

County Report MAY 2014

Councillor John Reynolds

COUNCILLORS DETERMINED TO HOLD BAM NUTTALL TO ACCOUNT OVER BUSWAY DEFECTS

Cambridgeshire County Council has confirmed measures to keep pressure on busway constructors BAM Nuttall to rectify defects identified on the track. Since the busway opened it has proved very popular, with passenger numbers continuing to rise steadily. But in line with all such major engineering projects continuous monitoring of the track is necessary to detect any problems at the earliest stage - and some defects have been uncovered.

When the legal action against the busway constructors BAM was concluded, the County Council identified three potential areas of concern and reserved the right to seek recovery of the cost of any necessary repairs from the builders. Since then work has been ongoing to assess the extent and seriousness of the faults. The issues include gaps between the guideway beams, drainage in some areas and problems with the support shims. A report spells out defects, the work needed to assess them and measures which could be taken to meet the cost of rectification if it becomes necessary.

County Council Leader Martin Curtis, said: "We are determined that the success of the Busway will be maintained. As with all major engineering schemes we are keeping a close eye on the performance of the structure to ensure it meets the standards demanded during construction and to identify any repair or maintenance work outside of what could have reasonably been expected when the track was built.

"It is right and proper that any faults which are the responsibility of BAM Nuttall are put right at no cost to Cambridgeshire taxpayers and if professional experts find unexpected or additional repair or maintenance work is necessary we shall seek to recover the full cost of that work from BAM - even if that means taking further legal action.

SPOT SCHEME STOP SCAMS

May is Scam Awareness Month, coordinated by the Citizens Advice Bureau, is being held throughout May. The campaign aims to raise awareness of scams and prevent people from becoming a victim. Throughout the month, officers from the police and the Council's Supporting Businesses and Communities Service will be reminding people that scams can come in a variety of forms and that it's not just the elderly and vulnerable who can become a victim.

Every year more than three million people in the UK fall victim to scams, losing hundreds, sometimes thousands of pounds. With fewer than five per cent of people in the UK reporting scams to the authorities, Cambridgeshire County Council's Supporting Businesses and Communities Service has said that it is time to "fight back against scammers" to ensure they don't get away with conning innocent people.

Elaine Matthews from the Council's Supporting Businesses and Communities Service said "This is a great opportunity to really raise awareness of scams and the damage and distress that they can cause victims. Everyone knows an elderly or vulnerable person - whether they are a neighbour or a family member and we all have a duty to make sure we know the signs to look out for and how to help them."

Anyone who thinks they may be a victim of a scam can report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

TRADING STANDARDS ADVICE

Be cautious of traders who call at your door

In the last 5 years it is estimated that £1 million has been paid to rogue traders by older residents living in Cambridgeshire. In most cases the rogue trader will have called at the customer's door offering to do work on their house or garden, and will have overcharged for unnecessary and shoddy work.

These are serious crimes, in some cases costing the customer their life savings and often leading to them being fearful in their own homes. Trading Standards would like to make you aware of the telltale signs of rogue traders to help you avoid them. We would also urge you to pass this advice on to elderly friends and relatives.

Rogue traders typically:

- 1. Call at the door offering services** such as replacing a loose roof tile, roof or gutter cleaning, gardening, house maintenance, jet washing, driveway paving and tree felling.
- 2. Engage with the customer to win their trust** e.g. claiming to have been before, claiming they are working up the street etc. They will seem very friendly and chatty.
- 3. Start with a small job** such as gutter cleaning and then claim further work is needed. This subsequent work will not be quoted for and will run into thousands of pounds.
- 4. Make fraudulent claims** e.g. moss growth on a roof causes severe damage and needs to be washed off, painting a roof is necessary to protect it.
- 5. Fail to give you written notice of your right to cancel** which is required for most contracts agreed at home.
- 6. Use intimidation to extort money** and often take the customer to a bank or cash point to withdraw cash (a criminal offence).
- 7. Return again and again** demanding further payment for bogus reasons e.g. claiming that VAT has not been paid.

If you think rogue traders are currently at your property, are in the vicinity or are due to return, please contact the police on 999. If you think rogue traders have done some work for you but have left, contact our advice partner, Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline, on 08454 040506 for advice.

In terms of finding a trader you can trust, seek recommendations from friends and family where possible. Alternatively, use a trader on our Buy with Confidence approved trader scheme who will have been thoroughly checked by us.

To find an approved trader visit www.buywithconfidence.org.uk, call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline (above) or visit your local library, where staff will be able to look up traders on the scheme for you.

We would always recommend getting three quotes to ensure the price is competitive.

