

Councillors' Report for Girton Parish Council, January 2025

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We would like to wish Parish Councillors, staff and Girton residents a peaceful and prosperous New Year. We start with a short briefing on flooding and highlight the respective roles of County and District. We hope this is helpful. If there are any topics where you think a short briefing would help, please let us know and we'll attempt to cover those topics in future reports.

Flooding

South Cambridgeshire District Council's (SCDC's) Scrutiny and Overview Committee recently discussed local drainage, flooding and mitigation of water pollution. One of the tasks to come out of that meeting was to provide South Cambridgeshire's parish and town councils with some helpful information and tools to support them – particularly when it comes to flooding. This information has been provided to all parish and town councils in South Cambs via the clerks' e-bulletin. Given the importance of the topic we are also highlighting it to you directly here.

Who is responsible for what and who should I contact?

It can be confusing and time-consuming to work out who is responsible for what when it comes to investigating and regulating flooding. This [handy flowchart](#), produced by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) as the Lead Local Flood Authority, shows a clearly defined list of responsibilities and contact details. The idea of this flowchart is to help you identify an issue relating to flooding and make contact with the appropriate organisation. We hope it will help with more isolated or local emergencies related to sewerage or surface water issues, which can present challenges for residents who don't know who to contact to find help.

Watercourse rights and responsibilities

If there is a watercourse on, next to or under a property you own, then you could be a Riparian Owner. The deeds for your property or land may tell you if this is the case. However, even if your deeds do not say you are responsible for an adjacent watercourse, the law will assume you are. Waiver of responsibility only applies where a title deed states specifically that you are not responsible. This means you are responsible for its maintenance to ensure it flows freely without obstruction, pollution or diversion, and you should also maintain your side of the riverbank. If you are a tenant, responsibilities usually sit with the owner; but it is worth checking your tenancy agreement.

A [map of all watercourses in Cambridgeshire](#) is available on the County Council website. You can also read more about rights and responsibilities as a riparian owner.

SCDC's Awarded Watercourse team

The District Council's Awarded Watercourses team is responsible for carrying out mechanical / machinery based, and hand works tasks, on approximately 275 km of open watercourses, culverts, pipes and associated structures within South Cambridgeshire.

SCDC often works with CCC on riparian interventions. It can often be the case that CCC will take action on riparian owners and ask the District Council to carry out work, with costs recovered through CCC's enforcement actions.

The SCDC's Awarded Watercourse team also works collaboratively with CCC's Highways teams to provide support to resolve issues quickly - using SCDC equipment and local technical network knowledge. Often issues are not the responsibility of SCDC, but it is able to address an issue which would otherwise take a lot longer to resolve.

SCDC's Awarded Watercourse team also support parish groups, councillors and representatives by taking a view on drainage matters generally and providing advice on the cause and resolution process. This includes enhancement and support for nature and ecology projects where the service can assist with resources.

Sewer Drainage

Any parishes that are experiencing any sewer drainage issues should email Anglian Water at their Public Affairs mailbox on public.affairs@anglianwater.co.uk

Waste

Blue bin collections

You may have heard of some changes taking place in the processing of blue-bin waste. We will keep you up to date, but would like to re-assure you (as Parish Council) and also residents that collections will continue according to the published schedule.

Transport

Combined Authority restarts procurement for precept-funded routes

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is restarting the procurement process for the final seven precept-funded bus services. This is in response to news that a bus operator – who cannot be named for legal reasons – has withdrawn all of its winning bids to run these services. As a result, the tendering process for the remaining seven routes – covering places including Peterborough, Cambridge, Ely, Huntingdon, Wisbech and surrounding villages – now has to start over, meaning the services are now not expected to launch until May. More details are contained at: <https://tinyurl.com/2s46nyte> . The routes affected by the withdrawal of bids are:

- Tiger 1 – Huntingdon to Cambridge
- Tiger 2/3 – Cambridge North and South connections
- Tiger 4/5 Soham to Cambridge and Newmarket to Cambridge
- Tiger 7 – Chatteris to Wisbech
- Tiger 9 – Peterborough Orbital

The routes are part of a package of 53 services funded through the Mayoral precept. 38 routes across the region are already up and running, with a further four [Tiger on Demand services](#) – flexible, bookable buses serving rural areas – set to launch this weekend, covering Fenland, East Cambridgeshire, and two in South Cambridgeshire. If you have any questions, the Combined Authority have asked that you direct them to transport@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk

Winter gritting reminder

With the weather taking a cold turn, a quick reminder about gritting on

Cambridgeshire's roads. CCC's 37 gritting vehicles cover 44 % of the county's road network.

Cambridgeshire is split into three gritting areas:

- Fenland and East
- Huntingdonshire and South
- Cambridge

Which roads are gritted and when will depend on forecast temperatures in each of these three areas, so there may be occasions when some parts of the county are gritted but not others.

