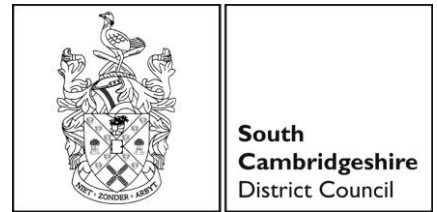


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Wednesday 4 October 2023

To: Chair - Councillor Pippa Heylings  
Vice-Chair – Councillor Dr. Martin Cahn

Members of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee –  
Councillors Geoff Harvey, Paul Bearpark, Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya,  
Ariel Cahn, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Dr Lisa Redrup, Peter Sandford and  
Bunty Waters

Substitutes: Councillors Graham Cone, Heather Williams, Dr. Richard Williams,  
Lina Nieto, Sue Ellington, Stephen Drew, Peter Fane,  
Natalie Warren-Green and Sunita Hansraj

Dear Sir / Madam

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Climate and Environment Advisory Committee**, which will be held in **Council Chamber - South Cambs Hall** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **Thursday, 12 October 2023 at 2.00 p.m.**

Yours faithfully  
**Liz Watts**  
Chief Executive

**The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you**

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<b>Agenda</b>		<b>Pages</b>
<b>1. Apologies</b>		
<b>2. Declarations of Interest</b>		
<b>3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b> To authorise the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2023 as a correct record.		<b>5 - 10</b>
<b>4. Update on actions in support of Biodiversity Net Gain</b>		<b>11 - 16</b>
<b>5. Climate Risk and Adaptation Update</b> Verbal update		



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# Agenda Item 3

## South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on  
Tuesday, 6 June 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

**Chair:** Pippa Heylings

**Vice-Chairs:** Dr Martin Cahn and Geoff Harvey

### Committee Members in attendance:

Ariel Cahn

Paul Bearpark

Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya

Dr Tumi Hawkins

Dr Lisa Redrup

Natalie Warren-Green

Councillors Bunty Waters and Sue Ellington were in attendance remotely.

### Officers:

Peter Campbell

Laurence Damary-Homan

Bode Esan

Siobhan Mellon

Alex Snelling-Day

Rebecca Weymouth-Wood

Head of Housing

Democratic Services Officer

Head of Climate, Environment & Waste

Development Officer - Climate and Environment

Waste Policy, Climate and Environment Team

Manager

Waste Policy and Climate Manager

### 1. Apologies

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Peter Sandford. Councillor Natalie Warren-Green was present as a substitute.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Pippa Heylings, Dr Martin Cahn, Dr Tumi Hawkins made declarations that they had engaged with the Solar Together Scheme, as customers, to install solar panels on their own homes.

### 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

By affirmation, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2023 as a correct record.

#### 4. **Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Action Plan Annual Review 2022-23**

The Development Officer (Climate & Environment) presented the report and provided a number of updates to the report:

- Members were informed that CO2 emission data was released at the end of June by Central Government, thus it was proposed that future Zero Carbon annual reviews be brought to Committee later in the year.
- It was clarified that there were 65 actions in the current plan, rather than 66 as listed in the report.
- The pie chart labelled “Scope 2” on page 46 of the agenda was listed as 264 TCO2E when the actual figure was 182 TCO2E.
- Action 4.2.1 had been amended to read “working through the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership deliver government funded HUG2 scheme by Q4” and an action to “develop the Action on Energy scheme to serve the needs of able-to-pay households” was added.
- The replacement of the action to “go beyond current building regulations of energy efficiency (part L) in new build on Council owned land subject to feasibility” was to read “continue to explore high energy efficiency specifications on homes built through the South Cambs Investment Partnership”.

The Committee agreed to the adjustment to annual timing of the report to include the June data. Members made a number of comments regarding the action plan.

##### **Section 1: Reduce consumption of resources and waste**

The Committee noted the completed actions and supported the proposed revision to action 1.1. Members were pleased to see the reduction of single-use plastics and the uptake of reusable/recyclable materials. Officers advised that the experience of reducing waste within the Council provided good experience to carry forward into campaigns to help other organisations reduce their waste.

Members were informed that the Joint Waste Strategy was up for renewal at the end of the year. The Committee requested that a draft of the proposed strategy be brought to Committee to allow Members to make comment prior to implementation.