Join Cambridgeshire's online conversation at:

www.shapeyourplace.org

Follow us on Twitter @cambsc and Facebook/cambridgeshirecc

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Independent education experts have identified significant strengths in Cambridgeshire County Council's support for schools. These include the Council's good relationships with schools, the quality of the support offered to schools and the Council's plans for even better support to help schools improve. The review found that most children in Cambridgeshire did well at school, but said there was a pattern of low achievement in many of the more vulnerable groups, such as those in receipt of free school meals. Overall, more schools should be 'good' or 'outstanding' than is currently the case, the experts added.

The main recommendation of the review was for the council to bring together all agencies currently offering support to schools and to lead the development of a clear countywide strategy for challenge and support that will drive improvement in the future. This strategy will need to define more clearly the options for schools in terms of accessing support and the role of the council in ensuring this support has a positive impact, the review team added. The peer review was a very useful learning experience. The time and expertise given by colleagues was extremely valuable and the review has already contributed to our thinking about how best to drive improvement in all schools across Cambridgeshire.

TRADING STANDARDS ADVICE

Changes to the law that may affect your business from June 2014

The Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 come into force on 13th June 2014. They introduce significant changes to the way most businesses contract with consumers regardless of how the contract is entered into.

These new regulations cover contracts made for the sale and supply of goods, services and digital content. In brief, the main changes are:

- The requirement to provide specified information to consumers about the seller, the product and any additional charges before they enter into a contract.
- An increase to the minimum cancellation period from 7 to 14 days for most contracts made away from business premises or without face to face contact.
- In relation to the sale of goods, where the consumer cancels the contract a refund must be provided within 14 days of the *goods being returned* (or proof of their return). With regards to service contracts, there is a requirement for any refund to be made within 14 days from the *date of cancellation*.
- Limited exemption for cancellation periods for genuine emergency work.
- Prohibition of pre-ticked additional charge options.
- A requirement that most telephone helplines are chargeable at no more than the basic rate. Where this is not adhered to, the regulations allow consumers to claim any difference from the business.

Further guidance is available from the [Trading Standards Institute website](#) which is split into three areas - on premises, off premises and distance selling contracts - to help businesses identify the changes they will need to make to comply with the new regulations from the 13th June 2014. For further guidance on the new regulations visit the [BIS website](#).

The [Distance Selling Hub](#) will be updated nearer the time, although you should still refer to it for queries on the current requirements for selling goods or services at a distance.

TAKE NEW WALKS IN YOUR STRIDE

Local people can take a stroll towards being healthy with three new walks in East Cambridgeshire. The new weekly health walks are designed to be fun, social and to be a gentle work out, and would also be suitable for people who have suffered injury or ill-health. The new walks are part of the expanding Heart Beat Healthy Walks, which have been developed by a number of partners including Cambridgeshire County Council.

Heart Beat Healthy Walks is a Walking for Health scheme and welcomes new walkers throughout the year. There are number of these walks throughout East Cambridgeshire to suit all needs starting at a variety of times and locations. More information can be found at www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

Dr. Liz Robin, Director of Public Health at Cambridgeshire County Council, said: "Physical inactivity increases the risk of many diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. Walking has been described as the near perfect exercise. Even walking at a moderate pace for 150 minutes a week is enough to provide substantial health benefits. And, you don't have to do this all at once or do it alone, you can accumulate 150 minutes per week by being active in short 10 minute bursts, and invite others to walk with you".

If you would like to walk with Heart Beat Healthy Walks or train as a Walking for Health Volunteer Walk Leader please contact the Scheme Co-ordinator, Sam Miller, by phone 01480 379300 or email Heart.BeatHealthyWalks@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. You can also see the full programme and find out about other health walks in your area by logging onto www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk<<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk>>

DELIVERY OF STATION AND NEW TRANSPORT LINKS TO MOVE FORWARD

The County Council has giving the green light to the building of transport links for the much needed Cambridge Science Park Station which will see 3,000 passengers a day. The plans include building a busway to the new station as well as cycle and pedestrian links.

Government announced in December a £6 million fund to help deliver these much needed measures. The report outlines how the Department for Transport and Network Rail intend to build the station and pick up the associated costs of the scheme. This follows the County Council launching the project and demonstrating how the new station would be self-financing bring around £5 million in new rail income a year.

The Council will then be responsible for the building of the cycle, pedestrian and bus access to the site so that the station is integrated into the local transport network. The interchange at the new station will provide access onto the wider public transport and highway network. It will enable travellers to switch between all modes of transport with access for pedestrians, cyclists, bus users, car drivers, passengers, and rail users. The interchange will be linked into the existing Busway, including the pedestrian and cycle routes.