Roads on the gritting network are classified as primary or secondary routes. Primary routes are the priority for gritting, because they serve as major connecting routes for communities and allow people to get to work and access essential services. Secondary routes are gritted in addition to primary routes as and when resources allow when there is a forecast of a prolonged cold spell, where road surface temperatures fall below zero, or when snowfall is forecast.

You can find which roads are primary or secondary gritting routes at <https://maps.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/> In the "Map categories" menu to the left of the screen, choose Transport and Streets, then select Primary Gritting Routes and Secondary Gritting Routes from the drop-down menu.

CCC checks detailed weather forecasts throughout the day, and at midday every day during winter receives road and air temperatures from twelve weather stations around the county. This information guides where and when to send out the gritters and how much salt needs to be spread.

You can find more information about winter gritting in Cambridgeshire at: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths>. CCC posts regular updates on Facebook and Twitter, including road gritting news and weather warnings.

Bus fare cap at £2 extended – for now

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has decided not to increase the current bus fare cap of £2 per journey. This comes despite the decision of the Government nationally to increase the fare cap to £3, and will be welcomed by many bus passengers.

£10 million for road maintenance

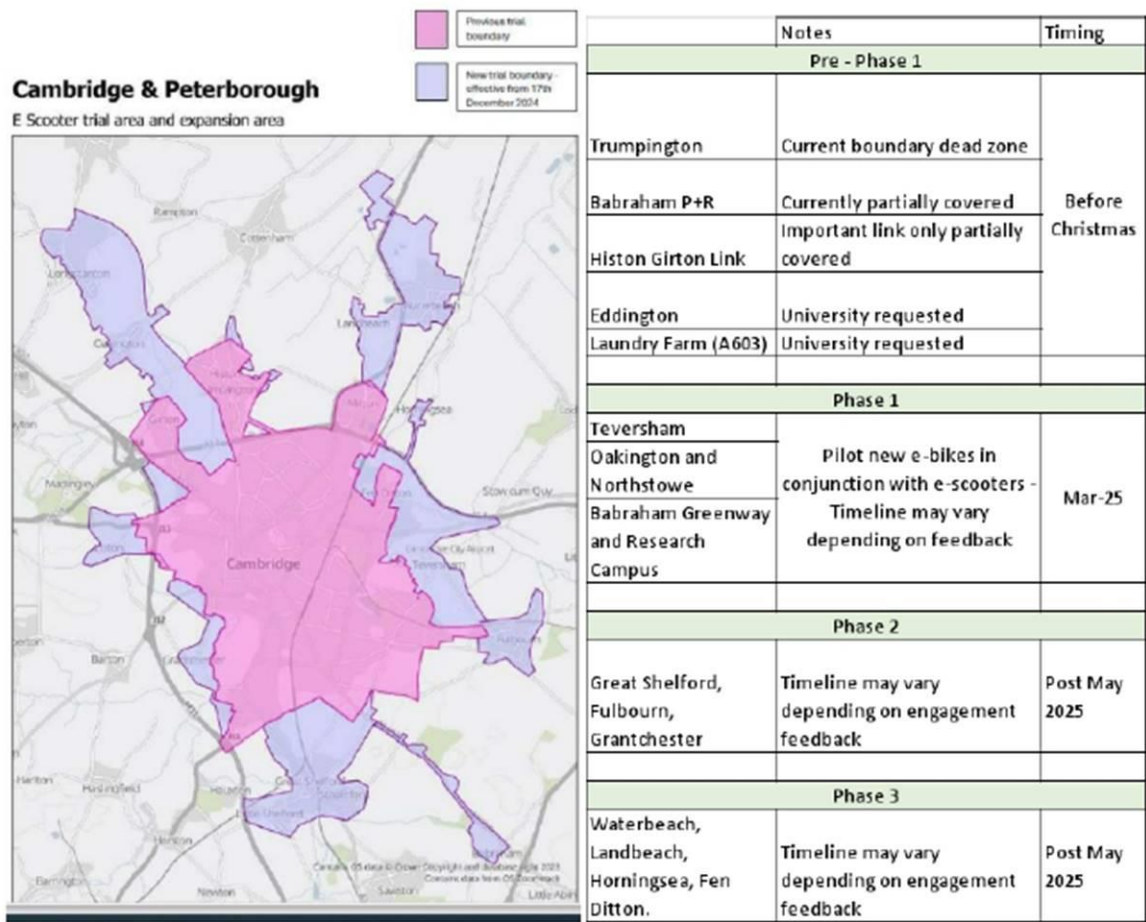
The Government has announced how much each council area will receive for highways capital maintenance for 2025/26. For the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area it's £10m, with a quarter of that amount to be held back until the respective councils have proved they will meet certain—still to be announced—criteria. £10m sounds a lot, but:

- The Government may hold back 25% of it
- It includes Peterborough as well as Cambridgeshire
- In Cambridgeshire alone the backlog of highways maintenance is around £600 million.

