

GOVERNMENT INVITES CAMBRIDGESHIRE TO BID FOR TRANSPORT FUNDING

Cambridgeshire's transport bid has potential says Government. Cambridgeshire is one of 13 authorities being asked by Government to re-submit bids for transport funding to boost economic growth and reduce carbon emissions. Ministers have said Cambridgeshire County Council's bid has potential and if approved in the next round would bring additional investment of £5 million over the next four years. The funds would improve walking and cycling facilities as well as Smarter Choices and travel promotion across the whole county. Funding would also go into the Transport for Cambridgeshire project which is looking to set up locally based transport solutions.

The Government agreed to fund 39 proposals as part of the first tranche of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and invited a further 13, including Cambridgeshire, to re-submit. Around two thirds of the overall funds will be available in the later tranches. In total there were 73 bids from authorities for the money and 21 were turned down completely.

In particular the funding would be spent on:

- * Continuing the successful work of the multi-million pound Cycle Cambridge project and take the approach into the rest of the county.
- * Providing support for the ongoing promotion of travel planning as a key tool in the management of the transport network, building and seeking to expand on the success of the Travel for Work Network.
- * Providing funding support for the Local Transport Consortia that will provide transport services for transport for Cambridgeshire.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Bidding for funds is never certain but I am pleased that we have not fallen at the first hurdle and been told by Government our ideas have potential. We will now work up the details for the second round. The money would be spent on rolling out the successful work of the Cycle Cambridge project across the whole of the county as well as improving travel planning. It would also be used to back the Cambridgeshire Future Transport project to help communities access millions in funding to boost local transport and enterprise."

CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S TRANSPORT REVOLUTION TAKES A BIG STEP FORWARD

County Council's Cabinet have agreed bold steps to give local communities a much bigger say in how public money is spent to revolutionise transport in Cambridgeshire. It is proposed to combine around £34 million currently spent by a range of public services on transport and use the money to drive forward local transport solutions, and to support enterprise and economic growth.

A micro-franchise scheme will be piloted where small local companies can be set up with the support of the council - boosting local enterprise and transport. In light of good progress being made by the Cambridgeshire Future Transport initiative it is also being suggested that plans to reduce subsidised bus services over the next four years should be linked to the pathfinder projects.

This means no further bus subsidy reductions are to be made until it is clearer what alternatives can be put in place and not before the adoption of the 2012/13 Integrated Plan. Wherever possible a withdrawal of subsidies and the introduction of alternatives need to go hand in hand.

As pathfinder projects are developed, councillors will have a better chance to assess their potential and even see some in action by the end of this year. It will also give the council an opportunity to consult relevant groups and complete an in-depth assessment of the impact of the proposals on the community in light of the Cambridgeshire Future Transport project.

Cabinet also backed plans to approve the principle of establishing a Transport for Cambridgeshire partnership to oversee the implementation of these radical initiatives at their meeting today, Tuesday. As part of the new plans, local consortia could be set up to use the money to run statutory services as well as investing any surplus or profit made into improved local services.

A micro-franchise scheme will also be piloted where small local companies can be set up with the support of the council. This could see certain overhead costs initially picked up centrally, giving the franchise more chance of creating a successful business and thus able to look for more opportunities to provide transport in the local community.

Cabinet will also be asked to support plans to invite expressions of interest from businesses and other organisations wishing to contribute to the provision of local passenger transport. Work has already started with partners and bus operators on delivering this new approach, which followed a very well attended transport summit held in February at March Town Hall. The County Council has been joined by city and district councils together with the NHS and transport providers to take the project forward.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "This is an exciting and bold project which could see the tens of millions of pounds spent across the county of passenger transport put in the hands of our communities to provide locally targeted transport. Not only does it give the decisions about how to provide local transport to local people, but through the micro-franchise scheme could see local enterprise being given a real boost. This franchise model gives people a better chance to set up their own business while looking for even more opportunities in the community they serve to meet transport needs."

"In light of the good progress the Initiative is making, I am keen that we link future reductions in subsidies with the implementation of alternatives. Wherever possible a withdrawal of subsidies and the introduction of alternatives need to go hand in hand. With trials of new local transport pilots due to take place later this year it is sensible to see how effective they are. It also gives us an opportunity to carry out in-depth consultation with communities and other groups about the proposed service reductions in the light of these potentially alternative schemes. That is why recommended there be no further reductions until the review is carried out."

SENIOR MANAGEMENT REMUNERATION (SMT).

