

Clr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT APRIL 2021

COVID-19

Statistics

Between 29 March and 4 April 2021, 30 people in East Cambridgeshire had a confirmed positive test result. This represents a decrease of 14.3 per cent compared to the previous seven days.

Between 22 and 28 March, 19 people were admitted to CUH (Addenbrookes) with coronavirus, a decrease of 9.5 per cent compared to the previous seven days. There were twelve patients in hospital at Addenbrookes with coronavirus on 30 March 2021, three of them on mechanical ventilation.

Between 29 March and 4 April 2021, there has been one death in East Cambridgeshire within 28 days of a positive coronavirus test—no change compared to the previous seven days.

Covid rules

From 29 March, outdoor gatherings of six people or two households were permitted. Including in private gardens. Outdoor sports facilities such as tennis and basketball courts were allowed to reopen, and people were allowed to take part in formally organised outdoor sports.

The Stay At Home order has now ended, though many lockdown restrictions remain—people should continue to work from home where possible, and overseas travel remains banned, other than for a small number of reasons.

The next step, no earlier than 12 April, includes the opening of non-essential retail, most outdoor attractions and settings, indoor leisure facilities for use by people on their own or with their household, outdoor service at hospitality venues, and self-contained holiday accommodation. Funerals can continue with up to thirty people, and the numbers able to attend wedding, receptions and commemorative events such as wakes will rise from six to fifteen.

Vaccinations

Vaccines are currently given in two doses, at least 21 days apart and usually twelve weeks apart. By 28 March, 44,570 people in East Cambridgeshire had received at least one dose of a COVID vaccine. Across the United Kingdom

- 26,719,422 people had had a first dose by the end of 3 April 2021.
- 4,304,760 people had had a second dose by the end of 3 April 2021.

Self-isolation support extended to parents

Parents who need to take time off work to look after children who are self-isolating due to COVID can now apply for financial support.

The self-isolation payment scheme has now been expanded to include parents of children aged 15 and under (or up to 25 with an EHC plan) who are not themselves legally required to self-isolate, but who need to take time off work if their children are required to do so. More information at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/selfisolationsupport

Council facilities

Recycling centres

From 1 April to 30 September all sites will be operating for the longer summer opening hours. Residents are being asked to sort materials in advance and make only one booking per week. Social distancing is in place at all sites, and advance booking is still required at Alconbury, Bluntisham, Milton, St Neots and Thriplow. Please do not turn up at a recycling centre which requires a booking if you have not booked in advance. And if you have booked in advance and no longer need your booking, please cancel it to free the space for someone else.

Libraries

Cambridgeshire's libraries will be open for 'managed browsing' from Monday 12 April. From that date, residents will be able to browse the shelves and select their own books. One-way systems will be in place, with customers asked to wear masks (unless exempt) and sanitise their hands when they enter the library. A friendly face will be at the door of each library to explain how managed browsing works and answer any questions.

Social distancing will be in place, and customers will be able to use self-service technology to check their books out. Returned books will also be quarantined to minimise the risk of Covid infection.

A maximum capacity has been introduced for each building so customers may have to queue at busy times, and for the time being won't be able to sit or study while visiting the library. Visitors will be asked to use the track and trace app when they enter the building, or if they don't have a smartphone, staff will take their details for the same purpose.

'Farmgate' report remain secret

The auditors' report into the events behind 'Farmgate' still remains secret, and will do so now until at least after the 6 May elections, and perhaps even forever, despite pressure from a number of councillors (including me) and the local media to publish its contents in the public interest.

Flooding

Notes of the extraordinary meeting of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Flood & Water Management Group (CP FloW) held on 3 February 2021 to discuss the response to the recent flooding are now available on the Council's web site at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/flooding-and-flood-investigations>

A committee of MPs has published recommendations on how the Government should respond better to flood risk. They say the Government should:

- Set out clearly defined objectives for a level of flood resilience which will protect homes and businesses in line with climate change projections, including 'seriously re-examining' the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendation of a nationwide standard. As the number of flood defences inevitably increases, the Government must also put in place a long-term budget for the maintenance of existing defences to cope with the extra stress climate change is putting on them.
- Give local authorities the resources they need—including for dedicated trained staff—to effectively factor climate change projections into local planning decisions, thus avoiding development in areas at risk from flooding.
- Work with charities to develop guidance which will allow 'meaningful engagement' between local people and risk management and planning authorities. The report calls for local people to be treated as 'vital delivery partners', rather than 'passive recipients', noting that such engagement brings 'real value' to flood risk schemes.
- Address the current lack of long-term recovery support for flooded communities, developing a well-resourced action plan to support their psychological, economic and physical recovery. Recognising the work of charities in supporting victims of recent storms, the Committee calls on the Government to provide funding to help the voluntary sector respond to flooding, and build capacity in other organisations.
- Reduce the risk of overwhelming existing drainage systems by ending the automatic right for new developments to connect surface water drainage to the public sewer. Instead, the Government must commit to sufficiently incentivising high-quality sustainable drainage systems (SuDs).
- Scale up natural flood management, while ensuring a catchment-based approach that takes account of local conditions. Natural flood management initiatives, such as allowing land to flood, must be appropriately incentivised, and doing so will require involving farmers and land managers at every stage of scheme design and implementation.

