

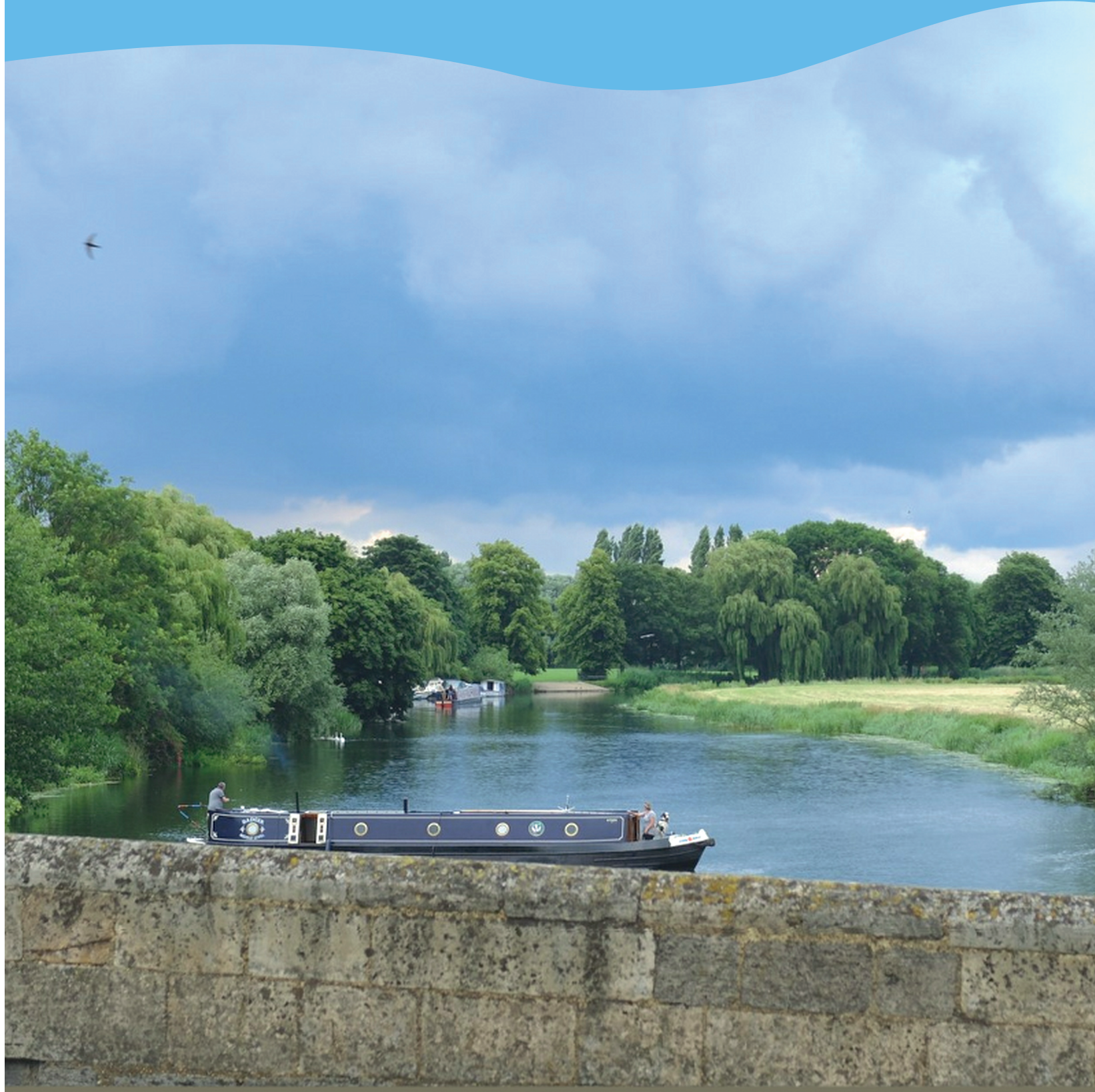


The countryside charity  
Cambridgeshire  
and Peterborough

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023

October 2023



# Chairman's report Alan James

## Contents

Fenland .....	page 7
East Cambridgeshire .....	10
Press & Publicity .....	11
Social Media .....	12
Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire .....	13
Huntingdonshire .....	14
Accounts .....	15
Peterborough .....	15
About CPRE .....	back page

**Last year I reported that a significant effect of the COVID lockdown appeared to have been a permanent change in many organisations' work practices which had a major impact on the use of, and requirement for, commercial premises clustered in town and city centres.**

Some organisations closed their workplaces permanently and changed to working 100% from home or other remote locations, such as local internet hubs. Others downsized their workplaces for use only by business-critical staff and for meeting and training purposes, enabling them to release floor space and reduce their rental and business rate costs.

Another approach has been to maintain workplaces but alter the layout to facilitate hybrid working on-demand in a less-crowded and improved work environment. Staff attend when they need to, and work-stations are subject to a booking system. Some organisations, such as South Cambs. District Council have shown that a 4-day working week does not damage performance and has improved work-life balance. Many businesses are ceasing to make it a condition of employment that personnel live within commuting distance of their normal place of work. Indeed, in many cases, the 'normal place of work' has become the home office.

During the current year these changes have continued, creating a boom for builders and tradesmen working on extensions and home office conversions. There has been a notable effect on commuting, with a briefing published in May 2023 by the European Environment Agency giving the following Key Messages:

- Teleworking during the pandemic showed both employers and employees that current technologies and some employment policies could already enable a functional alternative to daily commuting.
- New remote working patterns are already transforming the nature of the labour market. People are considering new opportunities to work internationally or from 'third places' (i.e. workplaces that are neither the office nor home) closer to where they live.
- Implementing hybrid working where possible could help us reduce our reliance on commuting and move away from car-centric lifestyles. Moreover, remote working could influence mobility patterns and urban planning (especially in metropolitan areas), alter harmful production and consumption patterns, and ultimately help us move towards more sustainable lifestyles.
- However, adequate economic and social policies are needed to ensure that changes to working patterns are sustainable... [and] strategic policy choices will be needed to manage these new ways of working and avoid negative rebound effects or trade-offs that compromise sustainability.

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/from-the-daily-office-commute>

These messages are entirely compatible with what we are observing across Cambridgeshire. One very positive effect has been that some villages already – or at risk of becoming – commuter dormitories are showing increased daytime activity and more business for local shops and services. Time saved by not commuting is enabling more, and younger, people to become involved in community activities.



