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A14 NEWS WELCOMED

Transport chiefs at Cambridgeshire County Council have welcomed news that improving the A14 could be included in the Chancellor's Autumn statement. The County Council has been leading, with our partners and local MPs, a campaign to make sure the vital road improvements stay on the Government's agenda.

The Council has been in talks with Government and ministers arguing the road needs increased capacity and improved performance to help unlock housing and business development at places such as Northstowe and Alconbury. These improvements are vital to help drive forward the economic prosperity of Cambridgeshire and the UK.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "The fact that Government is taking the A14 issue seriously is down to the long and sustained campaign we have been leading on with our partners. Improving the A14 is vital for improving safety, supporting business and reducing congestion. But it is not just vital locally it is important regionally, nationally and internationally. At the moment it is a barrier to growth at a time when Cambridgeshire could help kick start the economy.

"We have argued that it needs increased capacity and improved performance so that the traffic flows freely and unlocks housing development and business opportunity at places such as Alconbury and Northstowe. We have made these arguments strongly to Government and it looks like they have been listening. The news of Government's strong commitment to finding a solution is a great step forward but we will continue to push for the process to be carried out speedily and turn from talk to tarmac."

MULTIHOG IS A FIRST FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridgeshire County Council has announced how it will be gritting the track alongside the Guided Busway and the multi-purpose piece of kit which will be used to help prevent slips and trips could also save the Health Service money! A special 'Multihog' machine will be used for a variety of purposes including gritting the maintenance track alongside the guided busway, treating other harder to reach areas around the county and could even be brought into play to help with road maintenance.

The car free 16-mile maintenance track is already proving extremely popular with cyclists, runners and walkers, and as an alternative commuter route into Cambridge. But its length, width and access restrictions mean it was not suitable for gritting using existing equipment. But a solution has been found using the Multihog, which combines brine spraying equipment and a snow plough to keep the route ice and snow free.

In particularly bad weather conditions the snow plough can be brought into use and the £75,000 four-wheel drive vehicle will also be used by the County Council to treat other restricted access areas such as town centres when it is available. The new equipment will help save the County Council money by replacing machinery which is currently leased, ensuring efficient use of brine spray to reduce cost and protect the environment and by reducing the number of slips and trips and consequent cost of visits to GP surgeries or A & E departments.

County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Tony Orgee, said: "We are already working very closely with health partners to do everything we can to keep people safe, well and warm over the winter months and this piece of equipment will boost the range of areas we are able to grit and therefore help to cut the number of people who potentially need medical treatment because of winter-weather related injuries."

It is estimated that every visit to a hospital emergency department costs between £57 and £200 depending on the injuries sustained and the treatment needed and it can cost up to £6,000 to treat an elderly patient for a hip fracture. The average cost of a GP visit is estimated to be almost £65. The brine sprayer was chosen over conventional gritting equipment to ensure accurate spraying in defined areas, which minimises the environmental impact of stray spray and keeps brine use to a minimum.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Since it opened, the Guided Busway has proved very popular with passengers. The smooth-surfaced track alongside is proving to be equally well used by a host of cyclists, walkers, horse riders, pedestrians and local dog for a walk!.

One of the major advantages of this specialist piece of equipment is that it will be used not only on the maintenance track and elsewhere in harder to reach areas, but it can also be brought into service throughout the year by adding other attachments such as a planer or the sweeper which can be used during highway repair work which goes on over all 52 weeks of the year."

"Thanks to the flexibility of this machine it is not only perfect for treating the maintenance track and other areas during the winter months, but because of the range of attachments available it can be used for other work also - it is certainly not going to be sitting in a garage for half the year, "said Councillor Criswell. National awards for promoting sustainable travel"

The Multihog features a 1200 litre brine tank, four wheel drive, a 90hp diesel engine and has a top speed of 40 kph. It has a towing capacity of three tons and the quick release mechanism enables all attachments to be changed or demounted.

COMMITMENT WINS SCHOOLS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Four Cambridgeshire schools have won national recognition for their commitment to encouraging sustainable ways of getting to and from school. Oakington Primary, the Bellbird Primary in Sawston and the Grove Primary in Cambridge received the Gold Standard and Barton Primary School the Bronze Standard in the School Travel Plan National Accreditation Scheme.

