

## **Joint Report from County and District Councillors for Melbourn Parish Council**

### **NEW East West Rail Consultation**

East West Rail will connect communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge, supporting sustainable economic growth in the area. The new railway would make it easier to reach jobs, education, public services and days out with family and friends.

We have updated our proposals to take account of further design work, ongoing engagement, environmental assessments, traffic and transport analysis and feedback from the consultation that concluded in January 2025.

This consultation will run for eight weeks from 14 April to 9 June 2026. The purpose of this consultation is to gather feedback on the updated proposals, particularly the elements which are new or have changed significantly since our previous consultation.

This consultation is intended to be our final consultation before we submit our Development Consent Order (DCO) application. It is important that you're involved in our consultation process as this gives you the opportunity to influence designs and help the project to address local needs and priorities.

More details: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation/consultation2026>

### **Cambridgeshire County Council**

#### **Nature Recovery from the Ground Up**

Cambridgeshire County Council is calling on residents across the county to play an active role in restoring local nature as part of the 'Nature Recovery - From the Ground Up' project (NR-FGU) a new initiative supporting parishes and community groups to design their own Community Nature Recovery Plans.

A Community Nature Recovery Plan is a locally created blueprint that sets out priorities for improving nature and wildlife at a parish level. These plans help communities to shape a vision for nature locally and identify steps to bring about the changes. The plans will support the wider goals of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Key actions include:

- Restoring habitats
- Creating nature corridors and stepping-stones for wildlife
- Increasing areas managed for wildlife.

These improvements benefit both nature and communities, helping reduce flood risk, support climate resilience, and enabling more people to enjoy time outdoors.

Through a series of workshops, communities explore what makes their local area special, share learning from similar habitats, identify potential projects, and collaborate to make them a reality.

As part of the project, all Cambridgeshire Parishes will have free access to the online mapping software Parish Online until March 2027. This will allow parish councils and community groups acting on their behalf to map out proposed projects relative to LNRS priorities, explore cross parish projects, and

contribute to collaborative maps (e.g. showing swift boxes across the county). **If you are interested in creating a Community Nature Recovery Plan, please get in touch with one of your councillors.**

More details: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/cambridgeshire-residents-invited-to-help-shape-new-community-nature-recovery-plans>

## **Flooding**

The County Council's Community Flood Action programme aims to:

- increase the county's resilience and ability to adapt to flooding through improving access to flood risk management information,
- improve flood risk data quality,
- provide guidance on asset management and, crucially,
- support local groups in establishing community flood plans.

In addition, to the seasonal newsletters, a series of webinar and in-person workshops are held throughout the year. A recording of the most recent webinar 'Understanding flood risk and different types of flooding' is available online, at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKpz1-v2\\_GA&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKpz1-v2_GA&feature=youtu.be). **If you are interested in setting up a local flood group, please get in touch with one of your councillors.**

More details: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/residents-and-householders/community-flood-action-programme>

## **Launching a Best Start in Life Delivery Plan to improve outcomes for children and families**

At the end of March, Cambridgeshire County Council published its Best Start in Life Delivery Plan, setting out a county-wide commitment to ensure every child grows up healthy, safe, and ready to learn, regardless of background or circumstances.

The plan details how partners across education, health, social care, and the community sector will work together to improve early childhood outcomes and reduce inequalities. It includes ambitious targets for school readiness, improved access to support, and enhanced early years provision across the county.

Best Start in Life will be delivered across the county in response to need to ensure that those families that would benefit most from support are able to access the help they need.

The plan also outlines improvements to home learning support, evidence-based parenting programmes, speech and language services, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) pathways, perinatal mental health, and infant feeding. A new website will ensure families can access trusted advice easily and at a time that suits them.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/launching-a-best-start-in-life-delivery-plan-to-improve-outcomes-for-children-and-families>

## Buses

A well-attended meeting of the Bus User Group was held in Bassingbourn in March. The group is an effective way of providing feedback about the performance of local services and building a relationship with those responsible for services at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

While the services – which are a real lifeline for many residents – have improved, the group welcomed that, following our feedback, the Mayoral Combined Authority responsible for bus services is now holding the operator to account.

The group also welcomed that later this year the Combined Authority plans to hold a consultation to feed into a review of the destination needs of local bus users, including across the border to Royston. We will follow up on the timetable and other suggestions made by the group. Please let us know if you want to be added to our email list. A report has been published on my website. **Please let us know if you want to be added to the mailing list.**

More details: <https://adambostanci.mycouncillor.org.uk/2026/03/26/meeting-report-cam-vale-bus-user-group/>

## EV cable channel trial

Cambridgeshire County Council will soon start a trial to test electric vehicle cable channels (EVCC). These channels help people who don't have a driveway to charge their electric vehicle (EV) at home. The cable goes inside a small channel in the pavement, so it is safe and tidy.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/electric-vehicle-charging/electric-vehicle-cable-channel-trial>

## Highway condition and potholes

As the weather improves, the potholes that opened up due to the cold and wet, should be filled more quickly. While the County Council continues to invest in our highways, as recently recognised by the Government, significant long-term funding is required to deal with the estimated £800m repair bill across the county. **Please continue to report issues in order to get as many issues addressed as possible while the weather conditions are favourable.**

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

## South Cambs District Council (SCDC)

### SCDC wins funding for AI 'proof of concept' projects

SCDC has successfully secured funding for collaborative work with the University of Cambridge to explore how artificial intelligence (AI) can support councils to improve services and make more effective use of data. The 12-month project is to deliver a proof of concept in five areas:

- Predictive risk intelligence for social housing maintenance (PRISM).

- Human orientated AI – a design framework for reaching vulnerable tenants (housing).
- Map automation for planning and local efficiency (MAPLE).
- AI Enabled surveys (planning)
- Automatic fly-tipping detection using refuse collection vehicle cameras.

More information can be found here: [AI@Cam Local Government AI Accelerator programme](#).

### Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Scheme

SCDC has committed another £152,000 to the popular ZCC grant scheme. The amount that applicants can apply for has risen from £15,000 per project to £19,500. Since the scheme was launched in 2019, it has supported 82 different projects, awarding over £855,000 to initiatives across the district including energy generation and efficiency, conservation measures at community buildings, community cycling events, cycle shelters, food waste reduction initiatives, community allotment and gardening projects.

The application window will open on Monday 25 May and close on Friday 24 July 2026. Projects on school sites and by parent / teacher associations will be able to apply – if there is a benefit to the wider community. Those interested in applying for a Zero Carbon Communities grant can join a workshop to find out more. Two sessions are to be held on Wednesday 20 May - one running from 12:30pm to 1:30pm and a second one from 6pm to 7pm. Potential applicants are encouraged to [register for either](#).

### Cancellation of non-responding postal votes

SCDC officers and councillors have, for several months, been campaigning to warn residents of the expiry of postal votes, which is a legal requirement and happens every three years. The deadline to apply for an extension has now passed and the postal votes of 4,266 residents have had to be cancelled (of the original 15,392 that required renewal) which represents a 72.28% positive response rate. All affected voters will receive a letter to inform them of this change and will also include details on how they might make a new application to vote by post if they wish. Applications need to be received by 5pm on 21 April 2026 to get a postal vote for the 7 May 2026 elections.

If you have any questions, please email [elections@scambbs.gov.uk](mailto:elections@scambbs.gov.uk).

### Local authority pre-election period began on Monday 30th March

The pre-election period for local authority elections starts on Monday 30th March and runs until the close of polls on Thursday 7th May. This should not unduly affect the PC.