

County Council – 21st March 2023

Public Question Time

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
1.	Sarah Hughes Campaign Support Officer Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	<p>Last week the Secretary of State for Transport announced cuts to the budget for active travel schemes in England outside London. It is estimated that two thirds of the previously-promised funding will be lost.</p> <p>Moreover, central government funding for buses lacks a sustainable, long-term plan. In February, the Government did extend the Bus Recovery Grant, but the decision was only announced at the very last minute, so some companies had already registered short-notice service withdrawals, and the extension was for a mere three months.</p> <p>Fuel duty currently generates the Treasury c£25 billion per year (c2.8% of all receipts). This revenue will decline rapidly and eventually reduce to zero as the country transitions to electric vehicles (the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans will end in just 7 years time). Since MPs recently revealed there are no plans to implement – or to consider implementing – a road pricing system in the UK, it appears there is no plan to replace this lost revenue.</p> <p>Given the continued reduction of realistic funding from central government for sustainable transport, does the Chair of the Highways & Transport Committee think that it is becoming increasingly urgent that our region does its utmost to take back control of vital local bus services, alongside improving active travel opportunities, and work to deliver a reliable funding source for the future?</p>

	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Sarah Hughes Campaign Support Officer Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
2.	Ms Anna Gazeley	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	<p>My family own Coton Orchard and the proposed alignment of the C2C would decimate our property. I have a specific question about the Environmental Impact Assessment and mitigation. See below.</p> <p>From the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Descriptions – “Traditional Orchards are hotspots for biodiversity in the countryside, supporting a wide range of wildlife and containing UK BAP priority habitats ... as well as an array of Nationally Rare and Nationally Scarce species. The wildlife of orchard sites depends on the mosaic of habitats they encompass, including fruit trees, scrub, hedgerows, hedgerow trees, non-fruit trees within the orchard, the orchard floor habitats, fallen dead wood and associated features. As such they are designated “Habitats of Primary Importance” and rightly accorded protections.</p> <p>There is no question that Coton Orchard is such a Priority Habitat. It is over 100 years old, with the afore described mosaic. Home to the “Nationally Rare and ... Scarce species” with, for example a recorded 8 species of bats and several Red List birds.</p> <p>In the C2C Full Council report Mar 2023. Agenda Item No 7 sub-section: Environmental Assessment - table 2.14.4 is states that there will be a “Loss of Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI) woodland and traditional orchard” so there is no question that the proposed route alignment will result in this loss to the environment.</p> <p>What is in contention however is that the GCP report states that “the effects are expected to be lessened to non-significant between year 15 and 30, on basis of compensation habitat offsite.” Steve Oram, the Orchard Biodiversity Officer for the People’s Trust for</p>

			<p>Endangered Species, who has visited the Coton Orchard has stated unequivocally that “the destruction of such a valuable Habitat of Principal Importance cannot be compensated. There has been an orchard on this site for around 100 years, so to compensate for its loss would mean that you have to plant and manage a traditional orchard on an alternative site for at least 50 years before removing the old one, which is of course not a viable option.” He goes on to add that “This utterly destructive proposal can never achieve biodiversity net gain due to the vast amounts of damage that it will do to an ancient orchard full of veteran trees, and the enormous impact of a road going through so much previously undamaged and unfragmented countryside.”</p> <p>I would add that beyond the impact on the wildlife of bisecting the orchard, which is already catastrophic, it would no longer be practically nor economically viable to manage as an orchard and so would be lost in its entirety.</p> <p>My question. Even assuming that Councillors consider 30 years “non-significant”, what proof have you been presented that such mitigation is even possible? And do you feel confident in making a decision with just a DRAFT EIA report?</p>
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	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council’s representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	Ms Anna Gazeley	To be provided at the meeting.

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
3.	Councillor Daniel Lentell, South Cambridgeshire District Council	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Item:10 b) Motion from Councillor Steve Count is an item that affects me as a resident of Over & Willingham with villages which are set to be considerably worse off if access to Addenbrooke's is included in the zone. Also, as a South Cambs District Councillor for that ward, I can see the serious damage to trust and confidence in the system that will be done to our system if such a large innovation is introduced without a mandate either from a regular election, or via a referendum. Given that the council will also be discussing 'debate not hate' in the same session, it seems reasonable to discuss what councillors can be doing to prevent a further deterioration in the relationship between The People and their representatives. Therefore what is democratic about ignoring the clearly expressed will of The People for the final say on the introduction of congestion charging?
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Councillor Daniel Lentell, South Cambridgeshire District Council	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
4.	Mr Allan Treacy	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	<p>I am concerned about the environmental impact of the off-road section of the C2C busway.</p> <p>In connection with the C2C busway, will the Chair please ask councillors to raise their hands if they are aware of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The near universal objections to the off-road section of the C2C busway from community groups, parish councils, thousands of petitioners, CPPF, the National Trust and CPRE And 2. The enormity of the environmental damage being inflicted by the off-road section of the busway on Green Belt National Trust covenanted land, especially the virtual