The schools were given their awards for the quality of their School Travel Plans and the commitment they demonstrate to encouraging sustainable modes of travel to school and reducing dependence on car travel. The scheme, administered by sustainable school travel charity Modeshift, awards gold, silver or bronze standards. Only 6 gold awards were given this year to schools outside London, showing how well these schools have done.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "The work that these schools have done to promote walking and cycling is amazing. All of the schools have worked really hard and evidenced that hard work to achieve the award. I am particularly pleased that we have three schools in Cambridgeshire that have managed to reach the Gold Standard."

"To reach this level, a school needs to demonstrate that sustainable travel is embedded in the school and that there is a whole school ethos to encouraging pupils to 'think green'. I am very pleased that schools in Cambridgeshire are so involved in encouraging their pupils to travel to school more sustainably. The work that these four schools in particular have done in order to receive these awards is outstanding - they have all clearly all embraced the sustainable travel ethos."

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TRADERS PRAISED FOR 100% PASS RATE IN CHALLENGING UNDERAGE CUSTOMERS

Traders have been praised for doing their bit in the community after 100 per cent of them passed tests on what items can be sold to young people. Trading Standards has been supporting businesses to help them prevent underage sales as part of its commitment to encourage enterprise and safeguard the community.

There were 31 shops visited during October half term by Trading Standards using 15 to 16 year old volunteers to see if the trader would sell alcohol, cigarettes or fireworks. All the stores correctly asked the volunteers for ID. Trading Standards carry out test purchasing to ensure stores are following the advice they are given to comply with the law as well as following up on concerns raised by the public and other agencies.

As part of ongoing support to businesses, Trading Standards had previously worked with the shops to help them prevent underage sales by providing training on the recommended 'Challenge 25' policy. If a customer looks under 25 they'll be asked for ID to prove their age. The scheme is now commonplace for most retailers and the red and black posters informing customers are a familiar sight in many shops.

Cambridgeshire County Councillor Mathew Shuter, Cabinet Member for Enterprise said: "This is a great result and shows that shops in Cambridgeshire have taken their responsibility to prevent underage sales in their community seriously and we hope that this good practice continues. Trading Standards prefers to work with stores to make sure they have the right training and understanding of the law as part of Cambridgeshire County Council's commitment to encourage business and the local economy. www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

INFORMATION DAY TO URGE BUSINESS TO TAP INTO NEW TECHNOLOGY

A free information day has been organised to help East of England organisations learn more about the benefits of alternative energy systems and perhaps generate business from the new technologies available. The SmartLIFE Retro – fit for business event will be held on Monday, December 5, and is open to all private sector organisations in the region with less than 250 employees.

The information day has been organised by a partnership led by Cambridgeshire County Council which recently won a £200,000 European grant to boost a pioneering energy saving project in Wisbech. The County Council joined forces with Anglia Ruskin University, Luminous and Fenland District Council to successfully bid for money from the European Regional Development Fund and Housing Growth Fund.

SmartLIFE Retro – fit for business will use the cash as part of a £500,000 project to carry out work on three existing social housing blocks of flats in the town and work with tenants to spread the benefits of energy saving by cutting costs and reducing power use. Work will include changing the heating systems, generating electricity on site and using the most modern energy monitoring technology to help keep costs down. Information gained from the project will be used to help local companies gain knowledge and experience of the benefits of different energy saving systems which they can use to help them attract business or to expand the range of services they offer to the public.

Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Councillor Matthew Shuter, said: "I think this exciting and pioneering project will help put Cambridgeshire at the forefront of the development of the low care economy and this event will help expand the knowledge and future expertise of local companies who are interested in getting involved in this market or expanding the level of business for those already involved in this type of work."

COUNTY COUNCIL WINS FUNDING TO HELP PROTECT IMPORTANT ANCIENT MONUMENT

The County Council has been given financial backing by Natural England to help protect one of the oldest roads in Cambridgeshire. A total of £25,000 over five years is being made available for additional management of grass and scrub on the Roman Road.

The Roman Road starts in Fulbourn and runs through several parishes towards Haverhill. The road is no longer used by vehicles, but it is an extremely popular right of way used by walkers, riders and runners. But unfortunately it has become somewhat overgrown. The road is also a site of national archaeological significance, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is known for the variety of flora and fauna which make it their home. The overgrowth has been damaging both the historic and natural features of the road.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "We have long worked with national partners such as Natural England and English Heritage and locally with the Friends of the Roman Road to keep the road open and available to those looking to get out and about in the countryside. "But there comes a point when keeping ahead of the scrub becomes an impossible and soul destroying task for volunteers, so we are delighted to have made an agreement with Natural England for the additional funding which will allow us to bring in a contractor to cut back worst of the vegetation and further improve this unique feature of the Cambridgeshire countryside."