Members discussed the challenges of recycling solar panels and officers advised that, whilst most solar panels installed in the region would not need to be disposed of for a number of years, the issue of solar panel recycling was being explored, in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council, in order to produce a joint approach to disposing of used solar panels before it becomes an issue for the region.

##### **Section 2: Decarbonise planning and land use**

The Committee discussed the causes of emissions that arose from land use in the District, including agriculture, development and the drying of peat land at the fen border of the District.

Members noted the progress of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan but emphasised the need to continue to take action to decarbonise planning in the District. Members noted the limitations of national legislation but commended the amount of sustainable development in the District, with many large developments going above the minimum requirements for energy efficiency, biodiversity net gain and other sustainability measures. Members felt that the aspirational targets set by the Council set a high standard for development in the District, and that developers were responding to market demands for efficient, sustainable properties.

### **Section 3: Decarbonise transport**

The Committee noted that transport was the leading cause of emissions in the District and the biggest challenge to nationwide decarbonisation.

#### **Local Transport and Connectivity Plan**

Members were pleased to see the transport strategies listed in paragraph 32 of the report but expressed disappointment that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) had deferred the approval of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. The Committee emphasised the importance of working with partners on sustainable transport and travel strategy, and supported the approval of the Plan at the earliest possible time.

#### **Active transport**

The Committee noted that changes to legislation were due to increase the required amount of active travel consultation undertaken as part of planning applications for large developments. Members acknowledged that challenges of transitioning to active travel and stated national action was required for significant progress to be made, but that local measures were also important and could have a substantial impact. Officers referenced the Active Travel Toolkit that had been produced to provide information on how to deliver effective active transport infrastructure to developers; the Committee requested that copies of the Toolkit be provided to both Members of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee and the Planning Committee.

#### **Council transport emissions**

The Committee noted that the waste vehicle fleet was the biggest contributor to the Council's transport emissions. Members enquired as to why the introduction of electric vehicles to the fleet had not led to a reduction in emissions. Officers advised that a data lag could partially explain this, but also advised that the length of rounds had increased alongside population. The Committee requested that, where necessary, targets be changed in response to demographic changes.

Officers informed the Committee that trials with replacing diesel with HVO biofuel in waste vehicles had been positive and funding had been secured to transition 1/3 of the fuel used by waste vehicles to HVO, with implementation to start in 2023. Members were advised that the Council sourced HVO that had an International Sustainability and Carbon Certification.

#### **Emissions from staff travel**

The Committee discussed the electric car salary sacrifice scheme and enquired about the impact of working from home and reduced daily commutes, asking if there was any data available on staff travel emissions. Officers advised that working from home would likely have led to a significant reduction from staff travel emissions but did not have data; Members were informed that annual snapshot surveys on staff travel used to be undertaken but were not currently in place. The Committee requested that data on emissions from staff travel and the impact of working from home be captured in some way.

## **Section 4: Decarbonise housing and other buildings**

### **Emissions at South Cambridgeshire Hall**

Officers advised that a significant proportion of the emissions from South Cambs Hall were due to heating being provided through gas, with a large reduction in emissions expected to follow the transition to the ground source heat pump. Members noted the co-benefits of retrofitting South Cambs Hall to improve energy efficiency and the Committee requested that data on the financial savings from reduced fuel costs/increased energy savings at South Cambs Hall be provided to the Committee.

### **Solar panel installations.**

Members discussed an article which showed that South Cambridgeshire had the highest rate of solar panels installed per household in the nation, highest rate of solar panel installation and the greatest number of planning applications which referenced solar panels, even when it was not a requirement. Members attributed this to the success of promotion campaigns, schemes and the setting of culture around development through aspirational targets.

Members discussed the Solar Together scheme and commended the overall successes of the scheme. Members noted that there had been some challenges in delivering the scheme, particularly around service availability and the ability of installation to match demand, but noted that oftentimes residents would utilise the viability assessment provided through the scheme and then procure panels privately. The Committee felt that even where panels were not directly installed through the scheme, awareness and information access promoted by the scheme was resulting in greater numbers of solar panels being installed in the District. Officers advised that Cambridgeshire County Council was reviewing whether it would reopen the scheme, based on experiences of the delivery of solar panels through Solar Together, and Members urged officers to ensure that the Council could still operate as a trusted broker/promoter of solar panel installation to residents.

