

Liberal Democrat Community Newsletter April 2022

We are writing to you, as councillors and campaigners for our interlinked cluster of villages, to keep you informed of local issues involving the District and County Councils. If you know of someone not receiving this newsletter who would like to do so, please ask them to contact sallyannhart@riskingonpurpose.com, jose@josehales.me.uk, susanvandeven5@gmail.com or peter.mcdonald@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. If you would prefer not to receive this email newsletter, please use the "unsubscribe" link at the bottom.

District and Parish Council Elections May 5th

A list of people standing in parish and district council elections can be found here.

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/elections/elections-2022/>

If you'd like a postal or proxy vote, please read the instructions here - which includes the deadline by which you need to make your request (which can be done by email). <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/elections/voting-by-post-or-proxy/>

For the South Cambs District Council election, Sally Ann Hart and Jose Hales are standing for the Melbourn Ward, Peter McDonald for the Duxford Ward, and Susan van de Ven for the Bassingbourn Ward.

Supporting people from Ukraine seeking refuge

Both South Cambs District and Cambs County Council are helping to coordinate efforts locally to support people seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine. The SCDC website contains practical information on what you can do: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/support-for-ukraine/>

Cambs County Council's information includes a useful FAQ:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities-localism/support-for-the-people-of-ukraine>

Easter holiday scheme for children in receipt of free school meals

Enriching experiences and a nutritious lunch are being made available in the Easter holidays for the children of families receiving income-related free school meals.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme offers fun experiences with friends and a nutritious meal for primary and secondary school children. The sessions will include a healthy meal, a variety of exciting activities or sports and the opportunity to socialise with other children. Any child receiving income-related free school meals is eligible for the programme.

Funded by the Department for Education (DfE), the HAF scheme enables local authorities to coordinate free holiday childcare and enriching experiences locally. The programme will be delivered by approved providers, co-ordinated by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council.

Each eligible child will be able to access up to 16 hours of free holiday childcare or enriching experiences through the school Easter holiday period. Further information can be found at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/haf

South Cambs Turtles swimming near you

Home-start and the amazing work it does supporting young families will be the goal for the South Cambs Turtles relay swim team on May 22nd. Please consider sponsoring the team, which consists of local parish, district and county councillors and friends, on its laps at Royston Leisure Centre – 100% of donations will go to Home-Start. You check out the Turtles, learn more about Home-Start, and make a donation here: <https://visufund.com/south-cambs-turtles>

Health and Social Care reforms and what we talked about

Thanks very much to those who joined us for an on-line evening chat about the national health and care reforms and what they might mean for us locally, and what people are most concerned about for their future. We had the input of people's direct experience, and this is what made the conversation so compelling. Susan is chairing the Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board which is working closely with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS to combine public health, social care and health care, under the terms of national reforms.

We discussed:

- The imminent National Insurance rise,
- The common sense support that local groups like Royston and District Community Transport and Mobile Warden Schemes can offer (and the potential for more),
- The profound isolation that many people have experienced during Covid, often compounded for single parent families and people already coping with poor health,
- The immense value of community activities and groups that provide social life and connections with others,
- The ability of places like the Melbourn Hub and perhaps in future the Old School Community Centre to provide things like dementia support, flu vaccines and parent-and-baby groups, that in turn help alleviate pressures on GP surgeries.

It was agreed that we would do this again in a few months' time.

Household heating: Oil Club rebate to Citizens Advice

This year's household bulk-buy Melbourn and Bassingbourn Oil Club rebate will be going to North Herts Citizens Advice, supporting their work for our area and in particular their weekly drop-in service at the Melbourn Hub every Wednesday, 10-12. The work of Citizens Advice has never been more vital with the cost of living rise and increasing pressures on residents in all our communities.

To book an appointment at the Hub please ring 01763 263303 or contact hubadmin@melbournhub.co.uk. Or the North Herts Citizens Advice phone helpline is 0800 144 88 48, open 10am to 4pm, Monday-Friday.

Oil Club comes to a close

The Oil Club has been running for many years but sadly comes to a close now as our supplier, Agricole, has found it necessary to cease its brokerage service: 'Over recent years there has been a

significant consolidation of oil suppliers in the UK and in our area. Also, these bigger entities are increasingly unwilling to trade via 'third parties'. Poor customer feedback regarding some suppliers further limits our choice. Realistically, and especially during the current war in Ukraine, there is no longer enough competition for us to leverage to get you a good price from a range of reliable suppliers. Consequently, I regret to inform you that with immediate effect, after trading in your area since 1996, we are withdrawing our service and retiring from the domestic heating oil market.'

Practical Solutions Groups – Bassingbourn and Melbourn

The Melbourn and Bassingbourn PSGs meet once per term, working directly with our village colleges and aiming to enhance opportunities for young people to become involved in and help to lead community initiatives, and to create ways for younger and older people to get to know one another. We know that all schools are in the process of getting back on their feet and still coping with staff absences and a great deal of backlog to catch up on.