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

TAKE THE RIDEWAY NEXT TO THE GUIDEWAY

Riders and walkers can now enjoy the full length of the 16 mile maintenance track that runs along the Cambridgeshire Busway after the last sections of black top were laid. Work to lift the maintenance track by as much as four feet to minimise the chance of flooding has been completed. This is the last of the major defects left by the Busway contractor to be corrected. While doing this work the Council has taken the opportunity, with the assistance of grant from cycling charity Sustrans, to add a black top surface. Already there are thousands of trips a day on the maintenance track, which is also a bridleway, while the busway continues to be a success since it opened in August.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "This is a superhighway for cyclists, horse riders and walkers that stretches from St Ives to Cambridge. We have been very pleased with the amount of people using it for work and leisure and hope more people will be encouraged to try it out now the new smoother surface has been laid along its whole length. The completion of the final section of path, which enables National Cycle Network Route 51 to be diverted on to the route from Milton Road, Cambridge to St Ives, providing a really excellent choice for local and long distance journeys on foot, bike or horse-back."

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STREET LIGHTING PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE (PFI)

On the 1st July Cambridgeshire County Council, in partnership with Balfour Beatty, commenced a 25 year street lighting Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. The contract covers planned and reactive maintenance of all the County's street lights, illuminated signs and bollards.

A special feature of the PFI is the asset replacement/ upgrades that take place over the first 5 years – this is the core investment period (CIP). Under the CIP 32,500 lighting columns will be replaced and 17,000 lanterns upgraded to white light. As part of the need to reduce the street lighting budget, approximately 5,500 columns will be removed and not replaced. The decision on which columns are to be removed can only be done street by street and is dependent upon the number of columns in need of replacing. With the move from orange to white light, the better colour rendition and light intensity this provides counteracts the reduction in lighting units.

Illuminated signs and bollards will be de-illuminated where possible. Where this isn't possible, bollards will be replaced with solar powered units and signs will be converted to LED light sources.

Information leaflets will be distributed to the streets where works are planned two to three months in advance of the works. This will then be followed up with a letter two to four weeks before we start works on the street. (Copies of the letters and leaflets are attached to the email for your information). For a detailed programme please follow the link to our website www.lightingcambridgeshire.com

HOW TO REPORT STREET LIGHTING FAULTS

Balfour Beatty Street Lighting Customer Contact Centre.
Telephone No.: 0800 7838 247

Website – www.lightingcambridgeshire.com

Visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

BUSWAY WILL BE THE GUIDE FOR GREEN DEVELOPMENT

One of the greenest buildings in Cambridgeshire has opened its doors in Longstanton. The new environmentally friendly exhibition centre and Busway passenger building sets a benchmark for low carbon properties on the proposed new town of Northstowe. It features a learning and exhibition centre to showcase environmentally friendly and low carbon living to encourage local residents to go green in their own homes. It also includes toilets for bus users and office space for park and ride staff. The building will be more than 90 per cent self sufficient for energy and uses materials such as hemp for insulation.

One of the first jobs completed for the building was to drive rods the length of an Olympic sized swimming pool into the ground to create a ground source heat pump. The rods conduct heat and provide environmentally friendly under floor heating and the building also has solar panels as well as top specification insulation on the roof and walls. Visitors can see the control room and displays give read outs on how environmentally friendly the building is.

Funding of £430,000 for the building was awarded to Cambridgeshire County Council following a bid to Government in partnership with Cambridgeshire Horizons and South Cambridgeshire District Council. Government funding was only available for projects that demonstrate concepts and standards expected in Eco Towns, such as the proposed new development of Northstowe, in advance of the towns being built.

Local Cambridgeshire County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "This building sets the benchmark for what is being built in Northstowe and is part of the County Councils' commitment to supporting environmentally friendly projects. This has been true partnership working and not only provides an excellent facility for the Busway but showcases what can be achieved in the new developments around the County."

South Cambridgeshire District Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, Cabinet Member for new communities and Northstowe, said: "This exhibition centre is the first step forward in establishing South Cambridgeshire as a UK leader in planning and managing development to make sure it is the greenest it can be while providing much needed affordable housing. South Cambridgeshire District Council has worked in partnership with the County Council to successfully bid for these Government funds to make sure any new development coming forward is as eco-friendly as it can be."