### **Home upgrades and skills**

Members were pleased to see the amount of grant funding spent on retrofitting properties to improve efficiency but raised concerns that some home upgrade schemes had underdelivered due to a lack of skills in the District required for the installation of energy efficiency measures in homes. The Committee requested that an investigation into what skills were lacking in the region be undertaken, with the issue being referred to the Greater Cambridge Partnership skills group- Members noted that the CPCA skills group was already addressing the issue.

The Committee noted that only one company was delivering efficiency upgrades to homes under the HUG1 scheme. Officers advised that a network of installers was now in place to deliver the HUG2, and that other schemes were available to assist able to pay homeowners in improving the efficiency of their homes.

### **Housing stock**

The Committee discussed the progress in improving the energy performance of Council properties and noted the successes achieved. Officers advised that more information on the Council's housing stock would be available once the stock condition survey was completed; it was noted that the survey had been delayed to allow for mould and damp assessments to be undertaken, with results expected to be produced by the end of the calendar year.

### **Heritage buildings**

The challenges of retrofitting heritage buildings to improve energy efficiency was discussed. Members discussed the importance of improving the energy efficiency of



heritage buildings in the District as a public benefit, balanced with conservation requirements and minimising harm to heritage assets. Members noted that the Council provided information to residents on how to effectively improve the energy efficiency of heritage buildings and encouraged officers to continuously update advice based on technological developments and new recommendations regarding heritage asset management, such as that produced by Historic England with regard to heat pump installation. The Committee agreed to add a new action regarding maximising residents' ability to improve the energy efficiency of heritage assets, using the best available technology, whilst maintaining the planning balance with heritage harm.

### **Section 5: Decarbonise business and industry**

The Committee noted the progress of the actions to decarbonise business and industry and enquired as to how changes in shopping habits were affecting the levels of waste produced through commerce. Officers advised that national legislation played a significant role in regulating packaging waste and referenced the forthcoming extended producer responsibility for packaging. It was noted that many businesses had their own net zero policies, and that the Council was working with business to help them change consumption habits and adopt more sustainable approaches through Council led schemes, such as the Zero Carbon Communities and the Waste Champions Group. Members requested that further information on business and packaging waste be brought to the Committee, and details on if trading standards could be utilised to reduce commercial waste.

The Committee discussed the proposal to replace the previous action regarding building regulations agreed that the replacement action should cover all new build on Council owned land delivering Net Zero housing, including housing delivered through the South Cambs Investment Partnership.

Members felt that it was important to set aspirational targets and continue to encourage developers to go beyond the minimum sustainability requirements when delivering new build homes. The Committee agreed to add an action that captured the intent to continue encouraging developers to go beyond current Building Regulations for energy efficiency for all new builds.

### **Section 6: Decarbonise food systems and agriculture**

The Committee discussed the impact of agriculture in the District on greenhouse gas emissions and noted the progress towards further sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices being implemented in South Cambridgeshire.

Members discussed the challenges of promoting sustainable diet and tackling the issues of food waste and waste produced as a by-product through packaging. The Committee noted the progress being made through ongoing campaigns, the food waste strategy and sustainable food strategy,

### **Section 7: Deliver training, education, communications and advocacy**

The Committee noted the progress of the actions and agreed to the proposed revisions to actions. Officers advised that various strategies to engage with business and residents were ongoing, and active engagement with commercial waste customers on avoiding single use plastics was being well received, especially by catering companies. The Committee noted that Council efforts were helping increase the use of reusable/recyclable materials in the District.

**Section 8: Respond to the ecological emergency**

Members commented that they were pleased to see the new action on promoting gardening for nature to residents, and expressed a desire to see more information on how residents can improve biodiversity in their gardens be made publicly available. The Committee noted that private garden space accounted for ~5% of green space in the UK, and enquired as to if it would be possible to map out garden space in the District to highlight nature corridors and help inform strategy on how to maximise the ecological benefits of gardens in the District.

The Committee discussed the challenges of hiring ecologists in the public sector, especially with increased demand due to the forthcoming biodiversity net gain legislation, and officers advised that an application had been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to provide additional ecological advice to Parish Councils.

The Committee **noted** the progress on the Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Action Plan 2020-25 and **supported** the proposed revisions to actions and new actions, with the following amendments:

Split the revised/new action regarding energy efficiency in Section 5 into two actions, in order to capture the intention to:

- Continue to encourage developers to go beyond current Building Regulations for energy efficiency for all new builds.
- Ensure that new builds on Council owned land, including those developed through the South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership, are delivered to the highest standard of energy efficiency possible.