Much has been said nationally about the salaries of senior council officers. For Cambridgeshire all officer salaries over £50k are available to view at any time on the County Council's website. Our Chief Executive, who started work in 2007, has not received any increase in salary but has this year taken a £20k pay cut. The Council has also been able to reduce the SMT by some 30% over the past four years.

FREE ADVICE SESSIONS TO HELP BUSINESSES GROW

A partnership approach which is offering free advice and support for small and medium size firms could help business to cut costs and take advantage of grant funding opportunities. Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Bedford College have joined forces to organise the event and to provide advice and support to private sector organisations based in the East of England with fewer than 250 employees.

1. Businesses with an energy audit to identify possible cost savings and grant funding opportunities
- 1:1. 2. Grants advice, with experts in funding opportunities for small and medium size enterprises.
3. Experts in construction training to improve staff skills to

enable businesses to take advantage of the growing green agenda and identify appropriate courses which focus on sustainable construction. 4. Guided tours of the greenhouse which has been retrofitted with technology to significantly upgrade its energy efficiency rating. 5. Free diagnosis of working practices, highlighting opportunities that can help cut costs and improve business practices through resource and energy efficiency.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "This free advice evening is a good way for small and medium size businesses to tap into the kind of support and advice which can be expensive to gain and may normally be beyond their resources. It's also another good example of how local authorities and educational establishments across the region are helping and encouraging local business to take advantage of the growing green agenda nationally."

NEW SMARTLIFE LOW CARBON CENTRE REACHES CONSTRUCTION MILESTONE

Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge Regional College, partners in SmartLIFE's new skills centre for renewable energy, will celebrate a milestone in the development of the SmartLIFE Low Carbon Centre on Friday 8 July. The £3.1 million Centre at The Hive will help speed up growth of the low carbon economy in the East of England. The building is due to be completed in October.

The Hive will eventually be home to three projects:

- * SmartLIFE Low Carbon
- * A SmartLIFE technologies expo
- * The Future Business Centre.

A national leader in business support activities for social enterprises, construction of The Future Business Centre's support and incubation space for up to 50 new companies is expected to start in September 2011.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "SmartLIFE training can prepare our local construction industry to take advantage of business opportunities to come. Demand for new skills is being driven by the requirement for zero carbon homes by 2016 and tighter standards for building regulations. In the renewable energy market, this is being accelerated by the Green Deal - where home energy efficiency improvements will be paid for by savings from energy bills. These changes are creating tremendous new business opportunities for local people.

To improve local workforce skills for both new entrants to construction industry and the existing workforce, CRC will offer qualifications in six technology areas: installation of photo-voltaic panels for electricity generation, solar thermal heating for hot water, ground and air source heat pumps for heating, rain water harvesting, advanced gas heating systems, and solid wall insulation. Modules in low carbon technologies will boost traditional skills training. To reduce the impact of CO2 locally, homeowners will also be able to learn about sustainable refurbishment and retrofitting of renewable energy systems to existing properties.

This new centre represents a step into the future, bringing innovation in renewable energy systems for our students, the construction industry and the local community. We already have a SmartLIFE Centre at CRC where we teach modern methods of construction, and the new Low Carbon Centre will allow us to go even further in teaching the skills to build low carbon homes and install renewable energy systems.

Kier has recently sponsored 25 students from the Cambridge and Peterborough region on the Construction and Built Environment Diploma for an additional two day Innovative Methods of Construction (IMC) training programme run by SmartLIFE. There can be no doubting that our industry needs projects like this. The SmartLIFE

Low Carbon centre has been designed to be a low impact and highly energy efficient building. The visual character of the building is strong, simple and modern."

FIRST TIME TRIAL FOR NEW CYCLEWAY SURFACE IN CAMBRIDGE

Cambridgeshire County Council have been using a new material for the first time as it re-surfaces short sections of cycleway. The two trial sites are on Castle Hill outside The Old Police House and in Grange Road from the junction with Clarkson Road going northwards. If the new material proves successful it will be used to resurface the northern part of Grange Road later in the summer.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Supporting cycling is vital to help reduce congestion and improve the environment. With fuel prices at an all time high, cycling represents an affordable and enjoyable way to keep active whilst contributing to reducing traffic congestion and improved air quality. One of our commitments is to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists and this work will deliver benefits to the local communities. The new material is less expensive than traditional surfacing methods and has been used successfully for a range of purposes in other parts of the country."

