

CLLR FIROUZ THOMPSON

CONSTITUTION & ETHICS

Constitution and Ethics Committee met on 14 November 2023 and considered a report on “Mitigating the Risks of Intimidation and Abusive Behaviours Towards Members and Officers”.

The Committee agreed that the Council should publish a statement on rules of engagement on its website, which Members would be able to refer people to if required or desired.

Please find below a link – if you scroll to the end, you will see a section on “Respectful Debate”.

[County Councillors - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Council leaders respond to Chancellor’s autumn statement

Cambridgeshire County Council leaders have expressed disappointment about the lack of any additional funding for local government in the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s autumn statement.

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council said: “The failure to address the funding crisis faced by the whole local government sector, caused by rising levels of inflation and spiralling need, in [the] Autumn Statement is disappointing for all County Councils.

“While we welcome an increase in the national minimum wage, as people on the lowest wages have been affected most by the cost of living crisis, this will make setting our budget this year even more difficult. Councils like Cambridgeshire have been underfunded for many years by central government, and central government are again asking for more growth without recognising the costs that brings in the need to provide more schools and more care for our growing older population.

“A previously announced £2.3million over the next two years for highways improvements in Cambridgeshire is helpful, but it’s a drop in the ocean of the need for investment in our highways network. Soaring inflation in highway maintenance costs, alongside the impact of climate change on our 4500 miles of roads, 37% of which are affected by peat damage due to extreme weather events, have left us with a huge challenge to simply stand still on keeping our roads safe. Like the Local Government Association said over the weekend, we need highways funding to be over a minimum of five years—as has been offered to National Highways.”

“We’re firmly on the side of our residents and remain committed to bringing forward proposals in our budget next month which focus on those who are in greatest need, and which consider some of the key areas that were highlighted to us in our Quality of Life survey this year – such as improvements to our highways, mental health support – particularly for younger people, tackle the climate emergency and support those most affected by the current cost of living crisis.” said Cllr Elisa Meschini, deputy leader of the council.

“The cost-of-living crisis means it’s costing us far more today to do the same things we were doing just a few months ago. This at a time when more and more people than ever need our help. We’ve already seen applications to our household support fund reach their highest ever levels this summer, compared to the same time last year.” confirmed Cllr Tom Sanderson, Leader of the Independent group on the council, and chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

Proposals for Cambridgeshire County Council's 2024/5 budget and five-year business plan are set to be presented to its Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 19 December, the same day the Government is likely to unveil the full detail of its Local Government Financial Settlement.

National concern at council funding challenges

County councils across the country have warned of the risk of major budget overspends due to 'uncontrollable' pressures, and fear that even well-managed councils are 'running out of road to prevent insolvency'.

The County Councils Network (CCN) says all frontline council services are being affected, with increasing demand for care services amongst vulnerable children and a rise in the cost of placing children in care leading to spiralling costs.

- £319 million of the projected £639 million national overspend by county councils this year comes from children's services.
- One in ten 'well-managed' councils are unsure whether they are able to balance their budget this year, which is a legal requirement. This figure is expected to rise to four in ten for next year, and then six in ten for 2025.

The overall funding deficit is anticipated to reach £4 billion up to 2026, regardless of the £2 billion worth of savings and cuts that councils are planning to make in order to prevent the issuing of a 'Section 114 Notice' (the local government equivalent of bankruptcy).

Council wins staff development award

Cambridgeshire has become the first county council to be awarded 'Silver' membership of The 5% Club's 2023-24 Employer Audit Scheme. This award recognises the council's significant contribution to the continued development of all its employees through 'earn and learn' schemes such as apprenticeships, graduate development programmes and sponsored student course placements.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Winter vaccinations

Flu, COVID-19, and shingles vaccines are now available for eligible groups. Flu and COVID-19 vaccination information at www.nhs.uk/wintervaccinations%20 and information about shingles vaccinations at www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/shingles-vaccination/

Older Adults Social Inclusion Grants

Cambridgeshire County Council is opening up grant funding for services, clubs and activities that support older adults (over 65) with emerging care or support needs to be:

- socially included in their community
- more physically active
- as independent as they can be.

These activities support the Council's 'Care Together' objective of enabling older adults to remain independent for as long as possible. Older adults and partners have co-designed what should be funded in each Cambridgeshire district.