For those continuing to commute, improved public transport would help reduce the numbers of cars on the roads and could significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions. There has been a small ray of light in this respect in the support of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CAPCA) for continuation and improvement of bus services across the county and some of the local schemes to encourage active travel by making cycling and walking easier, safer and more enjoyable. Tragically, in March this year government ministers cut two-thirds of England's dedicated funding for walking, wheeling and cycling, in order to protect the largest-ever roads programme. Only days later, ministers published an updated climate plan, showing the UK is set to miss its 2030 target due to carbon emissions from road transport.



📷 "Cambridgeshire Guided Busway" by Burgess Von Thunen is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

We continue to call for a properly integrated transport plan for the Greater Cambridge area. Something which seems further away than ever with the mish-mash of authorities claiming responsibility for transport planning.

East-West Rail have announced their preference for Route 'E'. This cuts up the countryside between Cambridge, Cambourne and Tempsford, with no other stations in between, and blocks the re-opening of the Colne Valley line. Its financial case is predicated almost entirely on excessive house-building in the countryside north of Cambourne and at Tempsford. This is a tragic loss of the opportunity for rail to provide the core of a new era in joined-up transport planning.

We continue to press for completion of the upgrade of the east-west rail freight route between Felixstowe and Nuneaton. This has become even more urgent as an alternative to East-West Rail's proposals to trundle goods trains through the

centre of Cambridge and Newmarket day and night.

As we explain in our Fenland report, we view the steadily and inexorably increasing rate of sea level rise due to climate change as the greatest risk to community health and well-being across much of the county. From flood risk to drought and wildfires, the effects of climate change are here for all to see. Yet corrective and preventive action by government and other organisations in authority has often been slow and even complacent.

We were pleased when the government decided to abandon the Ox-Cam Arc construction which would have generated massive carbon emissions adding to climate change. We were therefore appalled that the representatives of some local authorities then backed an alternative approach to achieving the same end, now re-labelled the Ox-Cam Pan Regional Partnership (PRP). This is neither sensible nor responsible when, since last summer until May of this year, all of our county was officially in drought, it is currently in 'recovering drought' and we are again experiencing prolonged dry continental weather with higher-than-normal temperatures.

This winter, there were shortages of fresh food in our shops due to the effects of climate change in Spain, Morocco and Portugal. Yet still the government, the unelected Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), some councils, and Cambridge University, continue to press for more building around Cambridge including on its Green Belt and on some of the best farmland in this country.

Like others in CPRE we are very concerned by the continued inclusion of National Development Management Policies in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill currently going through parliament. We see these as a central government 'power grab' which will neutralise the concerns of local people about planning issues, and severely damage local democracy. We are pleased that the Bill retains the facility for the Minister of State to create levelling up and regeneration 'Missions' and hope that very soon after the Bill becomes law, Mission 2 of the White Paper, moving R&D investment out of the south east, is implemented. I repeat it here:

“Mission 2: By 2030, domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40%, and over the Spending Review period by at least one third. This additional government funding will seek to leverage at least twice as much private sector

continued overleaf ►

investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth”.

And...

“Achieving the mission will require sustained and targeted increases in public R&D investment, as well as increased investment by business. It will be driven by a change in the way the UK Government invests. For example, for the first time, BEIS will commit to invest at least 55% of its funding outside the GSE by 2024–25. In addition, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) will increase National Institute for Health Research investment outside London, Oxford and Cambridge, while the Ministry of Defence will enhance and accelerate R&D spend across the UK through the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy”.



📷 "The Ferry Bridge, Peterborough" by Terry Butcher is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire continue to be beset by major proposals for growth. The University of Cambridge has become one of, if not the, largest threats to the countryside around Cambridge and to its Green Belt, their incursions having a major effect on the character and setting of the historic city.

Trinity College has applied to double the Science Park by building in the Green Belt north of the A14. Housing and a supermarket have been built on the former Plant Breeding Institute land just off the A10 on Trumpington Road, close to Grantchester. The National Institute of Agricultural Botany site North East of Huntingdon Road has been built on, and the University Farm West of Huntingdon Road has disappeared under what is now Eddington.

We recently assisted Newnham residents in halting a Queens College application for new student accommodation which would have severely

damaged wildlife, including bats, in the adjacent Paradise Nature Reserve. Queens have appealed.

The South Barton Road Landowners Group of colleges is pushing the councils to include the Green Belt south of the Barton Road in the next Local Plan. The North Barton Landowners Group of colleges is trying to do the same for land north of the Barton Road. If successful, this will destroy a very significant part of the Cambridge Green Belt.

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/8497/fwr-m9-21301-south-brlog.pdf>

Yet, the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study by LDA Design in November 2015 - the most recent review of the Green Belt - was very clear that any release of Green Belt land in this sector would be very damaging to the setting of the city and that *“no Green Belt release should be contemplated”*.

The University and its colleges are, of course, not the only major threat to the Cambridge Green Belt and surrounding countryside. There is also the proposal by Anglian Water to move the perfectly serviceable Cambridge Waste Water Treatment (WWT) plant into the Green Belt at Honey Hill, north of the A14 between Fen Ditton and Horningsea. The unelected Greater Cambridge Partnership, GCP, wants to build 3 busways, north, east and west across the Cambridgeshire countryside, whose only claimed financial benefit is *“land value uplift”*.

We were disappointed that the Secretary of State endorsed the decision of the County Council to accept the proposal by the GCP to build the A10/M11 Travel Hub, aka giant car park, in the Green Belt. Our concerns remain that it will encourage car use and result in ribbon development along the whole length of the A10 from Trumpington to Harston. Land on the opposite side of the A10 has already been acquired by a major developer.

Many development proposals use as justification the idea that life sciences and IT need to ‘cluster’ around Cambridge and Oxford and in the corridor between them. Having worked continuously since 1975 in both industries, I guarantee this is a myth. Once, there was no alternative but to fly or drive to meetings. Decades ago, I would take up to four flights a day hopping between airport meeting rooms, commute to Boston in Massachusetts every week, and drive 50,000 miles a year. From these unsustainable practices came the concept of clusters such as Route 101 around Boston MA, Research Triangle in N. Carolina, and Silicon Valley in California. But now new emphasis on sustainability means that many organisations are reducing travel per employee to help meet their sustainability targets. With technologies such as the



internet, VoIP, tele-conferencing, and virtual meeting systems, plus changes in working practices, companies and organisations are dispersing from these clusters and are co-operating globally. There really is no longer any need for physical clustering of industries in specific geographical regions.

We remain extremely concerned by the number of planning applications, often for the most damaging projects, being made via the National Infrastructure Commission (NISC) and Transport & Works Order routes, which avoid proper scrutiny by local planning authorities and local communities.