Better than nothing, then, but a long way from what we need.

Expansion of Voi Scooter Scheme (for information)

CPCA’s Transport and Infrastructure Committee has made an application to the Department for Transport (DfT) to expand the trial area of e-scooters, which currently operate in Cambridge. DfT has approved the proposal for the boundary changes to the existing e-scooter trial area as well as an increase in the fleet size. CPCA’s Transport and Infrastructure Committee advised that this will be a phased approach, the table below shows the proposed phasing order. Waterbeach and Landbeach are scheduled for Phase 3. Parishes will still have the option not to participate within the scheme if they have reservations.



County council budget for 2025-26

CCC will set its budget on Tuesday 11 February 2025, with recommendations being considered in advance by the Strategy Resources & Performance Committee on Tuesday 28 January 2025.

Each year councils are required to set a balanced budget for the year ahead. This has become more difficult in recent years for several reasons including:

- Growing demand for services and increasing complexity of health and care needs
- Inflation
- Market failures in services such as provision for children in care, with high demand, insufficient supply, provider profiteering, and diminished council negotiating power.

The totality of the council's gross budget, including schools and services funded by specific grants, is expected to be over £1.1 billion for 2025-26. Of this, over half (£567 million) is proposed to be spent on children, education and families, and health and adult social care.

In December, councillors were told that efficiencies and savings or additional income of £34m would be needed to set a balanced budget for 2025-26, and considered draft proposals to achieve this. However, the coming five years show an overall funding gap of £132m, of which £73m is not yet addressed.

Projects

The Fens Reservoir

Analysis of Phase 2 consultation feedback on the Fens Reservoir project has been completed and the feedback summary will be published on the project web site shortly. Please check <https://fensreservoir.co.uk> .

East West Rail (EWR)

The non-statutory consultation on the EWR project continues until 24th January 2025. Please check <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024> . Parish Council, local organisations and individuals are all encouraged to give their views.

Campaigns

Support for Young Carers

The Digital Poverty Alliance wants to make more people aware of the support on offer to equip young carers with digital access and skills. The Alliance is not reaching everyone who could benefit so we are sharing this information and asking parish councillors to reach out to people you're your communities who you think could be supported. More information is available on the [Digital Poverty Alliance website](#).

Climate and Nature Bill

SCDC has signalled its support for the Climate and Nature bill which is soon to be debated in Parliament. A motion passed at last week's Full Council meeting agreed that the Council would endorse the bill, which is being introduced by MP for South Cotswolds, Dr Roz Savage. The bill also has support from all three MPs covering South Cambridgeshire.

If agreed by the House of Commons and House of Lords, the new bill would lead to several climate and nature goals being enshrined in law, including:

- Requiring the United Kingdom to achieve climate and nature targets.
- Giving the Secretary of State a duty to implement a strategy to achieve those targets.
- The establishment of a Climate and Nature Assembly to advise the Secretary of State in creating that strategy.

- Giving duties to the Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee regarding the strategy and targets.

The motion agreed by SCDC Councillors means the authority joins a list of councils from across the country who have agreed to support the bill as part of the Zero Hour campaign.

The motion was put forward by Cllr Paul Bearpark. It was seconded by the Council's Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, Cllr Brian Milnes. The Council unanimously - with two Councillors abstaining from voting - agreed the motion.

Cllr Bearpark said: "I am pleased we have sent a clear message that we support the aspirations of this hugely important bill, and we look forward to seeing it progress into law. As a Council we have an important role to play in combating the climate and ecological emergencies that we face – and this is exactly what we are doing through our Zero Carbon Communities programme, along with our Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature strategies. However, it is the responsibility of Government to establish more rigorous support and frameworks to help transition communities towards a zero-carbon future.

"This new bill is an important step towards that new framework and through citizens' assemblies it makes sure that everyday people are driving the progress we need to make. It also recognises the inter-connectedness of climate and nature. Nature is the best asset that we have when it comes to mitigating the effects of climate change, so we need to not just be protecting nature in the UK - we need to be restoring it. This is a comprehensive bill and demonstrates a commitment to a sustainable, just and resilient future. It has legally enforceable biodiversity restoration goals and it protects and restores 30% of the UK's land and marine environments. It is incredible that this is the first time such targets have been proposed for the UK – so it has mandatory targets to halt nature's decline by 2030."

We hope that you find the report of interest. Please get in touch directly if you have any questions.

Cllrs Corinne Garvie, Edna Murphy, Richard Stobart
13th January 2025