STREET LIGHT REPLACEMENT PROGRAM STARTS

The County Council is about to start work on replacing more than 50,000 street lights as part of a project to improve lighting and safety for communities across Cambridgeshire.

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) funded partnership with Balfour Beatty will replace most of the street lighting columns in the county with improved lighting levels and reduced maintenance and replacement costs over the next 25 years.

Consultation has already started with local communities and will continue throughout the replacement program. The replacement program schedule for the first six months has now been published by the County Council (details below) and work on the ground is expected to commence in August.

Currently the County Council maintains around 56,000 street lights in Cambridgeshire with a further 5,000 lights owned by district and parish councils. Under the PFI contract a single lighting standard will be introduced across the whole county using modern energy efficient lights which will cut maintenance and electricity costs. The existing lighting network costs more than £3.2 million to maintain and light – the new network and its operation is expected to save around £350,000 annually. Street lights will be replaced over the next five years by Balfour Beatty with the company then maintaining the network for a further 20 years.

The Government has awarded Cambridgeshire around £52 million for the project. This allows the County Council to use a private contractor to do the replacement over five years but for the Council to pay back over the full 25 years, rather like a mortgage. This has made it possible to tackle the backlog of poor lighting stock across the county. Over the lifetime of the PFI the government funding is expected to total around £100 million.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "The development of the PFI street light replacement program and our partnership with Balfour Beatty gives us an opportunity to make significant improvements to street lighting and community safety in Cambridgeshire. We have already been talking to local communities about the replacement work and any areas of concern where they would want to see better lighting to improve safety. At the same time, by using the most modern lamps and control equipment available we will be able to reduce the number of columns needed in some areas, cut replacement costs and make significant saving on electricity bills and carbon output to help protect the environment."

CHECK OUT NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE LIBRARIES

A highly successful scheme to introduce new self-service technology in libraries is being rolled out across Cambridgeshire. The latest phase of the project will see nine libraries have the technology installed, with the rest being completed later.

Where the technology has been installed more than 90 per cent of transactions, such as issues, returns, renewals and payments, are carried out using the equipment.

Cambridge's Central Library alone sees some 834,002 transactions through its equipment since 29 September 2009.

The new self-service machines enable customers to:

- * Issue and return books, story cassettes, DVDs and CDs quickly and easily
- * Check what books they already have out on loan
- * Renew items
- * Pay overdue and loan charges for story cassettes, DVDs and CDs

The self-service is quick and easy to use and staff will be on hand to explain how the machines work and to answer any questions. Libraries will close for a week to enable the installation work to take place. During closure, Library services will be available as usual at all the other libraries in Cambridgeshire. Books and other material on loan can be renewed by phone: 0345 045 5225 or via the online library catalogue.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Self-service has been highly successful in the libraries we have already introduced it. The equipment is easy to use and library staff will be on hand to help people using it. We apologise for any inconvenience while the work is being carried out and the library temporarily closed."

When the library reopens, customers will need a PIN number to use the self-service machines. Please ask a member of staff for a PIN as soon as possible in order to prepare for the new system.

Local Library closures

Arbury Monday 18th July Mon 25th July

Histon Monday 25th July Monday 1st August

Cherry Hinton Monday 1st August Monday 8th August

Burwell Monday 8th August Monday 15th August

Barnwell Road Monday 19th September Tuesday 27th September

NEW BROADBAND AGREEMENT NETS MAJOR SAVINGS FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The County Council and other public sector bodies across the region are set to see major savings and benefits from a new Cambridgeshire IT Network agreement, linking Cambridgeshire public services and improving broadband for schools. The new Cambridgeshire Public Sector Network contract has been awarded to Virgin Media Business following a successful partnership procurement led by the County Council.

The new network will provide increased bandwidth for more than 200 schools and provide significant savings thanks to improved IT, making it easier for public services to work in partnership. Currently the partnership includes Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority as well as the voluntary and community sector represented by the Cambridge Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "The new Cambridgeshire Public Sector Network agreement will provide faster, more cost-effective and secure networks that will enable public services across Cambridgeshire to deliver more efficient services.

Shared networking will keep costs down, delivering more for less while providing real benefits for our communities.

We're absolutely committed to helping the public sector do more with technology, whether that be connecting multiple buildings with a super-fast network, empowering them to use the cloud or sharing valuable data across organisations. The CPSN Framework is a great example of the future of public sector technology procurement and we're incredibly proud to be making this happen.