			<p>destruction of the precious 100 year old Coton Orchard which is the largest traditional orchard in the County and the eighth largest in the UK (and which barely gets a mention in the papers for this meeting)</p> <p>And</p> <p>3. The BCR of 0.43, which falls absurdly below the normal benchmark of 2.00</p> <p>And</p> <p>4. The availability of an on-road alternative down Madingley Hill for some £20m?</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response
	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	Mr Allan Treacy	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
5.	Dr Marilyn Treacy	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	<p>In the GCP paper relating to the Cambourne to Cambridge Project under Section 2.1.2 it states: "The C2C scheme aims to provide better public transport, walking and cycling options in the area west of Cambridge in order to improve journey times and to address a transport constraint on growth by linking key employment and housing sites together, and with the city centre."</p> <p>Cambridge's two largest and rapidly growing sites of employment are the Biomedical campus to the South East and the Science Park to the north. Taking real time data from Google maps at 08.30 am this morning I find that journey times are as follows</p> <p>Cambourne to Cambridge Science Park Via A428 + A14 22minutes Via Grange Road. 67 minutes</p>

			<p>Cambourne to the Biomedical Campus(Addenbrooke's) Via A428 and M11. 30 minutes Via Grange Road. 44 minutes</p> <p>The West Cambridge site may become a major site of employment in the future but Highways England are looking at making the Girton interchange an all-ways junction which will solve potential congestion problems on the A1303.</p> <p>Using an inbound bus lane on existing infrastructure will dramatically reduce costs, give better journey times and leave the environment intact.</p> <p>Given the above, could you please explain the rationale for spending over £200m (2024 prices) on an off-road busway which transects the greenbelt, destroys a Priority Habitat and extends journey times?</p>
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	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	Dr Marilyn Treacy	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
6.	Mr Rory Comyn	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	I would like to speak in support of Kieron Johnson's referendum petition on the issue of congestion charging in Cambridge. I wish to explain why I believe a referendum would be a fair and suitable way to move forward with the proposal and to ask that the chamber if they will allow the public the opportunity to have their say using the purest form of democracy available.

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	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Mr Rory Comyn	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
7.	Mr Roy Stamp	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	I would like to speak as a long standing foster carer. The impact it would have over people with mental health issues, disabilities and those that work in the social sector would be far reaching. Given these circumstances, do the council not think that a referendum is the most suitable course of action?
	Response from:	Response to:	Response
	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Mr Roy Stamp	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
8.	Mr Mark Abbott Chair of Coton Parish Council (David Cairns, Transport Lead for the Parish Council to present)	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	"Section 1.4.2 (p.26) of the paper Better Public Transport: Cambourne to Cambridge Project states that the Benefit Cost ratio of the GCP's proposals is "low". The GCP is now building a greenway cycle route from Cambridge to Hardwick, nullifying the need for the "Active Travel Path" proposed. The bus route design obviates the need for a separate maintenance road. The GCP's own data demonstrates that there is no congestion at any time from Cambridge to Cambourne necessitating an off-road East-West busway. Will the County Council therefore instruct the GCP to explore the option of an inbound on-road

			bus solution from Madingley Roundabout to Cambridge, as it has done through Hardwick, thus improving the Benefit Cost ratio of the plan?"
	Response from:	Response to:	Response
	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	Mr Mark Abbott Chair of Coton Parish Council (David Cairns, Transport Lead for the Parish Council to present)	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
9.	Mrs Heather Du Quesnay, Chair North Newnham Residents' Association	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership	North Newnham Residents' Association welcomes the progress that has been made with the C2C project after more than seven years' work. We believe that the decision to take the route down the Rifle Range Track rather than Adams Road after a thorough environmental assessment and extensive public consultation is the best one for our area as a whole. Will the County Council now commit to carrying out the necessary complementary work to make Adams Road and the neighbouring streets safe for pedestrians and cyclists by introducing a scheme to manage car parking and make urgent arrangements to improve safety at the dangerous corner of Adams and Wilberforce Roads?
	Response from:	Response to:	Response
	Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, the Council's representative on the	Mrs Heather Du Quesnay, Chair North Newnham Residents' Association	To be provided at the meeting.

	Greater Cambridge Partnership		
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