

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Tuesday, 4 April 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

Chair: Geoff Harvey
Vice-Chair: Dr. Martin Cahn

Committee Members in attendance:

Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya
Stephen Drew
Peter Fane
Peter Sandford

Councillors in attendance:

Councillors Brian Milnes and Bridget Smith were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers:

Peter Campbell	Head of Housing
Bode Esan	Head of Climate, Environment & Waste Development Officer - Climate and Environment
Siobhan Mellon	Policy, Climate and Environment Team Manager
Alex Snelling-Day	Climate and Environment Project Officer
Luke Waddington	

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Paul Bearpark, Ariel Cahn, Pippa Heylings, Lisa Redrup and Bunty Waters. Councillors Stephen Drew and Peter Fane were in attendance as substitutes.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Doubling Nature - Presentation by Richard Astle, Chair of Natural Cambridgeshire

The Committee received a presentation from Richard Astle, Chair of Natural Cambridgeshire. He explained that Natural Cambridgeshire was an independent charity, which worked in partnership to provide advice on how best to convert areas to a natural habitat. He made the following points:

- On average, 17% of the country had been given over to nature, whilst in Cambridgeshire the figure was only 8.5%.
- The Combined Authority had set up a £1m doubling nature fund, three applications were from South Cambridgeshire.

- In summer of 2023 a fund of £100,000 would become available, offering grants of about £2,000 each.

Members of the Committee noted that:

- Nature could be doubled by replicating small projects throughout the county.
- If a natural habitat could not be provided on the site of a new development, the target could be met by growing the habitat on another site, as a form of offsetting.
- The Council should work with small communities by providing small grants, advice and a leadership role to increase natural habitat in the District.
- The Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership provided an opportunity for increasing nature in the county.
- Cambridgeshire County Council owned a large amount of land in the District that could develop nature.
- The price of land made it difficult to double nature in the District.
- Farmers could be encouraged to convert farmland to a nature reserve.
- New developments, such as Orchard Park and Northstowe, presented opportunities to increase nature in the District.
- Tiny projects, such as encouraging residents to grow potted plants on their balconies, could help the Council to meet its target of doubling nature.
- The quality of the soil was crucial when increasing nature.

The Committee thanked Richard Astle for his presentation and informative answers to their questions.

5. Doubling Nature in South Cambridgeshire: Progress Update

The Project Officer presented this report on the Council's Doubling Nature Strategy, including details of the proposed actions to advance the authority's contribution to doubling nature in the District.

Members of the Committee noted the following points:

- It was appropriate to remember the work of Councillor John Loveluck and see that his initiatives were making a difference and were being used as a case study.
- The target of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for new developments was ambitious and its achievability would often depend on the nature of the development.
- Neighbourhood Plans were proving effective at promoting the preservation and extension of green spaces.
- The Council monitored air quality in the District and fortunately there were no areas of major concern.
- The proposed East West rail development provided an opportunity for Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Small projects, such as putting grass on the roofs of bus shelters, should be supported.
- Encouraging all landowners to take positive action was a key factor to achieving Biodiversity Net Gain.

The Chair thanked the Project Officer for his report, which clearly evaluated the measures being taken and being proposed.

6. Sustainable Food: supporting initiatives in South Cambridgeshire

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment presented this report, which provided

an overview of the current actions and plans by the Council to support sustainable food initiatives.

The Committee noted the following points:

- Britons now consumed a far wider range of food, which often had to be imported, which was less sustainable than local produce.
- Innovative cooking could reduce both costs and waste and be more sustainable.
- Sometimes growing food locally could use more energy than importing it from overseas. Either way, eating food that was out of season was not sustainable.
- Gleaning, which was collecting excess fresh food from local farms, should be encouraged.
- Allotments should be encouraged in existing settlements and not just in new developments.
- Regular local community markets should be encouraged.
- The “Love Food, Hate Waste” campaign should be supported.
- South Cambs magazine was an excellent way to advertise sustainable food initiatives.

The Committee **noted** the report.

7. **Forward Plan**

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment, agreed to look into providing an agenda item on innovative farming at a future meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Tuesday 6 June at 2 pm.

The Meeting ended at 4.15 p.m.