The money will be spent on a range of measures, including cycle links such as along Cowley Road and those from Nuffield Road onto the Busway cycleway. These latter will create a new route from East Chesterton to Science Park and Cambridge Regional College avoiding the Golden Hind junction on Milton Road.

The new station will be on the main line between Cambridge and Ely and is expected to be served by direct trains running to London Kings Cross, Liverpool Street, Norwich and

King's Lynn. As well as connecting into the national rail network, trains may also be available to Stansted Airport and Birmingham.

The scheme will include:

- a new station building, platforms, and other rail infrastructure to be used by around 3,000 passengers a day
- the extension of the Busway from Milton Road to the station as well as linking to the new town of Northstowe
- public space, pedestrian and cycle access routes
- cycle parking for 1000 cycles
- a taxi drop-off and pick-up area
- a 450 space car park with disabled and short stay parking.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "The station received huge support at public consultation with 90% of respondents supporting the proposal in principle. This Cabinet decision is the next step in delivering this much needed station which will help boost jobs and the economy as well as linking into the existing transport network. The funding we have received from Government is a reflection of the confidence they have in this scheme and business case we have put together."

PLANNING FOR A NEW HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING SERVICE

With Cambridgeshire one of the highest recyclers in the county, the Council is looking at how best to deliver its household recycling service in the future. This review will involve the proposed reshaping of the service, alongside delivering annual savings identified within the Council's Business Plan of £440,000 from April 2015.

The review will look at options such as potentially accepting trade wastes at a cost; service management by third sector businesses and changing opening hours, before examining any potential need to close household recycling centre sites.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "We have some fantastic Household Recycling Centres in Cambridgeshire such as Witchford and St Neots which make recycling not just an efficient process but a pleasant one too. It is facilities such as these which have helped the county to rank so highly in the national leagues. Our challenge is to look at our other centres in Cambridgeshire to deliver a better and most cost effective service, even if this means we have fewer sites in the future."

"We also know that the county is projected to continue to expand in the next 20 years by more than 70,000 homes. This is why it is essential we work closely with Districts, City and other key stakeholders to plan now for the future to ensure that we have considered the needs of our current and future residents. We will be learning from experience of neighbouring and further afield authorities who have already gone through a similar exercise. It is very important that however the service reshapes we consider the implications across the whole of Cambridgeshire whilst getting the best value for our residents."

Should the review be approved by Cabinet the strategy, which covers a five year period, will trigger initial options work with savings to be delivered by April 2015.

The current list of Household Recycling Centres are: Alconbury, Bluntisham, March, Milton, St Neots, Thriplow, Wisbech, Witchford and Whittlesey.

CABINET SET TO APPROVE NEW APPROACH TO HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Cambridgeshire County Council's Cabinet is expected to approve a new approach to highway maintenance which will provide a sustained improvement to the condition of the county's roads and pavements over time and give Councillors a greater say on work in their area. The change in approach to highway improvements results from a recommendation contained within a peer review of the service carried out in July 2013.

The new strategy:

Recognises the importance of all roads not just strategic routes in the county
Adopts a preventative rather than reactive approach to highway maintenance and repairs

The new focus is also expected over the long-term to help cut the cost of road maintenance by between 10-20%. Councillors will be given a greater opportunity to ensure local priorities are taken into account when maintenance and repair priorities are set

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "A key point made during the peer review was that the County Council's approach to highways maintenance should be focused around taking a long-term view which would maximise our ability to fix and improve the network within the resources available to us. This new strategy marks the start of a series of improvements to the way Cambridgeshire highways are maintained which will help us meet the expectations of the community while at the same time cutting the cost in the longer-term of maintaining the road and footway infrastructure throughout the county."

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

WHAT DOES THE TOUR DE FRANCE MEAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

With the Tour de France coming to Cambridge this summer, businesses from across the county are being invited to special briefings to hear what the race will mean for them. The meetings have been well attended so far with firms from across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire attending to hear the latest developments from road closure information to the promotional work which is being planned.

The business briefings began last autumn and have had many businesses coming along to hear what the impact of the Tour de France will be for them. This ranges from understanding the opportunities which thousands of visitors to the city and the county will bring to receiving up-to-date information about the potential disruption of the road closures. The point we have stressed throughout is the importance of planning now for the big day in July. So please come along to our remaining briefings in May and June no matter where your business is based in Cambridgeshire to get the latest information on Le Tour."

The riders will travel past the world famous colleges of St Johns, Trinity and Kings as they cycle along Kings Parade and Trumpington Street before leaving the city via Trumpington Road.

