

Councillor Peter McDonald Duxford Division & Ward:  
District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.  
County Councillor also for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow, Heathfield, Heydon, Chishills,  
Whittlesford

## **Report for Parish Councils – May 2022.**

### **South Cambs District Council**

Supporting people from Ukraine seeking refuge. Reminder of the South Cambs District and Cambs County Council efforts to support people seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine.

The SCDC website contains practical information on what you can do:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/support-for-ukraine/>

Cambs County Council's information includes a useful FAQ:

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

### **Business Rates Relief**

Businesses in South Cambridgeshire which have been adversely affected by the pandemic, but unable to access COVID-19 support linked to their business rates, may be eligible for the latest financial support. South Cambridgeshire District Council is now welcoming applications for its discretionary COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF).

The Government funding is to provide additional business rates relief to support rate-paying businesses affected by the pandemic between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. It is for businesses which weren't eligible for previous support linked to business rates, who can prove they have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.

Eligibility criteria will apply, and the scheme will not cover ratepayers who were eligible for Extended Retail Discount (covering Retail, Hospitality and Leisure), those who were eligible for Nursery Discount, or businesses where the premises was unoccupied. Premises that were temporarily closed due to government advice on COVID-19 may still apply.

Full details and eligibility criteria, along with an application form, can be found [here](#).

Applications will close on 13 May 2022. Rate Relief will be paid onto Business Rates accounts as soon as possible after all applications have been assessed.

### **Cambridgeshire County Report**

Thousands of people across Cambridgeshire have been offered a large discount on installing solar panels on their roofs thanks to an innovative scheme taking place across the county.

Solar Together Cambridgeshire is a partnership between Cambridgeshire County Council, the district councils of East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire, and the city of Cambridge, which offers homeowners high-quality solar PV panels through a group purchasing scheme.

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The first round of the scheme in autumn 2020 saw just under 1,000 installations completed, and the second round which has just taken place resulted in more than 9,000 registrations of interest, with homeowners able to secure average discounts of 34% compared to typical market rates.

Those taking up the scheme will also benefit from the removal of VAT for solar PV which began in April.

Under Solar Together Cambridgeshire local councils have partnered with independent experts iChoosr Ltd to offer homeowners a competitive price from pre-vetted installers.

For the second round of the scheme there were 9,284 registrations of interest, of which 8,470 were for solar PV and 814 for retrofit battery storage. This is 59% higher than the total registration figures in the autumn 2020 scheme.

On 15 March an auction took place where interested installers were subject to a strict qualification procedure to check they had the necessary certifications and insurances, while their financial stability and customer satisfaction results were also investigated.

Moreover, iChoosr looked through each installer's method of approach to ensure that they would be able to manage the logistics and operational demands of the scheme.

Following the auction, three winning bidders to cover the county were chosen. These were: Greenscape Energy, Green Energy Together UK and Everyone's Energy.

All registered homeowners were then offered a deal which was on average 34% below the typical market price. The number of people who have taken up the offer has yet to be finalised with the offer remaining valid until 13 May. To register your interest for the next round of the scheme, visit: <https://solartogether.co.uk/cambridgeshire/home>

### **Mobile Library**

Mobile Library routes across the county are changing from Tuesday 3rd May, to include new stops and changes to visiting days and durations.

An additional 18 stops have been added due to public demand. For example, in Trumpington the Mobile library will now be stopping at Trumpington Meadows and Glebe Farm to allow for residents of these housing developments – many of which enjoy hybrid working - to access the Mobile Library.

Our mobile library service is a much-valued service which has been available to all residents across the county for decades. The service now runs three mobile libraries stopping at 388 locations in 98 villages and communities throughout Cambridgeshire.

The routes are reviewed and amended based on demand every three to four years. These new route changes also consider how the service was used during the pandemic and the fact that a

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more fluid way of working is available to many so a hybrid of working from home and going into the office is now the norm.

Current users have been made aware of route changes and additional new stops coming in via extensive leafleting in villages and when they visit the mobile library. We have also been letting resident know of the forthcoming changes via social Media posts to local groups.

Each stop on the route not only offers a library service but also allows visitors to recycle household batteries, collect free NHS hearing aid batteries, walking stick ferrules and buy stamps.

Using the service is easy. Anyone can join and it is free. Each mobile library vehicle carries up to 3,000 items of stock including fiction, non-fiction, large print, books on CD & cassette, jigsaws and books for children of all ages.

Each mobile library has access to all the books in Cambridgeshire Libraries. You can also request books online to collect from the mobile library on our next visit. You are also able to return mobile library books to any Cambridgeshire library and vice versa.

All vehicles have a lift for wheelchair users or those who find stairs difficult.

For further information on route changes please go to Mobile libraries - Cambridgeshire County Council. [Find a mobile library stop - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

### **No Mow May**

Local wildlife will thrive along Cambridgeshire's roads this spring as grass cutting will be paused to support animals and plant life.

Cambridgeshire County Council will stop cutting grass on its road verges during May this year to support local biodiversity, with a particular focus on pollinators such as bees.

'No Mow May' is run by Plantlife – an organisation that promotes the maintenance and growth of wildflowers, plants and fungi. According to Plantlife, more than 700 species of wildflowers grow on road verges in the UK - this is almost 45% of the total wildflower species found across the country.

As the council is committed to improving the environment and tackling climate change, it declared both a climate and environment emergency in 2019. It has also set the target for Cambridgeshire to reach net zero emissions by 2045 and an organisational target for the county council to reach net zero by 2030.

Cutting the grass less often will help reduce carbon emissions, as well as providing habitats for pollinators, such as bees, to thrive. The council is also encouraging all local parish councils that cut verges on its behalf to take part in No Mow May.

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Road safety is a priority for Cambridgeshire County Council, so in agreement with Plantlife we will still cut grass where leaving it could cause danger such as at junctions or bends.

The county council previously attended a workshop and worked closely with Plantlife to develop its current grass cutting protocol around the highways and verge management policy to support biodiversity. These changes to the way roadside verges are maintained help support wildflowers, bees and plant species to thrive.

It includes protecting wildlife corridors, which are areas of land that connect species with habitats that would otherwise be separated by human activities. For more information on its current verge maintenance policy, which came into place last year, visit the council's website [here](#).

For more information on Plantlife, visit: <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk> or <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/no-mow-may>

### **LHI Review**

The link to the S Cambs schemes are here:

[LHI Panel Scores 22-23.xlsx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

A further schemes for 20 mph schemes will come forward at the July Committee. Meanwhile those 20 mph proposals in the LHI programme are likely to be funded separately.

Peter McDonald

May 3rd 2022