The recent Melbourn PSG focused on taking forward a plan for improving the A10 pedestrian underpass environment, working with local business who are poised to clear vegetation around the underpass next week, and the Community Rail Partnership and County Council Youth Services, who are working with Melbourn Village College students to come up with new artwork ideas to brighten up the underpass itself. Please contact Jose and Sally Ann for more information.

The recent Bassingbourn PSG meeting explored ideas from the Environment and Climate Groups including Duke of Edinburgh volunteering opportunities, the Over Sixties Club and Bassingbourn Barracks, with lots of connections made and a look forward to later in the year when we hope that things will have eased up a bit more and social activities can be planned.

Repair Cafes

Many thanks to all who organized the Bassingbourn Repair Café on a gorgeous March day. An offer from repairers to support a Meldreth Station Repair Café later in the year was gratefully received. The County Council will be considering how it can best support the growing interest for Repair Cafes across the county, and Susan has asked about the matter of insurance and whether any economies of scale can be provided to support repair cafes across the county.

Bassingbourn Rd Litlington – surface dressing due in late May

There have been a number of complaints about the appalling state of this road which we're glad to report is on the list for surface dressing in late May.

Many other roads are in a similar state and sit in a long queue – and the same goes for pavements. We'd like to thank everyone who takes the trouble to report faults at <https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>, as this creates an essential public record. We understand that the wait can be frustrating but encourage people to continue doing so – it makes a difference even though the wait can be long.

Sadly, a negligent underinvestment in roads, pavements and drains by previous County administrations over a period of many years, due to an unwillingness to raise funds and poor management, has left the highways network in a crisis state that will take time to turn around, particularly given the state of public finances across the board. That said, new management systems are now being implemented, with a back to basics approach including annual attention to drains, which incredibly had been abandoned under previous Cambridgeshire administrations.

Bus User Group to reconvene

The Cam Vale Bus User Group will meet April 13, 10:30-11:30, at the Old School Community Centre Bassingbourn, for the first time since the pandemic. Royston and District Community Transport will be attending as before, and the idea will be to understand transport needs of those without access to private vehicles and supporting our bus service which like all public transport needs to see ridership increase, in order to remain viable. All welcome – and please contact Susan for more information.

Rail User Group AGM

The Meldreth Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group meeting will take place on April 20, 7:30-8:30PM, via Teams – please contact railusergroup@gmail.com for the joining link. The meeting will kick off with a brief AGM and then move to all the business that the Rail User Group is actively pursuing, first and foremost encouraging take up public transport to help boost ridership figures – which is needed in order to bring the full half-hourly service back into play.

Crossing the A505 without a car

The process of establishing new connections over the A505 from Melbourn and Bassingbourn is finding its way, step by step.

Melbourn: Last month the Greater Cambridge Partnership heard a question from 10-year-old Meldreth resident Iris Bostanci, who gets around everywhere by foot, bike or train, asking when the bridge connecting Melbourn to Royston will be built – as reported in the Royston Crow here. <https://www.royston-crow.co.uk/news/meldreth-10-year-old-safer-cycling-routes-8762656>

Detailed design work for the bridge and connecting path is now taking place and a public consultation is anticipated in the autumn. The A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign has decided to hold its annual awareness ride event nearer the time in order to encourage a strong consultation response. Funding remains to be settled but is being actively pursued. Melbourn and Royston councillors have been working together since project inception on a coordinated approach.

Bassingbourn: The existing Ivy Farm Bridge is owned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and has never had a public right of way recorded across it, having been created as an accommodation bridge for access to the agricultural farm on either side. Currently there are no recorded public rights of way leading to the bridge on either side.

A set of circumstances arose over the past few years creating the impetus for HCC to consider putting together elements necessary for a new public right of way connecting Royston to Bassingbourn and Litlington via the Ivy Farm bridge. This has been affirmed and strengthened by obvious public interest in a safe pedestrian crossing of the A505.

The trigger for a new route and potential opening of a right of way over the Ivy Farm Bridge was the Royston Redrow development, which places additional pressure on a nearby Network Rail level crossing, thus requiring safety adaptations. Initially, in discussion with HCC and Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), Redrow considered working toward a diversion of Royston Footpath 17 to join up with the Ivy Farm Bridge and connect to Bassingbourn Footpath 17. After some initial work Redrow decided on balance not to go ahead with the footpath diversion themselves but, under the terms of the Royston planning agreement, opted to pay Network Rail to increase safety measures to the existing Footpath 17 pedestrian railway crossing instead. In addition to this, Redrow made a

further payment to HCC for the purpose of making improvements, for pedestrians, to the existing A505 crossing point.

Network Rail has now decided to pursue its own order to divert Footpath 17 around the existing pedestrian railway crossing only. HCC's Countryside and Rights of Way Service (CRoW) still considers that there is a need to create the footpath link from Royston north into Bassingbourn, via the Ivy Farm bridge. CRoW is therefore proposing to consult on an order to create a footpath to Bassingbourn, in conjunction with Network Rail's diversion application. Working in conjunction with the NR application is the quickest option given HCC's priorities.

Rights of Way orders do not require land to change hands. HCC will not compulsorily purchase any of the land affected by the proposal but would acquire an interest in the surface of the land crossed by the newly created right of way. As the proposal crosses the county boundary, HCC will continue to co-ordinate with officers at CCC.