In the build up to the arrival of the Tour, detailed information will be given to residents, businesses and visitors regarding the impact of the race on Cambridge and the county. This will be made available online at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/letourstage3 and www.cambridge.gov.uk/le-tour-cambridge as well as through leaflets, and events.

Information will also be made available via Facebook:
www.facebook.com/LeTourCambridge or Twitter: @LeTourCambridge

CAMBRIDGESHIRE ENERGY SWITCH SCHEME

Cambridgeshire County Council have officially launched the second Cambridgeshire Energy Switch scheme. The aim of the scheme is to obtain better energy prices for residents by making a collective bid to energy suppliers. Residents can apply using our dedicated website at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/switch

BACKGROUND

Cambridgeshire Energy Switch is a scheme which aims to save Cambridgeshire residents money on their energy bills. Energy prices are increasing and numerous consumers across the County are not enjoying the lowest available tariff. Councils across the UK are now taking action to help their residents cut household energy bills. Cambridgeshire County Council is targeting all Residents to participate in energy switching but is particularly keen to target residents who are unable to afford to heat their home adequately and those paying disproportionately high bills to keep their home warm. This briefing will explain Cambridgeshire's Energy Switch scheme, its launch and what will be involved.

THE FIRST SWITCH

The Council has already taken part in one collective switch auction, in February 2014. This received over 1300 local residents to register to the scheme and of these 32% switched, making average savings of £224 per household. To date, Cambridgeshire residents in total have saved approximately £89,600. Cambridgeshire was one of the highest authorities in the country for the percentage of households that switched. We are hoping to keep this high level switching rate but this time increase the total number of registered households in order to save more Cambridgeshire residents money.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

The Council has signed up with a third-party provider called IChoosr. In tandem with Council officers, IChoosr will encourage residents to register their details from April 29 until June 9. Once residents have registered either online or via a paper application, the provider will use the collective bargaining power of households from Cambridgeshire and elsewhere to run a 'reverse auction' in June. Energy suppliers compete against each other in this auction to offer the cheapest tariffs and to encourage Cambridgeshire's collective block of customers to sign up with them. Energy providers can now offer a fifth tariff for collective switchers which we hope will bring forward better deals.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

There is no requirement on residents to switch tariffs, even if they sign up to the scheme. The Council will not have to pay the suppliers, and will in fact receive a small rebate from each customer who changes their energy supplier through the scheme to recover marketing costs. The supplier benefits through access to the Council's communication channels and marketing strategies. The Council benefits through helping residents save money in a time of rising prices especially those with high bills.

HOW WILL RESIDENTS FIND OUT ABOUT THE SCHEME?

Officers are working closely with the communications team and have produced a detailed communications campaign to run from April 29. Residents will hear about the Cambridgeshire Energy Switch scheme across media channels. Co-workers and councillors are also encouraged to spread the word and will receive briefings from April 29 right up to June 9, when registrations close and the auction opens.

NEXT STEPS If the communications campaign is a success and the level of residents to switch with the Cambridgeshire Energy Switch scheme is again high, there is the possibility to run future auctions with iChoosr in September. Cambridgeshire's level of participation is entirely optional.

THE GREAT WAR, BETWEEN THE LINES

The between the Lines project is holding a free commemorative event on 3 August 2014, 1-5pm in Hinchingbrooke House, Huntingdon.

The event aims to raise awareness of this hugely important milestone in world history, we will have activities to engage families as well as inform and educate. 'The Last Day of Peace' will include activities of interest to all ages. I'm flagging this up to you so that you can save the date in your diary.

The event will include:

- * Re-enactors - in costume - to help bring the alive the spirit of the Great War
- * The Music Hall Society who will perform music of the period. A brass band will also be playing music from the war years
- * The Combat Veteran Players will perform short extracts of Henry V and selected Rupert Brooke readings.
- * Six exhibitions including photographs, documents and letters from Cambridgeshire, Belgium and France
- * Vignettes and reading of letters to and from the front
- * Displays from St Neots Museum
- * Expert advice on family history from Cambridgeshire Archives

We are pleased to say that we will have Vintage Cycles, a display of Shire Horses in the grounds and hopefully a veteran car and model planes. We also aim to have cricket in the background and croquet (participatory) - weather permitting. There will also be light refreshments on sale.

Join Cambridgeshire's online conversation at:

www.shapeyourplace.org

Follow us on Twitter @cambssc and Facebook/cambridgeshirecc

~~~~~

*To give your points of view on any of these issues, contact me by email at;*

[j.e.reynolds@ntlworld.com](mailto:j.e.reynolds@ntlworld.com)

As Your County Councillor I welcome hearing from you on these and/or any other issues that affect our community."

**County Councillor John Reynolds**

**May 8th 2014**