Currently, these include:

- A428 improvement, now proceeding.
- East-West Rail, route announced.
- Relocation of the Cambridge WWT plant into the Green Belt.
- Sunnica solar installation.
- Wisbech waste incinerator.
- Greater Cambridge Partnership busways.
- Mallards Pass solar installation just across the border in Lincs.
- Potentially, the Fens Reservoir at Chatteris.

Many applications come round again, like boomerangs. As an example, the application for Bottisham 'retirement village' in a conservation area, which was rejected for a second time on appeal last year, has been resubmitted.

We continue to ask local planning authorities to consult the appropriate Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) when examining or making planning applications in their districts. There is a worrying lack of understanding by planners of the vital role which IDBs play in keeping Fen communities and countryside safe from flooding in winter, and drought in summer. This is borne out by the fact that frequently the Environment Agency will defer to the more detailed knowledge, skills and engineering capabilities of the IDBs. In South Cambs., we are making some headway with this issue.

We are seeing increasing levels of 'greenwash' by planning applicants. Phrases such as 'net zero' housing and 'bio-diversity net gain' achieved by off-setting are used freely, yet there is still no universal application of carbon life-cycle analysis to developments despite construction classified by the Climate Change Committee as a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Kings College has made much of growing long grass on its lawn and putting a few solar panels on its Chapel roof. Cambridge is one of the UK cities most vulnerable to climate change, and by these feeble actions the

College is hardly off-setting the damage being caused by its continued support for development.

On a far more positive note, it has been heartening to see the progress made by the Great Ouse Valley Trust (GOVT) in improving the Ouse Valley Way. We wish them luck with their application for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status. The Great Ouse Rivers Trust which extends the length of the Great Ouse has also recently been established.

<http://greatousevalleytrust.org.uk>

<https://theriverstrust.org/about-us/news/new-great-ouse-rivers-trust>

The campaign group Friends of the Cam grows from strength to strength. They provide an effective discussion and presentation forum on Cam catchment issues such as continued over-abstraction from the chalk aquifer south of Cambridge, failure by water companies to prevent raw sewage discharge into the river, protection of the flora and fauna of the river, and the need to protect the river and all its tributaries from over-development. <https://www.friendsofthecam.org/>

Be rest assured, we will continue our efforts to protect our precious countryside, to counter the causes and effects of climate change on it, and to ensure healthy, vibrant rural communities within it. If you think you can assist, either as volunteer or as a trustee please do contact us.

Jo McGowan continues to provide an excellent service as Branch and Regional Administrator, and Tracey Hipson does a sterling job maintaining our website and Facebook presence. If you have information for either, please email [office@cprecambs.org.uk](mailto:office@cprecambs.org.uk).

Michael Monk has retired as Chairman of the East of England Region group and finally relinquished all his CPRE responsibilities. We wish him a long and happy retirement.

In July 2022 we lost our former Chairman, Mike Bratby, who died at the age of 77. Born and educated in Norwich, the retired Wing Commander devoted eight and a half of his retirement years until 2010 campaigning for countryside issues in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Then, in November, Lawrence Wragg, our long-time Vice Chairman, died aged 78. As I said last year at his retirement, I couldn't thank him enough for all the effort he put into CPRE and other environmental charities, nationally and locally, over the years. It was a mark of the esteem in which Lawrence was held that for some it was standing room only in Ickleton church for his funeral. We all miss him so, so much!

Since the Chairman's and South Cambridgeshire's reports were written, Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, has...

## made the announcement of wishing to build an additional 250,000 homes in Cambridge city, proposed in the document 'Cambridge 2040'

The announcement was a surprise, not only for ourselves but also for all local councils, who had apparently not been consulted in advance, and for the South Cambs. MP, Anthony Browne, who has roundly condemned and opposed it.

Ali Sargent and Alan James rapidly prepared a Press Statement which was sent by email immediately and resulted in two radio interviews. Our statement was as follows:

“If you're running the Michael Gove story about plans for mass housing developments around Cambridge (and Anthony Browne's objections to them), might you be interested in the views of Cambridgeshire CPRE (see below)?

South Cambridgeshire MP Anthony Browne's promise to do everything he can to stop the Government's "nonsense" plans to impose mass housebuilding in Cambridge has been strongly supported by countryside campaigners. "Michael Gove's plans to relax planning rules to create more homes in the heart of our cities – Cambridge being target No 1 – are nothing short of madness" said the Chairman of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CPRE, Dr Alan James. "I agree with Anthony Browne. All major developments in and around Cambridge are currently blocked by the Environment Agency because we have quite literally run out of water.

"Cambridge is on the edge of the Fens and very low-lying. Climate change means the rate of annual sea level rise has now increased from 3mm a year to 3.57mm. That, coupled with the predicted effects of melting glaciers in Greenland and Antarctica, up to 12 feet globally, means Cambridge is a very silly place to build indeed. What happened to the

Levelling Up Agenda and Mission 2 of the White Paper?

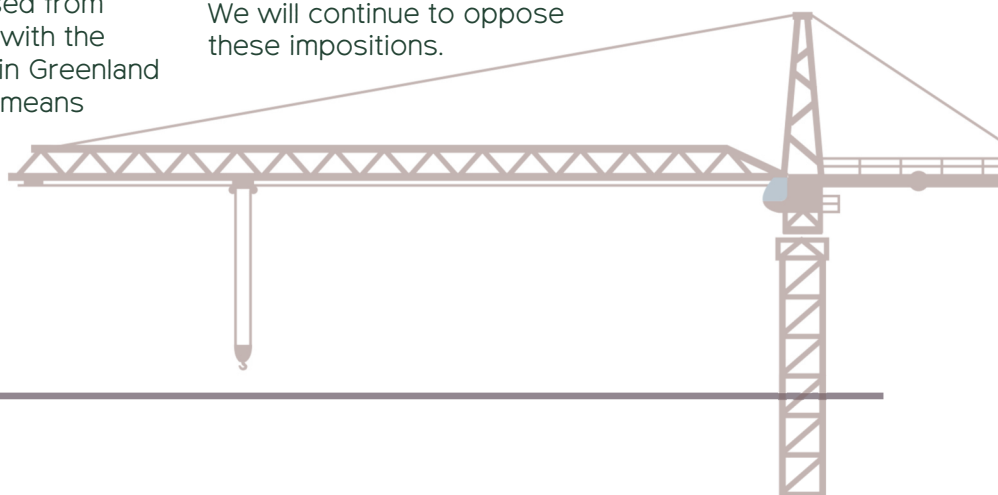
'Life sciences now work together globally using something called the internet. It would appear Mr Gove is back in the 20th century when clustering came about to reduce air travel and improve communications. Now, the original clusters in the USA are gradually dispersing.'