FOCUS LED TO ROMAN FORT ON CAMBRIDGE'S CASTLE HILL

The story of how Cambridge grew out of a Celtic river crossing and was once called Duroliponte in Roman times was revealed on a special guided walk of Castle Hill. Whilst the modern Castle Hill is the site of Cambridgeshire County Council's Shire Hall headquarters, it has more to offer than just a great view over the city.

It has been the centre of Cambridge since before the Roman invasion, when a defended Celtic settlement was built here to control the crossing of the river. After the Roman invasion a fort may have been built on the site and this later developed into a small Roman town known as Duroliponte. After the Norman Conquest, the first of two medieval castles were built, giving its name of Castle Hill, and the site continued to be of importance when in the English Civil War it was fortified with cannons. Later history of the site includes its use as a gaol in the 19th Century.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Castle Hill is a site people may walk by every day on their way to work or use just to view the city, but never know much about. This is a chance for people to discover the history of the site."

ROAD SAFETY OFFICERS BACKING NATIONAL ACCIDENT REDUCTION CAMPAIGN

Road Safety Education Officers and Cycle Training Instructors from Cambridgeshire County Council will be out and about in support of a campaign to reduce accidents and injuries to youngsters. The Child Accident Prevention Trust's annual Child Safety Week is a community education campaign that aims to raise awareness of the number of accidents that seriously injure, disable or kill children and the steps that can be taken to prevent them.

One of the key messages of the courses will be the importance of taking a second look behind for traffic before making right hand turns. Each year, around 3,500 schoolchildren countywide are trained on the road. The aim of the training is to give young people the basic skills to cycle on the road in simple traffic conditions and encourage safe cycling habits for life.

GUIDED BUS UPDATES

PUMP UP TO AVOID THE JAMS AS BUSWAY BLAZES A TRAIL

Fire engines were rolling onto The Busway as drivers carried out training on the concrete track. Some fire crews have already been on the guideway, but other crews from in and around Cambridge, St Ives and Huntingdon will all be trained so they can respond quickly if an emergency occurred on any part of the 16-mile route.

Council and emergency service have agreed a protocol which will see fire engines use the guideway while the police and ambulance service vehicles use the maintenance track that runs next to the entire length of the guideway. The plan in place will make sure all vehicles can get to, and away, from any emergency as quickly as possible without the maintenance track being blocked by one for the other emergency services in attendance.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "The Council and emergency services have had a plan in place to deal with any emergency situation on the guideway for some time. Now we are at the start of the home straight before buses being to run on Sunday 7 August, it is important we complete all the final training necessary. Everyone is very focussed on the start of bus services and a huge number of people will be very pleased when buses begin to run.

KEEPING YOUR BUSWAY RELIABLE, FAST AND FREQUENT

Recovery trucks have completed final trials to make sure The Busway remains reliable - even in the event that a bus needs to be towed out of the track. Unlike rail, where a break down disrupts the entire line and causes long delays for other trains, guided buses can be immediately diverted around the section where a bus is being recovered which means only a few minutes delay for passengers.

Busway bosses have said they do not expect the recovery vehicle to be called on often, but the final trials have confirmed vehicles can be towed away quickly as expected. Recovery firm Allways will have a vehicle on standby 24/7 so they can get to any problems swiftly and the successful recovery trials are the latest step the Council is taking to prepare for The Busway opening on Sunday 7 August.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "A broken down train between Cambridge and London this week meant trains were cancelled, but on The Busway buses will simply divert around a section if there is a problem. This will cause minimal delays for other buses. We expect it to be rare for a bus to need to be towed, but the process will be quick, easy and we will be able to keep services running without long delays. It is important for The Busway to offer a reliable, fast and frequent service and these recovery trials help make sure that is the case under all circumstances."

POLICE AIR SUPORT HEADS FOR CHANGE.

Cambridgeshire Police Authority members have discussed a proposal from the constabulary to change the way in which air support is provided in the force area. The constabulary had recommended it entered into a consortium with Chiltern Air Support Unit, backed up with existing arrangements with Suffolk and Essex police forces.

The move will save an estimated £0.5 million and provide 500 flying hours at a reduced cost per flight hour. Members scrutinised a comprehensive briefing paper and took the opportunity to ask the force's ACPO team questions on the recommendation before making the decision to approve the proposal. The constabulary asked the authority to consider this proposal at the finance and resources committee on June 16. It was decided to take the decision to the full authority meeting to enable all members to consider its strengths and weaknesses.

We are confident that the move will provide a borderless air support service, which can be called upon 24/7 and result in more efficient tasking across the region and greater resilience.

John Reynolds July 2011