late. Schools and the County Council can help find the right people to talk things through with. Advice is also available for unexpected GCSE results. As well as their school, young people can contact Council centres in, Huntingdon, St Neots, Ely and Cambridge for advice:

Cambridge: 01223 728500
Ely: 01353 616990
Huntingdon: 01480 376800
St Neots: 01480 376298

Businesses and employers in Cambridgeshire also need to know about the raising of the Information for employers is available at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/employing-young-people.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Supporting further learning beyond age 16 is a key priority for the County Council. We want 16-year-olds to have choices about their further learning. If we can establish a good range of options including apprenticeships, A-levels, traineeships, NVQs, and opportunities which combine work with learning then young people will be able to choose the option that is right for them.

"We're doing well in Cambridgeshire - the number of young people participating is on the up and the number not in employment, education or training (NEET) is going down. This is thanks to the collective effort of schools and post-16 education centres, businesses and a host of other partners as well as County Council services. I want to pay particular thanks to our locality teams who work really hard to support young people to find places in learning and support those with additional barriers to achievement.

"Schools and post-16 providers have come together as 14-19 Area Partnerships to prepare for the raising of the participation age alongside the local authority. These partnerships have achieved better information sharing, have established new learning routes, have provided high quality advice and guidance and have made excellent links with businesses and employers all contributing to the positive picture in Cambridgeshire. However we do know there is more to do as we plan ahead. Next priorities include continuing to review our current Post-16 transport policy to ensure this supports our young people and providing more opportunities for young people who may need extra help such as care leavers, young mothers, young offenders or those from deprived backgrounds."

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

The Following are three reports from Trading Standards.

1. Is renewable energy for you?

As solar panels become a common sight around our neighbourhoods, you may be wondering what options are available to you to save or even generate your own energy but it can be daunting knowing where to start. At Trading Standards we want to help you find a trader you can trust and make sure you know what you can expect of these businesses.

When considering the options available to you, the Energy Saving Trust (www.energysavingtrust.org.uk) is a good place to start. They are an independent organisation that provides free, expert advice on saving energy in your home. Their website contains extensive information, and they also have a helpline which can be contacted on 0300 1231234 (national rate).

In terms of funding any improvements, if you aren't able to pay for them up front, you could consider the Government's Green Deal Scheme (www.greendealinitiative.co.uk) which allows for repayment over a period of time through your energy bills. As with any finance arrangement, make sure you know how much you will have to repay in total, what the monthly charges will be, and check the interest rate is competitive with other finance options. You should also be aware that with Green Deal the debt attaches to the property, so if you sell it, your buyer will have to take over the debt. If you need advice on finance options, your local Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to help you.

There are a range of businesses that offer home assessment visits to advise you on the options most suitable for your specific circumstances. You will usually need to pay for this and you should check whether there is a tie-in clause requiring you to use a certain business to do the installation work if you decide to go ahead. The assessment will give you estimated savings projections for the first year based on a specific level of energy

larger commitment, and means you must make sure you have done, at least, the minimum least check to make sure the estimate is based on a realistic level of energy for your usage.

In terms of finding a trader, it is important to shop around to ensure the business is reputable and that the price is fair before agreeing to any work.

Green Deal has its own approved assessors and installers, but if you are not using Green Deal we would recommend that you find an installer and products that are part of the Micro Generation Certification Scheme (MCS) or are Renewable Energy Assurance Limited (REAL) approved. These organisations have codes of practice that traders have to comply with and standards that the products have to meet. The Energy Saving Trust website allows you to search for local installers who belong to MCS. Some members also sit on our Buy With Confidence approved trader scheme giving you even greater assurance that they are businesses you can trust. Visit www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk for more details.

As always, we would recommend getting three quotes to ensure the installation price and projections are reasonable, and check the terms and conditions carefully before agreeing to anything.

If you encounter any problems with an assessor, installer or any other type of business and need some advice, please contact our advice partner, the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline, on 08454 040506 (national rate).

2. GARDENING SERVICES YOU CAN TRUST

Hopefully your garden has flourished this Summer, but as the nights draw in and temperatures cool, you may begin to think about jobs that need to be done in the garden before Winter - tree pruning, fencing repairs and tidying up the flower beds to name but a few. It might be that you need a bit of help to get these jobs done and that you will need to turn to a professional.

Gardening services are a common area of work for rogue traders, so at Trading Standards we want to help you to find a trader you can trust.

Firstly, we would advise against using anyone who calls at your door offering gardening or tree pruning services. Whilst not all traders that call door to door are rogues, this is the primary way rogue traders find work. Instead, where possible use a tradesperson who has been recommended to you by someone you know, or use a trader on our approved trader scheme, Buy with Confidence.

You can telephone our advice partner, the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline, on 08454 040506 to be given the details of three traders on the scheme that best meet your needs. If you have access to the internet, you can look up traders on the scheme at www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can visit your local library and ask the library staff to look up traders on the Scheme for you. As well as gardeners and tree surgeons, we also have a number of handyman services on the scheme that might be able to carry out gardening tasks for you.

Once you have identified some suitable traders, we would recommend that you get three quotes to make sure the price is reasonable and fair. Ask for the quote to be put in writing and ensure it breaks down what will be covered for the price (eg, removal of rubbish, equipment hire etc). All quotes should include VAT.

For bigger jobs you might be given terms and conditions. If so, make sure you read them before signing any contract. If you are at home when you agree to have work done, you should be given a written cancellation notice stating that you can change your mind about having the work done within 7 days. If the work is going to be done before the expiry of those 7 days, you should be asked to sign a consent form whereby you agree to the work

being done but within the cancellation period, you must still pay the trader for any work completed up to cancellation.

We have an abundance of quality traders in the county so no doubt you will be very happy with the work they have done for you, but if you do have any issues then please contact our Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline for free, impartial and confidential advice. If you are tired of traders calling at your door you can also request a 'We're not Buying It' door sticker to deter them. Finally, if you think you have been affected by a rogue trader, we would urge you to contact the Helpline so that your details are passed to us and we can support you to ensure it doesn't happen again.

3. SCAMS AFFECTING LOCAL BUSINESS

At Trading Standards we have seen a rise in complaints about business scams, in particular the charitable publication scam which has re-emerged. It starts with a call claiming that someone in your office has agreed to place an advertisement in their charitable publication, and asking you to confirm your business details. They will go on to suggest the publication is being produced in partnership with local charities, emergency services, crime prevention or health services, and that it will be distributed through doctors surgeries or support outlets. In fact, if the publication is produced at all it is likely to be of low quality and circulated in significantly smaller numbers than stated. Invariably they will threaten legal action if you do not pay.

It is similar to the business directory scam which relates to advertising in business directories. Generally you will be asked to return an order form even if you don't want to buy advertising space, but according to the small print, by returning the form you are committing to an order requiring you to pay for ongoing entries in the Directory running into hundreds of pounds a year. Again, legal action will be threatened if you do not pay.

We would advise that you don't get into conversation on the phone with marketers who you are not familiar with, but instead ask them to send you the information in writing so you can make an informed decision. Check out the advertiser and the publication before agreeing to any advertising, and satisfy yourself that the charity supported exists and that the publication is being produced with their agreement.

If you are told that someone in your business has already agreed to go ahead with the marketing, ask them to send you proof of that agreement. If they threaten legal action, write to them stating that you have requested proof that such an agreement was made, and until that is produced you will not be making a payment. Keep a copy of the letter and ask the Post Office to provide you with a Certificate of Postage as proof that the letter was sent.

For more information about business scams or to report a scam, visit the [Action Fraud](#) website.

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