

**REPORT TO:** Climate and Environment Advisory Committee 28th January 2020

**LEAD OFFICER:** Historic Environment Team Leader

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## **Information item: Advice for residents about energy efficiency improvements to historic buildings.**

### **Executive Summary**

1. To receive a presentation at the meeting from officers from the Council's Historic Environment Team. The presentation will set out the policies and good practice and provide examples of the advice being given by the Councils' Historic Environment Team to residents to help them make adaptations to 'heritage' homes. This is particularly important following the Councils' declaration of the Climate Emergency.
2. The team is currently looking at way to increase awareness and disseminate this advice to residents. The first step to do this is focussing on the Councils' Webpages which will be updated to include advice to encourage householders and small businesses to make improvements to their historic buildings' environmental performance. The presentation will include examples of the draft webpages.
3. Once the webpages are finalised, the team intends to scope other means by which they could provide advice to residents/small businesses across both Councils, such as a "surgery" with a Conservation Officer, and training for both Planning Officers and Councillors
4. The Service is keen to support a pro-active approach and as practitioners are keen to keep up to date with good practice in this field, including the "Heritage Declares" initiative.

### **Details**

5. South Cambridgeshire has a rich historic environment with 2,962 listed buildings and 85 Conservation Areas. In addition to designated heritage assets, 'traditional buildings' (generally those built before 1919 with solid wall or timber frame construction) comprise around 20% of our national building stock. In 2019 South Cambridgeshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency. Energy efficiency improvements to our existing building stock, including those of traditional construction and those recognised as heritage assets, are essential if national and local targets are to be met.
6. It is a priority of the Historic Environment Team to support to South Cambridgeshire residents who wish to make energy efficiency improvements within a heritage context,

and to provide resources and advice encouraging appropriate energy efficiency improvements to historic buildings. The team further recognises that much of the guidance relating to energy efficiency improvements for designated and non-designated heritage assets is also relevant to buildings of traditional construction more generally and recognises here the opportunity to provide and disseminate information with a broader reach and benefit.

7. To help residents, the first step is to focus on the Councils' webpages. The intention is to create a 'Climate Change' webpage within the Historic Environment section of the South Cambridgeshire District Council website. The target audience will initially be residents who wish to make energy efficiency improvements to 'heritage homes.' There will be scope for expansion of the webpage in the future. The web page will:
  - Recognise the climate emergency
  - Provide an outline the opportunities and risks in undertaking energy efficiency improvements to traditional buildings
  - Provide an overview of approaches to enhancing the sustainability of heritage assets and reducing carbon emissions in line with best practice, including improving energy efficiency and the introduction of micro-renewables.
  - Provide a list of resources for homeowners, to provide a gateway to the wealth of relevant guidance available for homeowners and residents of traditional buildings.
  - Link to relevant national and local policy and guidance, including the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2020) and Local Plan (2018) policy NH/15 Heritage Assets and Adapting to Climate Change
8. Once that foundation is in place, the team intends to scope other ways of helping advise residents. For example, this could include providing a surgery for residents who wish to discuss energy efficiency improvements to Listed Buildings and properties within Conservation Areas. As on occasions, what is initially proposed is not appropriate. A surgery would help guide residents to a solution for their particular circumstance. Training for Planning officers and Councillors will also be programmed for later in the year to help them not only as ambassadors but also in their role as decision-makers.
9. The Team continues to look at a best practice and work closely with the Councils' Sustainability Officer, so they can make positive suggestions to residents. The Service is also currently considering joining the 'Heritage declare initiative', a non-affiliated group of heritage practitioners who together urge the sector to react more quickly and effectively to the climate and ecological emergency. (<https://www.heritagedeclares.org>)

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