Alan would be more than happy to explain CPRE's concerns in more detail”.

Interestingly, publication resulted in a call from Rob Larter at the British Antarctic Survey, our AGM speaker, who pointed out that the sea level figure used above is the rate of global mean sea-level rise averaged over the past 30 years. It is based on satellite altimetry data. The rate over the past 5 years is 4.3 mm per year. Add to this the *circa* 1 mm per year land subsidence in this region, and the effective rate of sea level rise is 5.3 mm per year and that rate is increasing. So Cambridge is not a good long term home for more building without astronomical expenditure on flood defences.

There was also announcement of a Cambridge Delivery Group being set up to lead the 'development' of the city, backed by £5 million. This is to be led by the chairman of Homes England, Peter Freeman, and will be the second unelected body, after the Greater Cambridge Partnership, to try and force central government's will on the people of Cambridge.

We will continue to oppose these impositions.





## Fenland

Alan James

### **We continued to monitor and respond to planning applications in Fenland and provide advice to residents and members.**

As with East Cambridgeshire and parts of South Cambridgeshire, the effects of climate change are our greatest concern. The annual rate of sea level rise continues to steadily increase as illustrated by the graph overleaf.

This is bound to increase flood risk to Fenland and to connected areas of the county in the main river catchments.

The Environment Agency has continued its programme of mitigation steps. The Ouse Washes form a flood storage reservoir between the Middle Level Barrier Bank (Old Bedford) and the Cradge Bank (Hundred Foot River) and are registered under the Reservoirs Act 1975 (the Act). Surveys determined that raising the Middle Level Barrier Bank was necessary in order to comply with the Act and ensure protection to a 1:10,000 year or 0.01% probability of flooding for communities adjacent to the bank. This project is now complete and a period of settlement monitoring continues.

In addition, to reduce flood risk to the village of Welney a demountable barrier has been installed on the A1101, Welney Wash Road, where it intersects the Middle Level Barrier Bank in order to cross the Washes.

With the inexorable sea level rise due to ice melt, changing weather patterns and clear evidence from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that the world is going to exceed the 1.5°C warming target,\* it is inevitable that considerable additional work will be required if the Fens are to remain sufficiently protected from flooding.

We remain concerned that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has continued to force councils to build in areas of future high risk of flooding, some already below sea level. We cautiously welcome announcements that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill may facilitate more local flexibility in housing numbers.

We have made written submissions opposing the proposed waste incinerator near a school in Wisbech. Due to lack of resources, we have been

unable to attend live sessions with the Planning Inspectorate, but we are encouraged that the local Wiswin campaign group appears to be winning the arguments.

We have continued to endorse investment in relatively new processes which recycle plastic waste and were pleased when one, the Trifoil process, received a grant of €3 million from the European Union LIFE Programme.

Previously, Fenland District Council removed the proposal for development of Manor Park, Chatteris, aka Wenny Meadow, as a site for up to 90 homes, from the draft Local Plan. However, the Council has designated only part of the site as a Local Green



📷 Flooding in Godmanchester, Winter 2019 - Photo 10/14 cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Richard Humphrey - [geograph.org.uk/p/6350733](https://geograph.org.uk/p/6350733)

Space, and campaigning for protection of its entirety continues. Meanwhile, a 2021 application to develop the site, F/YR21/0981/F has been approved. Judicial review is possible.

In 2022, residents of Tydd St Giles village and holiday park requested our assistance with a proposal to build an additional 51 leisure holiday homes. This would have significant effects on the village, residents of the existing holiday homes and, most importantly, on the flora and fauna of the existing green space which residents use as a recreation area. We objected and asked Fenland District Council to consider designation of this area as Local Green Space. The application remains under consideration.

We remain concerned by the proposal by Anglian Water (AW) for two reservoirs in the Fens and that

continued overleaf ►

\*According to the World Meteorological Organisation there is now a 66% probability that the 1.5°C target will be exceeded by 2027 (New Scientist, June 2023)...

<https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/global-temperatures-set-reach-new-records-next-five-years>

