South Cambs Magazine Winter 2026

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Hello

Welcome to the winter edition of South Cambs Magazine

As winter arrives and communities across South Cambridgeshire prepare for the festive season, I'm reminded of what makes our district such a special place to live. Time and again, we see people coming together to support one another, champion local businesses and take pride in the places they call home.

That community spirit is reflected throughout this edition. One achievement I'm particularly proud of is that we have now awarded more than £1 million through our Zero Carbon Communities Grant scheme since it launched in 2019. Local groups across South Cambridgeshire are using this funding to take practical action on climate change, helping us become greener while strengthening communities at the same time. That milestone reflects the passion and commitment of residents who are taking action in their own communities, proving that tackling climate change isn't just about ambitious targets, it's about practical local projects that make a real difference.

You'll also discover stories that show how environmental action can go hand in hand with supporting nature, including how our renewable energy park is helping to power electric bin lorries while creating valuable habitats for local wildlife. As the festive season approaches, you'll find useful tips on reducing and recycling more of the extra waste that Christmas can bring.

Winter is also a wonderful opportunity to support local businesses. I hope many of you will join us at our South Cambridgeshire Christmas Market on Sunday 6 December at Cambourne Village College, where more than 100 local traders will come together under one roof to showcase the very best our district has to offer.

As the year draws to a close, I'd like to thank everyone who contributes to making South Cambridgeshire such a thriving, welcoming and forward-looking place. I hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine, and I wish you and your loved ones a happy, peaceful and safe festive season.

Cllr Bridget Smith
Leader
South Cambridgeshire District Council

Contact us

It's easier to contact us online. You can do more online at a time to suit you.

Chat with SAM, our artificial intelligence (AI) assistant
SAM can help you instantly, or signpost you to the relevant team that can support you further. Just click on the speech bubble icon on our website and ask SAM a question.

www.scambs.gov.uk

Create a My South Cambs account
See personalised information – such as your Council Tax payments or your Benefits account.

https://mysouthcambs.scambs.gov.uk

Or you can email us, phone us, write to us, visit our offices, or get in touch using our social media channels.

email: **scdc@scambs.gov.uk** phone: 01954 713 000

South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, CB23 6EA

Facebook, LinkedIn: South Cambridgeshire District Council

X, Instagram: @SouthCambs

If you phone us

Our phone line is available 8am to 5:30pm on weekdays - apart from Wednesdays when it stays open later until 6:30pm.

Our AI-powered telephone system makes it easier and faster for you to get the help you need.

When you phone, you'll be asked to briefly explain what your enquiry is about. The more specific you are, the better – our system uses your response to connect you directly with the right advisor, who's trained to deal with your particular issue. Prefer to speak to someone straight away? That's fine. You can still choose to speak to an advisor at any time!

This system is all about giving you a smoother and faster service. So next time you call, try to be as specific as possible.

If you visit us

Our office opening hours are 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. If you come to the office, we'll try our very best to resolve your query there and then. If we can't, our advisors will book you a follow-up appointment when you will be able to speak to someone. Alternatively, you can book your own appointment at **www.scambs.gov.uk/book-an-appointment**

Request a large print copy **communications@scambs.gov.uk**

Your next issue

The spring 2027 issue will be delivered between Monday 22 February and Saturday 6 March.

Contact Smart Distribution for delivery enquiries.

e: **scdc@smartdistribution.co.uk** t: **0800 6444 011**

South Cambs Magazine

Enquiries should be directed to:

Editor: Tom Horn

Editorial: Megan Jerome, Amelie King, Jessica Lydon, Kath Sansom and Lauryn Snow

South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, CB23 6EA

communications@scambs.gov.uk

Design: Danielle Harrington

design@danielleharrington.co.uk

Advertising: Beverley Carter at Media Shed Ltd

Ground Floor, Unit E1, East Court, Enterprise Road, South Park Business Village, Maidstone, ME15 6JF

e: **bev@media-shed.co.uk** t: **0207 183 1815**

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Putting you first

If you phone us we will:

- resolve your enquiry as quickly as possible
- provide voicemail if the person you need is unavailable
- answer your phone message within three working days.

If you write to us we will:

• reply to your letter or email within 10 working days.

If we write to you we will:

• write in plain language

• arrange for translation, large type, braille or audio tapes upon request.

If we visit you we will:

• carry identification that you can check with a phone call

• arrive at the time we say we will, or give you as much notice as possible if we have to change the time.

If we get it wrong we will:

• apologise if we have made a mistake or failed to meet our standards

• acknowledge your written complaint within three working days

• reply in full to your complaint within 10 working days.

Assisted digital service support

We run an Assisted Digital Service Support to ensure nobody is excluded from completing an online application or e-form due to difficulty with digital skills or access to a computer. Eligible residents are offered telephone support or face to face help by one of our contact centre advisors. Your local library or Parish Council hub can also help. To take advantage of this service, just call us on 01954 713 000.