Some examples of the grants on offer include:

- building-based services (day centres)
- community-based activities (providing opportunities for social interaction, such as lunch clubs, wellbeing walks, knit and natter groups)
- hospital discharge support (with a view to regaining independence)
- some Community Transport funding

Assets & Procurement

Shire Hall to be re-marketed

Cambridgeshire County Council is poised to begin work to find a new commercial partner in the redevelopment of the former Shire Hall building in Cambridge.

The previous preferred bidder Brookgate has now confirmed that altered market conditions mean they are unable to complete the deal. Councillors have been asked to approve moves to re-market the site from early next year with a deadline to complete with a new partner by the end of 2024.

Council officers have been working with expert legal and property advisors to review the six-acre site and provide a comprehensive update on all the options available. The review has recommended that the development of the site for office and hotel use remains the most valuable option for potential developers and local taxpayers—with a likely annual return in the region of £3 million each year to invest in frontline services for the next fifty years and £6 million to invest in Cambridgeshire’s infrastructure and assets.

All proposals for the site will require full planning, Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument consents, and ensure protection of the assets on site.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Teenage Fostering Appeal

In Cambridgeshire, there are currently more than 400 young people in the 12-18 age range who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to continue living with their birth families. These young people would benefit hugely from the invaluable experience of people who have raised teenagers and supported them on their journey to independence.

When you foster with the Cambridgeshire Fostering Service, you will receive:

- generous allowances and carer perks
- an individualised training programme tailored to your needs
- round-the-clock support
- a dedicated, skilled and experienced Supervising Social Worker

If you are over 21 years of age, have a spare bedroom, and believe you have the qualities and skills to become a compassionate, resilient foster carer, please get in touch.

Facebook at [@CCCFosteringService](#)

Online at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering-and-adoption

Phone 0800 052 0078

Care quality initiative

The new initiative aimed at nurturing and developing social care skills in Cambridgeshire has now been launched.

Cambridgeshire Academy for Reaching Excellence (CARE) is a new approach launched by Cambridgeshire County Council to support learning and develop talent within its children’s social worker and social care practitioner workforce.

The new Social Care Academy aims to improve outcomes for children and young people through support and training being offered for social work students and apprentices, international practitioners, experienced social workers and those in leadership positions. It comes at a time when across the country local authorities are facing a shortage of social workers. For more information see www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/care

Modeshift STARS

Four Cambridgeshire schools attended a regional award ceremony for their achievements in promoting sustainable travel and developing school travel plans. The schools made a shortlist of only 124 schools across England chosen to take part in the 2023 Modeshift STARS Regional Awards.

Two of these, Highfield Littleport Academy and Barnabas Oley C of E Primary School went on to win STARS Local Authority School of the Year 2023/24 awards. Highfield Littleport then went on to receive STARS Regional SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) School of the Year 2023/24 – East of England. All these awards are fantastic achievements.

Highfield Littleport, which is part of The Active Learning Trust, will now go on to represent the East of England in person at the National STARS School Travel Awards in London in March 2024.

Modeshift STARS, supported by the Department for Transport, is the national school travel awards scheme to recognise schools that have demonstrated excellence in supporting walking, cycling and other forms of sustainable travel for the journey to and from school. Cambridgeshire County Council's Road Safety team is keen to see more schools in Cambridgeshire taking part in the Modeshift STARS travel planning scheme to encourage sustainable school travel. More information about the scheme can be found at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/road-safety/road-safety-education-for-schools/school-travel-planning

Holiday activities and food

This Christmas, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is offering free spaces for children in Cambridgeshire who are eligible for free school meals, to enjoy enriching experiences and nutritious food.

Approximately 19,000 HAF eligibility vouchers have been sent to families. These vouchers offer sixteen hours of access, for no charge, to a HAF scheme this Christmas, subject to availability. Each session will include a nutritious meal, a variety of exciting activities or sports and the opportunity to socialise with other children.

The HAF scheme is part of the County Council's 'Be Winter Wise' campaign, which draws together a range of services, activities and offers, keeping communities across Cambridgeshire informed and prepared to stay safe and healthy during the winter months of 2023 and 2024.