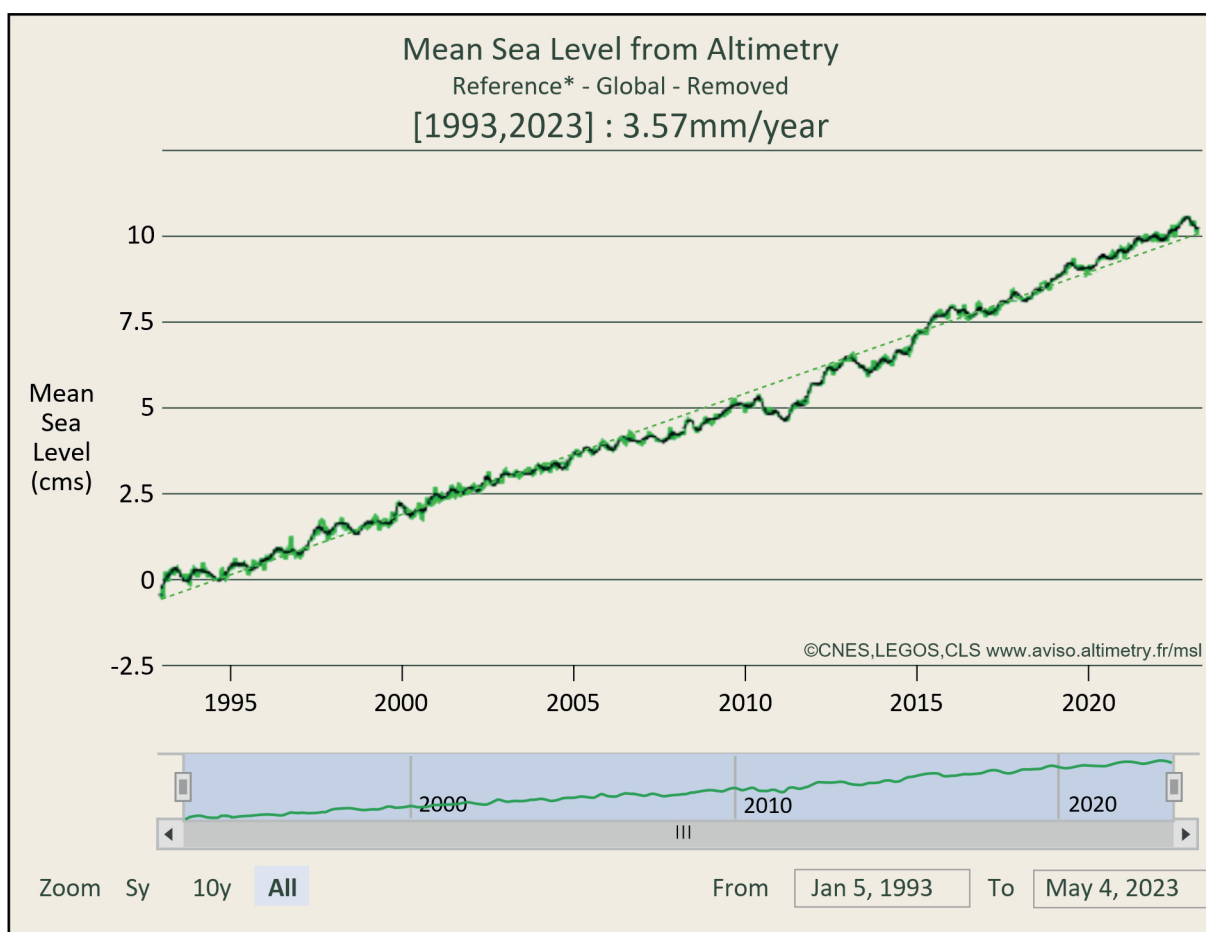


Image credit: Aviso Satellite Altimetry Data

their offshoot, Water Resources East (WRE), has been recognised as a regional water authority. It is our view that such authorities should be completely independent of water companies and the regular exchange of senior staff between AW and WRE is evidence that WRE is not independent in any way.

AW conducted a ‘consultation’ concerning its proposals for a new reservoir at Chatteris. Interestingly, this ‘consultation’ was commenced before the publication of the regional plan for water by AW’s colleagues at WRE. We raised serious objections to this proposal, summarised as follows:

- **Consultation Approach** – documentation provided addressed none of the serious issues, merely how the apparently ‘done deal’ might be designed for recreational use.
- **Purpose of the Reservoir** – stated as to “enable sustainable economic and housing growth”, in the East of England. We pointed out there is no such thing and that the Committee on Climate Change in its annual reports to Parliament make it very clear that construction is one of this country’s highest greenhouse gas emitters. We also pointed out that the Levelling Up Bill currently

progressing through Parliament emphasises that government wishes to transfer economic activity away from the south-east to other regions of the country. Therefore, the growth agenda being stated as the primary driver of need for this reservoir is neither sustainable or consistent with current government policy.

- **Loss of Grade 1 and 2 Farm Land** – all of the land within the proposed site is Grade 1 and 2 best and most versatile agricultural land, the protection of which is given significant weight by the NPPF. We pointed out that the Environmental Audit Committee warned the UK government in 2019 that it must reduce dependence on imported foods because climate change will reduce their availability. This warning was repeated in the UK Food Security Report 2021 issued by DEFRA in May 2022.
- **Loss of Residential Properties and Rurally-located Businesses** – It was stated that there will be loss of ten residential properties, and likely impact on the viability or result in the loss of five non-agricultural businesses, including potential recreational facilities, plus around 13 agricultural



holdings. We objected strongly to the casual way a large private company referred to the loss of people's homes, businesses and farms in an area which has significant rural poverty and heavy reliance on long-distance commuting for the economic survival of many families.

- **Availability of Water to fill the proposed Reservoir** – It was stated in the published documentation that “during times of high rainfall, river flows from the Great Ouse catchment would feed the reservoir with water.” It seemed to have escaped AW's notice that the River Great Ouse is a tidal river upstream as far as Brownshill Staunch, and therefore any water taken directly from the river close to Chatteris will be saline and contain nematodes, as was discovered in the 1947 and 1953 floods. Furthermore, if this reservoir were to be filled by abstraction from any underlying aquifer, it would likely create a risk to the supply of water for irrigation at surrounding farms.
- **Availability of Construction Material** – AW stated that “to build the reservoir, we will excavate soil and underlying material from the site and use this to create a surrounding embankment that will contain the water in the reservoir.” This assumes that the material would be suitable for forming a water-tight barrier for the banks and floor of the reservoir. We doubt that there is sufficient depth of high-grade clay within the proposed site and therefore material will likely have to be imported by road from elsewhere.
- **Flood Risk** – the proposed site is in Flood Zone 3. The bank raising described above should protect it from flooding from the Ouse Washes Reservoir. However, it is unclear what protection will be afforded from flooding of the river Nene, where bank raising plans are apparently still under development. We also pointed out the increasing flood risk being caused by sea level rise due to ice melt.
- **Alternatives** – we recommended more climate-friendly alternatives to this proposal, including:
  1. Implementation of the government's Levelling Up Agenda.
  2. Re-use and refurbishment of empty homes in other regions of the country, where water supply exists.
  3. Building on brownfield sites in other regions of the country, where water supply exists.
  4. Fixing and replacing leaking pipes and infrastructure, which both AW and Cambridge Water have failed to do.

5. Better promotion and investment in water-use reduction.

We made very similar comments in response to the ‘consultation’ by WRE about its Water Resources Management Plan, adding that the sustainable approach to protecting Chalk Streams & Aquifers is to reduce the pressure leading to abstraction. We expressed concern that there was little consideration of Waste Water Treatment, given that any increase in water use will increase the need for treatment, and of waste water re-use.

There was considerable complacency about water leakage, exemplified by the statement: “past investment in demand management and leakage control within the region means that there is less potential here than elsewhere in the country.” This is not consistent with experience in the summer of 2022 when villages around Ely were without water for up to seven days due to decayed or broken pipes. When spoken to, members of a repair gang admitted they were fighting a losing battle because wholesale pipework replacement around the area is essential and long-overdue.

We expressed concern about the project to transfer water by pipeline across the unstable Fens from North East Lincolnshire, a project which had already been started prior to the ‘consultation’.

As we have previously highlighted, and will continue highlighting, Fenland is one of the UK's most productive crop-growing areas. The warnings contained in the reports by the Environmental Audit Committee in 2019 and by DEFRA in the UK Food Security Report 2021, mean we must continue to do all that we can to protect the Fens from both over-development and flooding in the interests of national food security.

We would welcome additional volunteers in Fenland to help us monitor and respond fully to inappropriate planning applications. Even small developments can cause profound damage. If you see something local to you that you think we should investigate, please let us know.

