

District Councillor report to Parish Council April 2021

Extension to changes to construction working hours

There has been an extension to the hours which can be worked on construction sites, the extension is until the 30th September 2021. The Government has set out guidelines to require planning authorities to approve requests to extend construction working hours temporarily so that sites can operate until 9pm Monday to Saturday. Local authorities can still restrict the working hours but would need compelling reasons to do so as the reason this extension has been made is to allow social distancing on building sites allowing contractors to be spread out over a longer working day. There are a whole range of activities that can be carried out on a construction site that don't require high levels of noise and I would hope that contractors would be mindful of this and SCDC will keep an eye on problems if they are to occur.

Traffic signal control

The Greater Cambridge Partnership are trialling a new traffic signal control method across some of the busiest junctions in Cambridge with a view to cut emissions and congestion at key points within the city. Many residents within the Fen Ditton and Fulbourn Ward will travel in and out of the city and will know very well where the pinch points are and it is my view that these changes have been a long time coming. The 12-month trial will investigate camera-based sensors and machine learning which will hopefully optimise traffic signals to improve traffic flow with the added benefit of reducing journey times and tackling air pollution. Most traffic signals across Cambridge currently use fixed algorithms to make decisions about traffic signal operation. It is hoped using machine learning that signals will over time learn what works best to manage traffic flows more effectively. Artificial intelligence will also be better at allowing different modes of transport to be prioritised.

A boost to sustainable transport

I am really pleased to see that the Government's strategy "Bus Back Better" will be supporting the Greater Cambridge Partnership to increase bus usage across the greater Cambridge area. This money will help bring cleaner buses and more services across the city and our district which will further help tackle air pollution. There is lots of information on the Greater Cambridge Partnership's website on how this money will be spent. It is my hope that we see this money invested and spent quickly on bus and cycling projects within our area. It is my view that the Greater Cambridge Partnership has taken far too long on a number of projects like cycle greenways and really needs to get on with putting projects into action.

Combined authority plan to go green

I have copied the below text from the Combined Authority website.

In a meeting of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority today (26 March), approval was given for the Combined Authority to act as the accountable body for a £79.6m

funding scheme to support the Government's commitment to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The ask for the scheme is to deliver greater energy efficient homes, support a green recovery and deliver progress towards fuel poverty targets, clean growth, economic resilience and increase the capacity of the renewables supply chain, accredited retrofit business and skills across the region covered by Greater South East Energy Hub.

The scheme focuses on improving the energy efficiency of around 10,000 low income and low energy performing households across this region, by offering the retrofit improvements such as cavity wall, underfloor and loft insulation, and replacing gas boilers with low carbon alternatives like heat pumps where appropriate. It will also include installing solar panels on many social housings, helping residents on low incomes create their own green energy to power their homes.

In the scheme which will be launched later this Spring, eligible owner/occupiers will receive a £10,000 grant to complete the work. Social and private landlords will receive £5,000 towards their costs of improvements.

Around 1,100 of the 10,000 homes identified by the Greater South East Energy Hub, sit within Combined Authority's area, and 5,000 within an area serviceable by a Cambridgeshire supply base.

The scheme is also predicted to directly support around 2,000 energy sector jobs, including local plumbers, builders, and tradespeople, needed to deliver retrofit over the next 4 years.

The Combined Authority will also use its refreshed Skills Strategy to identify Green Skills as a priority for investment of future education budgets, such as the Lifetime Skills Guarantee and the Adult Education Budget and Further Education Capital Transformation Fund. It could provide significant opportunities to upskill and reskill Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents in Green Skills and jobs that are in-demand and better paid, improving prosperity in the region. Local Colleges are already developing Green Skills Academy ideas to address the skills needs of this emerging sector.

This scheme is part of a nationwide programme, announced yesterday by the UK Government (23 March), where 50,000 households will be upgraded with green improvements from a £562 million fund, reducing carbon emissions and supporting thousands of green jobs across the country.

It also come a week after an initial recommendations report presented by the **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate** suggested:

"All existing building should achieve high energy efficiency standards and be heated from low- carbon sources.

"Every building, starting with those properties below EPC"C", have a renovation plan setting out a clear pathway to full decarbonisation and home retrofits will need to be rolled out

across building stock incorporating cooling measures as well as energy efficiency, water efficiency and heat decarbonisation.

“The Combined Authority and constituent authorities should priorities achievement of net zero emissions for social housing.”

Speaking after the Combined Authorities Board meeting, Mayor James Palmer said:

“The Combined Authority is focussed on delivery, on sustainable housing, on jobs and on economic growth. This exciting scheme touches on all these areas and shows how doing right by the environment can also do right by the economy.

“I am pleased that we have been able to support this clean home scheme both directly and indirectly. The Climate Change Commission has showed us what we need to do to tackle climate change in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and this scheme is one of the first to deliver on that aspiration.”