Subject to availability of places, any child receiving benefit-related free school meals is eligible for the programme. The programme will run from 21 December to 3 January, except for bank holidays.

Funded by the Department for Education (DfE), the scheme enables councils to coordinate free holiday childcare and enriching experiences locally. The programme will be delivered by approved providers, co-ordinated by Cambridgeshire County Council. The Council is working with schools, childcare providers and voluntary and community organisations to deliver the programme.

Further information at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-cost-of-living/holiday-activities-and-food-programme

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Swaffham Prior Community Heat Network

The Swaffham Prior community heat project, which is offering residents in the village the opportunity to swap from oil to clean green energy with no upfront costs and better prices, has won the prestigious Edie Net Zero Award for Renewable Energy Project of the Year.

The Edie Awards—formerly known as the Sustainability Leaders Awards—are the world's largest sustainable business awards and recognise green projects which are transforming the energy landscape for good. There are more than 25,000 homes in Cambridgeshire—and around 4.4 million nationally—that are off the gas grid. The Swaffham Prior project provides a new business model for community-wide adoption of renewable heat, and off-gas communities have been in touch wanting to replicate the project.

Flood Drop-in

The County Council's flood and water team will be joined by representatives of the National Flood Forum and other partner organisations at a dedicated drop in session on Friday 8 December from 10:00AM to 12:30PM at New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald. The event is open to all, and no bookings are necessary.

The team will be able to discuss any concerns, explain measures you can take to help protect your property and community against flooding, and talk you through how to report different types of flooding.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Local Highways Improvement Applications (LHI)

The window for Local Highways Improvement applications is now open, and will remain so until **5:00PM on Friday 12 January 2024**.

More information can be found on the Council's website at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/local-highway-improvement-funding/applying-for-a-local-highway-improvement-lhi

The status of schemes currently in delivery can be found at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/local-highway-improvement-funding/local-highway-improvement-delivery-programme>

Over the course of the application window officers have arranged a drop-in session for applicants with any questions. This will take place on **Friday 5 January 2024, 10:30AM—12:00noon**. If you are an applicant parish council, please contact the relevant County Council officers to confirm your attendance.

Streetlights switchover on the way

The Highways and Transport committee agreed in October a project to switch its streetlights to newer, more efficient LED lights.

The work is expected to begin in 2024 and will involve replacing 47,500 streetlights with LED lanterns. This will take two years to complete. The works should cause minimal disruption to residents, with no impact on roads or footpaths. Each unit should take about one hour to replace. The Council will share the proposed installation dates for each area before the start of the works and will publish this information on its web site.

The Council's street lighting service provider, Balfour Beatty Living Places, will also provide information on its own web site. Questions can be addressed to Street.Lighting@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

PLANNING

Envar

Waste management company Envar Composting Ltd have submitted an appeal to the Secretary of State after Cambridgeshire County Council voted in April to refuse their planning application.

Envar's plans include building a healthcare waste energy recovery facility on Somersham Road in Woodhurst, near St Ives, which would lead to the construction of a 26 metre-high chimney stack. This would allow for clinical waste, transported to the site from local hospitals, to be incinerated.

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Cambridgeshire Matters Newsletter

Cambridgeshire Matters is Cambridgeshire County Council's monthly newsletter which aims to share good news, highlights and updates from across Cambridgeshire to help our network of district, city and community members stay informed.

Find out about the great work that is taking place to support everyone in the county.

[Cambridgeshire Matters - October 2023 \(govdelivery.com\)](http://govdelivery.com)

Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership won awards in both the Active Travel and the Future Projects categories at the CiTTi awards ceremony this week.

The second annual City Transport & Traffic Innovation Magazine (CiTTi) awards were held on Tuesday (21 November) in London and attended by policymakers, landowners, developers, architects, planners, and technology companies from across the UK. The CiTTi awards aim to highlight achievements and innovations over the last 12 months in areas like sustainability, public transport and road safety.

Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership were shortlisted in two of the 16 award categories, winning both of them: the Active Travel Award (Sustainability) and the Future Projects Award (Transport).

The Active Travel Award recognises the best active travel schemes developed by local authorities and partners. The projects submitted for consideration by Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership were the [Chisholm Trail](#) (Phase 1), the [Histon Road scheme](#) and the [Dutch-style roundabout](#) at Fendon Road.

