

Cambridgeshire County Councillor John Reynolds

Bam Nuttall fail to meet own deadlines

A report published this month has revealed BAM Nuttall has missed their own self imposed deadlines to complete work on The Busway. Following inspections of BAM Nuttall's works at the end of last year six main issues were identified for the contractor to address before the Council could accept handover of the track.

A Cabinet report published last week states that BAM Nuttall has missed many of the dates they set for themselves to address the final six jobs and none of the jobs have yet been completed. Earlier this year BAM Nuttall bosses committed to install two standard joints in the new St Ives viaduct to fix the problem of water leaking onto the steel beneath – which if not fixed would reduce the life of the bridge.

However, the designs BAM Nuttall has put forward in recent weeks have not been accepted by Council experts as they do not fix the problem completely meaning the Council would be expected to accept an ongoing maintenance liability. Council transport bosses have made it clear to BAM Nuttall that the Council cannot accept the route with any outstanding liabilities. The contractor has paid over £6 million in damages for late delivery to date, and will continue to pay almost £14,000 a day until they complete the route to the standard specified.

Council commended at national awards for recycling

Cambridgeshire County Council has been highly commended at a National Awards ceremony for its innovative approach to managing the county's waste. At the Public Private Finance Awards, the County Council and local waste management company, Donarbon, were celebrated for working together to help meet the challenges of climate change in the county.

The commendation was given for the County Council's £730 million Waste PFI Project, which was designed to help meet challenging recycling targets and avoid costly fines. It includes the building of major waste management facilities such as the state of the art Mechanical Biological Treatment Plant at Waterbeach, and the running of the County Council's nine recycling centres.

The County Council was up against a range of much bigger authorities from across the country, and came second only to the multi billion pound Manchester PFI project.

New executive director starts

John Onslow has taken over as Acting Executive Director: Environment at the County Council's Environment Services following the retirement of previous Executive Director Brian Smith. Services ranging from planning for economic and housing growth, recycling, trading standards, transport, highways and environment all come under his remit.

John, who has a wealth of experience in working with these types of projects, joins from Cambridgeshire Horizons where, as Director for Development and Deputy Chief Executive, he led on major growth and regeneration projects, took forward the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth, which sets high standards for new developments, and led strategies for culture, sport and green infrastructure.

He was previously Assistant Director of Environment at Cambridgeshire County Council.

Million visitors visit Cambridgeshire museums

Figures just out show more and more people are visiting Cambridgeshire Museums and last year over million people discovered the County's historic heritage. The almost six per cent rise in visitor numbers and a doubling of the time volunteers have given shows how dedicated Cambridgeshire Museums are at preserving and showcasing the County's history.

Volunteers have also shown their commitment to Cambridgeshire's heritage as the number of hours spent volunteering in museums have more than doubled from 26,861 to 54,057. Nine of the county's 28 museums are wholly run by volunteers. More than 100,000 school children from across the region have visited in organised groups Cambridgeshire's museums.

My Cambridgeshire puts communities in the click of it

A new 'My Cambridgeshire' web service is being launched to take the hassle out of finding services and events on your doorstep. Communities have been telling the Council that it is often confusing to find out which council or organisation does what and how to contact them. This means people are sometimes put off from using the services they need.

That is why the 'My Cambridgeshire' mapping facility has been launched on the County Council's website to make it easier for residents to find a range of local information and services, near their homes. Residents can click on www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk and put in their address or postcode to find out where their local County Council run services are and how to contact them but also information on local services provided by partner agencies, such as the NHS and District and City Councils. Also the service gives information about local community events near by.

Work at Cambridge railway station completed ahead of schedule

Work to improve public transport access at Cambridge Railway Station will be completed early. The work was part of a Cambridgeshire County Council project to create a new railway station bus interchange for all buses, including those that will use the guided busway. Railway station users were thanked for their patience during the works and bus stops outside the railway station building have returned to normal.

Dust off your bike and get it repaired for free

Cyclists have been bringing along their bikes for a free 'bike MOT' at the Dust off your bike events in Cambridge. Held on Saturday 15 May in Barnwell lots of cyclists came along for free basic bike repairs and learn about bike maintenance. There were also fun cycling activities for children. There is another event set for Saturday 19 June in Arbury, These special events have being organised by Cycle Cambridge, a joint campaign that will see around £7 million spent on encouraging cycling in the city as well as surrounding villages. They are part of a wider programme of free events leading up to Bike Week (19 to 27 June) designed to get residents on their bikes.

Engage in new free courses and events at Central Library

From knitting to creative writing - new afternoon EngAGE courses at Cambridge's Central Library have been launched to give people the chance to try a new skill or meet new friends. Every Monday between 2pm to 4pm there will be various courses, events tours and talks to get everyone hooked on a new pastime.