## East Cambridgeshire

Alan James

### **We continue to monitor and respond to planning applications in the District and provide advice to residents and members.**

Climate change remains the most serious issue facing East Cambridgeshire (Cambs.), much of which consists of areas of drained fen or 'islands' within the fen, the largest being the Isle of Ely. It is now apparent that the annual rate of sea level rise is inexorably increasing due to the ice melt caused by climate change. The rate has risen from 3mm/annum in 2014 (IPCC), to 3.3mm/annum in 2019 (IPCC) to 3.57mm/annum in 2023 (Aviso Satellite). Adding this to the annual rate of crustal shrinkage of the southern England land mass, means an effective rate of sea level rise of 4.57mm/annum. This rate will only increase as climate change gathers pace, presenting increased risk of flooding to large areas of East Cambs.

The summer of 2022, one of the driest and hottest on record, created major water stress. This was not relieved until the heavy 2023 rainfall in February and normal rainfall in March. In August, East Cambs was in a state of 'recovering drought', and the current dry spell could send the whole region back into drought.

We therefore remain very concerned by the continuing high rates of building in East Cambs., which will contribute to climate change and make it harder to manage its effects in the future. It remains our view that the Environment Agency and the Internal Drainage Boards should be given more powers to prevent unwise development which affects flood plains and artificially drained areas like fens.

East Cambs. District Council continues to misuse the Rural Exception site rules, branding large developments of open-market housing (with a policy minimum of affordable housing) as Community Land Trusts (CLT) and 'community-led-developments'. It has been told by a Planning Inspector to rescind this policy, and we remain unaware of any other planning authority behaving in this manner.

The 500-home 'CLT' in Kennett, which proceeded despite objections from every local parish council, local residents and many organisations, has now been sold off by the District Council for development by Bellway.

We continue to object to a similar application in Wilburton where, as we reported last year, a referendum declared a majority against the proposed development and where there was a formal vote of no confidence in the parish council, both of which continue to be ignored.

Loans to East Cambs. Trading Company Ltd from East Cambs. District Council and the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority (CAPCA) remain outstanding.

In March 2023, we objected to a third application to build a retirement care village on an area of the Cambridge Green Belt in Bottisham. Applications for this development have been refused on appeal twice previously.

We continue to await any significant outcome from the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) Consultation – Round 2 Part 2 – Ely North, held in 2021. We consider that completing the freight route upgrade between the Haven Ports and the Nuneaton rail freight interchange would be a less damaging and more cost-effective means of increasing east-west rail freight capacity than the proposals to use East-West Rail to move freight.

The CAPCA is continuing to look at the feasibility of re-opening the rail line between March and Wisbech by providing £310,000 for a study, Network Rail having completed their own study in 2022. The continued discussions seem to be focused on whether heavy or light rail would provide the best solution, rather than any negative issues about the principle of re-opening this railway.

The CAPCA is also continuing its study into the planning of an upgrade to the A10 between Cambridge and Ely. We have expressed our concerns about increasing development pressures, additional carbon emissions and the apparent lack of consideration that changed work patterns following the pandemic - with full home-working, hybrid working and shortened working weeks - all reducing commuting and peak traffic flows. Our local politicians seem unaware that all across Cambridgeshire, companies are down-sizing or closing their offices.

We have received a lot of support from the local MP, Lucy Fraser, in respect of our continued objections to the massive solar development known as Sunnica on the Cambridge-Suffolk border. The issues we have raised include the threat to food supply. The Environmental Audit Committee has told government that the UK must increase home-grown food and stop relying on imports which climate change will make increasingly scarce, and when the threat of sea level rise to the UK's best land is increasing. We have also raised the issue of the explosion and chemical contamination dangers of the huge battery storage installations. Ms. Fraser has taken this up at ministerial level. The investigation by the Planning Inspectorate has now closed and we are awaiting the outcome.



The speculative application to build 70 houses on the hillside between Haddenham and Wilburton was refused on appeal.

The gravel extraction close to the river on Haddenham Fen, which was disguised as an agricultural reservoir and given planning permission by the County Council, has caused massive damage to the previously unspoiled fen landscape from the Hillrow Causeway towards Sutton. The heavy vehicle traffic is further damaging this already dangerous fen road and is causing noise and vibration to village houses that are built abutting the road.

The villagers of Pymoor requested and received our support, and were successful in their bid to halt a licensing application which would have enabled festivals to be held in their village.

At residents' request, and to support Soham Town Council, we objected to the hybrid planning application by Pigeon Capital Management 3 Ltd. This consisted of full planning permission for the demolition of 81 Brook Street and the provision of a new site and replacement bungalow along with outline planning permission for the construction of up to 80 new homes on East Fen Common. This Common is a well-used local green space. It is somewhere safe, in close proximity to the town where adults and children can appreciate nature and, in particular, its mature hedgerows. Soham Lode, which bisects it, also means that it is unusually rich in all kinds of wildlife including cormorants. The application remains under consideration.

In Haddenham, we supported residents in their objections to an unnecessary new football field behind their homes in the very significant landscape of the Haddenham 'bowl'. In our view this will cause significant accident risk to residents and their children, damage their local play area, effect the local drainage and increase the risk that the Bury Lane development, previously refused on appeal, will return. Unfortunately, outline permission has been granted.

We would welcome additional volunteers in East Cambs. to help us monitor and respond fully to the many inappropriate planning applications that continue to arise in the District. With around 60 planning applications per week arising, it is difficult just to identify those which will have a significant negative effect upon their neighbourhood, the countryside or the landscape. Often it is the smaller ones which do the most profound damage. If you see something near you that you think we should investigate, please let us know.

We email our members a quarterly news update, plus occasional information about events and campaigns that are of interest to CPRE. If you'd like to receive these – or if you are not sure if you are already on the list – please get in touch with our administrator Jo McGowan at [office@cprecams.org.uk](mailto:office@cprecams.org.uk).

## Press and Publicity

Ali Sargent

There have been some weighty problems to keep us occupied this year – not least continuing activity over the Ox-Cam Arc and assorted busway issues. Our press release voicing our concerns about the Cambourne to Cambridge busway was well received. We argued the plan was more about land value uplift than improving public transport. We also issued a joint press release with Friends of the Cam expressing concern that the Greater Cambridge Partnership busway plans represented a Trojan horse designed to open up new areas of greenfield land for housing and industrial development.

Thakeham in South Cambridgeshire took a starring role in BBC 1's Countryfile in March. Tom Fyans from CPRE's national office made a strong case for the

crucial role of our Fenland farming.

It was good to circulate a press release with a positive spin in April when we welcomed the County Council's decision to refuse permission to build a medical waste incinerator at Woodhurst near St Ives. Since our role is to keep a close eye on unsuitable plans, it makes a happy change to be saying "good job!"