The Future Projects award recognises forward thinking and sustainable urban transport solutions and the positive contributions they can make to communities. For this award Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership had submitted the [Chisholm Trail](#) (Phase 2), Mill Road (Cambridge), [The Greenways](#) and [Milton Road](#).

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Code of Conduct complaint against Mayor Nik Johnson has now been adjudicated by the Combined Authority's Audit & Governance Sub-Committee. The Mayor was found to have breached the Code on two counts—civility and disrepute, the latter brought upon himself.

The Mayor was cleared of bullying but investigators took the view that his failure to intervene over the behaviour of a former employee 'amounted to him condoning such behaviour'. He was asked to issue an apology and to undertake appropriate training. The decision notice, the Mayor's apology, and a statement from the Combined Authority chief executive, are all publicly available at <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/news/code-of-conduct-decision-notice/>

The Board has agreed £550,000 for the next stage of the project for safe crossing of the A10/A142 BP roundabout, and £3M capital for construction.

The change of political control at Peterborough City Council last month following a vote of no confidence in leader Wayne Fitzgerald and his cabinet is significant for the Combined Authority. Peterborough, like Cambridgeshire County Council, has a veto over significant financial and transport decisions at the Combined Authority.

Following the change of control, the Combined Authority Board has been able to agree its updated Local Transport & Connectivity Plan, which Cllr Fitzgerald had previously vetoed.

51 bus services are performing well in terms of the need and performance. 2 of those are marginally above the £12 per passenger journey. These 51 services are to be retained and promoted to ensure continued viability. 19 bus services were identified for review, none within my ward.

MEETINGS ATTENDED and COMMUNITY WORK 4 October to 3 December 2023
(Sick leave 23 October to 13 November 2023)

Local meetings:

Northstowe Community Forum (4 Oct), Quarterly Highways meeting with Clerks from Longstanton, Oakington & Westwick and Over (6 Oct), Oakington & Westwick Parish Council meeting (9 Oct), Homes England meeting (11 Oct), Pathfinder School (13 Oct), Stagecoach/Homes England/CCC Busway (17 Oct), CALH Local History Event (11 Nov), Northstowe Delivery Group (16 Nov), Starship Robot/SCDC (20 Nov), Active Travel (21 Nov), BBC interview re: Childminders in Northstowe (24 Nov), Northstowe Town Council (28 Nov), Cambridgeshire TV interview re: Childminders in Northstowe (30 Nov), Overcoate meeting with Over PC/CCC officer residents/ (30 Nov)

Council meetings:

National Highways A14 corridor (13 Oct), Highways meeting with Assistant Director (16 Oct), Full Council meeting (17 Oct), Monthly catch up with Nigel Eggar and Tam Parry (15 Nov), CPCA EV & EV Charging (16 Nov), David Allatt, Assistant Director, Place & Economy (22 Nov), Children and Young People Committee (28 Nov), Cambridgeshire Music Open Mic (24 Nov), LGA seminar - Personal Safety for Councillors (30 Nov)

Community work:

Northstowe Town Council Light up Christmas Tree (25 Nov)
Parish/Town Council monthly reports, Column write ups within Northstowe News, Oakington & Westwick Journal and Over News online magazine, Northstowe Town Council Market Working Group – promoting on social media and volunteering, Northstowe Foodies.

Private case work:

Most Councillors will have private case work that they are dealing with, details of which cannot be shared due to GDPR – current themes are Bar Hill Asylum Seekers, Homelessness, Early Years, ASB, Harassment, Planning, Highways.

WARD NEWS

HIGHWAYS

New Local Team

Local Highways Officer: Neal Stephens

Local Highways Officer: Aaron Boddington

Quarterly Highways meetings 2024 dates

Friday 26 January 12noon – 1.30pm

Friday 26 April 12noon – 1.30pm

Friday 12 July 12noon – 1.30pm

Friday 1 November 12noon – 1.30pm

B1050 Cones

Homes England have stated that the Cones on the B1050 leading up to the new roundabout are still there due to works that Sisk needs to complete, I have for further information, in the meantime I have asked CCC officers if they could shed light on this matter too, as I am receiving a few emails/messages from residents, I have referred them to Home England.