Covid updates from the government website at the time of writing report

Shielding patients:

- Advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable to shield ceases from Thursday 1 April, as virus infection rates continue to fall
- People on shielded patient list will receive letters from today with updated guidance on steps people can take to reduce their risk
- More than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people have been vaccinated with a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

In line with the government’s [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#) roadmap published last month, those on the shielded patient list can begin to follow the national restrictions alongside the rest of the population, but are still advised to take extra precautions to keep themselves safe from COVID-19.

Letters to patients with updated guidance will be arriving from today and over the next 2 weeks. These set out practical steps people can follow to reduce their risk of catching the virus, including continuing to maintain strict social distancing and to keep their overall social contacts at low levels, such as working from home where possible.

The move follows the steady decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations across the country for the last couple of weeks.

Senior clinicians, including the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Dr Jenny Harries, have recommended that shielding advice is paused nationally from 1 April onwards, as supported by the latest scientific evidence and advice.

With the success of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme, more than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people are now vaccinated with their first dose, but it's still important people continue to follow the national rules and take the additional precautions set out in the guidance to keep themselves as protected as possible.

Local councils and supermarkets will continue to provide support for those shielding until 31 March. If people have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots, they will continue to be able to access these until 21 June 2021.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Dr Jenny Harries, said:

Shielding has always been an advisory measure to safeguard those who are the most clinically vulnerable in our communities. We recognise how difficult this period has been for so many and the impact it has had on people's wellbeing.

With the prevalence of the virus in the community continuing to decrease now is the right time for people to start thinking about easing up on these more rigid guidelines.

If you have been shielding, we strongly urge you to take extra precautions following 1 April to keep yourself as safe as possible, such as continuing to observe social distancing and working from home.

We will continue to monitor all of the evidence and adjust this advice should there be any changes in infection rates.

People are still advised to continue working from home where possible, but if people are unable to do so, employers are required by law to take steps to make workplaces COVID-19 secure and should discuss this with their employees.

In February 2021, the government announced a new predictive risk model that helps clinicians identify additional people who may be at higher cumulative risk from COVID-19 due to the combination of their underlying risk factors.

Up to 1.7 million vulnerable individuals were identified by the tool, taking the total number of people in the shielded patient list up to 3.79 million people, as of 6 March 2021. As a result, over 800,000 more adults have been prioritised to receive a vaccine that weren't already in the top four priority groups for phase one of vaccinations.

Vaccination programme starting to save lives:

Public Health England (PHE) analysis indicates that [the COVID-19 vaccination programme prevented 6,100 deaths](#) in those aged 70 and older in England up to the end of February.

From 8 December 2020 to the end of January 2021, over 4 million vaccine doses were given to adults aged 70 and over. The analysis compared the observed number of deaths with the number of deaths that would have been expected, if the vaccine hadn't been given during this time period. To allow for the time taken to develop an immune response to vaccination,

the analysis assumed it would take 31 days before the effect of vaccination on deaths is observed. Using this method, PHE estimates that around 6,100 deaths were prevented to the end of February – 5,900 in those aged 80 and over and 200 in those aged 70 to 79.

Expected deaths with COVID-19 were estimated using real-world data on how effective the vaccines are at preventing death and vaccine uptake.

The results are very similar to those estimated by Warwick University (also published in today's report), which used a different approach to model the number of deaths with and without the vaccination programme. Warwick University's estimate suggested that the programme has prevented around 6,600 deaths across all age groups.

Grants

- New Restart Grants scheme launched today, providing funding of up to £18,000 to eligible businesses
- call issued to all 314 local authorities across England to deliver new COVID grants to businesses in good time and take a flexible approach to updated restrictions
- joint letter from Small Business Minister Paul Scully and Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston thanks councils for supporting businesses but highlights urgency of ongoing support

Hard-pressed businesses across the economy will receive fresh support from the new £5 billion [Restart Grants scheme](#) launching today (1 April), as the government on councils to get funds to business owners as soon as possible.

From today, businesses in England in the non-essential retail sector will be eligible for one-off grants of up to £6,000, while businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym sectors, which are reopening later, will be eligible for one-off grants of up to £18,000. The £5 billion of government funding available through the Restart Grants scheme will be delivered by local authorities.

This is coupled with £425 million of top-up funding for the ongoing Additional Restrictions Grant scheme for councils to distribute to businesses in particularly urgent need of additional support – which could also be businesses who don't necessarily pay business rates like tour operators, B&Bs, caterers, freelancers and wedding service providers.

Minister Scully and Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston have written to the leaders of 314 councils in England urging them to do all they can to pay out grants money more quickly and ensure businesses in their local authority area get the support they need.

It also encourages councils to support pubs and restaurants to open outdoor areas and host outdoor events in a safe and secure manner.

*Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any of the issues raised email me on graham.cone@councillor.online or ring 07595 361 285 (please leave a voicemail if I am unavailable) **Councillor Graham Cone***