Ouse Washes bank raising and flood barrier work

As expected, wet weather conditions prevented the Environment Agency from finishing its bank raising programme by the statutory deadline. The Inspecting

Engineer has completed a new inspection, and his report sets a new deadline of December 2022 to complete the physical work, and December 2024 to establish good grass cover.

The Environment Agency needs to finish all the bank raising works before it can start building the foundation for the demountable flood barrier at Welney. This is because the access to the haul road at Welney is the only way to bring clay in to finish the bank raising between there and the railway bridge.

The Environment Agency held an online consultation from 12 March to 30 September 2020 asking for views on the best time to close the Welney Wash Road to complete the demountable flood barrier works. It received 101 responses and the majority of respondents chose June to August as their preferred period for the works.

The working period for this year is 15 July to 31 October, with ecological surveys and grass cutting starting shortly. The Environment Agency is hoping that Natural England will approve an early start in June to repair the haul road and topsoil slips before bank raising works continue in July. It also needs to repair flood damage sustained during the winter.

The work plan is as follows.

Year 5 (2021) bank raising works between Mepal and Welney

April-May	Ecological surveys and grass cuts on the full length of the Middle Level Barrier Bank.
June-July	Haul road repairs and topsoil slip repairs.
July-October	Repair flood damage sustained during the winter.
July-October	Finish the bank raising work between <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welney and the railway bridge • Welches Dam and the railway bridge • A142, Mepal and Welches Dam
September-October	Install remaining two bird hides at the Ouse Washes RSPB Reserve.
October	Reinstatement of the haul road.

Year 6 (2022) demountable flood barrier works at Welney

April-May	Ecological surveys and grass cuts on the full length of the Middle Level Barrier Bank.
June	Divert the public footpath north from Welney to Welmore Lake Sluice to Low Bank. The barrier works is being carried out across the access to the public footpath.
June-July	Build the abutment walls each side of the road. This should be possible without the need for any traffic management on the road.

July-August	Full road closure to excavate and construct foundation slab across the road. This will take about six weeks.
August-September	Temporary traffic lights in place to install the stub walls that the temporary barrier attaches to.
September-October	Reinstate footpath, fencing and tidy up embankments.
October	Practical training session to install the barrier

The Environment Agency opened the footpath between Earith Sluice and Sutton Gault in February 2021. Some remedial work in this area may be needed during 2021, but any work areas will be fenced off and the footpath will remain open.

A virtual drop-in is planned for May 2021 to showcase the project so far, the plans in relation to the demountable flood barrier at Welney, provide a visual representation of the Ouse Washes, and respond to any enquiries.

More information about the works at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/ouse-washes-section-10-works/>

LHI bids

The Council has issued an indicative list of successful Local Highways Improvement applications, subject to final approval by the Highways & Transport Committee in May. The Council is proposing to start the design and consultation processes on all applications shortly, reviewing the successful applications in more detail and assigning an officer to carry them forward.

In the Sutton division the applications recommended for approval are:

- Little Downham: solar studs along the B1411 Ely Road
- Witchford: pedestrian crossing near the school on Main Street
- Coveney: gates and signing and lining on Jerusalem Drove Wardy Hill

Sutton Parish Council's application for a pedestrian refuge on The Brook to assist pedestrians walking along the northern side of the High Street across the junction at The Brook was unfortunately not successful.

Road resurfacing schedule

Road resurfacing plans for the coming year include the following roads in the Sutton division:

- The Brook, Sutton in May
 - The Orchards and Elizabeth Court, Sutton in September
 - Cross Lane, Little Downham in September
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Fen biosphere

My motion to the County Council on the Fens Biosphere was once again watered down, as district councillor Mark Inskip's motion to East Cambridgeshire District Council was in February, but at least achieved support in its weakened form. The revised motion concluded:

This Council therefore:

- recognises the potential value of the Fens Biosphere and requests further investigation of the implications and benefits of designation for Cambridgeshire before considering whether to formally support its request for UNESCO Biosphere designation, and
- instructs the Executive Director for Place and Economy to write to Cambridgeshire Acre to seek further information and report back to a future meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Committee with recommendations.