County Council agrees way ahead for A14 & Northstowe archaeological finds display

A meeting was due to take place on 30 November, but unfortunately Quinton Carroll, CCC officer was unwell, and it had to be cancelled, once he has returned to work a new timing will be put in the diary.

NORTHSTOWE Road Gritting – roads not adopted by CCC

On Friday 1 December, it was reported that the roads in Northstowe in front of the Education Campus were not gritted. I subsequently emailed both L&Q and Homes England to enquire about their gritting programme. Both L&Q and Homes England confirmed that a winter programme for gritting is in place, although there seemed not to have been gritted outside of MBA, which caused an accident on the Stirling Road, this matter has been reported to police.

A14 Trees

Over the last 6 months, we have met regularly with Martin Edwards, Project Manager of the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme, Complex Infrastructure Programme, Major Projects, National Highways. National Highways gone out with a press release about the re-planting of the A14 trees, this is an article link from 3 November [National Highways 'sorry' over A14 Cambridgeshire tree-death claims - BBC News](#) and attached is the latest update following the most recent planting survey, which includes lessons learnt and next steps. There are plans to work with the community on further tree planting within the communities, but we are yet to hear from Martin.

LONGSTANTON

- Highways – the trench outside of the Mitchcroft Road has had approval to go ahead and be repaired, the contractors are looking how they could do the work without closing down the road as the trench is across the street. TTROs require 13 weeks' notice. The resident has asked if we could put signs beside the trench, I am awaiting feedback from Local Highways Manager and confirmation that the works could be completed in late December, very weather dependent.
- 20mph funding – I have liaised with County Officers to ensure that they give you feedback on your application and work with you on the best way to re-apply for February the next round. Application window opens on **15 January 2024 and closes on Friday 15 March 2024 at 5pm.**
[20mph Funding - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

NORTHSTOWE

- My Childcare campaign started on 22 November in Northstowe, spearheading to recruit childminders, [Campaign launched to encourage more childcare professionals in Northstowe - Cambridgeshire County Council](#), there were some press interest following the press release. Interviewed for BBC radio, which was pre-recorded and aired on Tues 28 November
Online article: [Northstowe : New town with no childminders launches campaign - BBC News.](#)
Radio interview: [Dotty McLeod - 28/11/2023 - BBC Sounds](#) (available for 29 days) Time: 1:50:20 – 1:57:40
30 November interviewed by Cambridgeshire TV
On Saturday 26 November, County Council officers attended the Northstowe market to assist and raise awareness of this campaign, they further attended Tuesday 28 November alongside the Children and Families centre, which enabled them to have very fruitful conversations with parents, a few of which were interested to learn a bit more about becoming a childminder.
- CCC have also been seeking your input on the kind of nursery and pre-school services that parents/carers desire for their children, and they are encouraging all parents, including expectant ones, to share their opinions as they work on defining the specifications for potential providers.
<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/NorthstoweChildcareSurvey/>
As of Friday 2 December, we have had 92 responses/ 19 partial and 73 completed, survey will remain open until 31 December 2023, has been advertised within Northstowe News, Social media pages within Northstowe, leaflets are at The Cabin, shared on NSC, MBA and Pathfinder Newsletters.

OAKINGTON AND WESTWICK

- Bus route to Impington Village College the trees have still not been cut as CCC have been unable to contact one of the landowners, Local Highways Officer was confirming with our contractors a date when they can attend, not sure we would be able to recoup this expenditure.
- The Drift pavement, I am very pleased to hear that this pavement has been finally resurfaced, I have not yet been onsite to see the end result, but I have not heard from anyone raising any issues.

OVER

- Overcoate meeting 30 November, I attended the Overcoate residents meeting at Over Community Centre with a Highways Officer, where we discussed all the possible ways of assisting the residents in overcoming the issues such as speeding and dangerous driving along Overcoate Road. There were a few actions that Parish Councillor Judith Davies and residents will look to take forward. I will continue to work with everyone to ensure that all applications are available.

COUNCILS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND KEY GOVERNMENT FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

If you have a problem or concern do not worry too much about who can solve it just ask the question and we will endeavour to signpost to the right person. The organisational structure of Cambridgeshire is complex, but it is important to identify where responsibility lies.