The sessions are being run by the County Council for adults. It is part of making libraries a focal point for the community and emphasising that they do more than just lending books.

Courses include:

- 1st Monday of the month: Creative writing
- 2nd Monday of the month: Knitting group
- 3rd Monday of the months: Speaker event
- 4th Monday of the month: Reading group
- 4th Monday of the month; Knitting group
- 5th Monday of the month: Library Tour

Comprehensive Areas Assessment:

In May 2010, CAA was brought to an end by the Government, and work on Comprehensive Area Assessment for 2010 has halted. More information will be circulated when available and we understand that the Audit Commission, with the Government, is looking at a future assessment regime. This does not affect Ofsted, which has a statutory obligation to carry out an annual assessment of Children's Services.

Information arising from the new Government

Local government savings

Details of the £1.166bn Local Government contribution to the £6.2bn cross government savings in 2010/11 were announced on 11th June 2010. Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has confirmed that no local authority will face reductions in their revenue grant of more than two per cent.

25 May 2010 - Queen's Speech

During the Queen's Speech on 25 May 2010, the Queen outlined what laws the Government wants to pass and stated that the proposed Bills will be based upon the principles of freedom, fairness and responsibility. The first priority of the Government will be to reduce the deficit and restore economic growth. An emergency Budget will be announced on 22 June to outline how this will be done.

Bills that will be introduced immediately include:

Academies Bill (Department for Education)

Relevant provisions in the Bill include:

- Allowing more secondary schools to transfer to academy status and expanding the academy programme to include primary and special schools for the first time.
- Pre-approving schools judged outstanding by Ofsted to become academies immediately.
- Schools transferring to academy status will not be maintained by the local authority and will instead be funded by the Young People's Learning Agency
- Removes any need for consultation on a change to academy status.
- Provides some schools with greater freedom over the curriculum, admissions and pay.
- Includes an obligation on successful academies to assist weaker schools in the same area.

Bills that will be introduced after the summer recess 2011 include:

Decentralism and Localism Bill

The main elements of the Bill identified currently are:

- Give councils a General Power of Competence.
- Give residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and to veto excessive council tax increases.
- Greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups.
- New powers to help save local facilities and services threatened with closure.
- Require public bodies to publish online the job titles of every member of staff and the salaries and expenses of senior officials.
- Abolishing Regional Spatial Strategies.
- Abolishing the Infrastructure Planning Commission and replacing it with a "democratic system with a fast-track process for major infrastructure".
- Abolish the Standards Board regime.
- Create Local Enterprise Partnerships (to replace Regional Development Agencies).
- Create new trusts that would make it simpler for communities to provide homes for local people.

Energy and Green Economy Bill

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Implementation of a 'green deal' to deliver energy efficiency to homes and business – delivering a framework including potential incentives to energy suppliers and households that will transform the provision of energy efficiency in the UK by enabling a 'pay as you save' approach.
- Reform of energy markets to deliver security of supply and ensure fair competition.
- Put in place a framework to guide the development of a smart grid that would revolutionise the management of supply and demand for electricity.
- Require energy companies to provide more information on energy bills to empower consumers and ensure fair access to energy supplies.
- Ensure that North Sea infrastructure would be available to all companies to ease the exploitation of smaller and more difficult oil and gas fields.
- Create a Green Investment Bank to support investment in low carbon projects to transform the economy.

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

The main elements of the Bill will be:

- Directly elected individuals to hold the police to account.
- Dedicated Border Police Force, as part of a refocused Serious Organised Crime Agency.
- Strengthened relationships the deal with serious crime and extended collaboration between forces to deliver better value for money.
- Overhaul of the Licensing Act to give local authorities and the police much stronger powers to remove licenses, banning the sale of alcohol below coast price, and allowing councils to charge more for late-night licenses to pay for additional policing.

Education and Children's Bill

Relevant provisions in the Bill include:

- To reform Ofsted and other accountability frameworks to ensure that head teachers are held properly accountable for the core educational goals of attainment and closing the gap between rich and poor.
- To introduce a slimmer curriculum.
- To introduce a reading test for 6 year olds.
- To give teachers and head teachers the powers to improve behaviour and tackle bullying.
- Introduce a 'pupil premium' so that more money follows the poorest pupils.

Health Bill

The intended benefits of the Bill are:

- To create an NHS led by clinical decision-makers that is more responsive to patients and fosters continuous quality improvements.
- To help shape a healthcare system which drives up standards of care, eliminates waste and achieves outcomes that are amongst the best in the world.
- To focus more on patients, ensuring they genuinely share in making decisions about their care and have more choice and control.

Yours

John Reynolds

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