Network Rail has now confirmed that it expects to move forward imminently with its application. Once that application is made, HCC will prepare the public consultation. This will require some preparation and allow a lead time for all interested parties to participate and respond.

The process of recording new rights of way, and altering existing rights of way, is public. It therefore allows for anyone to object to, as well as support, the proposals. Whilst HCC would prefer to reach a consensus with all parties, in the event that this is not possible the decision on the creation of new public rights of way will be made by an independent inspector.

The next step for communities which stand to benefit is the public consultation and the opportunity to make a compelling positive case for HCC's proposals. Bassingbourn, Litlington and Royston councillors have been working together on a coordinated approach since the Redrow development trigger.

Correcting misinformation: the Local Plan

The emerging Local Plan, running from 2011-2041 (i.e. 30 years), makes provision for around 49,000 dwellings across South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City. 37,000 of these have already been built or are in the planning process already, having formed part of two previous Local Plans. The remaining 11k, running from 2022-2041, are nearly all in Cambridge City, with some allocations at new Towns (Cambourne, Northstowe and Waterbeach) and then there are about 350 in the rest of South Cambs - all in villages with railway access. All information is here:

<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan/>

Unfortunately it's necessary to flag up an incorrect assertion published in Conservative leaflets (and indeed a letter from our own MP) which state the Lib Dems wish to build "49,000 **new** flats and houses". This is of course untrue. Regardless, the implication is that the Conservatives would not support the Local Plan if they won the forthcoming election. The consequence of that would be the removal of planning powers by Her Majesty's Government and a free-for-all for developers. The last time this happened (for several years up to 2018, under Conservative leadership at South Cambs) over 4,000 homes were given permission which were not in compliance with our policy on protecting villages.

The Liberal Democrat position is that the plans included in the forthcoming iteration of the Local Plan deliver sensible levels of sustainable housing - especially affordable housing - in communities which are themselves already sustainable by virtue of size, public transport links, public services and

indeed local will. Should local communities want local affordable housing there is provision in the policy framework to allow this to happen on 'exception sites' where the housing must be provided by a registered social landlord and be adjacent to the village framework.

Thakeham – new donation to Conservative Party

The South West Cambridge Action Group notes that a significant new donation and auction prizes from Thakeham to the Conservative Party have been recorded on the Electoral Commission website – donations now totalling £716,000.

[Thakeham Donations Update – Click here](#)

County Biodiversity Initiative

A scheme which will help increase the county's biodiversity and support the development of new homes, businesses and infrastructure was approved by Cambridgeshire County Council's Strategy and Resources Committee on 29 March.

Under the Environment Act 2021, the biodiversity of an area resulting from new developments must exceed the pre-development biodiversity value by at least 10 per cent - known as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This should be provided onsite, but if that isn't possible it must be provided offsite, close to the development and within the local planning authority area. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Biodiversity Special Planning Document, adopted in February 2022, says that they expect to require developers to deliver 20 per cent BNG.

Under the new scheme, developers who are unable to meet BNG requirements on sites in the South Cambridgeshire area will be able to secure biodiversity units from the Lower Valley Farm BNG scheme in Fulbourn.

The 358-acre farm, which is part of the council's 33,000 acre rural estate, has been identified as the ideal site for the scheme as it is located within the Cambridge Nature Network and lies adjacent to the Roman Road Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It will also act as a stepping stone to other surrounding SSSIs, supporting habitat connectivity across the landscape from Trumpington Meadows through to Wilbraham Fen.

Cambridge-based Bidwells have helped establish the scheme and will oversee its implementation. The currently arable land will be converted to biodiverse habitats including botanically diverse grassland, native broadleaved woodland, scrub and species-rich hedgerows. The Lower Valley Farm BNG scheme will go beyond BNG requirements by providing public footpaths and opportunities for education. Developers will secure units through an Option Agreement which will commit the council to delivering the associated habitat creation and management for a 30-year period.

South Cambs Audit of 2018/19 Accounts

The audit of Accounts for 2018/19 is here:

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s126682/Full%20SOA%20V1.0.pdf>

This is the audit opinion:

https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s126680/South%20Cambridgeshire%20DC_2018-19_ARR%2029%20Mar22%20final.pdf

Be Kind

We continue to help spread the message for the '#BeKind' campaign on behalf of all those working in public services that are struggling amidst accumulated pandemic and other pressures.

Zoom Cuppa Surgeries Wednesdays 5-6PM

If you'd like to meet with your councillors by Zoom, to bring any concerns or ask any questions, please come along to our weekly Wednesday Zoom Cuppa Surgery, 5-6 PM. Please contact Sally Ann for a link: Sallyannhart@riskingonpurpose.com.

Anything we can help with? Issues we can raise?

We would be delighted to address any concerns you may have or help raise awareness of issues affecting our community via this newsletter. Any questions or concerns, please contact us any time – details below.

What we stand for

The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. Learn more about or join the Liberal Democrats at <http://www.libdems.org.uk>.

Sincerely yours,

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