Add a new action regarding maximising residents' ability to improve the energy efficiency of heritage assets, using the best available technology, whilst maintaining the planning balance with heritage harm.

**5. Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee was informed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 12 October 2023.

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**The Meeting ended at 3.55 p.m.**

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# Agenda Item 4



**South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Climate and Environment Advisory Committee 12/10/2023
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	Lead Cabinet member for Planning – Tumi Hawkins
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Stephen Kelly

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## Update on activity in support of Biodiversity Net Gain

### Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the activities, actions and outcomes relating to the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain by South Cambridgeshire District Council through the Planning and Development process advanced by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning over the last twelve months (from October 2022).

In the report we provide detail of activities undertaken and those planned in support of BNG, and how this underpins the Doubling Nature goal set out by this Council in its Doubling Nature Strategy from 2021.

### Key Decision

1. No

### Recommendations

2. It is recommended that efforts continue to ready the Council and the Planning Service for the implementation of mandatory BNG from November 2023.

### Reasons for Recommendations

3. Councils in England will have new biodiversity duties as a result of the Environment Act 2021. Within the Greater Cambridge Planning Service, this means a new statutory duty to ensure that mandatory BNG at a minimum of 10% is delivered as a result of developments with the Greater Cambridge area.

### Details

4. Between October 2022 and October 2023, the Natural Environment Team (NET) have made good progress advancing work to prepare for the imminent roll-out of Biodiversity Net Gain to all Local Planning Authorities in England from November

2023, as per the schedule set out by DEFRA in the Environment Act 2021. Among other things, the NET have developed and delivered:

#### Funding for activities

We applied to DEFRA for the New Burdens funding made available by central Government to all Councils in England in Financial Years 2022/23 and 2023/24, justifying the funding by demonstrating our actions and activities in preparation for BNG during those timescales. As a result, South Cambridgeshire District Council was awarded approximately £46,000 for FY 2022/23 and have thus been allocated an additional £46,000 for FY 2023/24, with indications that some level of future funding will continue, although amounts are unclear at this time.

In addition to the funding for South Cambridgeshire, we were also able to assimilate funding from the City of Cambridge (£26,000 PA in FY 2023/24) as a contribution toward joint BNG work being undertaken by officers within Greater Cambridge Shared Planning. This included the time of our new Ecologist to support City Planning applications requiring BNG oversight and input.

#### Additional Ecologist

The DEFRA funding has been used to hire a new permanent Senior Ecologist in order to support and deliver the additional work that will be generated as a result of mandatory BNG. This role sits within the Ecology Team at South Cambridgeshire District Council, but services Greater Cambridge.

#### Biodiversity Net Gain training

We developed and delivered in-person training on BNG at different times during 2023 to Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Officers as the information from Government emerged. This training was given to the Development Management Team and the Strategic Sites Team within the Planning Service.

In addition to training our own GCSP Officers, we began working in Partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council Environmental Team to develop and deliver BNG training to Planning Policy staff from different districts from across Cambridgeshire. This was delivered at an event in Eddington in July 2023.

In addition to the training of Officers, we are in the process of finalising some in-person training sessions for Members in the following Local Councils:

- South Cambridgeshire
- Cambridge City
- Huntingdonshire
- East Cambs

The Natural Environment Team are also currently in the process of finalising training sessions on BNG for the Compliance Team, Technical Support Officer Team, and wider Business Operations team, as well as any other groups within the Council that will need to understand and act on BNG as part of their duties.

#### Policy development

We have also been in consultation with the Planning Policy Team at GCSP regarding the development of new policies for the new GC Local Plan that support BNG as part of that new Local Plan process and those conversations are ongoing as new policy development advances.

### Parish Engagement

To bolster our ability to support Parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire, we recently (September) submitted a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to secure funding for a two-year post within the ecology team focused on Parish engagement around BNG and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The funding bid was supported by Parishes, Members and is configured in such a way as to include the Wildlife Trust BCN as funded delivery Partners. The bid will be determined and we will be notified by December 2023. We were also able to secure a £10,000 contribution for the project from the Green To Our Core funding pot within the Council, increasing the attractiveness of the bid to HLF.

