
Report: County Councillor (Hardwick div.) District Councillor (Harston & Comberton) Cllr Michael Atkins January 2025

Highlights

- Flooding information and disambiguation
- EWR consultation
- Devolution and local government reorganisation
- Net Zero Villages grants
- Planning committee: Comberton Retirement Village and Coton Orchard trees
- Contact information

News from the County

Flooding information

The County Council has produced two resources to help understand flooding, watercourse ownership and requirements:

A Mapping Tool showing the status of the County's watercourses:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/watercourse-management>

A flowchart showing who has responsibility for responding to flooding:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/Investigating-and-Regulating-Flooding-Who-Manages-What.pdf>

This hopefully makes a very complex picture somewhat clearer.

Houshold recycling

A new larger recycling facility will be constructed on the Milton site. It will include a purpose built re-use space and more accessible parking for cars and bikes. Work will start in the Autumn for approximately 9 months, during which time you will need to use the sites at Thriplow, Witchford and Bluntisham instead.

News from GCP, Combined Authority & Gov't

East-west Rail Consultation

The delayed non-statutory consultation on East West Rail opened on 14th November. Materials and information will be made available here: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>

There will be in person events as follows:

Comberton, [Comberton Village Hall](#), 10 January 2025, 2pm - 7pm

I have previously signed a declaration opposing the southern alignment for EWR (from Camborne to Cambridge South) because of the direct impact on villages in our area, and also raised broader concerns about the use of diesel trains, the economic rationale, and the lack of benefits for local residents. I will be interested to see how/if the plans have changed when the materials are published this month.

The Consultation closes on **24th January**

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has indicated that it wishes to reorganise how local government is delivered. In short, the ambition is by the end of the current parliament that everywhere in England will have a combined authority with an elected Mayor, and then a number of unitary authorities underneath them.

As we already have an elected Mayor with some (but not all possible) devolved powers, the potential impact for our area would be the replacement of the existing District and County Council with some number of Unitary authorities that would have the duties of both. It is also possible that the size/shape of the Mayor's combined authority could change.

Some areas of the country can apply for elections scheduled in May 2025 to be delayed: we are not in this category.

Proposals will be invited from the affected Councils this month with a deadline of the Autumn as to how reorganisation could work in our area.

Voi Scooter Scheme expansion

The current Voi scooter scheme is set to expand over the course of 2025 to include Grantchester and Coton (though not the roads directly between them, i.e. only for journeys into/out of Cambridge). I am a cautious advocate of this scheme, as the Voi scooters have capped speeds (12.5mph) and clear registration numbers for reporting infringements, and can be an effective method of travel in the Cambridge area. As the rollout approaches, I will of course work with Parish Councils to identify suitable and unsuitable parking spots, and any areas that require 'go slow' settings to be activated on the scooters and ebikes.

A reminder that all other e-scooters are not permitted on either public highways or footpaths – they can only be used on private land with the consent of the landowner.

Tiger On Demand replaces Ting services

The on demand bus service operating in Huntingdonshire has now been rebranded as "Tiger on Demand" with a new app. We are expecting the service area to expand to include Northstowe and surrounding villages in 2025.

Tiger bus passes for young people continue to be popular with 30,000 applications for the £1 bus ticket scheme.

The X2/X3 route from Huntingdon to Cambridge has increased in frequency to every 30 minutes (from 60) which may be of benefit as these routes run close to several villages.

News from the District

Council tax on second/vacant properties

From April 2026 Council Tax will be doubled on long-term vacant and empty properties. This is aimed to encourage owners to sell or rent their properties to bring the housing stock into use. Exemptions are available for sensible reasons such as: delayed sale, undergoing probate, major works etc. The Council will support owners to bring their properties back into use: see for more details <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/housing/housing-development/empty-homes>

Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders

The 23/24 report has been published on our website and sent to all Council tenants and leaseholders: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/housing/information-for-council-tenants/tenant-news-and-involvement/tenant-and-leaseholder-news#report>

The report includes how we fare on 22 satisfaction measures, and a breakdown of how the rent collected by the Council is spent.

Net Zero Villages

A significant grant scheme has been opened with a total pot of £360k to be awarded to rural villages to become low carbon, more sustainable and more resilient to the effects of climate change. It will fund capital projects on the following themes:

- Energy efficiency and generation (e.g. insulation, solar panels, turbines, batteries)
- Low Carbon Transport (e.g. community bus -> electric)
- Nature-Based Solutions (e.g. green roofs, tree planting etc.)

More information is available at <http://www.scambs.gov.uk/net-zero-villages-grant> and the deadline is **January 26th**.

The Hoops, Barton

The Council has added this building to the list of Assets of Community Value. For more information go to: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-development/community-rights/assets-of-community-value/>

Planning Committee – January meeting

The District Planning Committee meeting of 15th January has two items of particular interest to our villages. First is the proposed Comberton Retirement Village, which officers have recommending refusing, on the grounds of inappropriate Green Belt development, loss of openness, and other environmental and ecological objections.

Second is a proposed Tree Protection Order for twelve trees in Coton Orchard which are threatened by the construction of the C2C busway. Officers are also recommending refusal in this case, on the grounds that: the trees are on private land and not accessible or observable from public highway/footpaths, and also that the only known threat to the trees (construction of the busway) would in any case override the protections a TPO affords.

I intend to attend and speak to both items – if you have any particular feedback on these matters you would like me to raise please let me know.

Contact Details

Councillors and residents are welcome to contact me on any issue which is concerning them:

Cllr Michael I. Atkins

matkinslibdem@gmail.com

07968 264637