The Council has now written to Cambridgeshire ACRE to commence that investigation.

More about the Fens Biosphere initiative at <https://www.fensbiosphere.org.uk/>

Waste and Minerals Plan

County Council officers have now received the Inspector's report on the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals & Waste Local Plan. The Plan has been found 'sound', subject to the Inspector's final Main Modifications—changes required to ensure that it is 'sound'. The Inspector has not changed any of the allocations or the maps that were produced and consulted on previously.

The Councils have managed to successfully hold off challenges made on our waste needs assessment, a policy criteria-based approach for waste sites rather than specific waste site allocations, and for a technology neutral approach rather than references to specific technologies such as Energy from Waste being added to the Local Plan.

The report will be published online and interested parties notified. A report will be presented to the County Council's Environment and Sustainability Committee in June and Full Council in July, before being adopted.

Energy projects

The County Council's energy projects are continuing, with unanimous councillor backing given to progress a number of schemes. The Council's Environment & Sustainability Committee has agreed the investment case for the installation of solar carports at the Council's new HQ at Alconbury; and for Phase 1 of a Smart

Energy Grid at Babraham Park & Ride which will reduce carbon emissions by 7,300 tonnes through renewable energy generated from solar panels, up to 80 electric vehicle chargers installed at the Park & Ride, and a private wire installation to sell excess electricity.

The Committee also agreed the investment case for a low carbon heat network at Comberton Village College, and a ground source heat pump project at The Galfrid Primary School in Cambridge—though alternative methods of funding and implementing these projects are now being considered.

The Swaffham Prior community heating project continues to make progress with additional households signing up as potential customers.

Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital

March's meeting of the County Council's Health Committee heard from CUH (Addenbrookes) about the progress of their plans for a Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital. Funding for this was announced in October 2020, and a Strategic Outline Case (has now been submitted).

The Trust's intention is to submit an Outline Business Case in or around June 2021, and a Full Business Case in or around August or September 2022, with a view to the new hospital being completed in November 2025.

Remote meetings

As previously reported, the County Council will not have a venue of its own for its Annual Council meeting on 18 May—and unless the Government has a last-minute conversion, online meetings will be banned from 7 May.

Unlike East Cambs District Council, which has brought its annual meeting forward from 20 May to 22 April, the County Council cannot meet before 7 May, as until the elections on 6 May the council will not know who has been elected.

Legal action brought by local government lawyers and Hertfordshire County Council will be heard in court on Wednesday 21 April—which is supersonic speed by legal standards. The aim of this legal action is to obtain a 'judicial declaration' from the courts. Judges are being asked in this case to define the words *meeting*, *place*, and *present* in a way which will enable online council meetings to continue without the need for legislation by Government.

Bus timetables

Changes to Stagecoach's bus services in Cambridge, including the 39 through Mepal, Sutton, and Witchford, will take effect from Sunday 11 April.

Stagecoach say:

- We will be making some changes to the 39 route so that buses will now serve Lancaster Way Business Park and the route will also be extended to March Railway Station.
- Due to these route changes, there will be some changes to arrival and departure times, please check the timetable for specific information.
- Please note that some stops listed on the timetable are shaded orange, this means that these timings are approximate.

More information and timetables can be found at
<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/east/east-covid19-services>

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Government has now withdrawn the remaining £45M of the £100M it had promised for affordable housing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Minister said "I have concluded that the programme has made insufficient delivery progress and that the value for money being achieved is below our expectations. I will not be extending the timeframe or continuing to fund the programme on its current basis." The Government has offered to make an unspecified sum available to the Combined Authority for some affordable housing up to March 2022 but with very much more stringent conditions.

The Independent Commission on Climate Change has published its first interim report, with some stark conclusions and about 30 recommendations. The effects of climate change are likely to be 'particularly severe' in this part of the country with increased risk of flooding, high summer temperatures, water shortages, and damage to the natural carbon stores found in the Fens peat. The county's greenhouse gas emissions are currently around 25 per cent higher per person than the UK average, and an estimated annual investment of £700 million will be needed to address the climate risk in this area.

Meet Your Councillor

Sutton ward district councillor Mark Inskip and I will be holding our virtual surgery via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30PM on

- Tuesday 13 April 2021
- Tuesday 11 May 2021

Please contact Mark at mark@markinskip.org.uk to book your timeslot.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division