Our Chairman, Alan James, has become a "go to" person for the local broadcast media, when they want a quote on countryside issues: a very happy state of affairs. In January he had an hour's worth of airtime on Huntingdon Community Radio's "Over to You" programme. It was a rare opportunity to talk through his own countryside agenda.

## Barbara Grafton

it has been very pleasing to see significant increase in public anger about water pollution.

Some of our most-retweeted tweets this year include:

- Explanation of "Land Value Uplift" - breaking up the countryside for development. See Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), document "Outline Business Case Economic Case 17 January 2020".
- Councils, the University & GCP want to destroy productive farmland in the Green Belt around Cambridge with bricks, concrete and busways.
- Objections to the Cambourne to Cambridge, C2C, busway passing through Coton Orchard, created a Twitter storm to which we contributed, and national media attention.

- A14 project which left hundreds of thousands of dying trees, acres of plastic waste and collapsing river banks.
- Petition and shocking footage from [@MattStaniek](#) who is trying to Save [#Windermere](#) from environmental disaster.
- [@amnestyelcity](#) Group's free April Talk by Dennis Jones from [@salvationarmyuk](#) Modern Slavery team.
- Work to expand Logan's Meadow wetland habitat in [#Cambridge](#) began on 31 May with funding from [@Heritage](#) [#Lottery](#)

- Mission Street & BentallGreenOak have started work to deliver The Press, [#Foxton](#) - a new 100,000 square feet life sciences facility in the [#Cambridge](#) Southern Cluster.

## Facebook

When we last reported, we were no longer using our Facebook site, but we managed to re-activate it here <https://www.facebook.com/CPRECambridgeshireAndPeterborough/>. It features an eclectic mix of interesting news on national and local planning and environment campaigns, activities by like-minded organisations, and blog posts from one of our volunteers, Lizzie Bannister. We are pleased to

continued opposite ►



## Cambridge & South Cambridgeshire Jane Williams

We continue to monitor and respond to planning applications in the District and the City and provide advice to residents and members. Planning applications in the area are now managed by a joint planning service, so it is sometimes difficult to understand the relationships between the planning service and the councils. This is further complicated by the existence of the GCP, unelected and government funded, and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, CAPCA, and its elected mayor.

We are seeing reduced commuter numbers but car traffic has returned to almost pre-COVID levels as people continue to make single occupant car journeys and shun public transport. This situation is not helped by the reduced bus services following the withdrawal of some services by Stagecoach and partial replacement by CAPCA-funded services. In this respect CAPCA, having taken over the responsibility for bus services from the County Council is now undertaking to deliver this new role. In other respects, CAPCA is being constantly undermined by the GCP who are spending public money in the guise of City Deal for projects such as Greenways, Busways, and Park & Rides, money that could perhaps be better spent to improve and expand existing public transport services to create a reliable and affordable network for all.

An integrated transport plan for the Greater Cambridge area is essential.

We are appalled by the announcement by East-West Rail of their preference for Route 'E', which has only one intermediate station between Cambridge and the Bedfordshire border. It is clearly predicated on increasing house-building in both counties and will severely damage landscapes, farm businesses, nature reserves, chalk streams and the environment of rural communities.

### Social Media continued

report an increasing level of engagement with our posts e.g. our guide to landscape designations attracted nearly 300 active interactions, and anything we post about our volunteers and the work they do is also very popular.

Do please drop in and support us. We are always interested in receiving photographs of our beautiful Cambridgeshire and Peterborough landscapes, so if you have any we can use (attributed to you), we would love to see them. News items and opinion pieces would also be gratefully received and considered for posting.

We continue to support Cambridge Approaches in their fight against this monstrosity of a project which has few transport gains. It will also cause severe disturbance along its planned route towards Ipswich and the Haven Ports, especially to Newmarket, and will not contribute to providing rail access for major sources of commuting from Suffolk to Cambridge such as Haverhill and Sudbury.

We will be objecting to the application by Trinity College to double the size of its Science Park by building in the Green Belt north of the A14.

We will be objecting to Phase 2 of Eddington on the old University Farm site.

We supported Newnham residents in halting a Queens College application for new student accommodation next to the Paradise Nature Reserve. This decision by the City council has now been appealed.

We are concerned that the South Barton Road Landowners Group of colleges and the North Barton Road Landowners Group of colleges are seeking to include Green Belt land on either side of the Barton Road into the next revision of the Local Plan.

We continue to support the Save Honey Hill group in their efforts to ensure that Anglian Water do not receive planning permission to move the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment (WWT) plant into the Green Belt at Honey Hill, north of the A14 between Fen Ditton and Horningsea.

We objected to the request to Cambridgeshire County Council by the unelected GCP to apply for Transport and Works Order Act approval for the Cambourne to Cambridge busway, C2C. The County Council unfortunately agreed to proceed and will now go to Inquiry for the Planning Inspectorate to decide.

We continue to support the campaign group objecting to the Cambridge South-East Transport Scheme, CSETS, busway between Cambridge and Haverhill.

A campaign group for the Cambridge to Waterbeach busway is yet to form.

Disappointingly, the Secretary of State agreed to the decision of the County Council to allow the GCP to build the A10/M11 "Travel Hub", a massive car park in countryside south of the M11.

We have similar concerns about a second proposed 'Travel Hub' on the A10 at Foxton.

We were disappointed that despite being in the current Local Plan and the objections of the

continued overleaf ►

Swavesey Internal Drainage Board, South Cambs. District Council gave permission for further phases of Northstowe. We are very concerned about the increased flood risk at Northstowe which will occur due to climate change and the consequently rising sea levels.

We have similar concerns at Waterbeach where development is proceeding apace and where we are also alarmed by the apparent lack of detailed pre-site inspection for ammunition, explosives and chemicals on the former airfield. There is also a lack of transparency regarding the remediation of identified contamination on the barracks land site Waterbeach New Town West. Waterbeach New Town East (prime agricultural land) lies in the floodplain, as will the relocated railway station.

Major gravel extraction to the west of Waterbeach and across to the Twenty Pence Road south of the Old West River bridge is having a horrendous effect on this delicate and once unspoiled area of water meadows and wildlife habitat.

Following a request by Oakington and Westwick

Parish Council, we have objected to a small development in the village.

We have raised concerns that new houses being built by companies which have a strong relationship with local councils, are being openly marketed as investments in China and Hong Kong.