Cambridgeshire County Councillor Shona Johnstone, Local Member for Willingham and the Northstowe area, said: "It is great to see the building opening and demonstrates what can be achieved at Northstowe and in new developments where we want the best examples of eco-friendly building."

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CONSERVATIVE MEP's OPPOSE EU BUDGET RISE

Ever since the Commission released its proposals for the EU's 2012 budget, Conservative politicians on both sides of the channel have been working hard to make sure that the shouts of more Europe and more money are met with equally loud demands for less waste and less expenditure. While the member's states national governments represented through the Council have come around to the UK's viewpoint that the EU's budget should be cut, the Parliament has stood steadfast by its proposals to ask for more money.

In an attempt to bring the more free spending MEPs from the UK and the rest of Europe back to reality, Conservative MEPs tabled a number of amendments to limit the EU's budget and increase the efficiency of its spending. One such amendment proposed a reduction in interpretation within the Parliament that could save €27m. Also, unlike many of our colleagues, Conservative MEPs supported calls for a freeze in pay for MEPs and top officials.

However, politics in Europe is slightly different from in the UK, for while our Chancellor holds up the famous ministerial box, politicians in the European Parliament hold up the red balance sheet instead of the red box. This seems to symbolise the pushing of Europe's national governments further into debt as a result of the EU's constant demand for more money. While the word 'budget' in UK has come to mean the act of carefully controlling one's expenditure, on the other side of the English Channel it seems have become synonymous with flagrant spending.

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CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - COMMUNITY CHAMPION SCHEME

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) are launching a pilot scheme in South Cambridgeshire to encourage residents to carry out safety checks on their homes. The scheme is innovative in that it will rely on local volunteers to liaise with the community on its behalf. CFRS is now looking for people who live in the South Cambridgeshire area to volunteer to become 'Community Champions'.

Community Champions will be trained to speak to local community groups about home fire safety and escape plans, and to refer those people who are unable to carry out a check of their own home to CFRS for additional support. Champions will also attend community events and take part in CFRS's public consultation activity.

Cambridgeshire ACRE is running this pilot scheme on behalf of CFRS. We believe that our strong links with South Cambridgeshire parishes means we are well placed to generate a good level of support for the scheme and we would encourage anyone looking for an opportunity to take on a more active role in their community to consider becoming a Community Champion.

More information on the scheme and to apply please contact **Lynda Bubb** via the following contacts details:

Lynda Bubb CFRS
Community Champion Scheme Co-ordinator
Cambridgeshire ACRE

Direct Line: 01353 865037
Main Switchboard: 01353 860850
lynda.bubb@camsacre.org.uk

CASH AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Local people around Cambridgeshire can now bid for County Council cash for highways projects which will improve their community. The County Council has adopted a new approach which gives local communities a real influence over minor highway improvements - and details of how to apply for the cash are now available online.

For many years the County Council contributed towards a jointly funded programme with district councils. Typically the authority made around £200,000 available. But the level of interest from the districts has reduced and the county council is now looking at ways to make the cash available directly to communities at a local level.

Successful projects would be those which provide improvements considered to offer benefit to the local community and have the support of local people. Parish councils, community and residents groups and charities are eligible to bid.

Details of how to apply are now available at:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/localism/Minor+works+funding+opportunities.htm>

Bids up to a maximum of £10,000 each are invited and there will be an expectation that the bidder will provide some level of financial contribution to the overall cost of the project - with a minimum contribution of 10% anticipated. Successful projects could include better signing and lining, speed reduction measures, dropped crossing points, a new bus shelter or improved street lighting.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "Local people know best what is needed in their community and this is an excellent opportunity for them to put forward ideas for local priorities and improvements to the highways network which would benefit everyone in their area. This is a real opportunity for the local community to have a genuine influence over what goes on in their area and to work in partnership with the county council - localism at its best."

TOUGH DECISION FOR POLICE AUTHORITY

Cambridgeshire Police Authority will face a difficult decision in the coming months about council tax. The Government is encouraging all local authorities not to increase their council tax in 2012-13. To offset this financial pressure it is offering local authorities a one-off additional government grant instead of raising council tax to fund services, including policing, in 2012-13. For the Police Authority the grant would be £1.5m.

The Police Authority is responsible for deciding the level at which the policing element of council tax should be set. It will therefore decide whether or not to accept the £1.5m grant.