<p>County Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Education, Transport, Highways, Heritage, Social care, Libraries, Trading standards, - Waste management, Maintaining their estate.</p> <p>Some of these services are shared between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council but any concerns should be directed to the county council.</p>
<p>District Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.</p>
<p>Parish/ Town Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.</p>
<p>Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)</p> <p>'The local delivery body for a City Deal with central Government worth up to £500 million over 15 years, to vital improvements in infrastructure (decarbonising transport), supporting and accelerating the creation of 44,000 new jobs, 33,500 new homes and 420 additional apprenticeships.'</p> <p>Partnership between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, University of Cambridge.</p>
<p>The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor</p> <p>'A combined authority (CA) is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries.'</p> <p>What our mayor does – Business support, skills, housing, transport, environment, international, digital connectivity, resilience, research, and strategy. New homes.</p>
<p>Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough</p> <p>To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.</p>
<p>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority</p> <p>The Fire Authority is the governing body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is made up of Cambridgeshire County Councillors and Peterborough City Councillors.</p>

CONTACT DETAILS

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the above, or any other matters.

Firouz Thompson, County Councillor for Longstanton, Northstowe, Over and Oakington & Westwick
Email: firouz.thompson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

For those on social media we have highly active Facebook groups:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/> - Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe

<https://www.facebook.com/libdems3rdMay18> - Over & Willingham

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme

Tree Survey 2023

Improved success rate for planting on the project

Thank you for your interest in the Replanting Strategy for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme.

Following the publication of our Replanting Strategy in March 2023, I would like to provide an update on the project's latest tree survey, which has now been completed.

Survey results

This is the most thorough review of the planting on the A14 project to date and was carried out over a three-month period by Chevron Green Services, National Highways' landscaping contractor for the East Region. The survey included the physical visual inspection of plants on the project.

As a result, we have now identified 165,000 plants that need replacing.

This represents a far better survival rate compared to previous surveys.

Areas surveyed.

The survey covered the planting from Alconbury through to Milton, which includes both land owned by National Highways and Cambridgeshire County Council. The project's borrow pits, aquatic species and bulbs planted were not included in this survey.

During the survey, we identified a small number of areas where it would not be possible to replant or undertake further maintenance due to road user and roadworker safety concerns. An allocation of approximately 1200 plants in these areas will be re-distributed to areas where it is safe to do so and further maintenance can be undertaken.

Lessons learnt.

We have identified a number of reasons for the improved survival rate of the plants on the project, these include:

- The use of more accurate data, with saplings being individually inspected.
- A thorough survey being undertaken instead of the previous sample inspection.
- A longer than expected root establishment (not visible in above-ground inspections), which can be a factor in bare-root planting.
- To ensure more robust outcomes, we will be planting a higher percentage of cell grown plants. Bare root plants will only be used where the species are suitably resilient.

The picture below provides a brief explanation of the difference between cell grown and bare root plants.

Cell Grown v Bareroot Plants

The roots of cell grown stock are intact, and a full fibrous root system is planted, allowing successful establishment and good survival

The root system of bareroot stock can be damaged during lifting and handling. They can dry out leading to reduced survival when planted.



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- We are working with the holding nursery to coordinate and improve the delivery time to site for immediate planting. This will reduce the time the roots are exposed to sunlight and are without moisture from the soil.
- A mix of tree specific fertilisers will be use during the replanting. These fertilisers are made up of specialist polymers, growth precursors and volcanic rock, it will enhance water retention to help plant establishment for the vital first 12 months after planting.
- In continuing to move towards a more sustainable future, we will now no longer use plastic tree-guard tubes for the re-planting exercise and these will be replaced with new 100% non-plastic biodegradable tree guards. These tree guards are made from UK wood and a plant-based biodegradable resin.
- We will share lessons learnt with other National Highways projects, including the nearby A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement scheme.

Next steps.

Preparation work is already underway, with planting of the pre-ordered 162,000 stock commencing in November, subject to weather conditions. Further plants will be ordered from the nurseries and we will continue replanting through to March 2024. We will continue to work collaboratively with county, district and parish councils, together with councillors and their communities, including a local charity as the replanting progresses.

For more information, please contact Martin Edwards (A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme - Project Manager) on 07713 46390 or email martin.edwards@nationalhighways.co.uk.