### Systems to manage BNG data

In consultation with Business Operations Team, Section106 Officers, Planning Advisory Service, and Natural England regarding possible solutions to the storage and scrutiny of BNG data. We believe that storage and collection of monitoring data will be a key aspect of both successful delivery and diligent oversight of BNG within the Great Cambridge Shared Planning Service.

Updated application criteria for inclusion of BNG as and when direction from Central Government, DEFRA, DLUC, Natural England, or PAS has been provided. This has been in the absence of any official guidance being released from Central Government, and in anticipation of Secondary Legislation coming forward from both DEFRA and DLUC (4 changes in total required). We are told that all documentation has been finalised; however, it is awaiting Ministerial signoff before it can be released.

### Offsite BNG Mitigation

We progressed and completed the first Section106 agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council Farms for an advanced creation habitat bank at Lower Valley Farm, Fulbourn. This is now signed and sealed as of August 2023, and with this resource set up biodiversity credits are now being sold to developers. We have sent a redacted version of this agreement to other parties that we are currently in conversation with regarding setting up other such sites.

We are in talks with the Wildlife Trust BCN, Cambridge Past Present and Future, Cambridge University, and Ground Control (private company) regarding the setting up of additional Habitat Banks in South Cambridgeshire. We have also had an indication from UK Power Networks that they are considering setting up their own Habitat Bank to offset three applications to be submitted in January, and any future works across the districts.

We are in the process of formalising the process for setting up new habitat banks (based on the PPA model) so that we can recover costs incurred by officers in discussions with 3rd party providers prior to the signing of a S106 agreement.

### BNG Pre-App Service

We are currently in the process of configuring a new BNG fee-paying pre-application service for development applicants to enable discussion of BNG requirements for their applications with Ecology Officers. Loosely based on the current model used by Historic Buildings Team; however, all levels of advice will be chargeable, as there will be no statutory requirement for household applications to provide BNG. In addition to this new chargeable service, we will be also producing free advice sheets covering the basics of BNG made available through our website.

### Ongoing assessment of Planning Applications for BNG

We are assessing BNG on all eligible planning applications, this is to test our own processes and adapt where necessary prior to mandatory BNG (at 10%) becoming law in November. BNG is already supported by the NPPF, but we cannot hold developers to a 10% net gain if it is unreasonable to do so.

Ecology Officers are continuing to attend training courses, seminars, and in-person meetings on wider issues regarding BNG, so that we can be ready for the expected commencement of mandatory BNG from November 2023. In addition, we are working closely with colleagues at the County Council and other Cambridgeshire District Councils to try and join up our wider work on BNG across the County.

## **Implications**

5. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

### **Financial**

6. Actions being taken forward will likely generate income for the Council going forward as while there is a statutory element of BNG, there are opportunities to offer services and charge for these in order to pay for officer time.

### **Legal**

7. There will be an ongoing need to include legal services in the creation of Section 106 agreements to secure advanced habitat creation sites for BNG, (as per Lower Valley Farm)

## **Staffing**

8. We have already recruited a new member of staff into the Ecology Team in order to support the additional BNG new burdens. This is a permanent post and is currently funded through DEFRA new burdens money. We anticipate that chargeable BNG work undertaken by the Council will raise enough to fund this post in perpetuity.

## **Risks/Opportunities**

9. There exist more opportunities than there are risks associated with this work. Those opportunities include improving our local biodiversity, aligning with the Doubling Nature Strategy, working more closely with our Parishes and increasing public awareness of the value of our natural capital and how we are protecting and enhancing it.

## **Climate Change**

10. As all BNG will be associated with the creation or enhancement of habitat, there will be relevant ecosystem services delivered through the created habitat, most notably carbon sequestration, but perhaps also shading, water management etc.

## **Health & Wellbeing**

11. The creation of new green spaces supports the health and wellbeing agenda advanced by the council.

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

### **Being green to our core**

12. Biodiversity Net Gain will create new habitat and enhance existing habitat and thus deliver multifunctional benefits to our area for local biodiversity.

### **A modern and caring Council**

13. The strong support for the green initiative being advanced by the Council is evidence of the council being a modern and caring council.

## **Background Papers**

None

## **Appendices**

None

## **Report Author:**

John Cornell - Natural Environment Team Leader  
Telephone: 07766114267