Ruth Rogers, Chair of Cambridgeshire Police Authority said: "On the face of it, this looks like an easy decision. After all, who would turn down the offer of additional money?"

"However, this grant is for one year only whereas a council tax increase provides ongoing funding in future years. Unless this lost, ongoing funding can be recovered by a council tax increase in 2013/14 – over and above the increase required to pay our increasing costs – then the police service in Cambridgeshire would need to find a further £1.5m per year in savings. This is the equivalent of 37 police officers.

This leaves the Authority with a dilemma - raise the council tax from April 2012 or take the grant and leave the new Police and Crime Commissioner with the decision either to raise council tax significantly from April 2013 or accept a further £1.5m per year in cuts."

"And for council tax payers the news might not be as good as it first appears because it could result in a bigger increase in council tax in 2013."

If Cambridgeshire Police Authority was to raise the policing element of council tax by 3 per cent it would equate to just ten pence per week extra for a Band D household. For the whole year that would be just over £5 – around the price of a kilo of cheese.

The Police Authority will make the decision at its meeting on February 9, 2012, and will be discussing it at the Finance & Resources Committee on December 9, 2011 but we are keen to hear the public's views.

What do you think? Cambridgeshire Police Authority would like to hear from you. Email police.authority@cambs.pnn.police.uk or write to:

Cambridgeshire Police Authority
Cambridgeshire Constabulary Police Headquarters
Hinchbrook Park
Huntingdon
PE29 6NP

In autumn 2010 the government announced massive reductions in public spending for the four year period 2011/12 to 2014/15. In December 2010 the government announced how much grant it would give to the Police Authority in 2011/12 and 2012/13. Over the two years Cambridgeshire will get about £11m less than previously (5% to 6% less per annum). In the following two years (2013/14 and 2014/15) we expect the reductions to be slightly less severe.

The Authority's net spending this year (2011-12) is £130m. Of this, £47m (36 per cent) is financed by local council tax payers and the balance of £83m (64 per cent) by government grant. The policing element of the current Band D council tax is £169.56 per annum (£3.26 per week). Most households in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are below Band D. Cambridgeshire Constabulary has already identified £11m of the £17m currently estimated to be required over four years. A 1 per cent increase in the council tax is three pence per week

A YEAR TO GO UNTIL POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONERS

One year from today will herald an important change in the way your local police are held to account. Locally elected Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will replace existing police authorities on November 15, 2012.

PCCs will have five key roles, including:

- Ensuring the maintenance, efficiency and effectiveness of the police force
- Hire, and if necessary dismiss, the Chief Constable
- Hold the Chief Constable to account for force performance
- Work with partners including local authorities, health services and the criminal justice system (including commissioning services) to tackle crime and disorder and set the police and crime objectives for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Be responsible for the police force budget and setting the precept (the policing element of council tax)
- Ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in the police area

The most significant change will be that the PCC will be democratically elected by the members of public he or she will serve and they will have a wider responsibility for delivering community safety than under current arrangements. The PCC will be held to account for their performance by a Police & Crime Panel made up of local councillors and lay members.

Local Cambridgeshire County Councillor and members of the Police Authority, John Reynolds said: "The Police Authority is working with the force and partner authorities to ensure a smooth transition to the new governance arrangements. The legislation passed through Parliament in September and we are now forging ahead with arrangements to ensure that the transition is successful and that the new PCC will be well equipped to serve Cambridgeshire's and Peterborough's communities."

THE EXISTING POLICE AUTHORITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR

Police authorities are responsible for maintaining an efficient and effective police service. Local police authorities, along with the Home Secretary and chief officers of police (ACPO), make up the tripartite relationship which is responsible for the governance of policing in England and Wales.

Police authorities will continue to be active, constructive members of the tripartite governance of policing until the first elections for Police and Crime Commissioners on November 15th 2012.

Police authorities are currently made up of local people: a mix of local councillors and skilled independent members (selected from the community) of which one must be a magistrate.

The job of police authorities is to:

- ensure that the public are served by an efficient and effective local police service
- consult with local communities to find out what they want the local police to do
- set the budget for their police force, and decide how much local people should pay for policing through the 'policing precept' part of council tax
- set the strategic direction for local policing and decide what police should focus attention on based on consultations with local communities appoint (and, if necessary, dismiss) chief constables and senior police officers

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REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 29th NOVEMBER 2011