It is our greatest concern that the sheer volume of development proposals around Cambridge and across South Cambs. is going to destroy the character and ambience of this very special place. The constant volume of planning applications and consultations we respond to can at times be overwhelming. We have got to know some wonderful people who have formed local campaign groups that we work alongside and support. It is very, very concerning that the University of Cambridge and business alliances appear to be leading the aggressive development charge. The government has also identified the area as a cash cow to fill the Treasury's coffers. Sadly, the cost to communities, Green Belt, prime food-producing greenfield land and the consequences of climate change appear to be of no importance or value in the pursuit of profit and unfettered growth.

## Huntingdonshire

Gareth Ridewood

We monitored and responded to planning applications in the District and provided advice to residents and members.

We continue to be opposed to the London Luton Airport/NATS change to airspace and the holding stack over large parts of Huntingdonshire which is now in post-implementation review by the CAA. Data will continue to be collected until September. We have received numerous concerns from across the hold and flightpath of increased noise and low altitude of aircraft approaching Luton airport causing a blight to local residents. We encourage residents who are concerned to report these to the CAA and Luton Airport. Details can be found on our local website.

We are also monitoring several large solar farm proposals currently being planned across Huntingdonshire and have concerns at the impact due to their scale and location. We have called for more solar retrofitting of homes and businesses and for better renewable energy incorporation into new housing development in the area from day one. We agree with the UK Warehousing Association who are advising their members to fit

solar on warehouses, such as the many already built or proposed in the countryside around Peterborough and Huntingdon. We have pointed out that putting solar on farmland is not consistent with the national imperative to grow more food and reduce reliance on imported fresh food.

We are concerned at the choice of preferred route for East-West Rail and the potential impact on St Neots and local countryside, as well as the potential impact on flooding downstream of any large development near the proposed stations at Tempsford and north of Cambourne.

We are keeping an eye on development at Alconbury Weald and have called for the original plans for the Country Park to be maintained. We are contributing to and monitoring the Updated Huntingdonshire Local Plan review. We successfully campaigned against the proposed medical incinerator at Woodhurst.

As summer is here it is great to see support for our local producers at Farmers' markets and local shops across the District. Our website has been updated with details of these and other local businesses.



## Financial Report for the year from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Nicholas de Chenu

	For the year ending 31st March 2023 £	For the year ending 31st March 2022 £
<b>Receipts</b>		
CPRE subscriptions received	9,014	9,271
Donations received	423	613
Interest received	296	7
Lottery receipts	193	176
Grants received	500	0
<b>Total receipts for year</b>	<b>10,426</b>	<b>10,067</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Charitable activities	11,464	9,558
Governance	360	348
<b>Total payments for the year</b>	<b>11,824</b>	<b>9,906</b>
<b>(Excess) Surplus of expenditure over receipts</b>	<b>(1,398)</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Balance of Cash Reserves at the beginning of the year</b>	<b>28,361</b>	<b>28,470</b>
<b>Balance of Cash Reserves at the end of the year</b>	<b>27,233</b>	<b>28,631</b>

The above unaudited accounts are for the financial year to 31st March 2023.

The charity does not have any funds which are of a restricted nature.

During the year to 31st March 2023 the charity received a steady flow of income from members' subscriptions of £9,014 (2022 £9,271), and donations

of £423 (2022 £613) and a Grant of £500.

All other expenditure for charitable activities and governance remained steady £11,824 (2022 £9,906).

The net result for the year was an outflow of funds of £1,398 which decreased the cash reserves as at 31st March 2023 to £27,233 from £28,631 as at 31st March 2022.

## Peterborough

Sally Jackson

We have been involved in several interesting projects this year.

Local planning issues are always a concern and we have worked with local supporters to query the proposed developments at Helpston. This area was designated as Medium Village allocation in the Peterborough Local Plan 2019 for 82 houses.

It was specified that a comprehensive masterplan for the whole site should be included with any application, but this has not been the case. The site has been divided up between developers and planned piecemeal. We have been able to support and advise residents in objecting to the schemes put forward.

We have also been involved with John Clare Countryside Nature Recovery Plans, working with 21 Parish Councils from the area North of Peterborough and towards Stamford.

<https://johnclarecountryside.co.uk/>

We have worked with PECT (Peterborough Environment City Trust) and Peterborough City Council to plan new walks and cycleways, develop wildlife-friendly areas in the individual parishes and meet with the City Council to look at ways to change herbicide use and grass cutting regimes.

# About CPRE

We campaign for a beautiful and living countryside. We work to influence how we plan our towns and cities to make them better places to live and work, to ensure the countryside is protected for all to enjoy for now and future generations.

Nationally, we have around 60,000 members and a branch in every county. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. CPRE is a Registered Charity (No. 1089685).

Please note the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individual contributors, or the editor, and do not necessarily represent the views of the branch or the national charity.

## District Contacts and Specialists

### Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

Jane Williams

### East Cambridgeshire and Fenland

Alan James

### Peterborough

Sally Jackson

### Huntingdonshire

Gareth Ridewood

### General Planning issues

Office

### Trustee and Membership Champion

Wendy Oldfield

### Blog

Lizzie Bannister

### Website and Social Media

Tracey Hipson

## CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

### President

Christopher Vane Percy

### Officers

Chair: Alan James

Vice-Chair: Jane Williams

Treasurer: Nick de Chenu

### Administrator

Jo McGowan

E: [office@cprecambs.org.uk](mailto:office@cprecambs.org.uk)

### Press Officer

Alison Sargent

T: 07776 255193

E: [Ali.sargent01@outlook.com](mailto:Ali.sargent01@outlook.com)

## Keeping in Touch

CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are happy to help you. As well as this report and our printed newsletter, there are lots of ways to keep in touch with us.

If you have an email address, sign up for our quarterly newsletter: [office@cprecambs.org.uk](mailto:office@cprecambs.org.uk)

Our website is frequently updated with both local and national news and issues. Have a look and tell us what you think: <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk>.

Write: CPRE, The Town Hall, Market Hill, St Ives, Cambs PE27 5AL.

Follow us on:

 Twitter: [@CPRECambs](https://twitter.com/CPRECambs).

 Facebook: CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## Gifts and Donations

We are always grateful for your donations – they are vital in enabling us to carry out our work. To ensure your gift reaches us, please consider donating in the following ways:

**Website:** By donating via CAF Donate on our website <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/donate-to-cpre.html>

**Online:** By bank transfer to our CAF account, Campaign to Protect Rural England Cambridgeshire (account details on request)

Please let us know so that we can thank you.

**Cheque:** Made payable to “CPRE Cambridgeshire” and sent to: CPRE, The Town Hall, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 5AL.

For further information about how to help us, including by leaving a legacy, please visit <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/how-to-help/> or contact us at [office@cprecambs.org.uk](mailto:office@cprecambs.org.uk).