News in brief

Local government reorganisation update

The Government has confirmed that a decision on local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is expected by early 2027. Elections to any new unitary authorities are now planned for May 2028, with the new councils due to take over services from April 2029. In the meantime, councils will continue delivering services as usual and you can be assured that essential services will remain unaffected throughout the process. We'll continue to provide updates as more information becomes available.

Recycle your Christmas tree

Arthur Rank Hospice Charity volunteers are once again offering to collect your Christmas tree from your front door. Residents in postcode areas CB1, CB2, CB3, CB4, CB5, CB21, CB22, CB23, CB24, CB25, SG8 and SG19 can register for a collection at **www.arhc.org.uk/tree-recycling**

Collections will take place between Friday 8 January and Monday 11 January 2027, and you can register up to midnight on Monday 4 January 2027. When you register your tree collection, you'll be asked if you'd like to make a donation. Every year, more than 3,750 patients are cared for by the Hospice in Cambridge, its Alan Hudson Day Treatment Centre in Wisbech, and in patients' own homes.

Funding available for local nature projects

Community groups, schools, parish councils, churches and other local organisations are being encouraged to apply for new funding to help create more space for nature across South Cambridgeshire.

We have just launched our new Nature Recovery Grant Scheme, with a total of £25,000 on offer to support projects that protect and enhance local wildlife and habitats.

Grants of up to £2,000 are available to help communities complete environmental surveys and identify opportunities for nature recovery, while grants of up to £5,000 can support practical projects such as tree planting, wildflower meadows, ponds, wildlife habitats, green roofs and living walls.

We are particularly keen to support projects that create connected habitats across parish boundaries, helping wildlife move more easily through the landscape. Applications close on Monday 25 January 2027.

Find out more and apply at **www.scambs.gov.uk/nature-recovery-grant**

For advice and support, email **climateandenvironment@scambs.gov.uk**

Exercise referral and cardiac rehab schemes

Discover a healthier you with our Active & Healthy 4 Life exercise referral scheme, tailored for individuals managing everyday health conditions. Qualified instructors create personalised gym-based exercise programmes, encourage twice-weekly attendance and offer advice on complementary activities like walking, cycling and swimming. If you're 18 or older and aiming to manage conditions like high blood pressure or cholesterol, diabetes, osteoporosis, arthritis, asthma, or pre/post operative and mental health support, this scheme could be for you.

Simply ask your health professional to complete our referral form, then contact your preferred sports centre to schedule an instructor appointment.

Join for just £20 per month for four months. For further details, visit **www.scambs.gov.uk/active** or email **AandH4L@scambs.gov.uk**

For those seeking more specialist support for cardiac rehab, join sessions at Cambourne, Sawston and Swavesey by completing the relevant form, which you can find at **www.scambs.gov.uk/cardiac**

Upcoming Community Forum dates

Community Forums are a great opportunity for local communities to hear from and speak with stakeholders, developers and our colleagues about developments in the area.

The next round of Community Forums will be held on the dates below.

- Bourn Airfield and Cambourne Forum - Wednesday 10 February 2027
- Waterbeach - Wednesday 24 February 2027
- North East Cambridge - Wednesday 3 March 2027 (Written update)
- Cambridge East - Wednesday 10 March 2027
- North West and West Cambridge - Thursday 18 March 2027
- Northstowe - Wednesday 24 March 2027

Stay active to stay independent

Are you aged 50 or older and looking to stay active or get back into exercise? Try the strength and balance classes run through our Sheltered Housing schemes. They offer friendly, accessible exercise classes designed to help you move more, feel stronger, and stay independent.

A combination of seated and standing exercises done regularly can improve strength, balance, mobility, energy levels, and support mental health in a fun and social environment. This will help reduce the risk of falls, support heart health and overall wellbeing. Classes are tailored to a range of fitness levels and abilities. The first class is free – come along and try!

For class locations and times, visit **www.scambs.gov.uk/strength-and-balance-classes**

Save the dates for next year's netball camps

Join our popular netball camps for children in school years three to nine. Suitable for children of all abilities and led by qualified coaches, the camps offer a fantastic opportunity for learning new or developing existing netball skills within game-based activities in a safe, inclusive and enjoyable environment.

All camps take place at Impington Sports Centre, 10am to 3.30pm:

- Easter – Monday 5 and Tuesday 6 April 2027
- May half term – Wednesday 2 June 2027
- Summer – Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 July 2027
- October half term - Wednesday 27 October 2027

For full details visit **www.scambs.gov.uk/sportscamps**

Help shape our services

You can use our 'How Are We Doing?' survey to provide feedback on our services, projects and policies. Your views and feedback matter to us, and we use responses from this survey to track our performance and improve the services we provide to residents.

For example, recently our online chatbot was telling people to go to the wrong page on our website for something because some information was out of date. Someone let us know via this survey and we were able to fix it that day.

The survey can be easily completed at **www.scambs.gov.uk/how-are-we-doing**

Healthy and supported communities

Get ready for winter

British weather can often be temperamental. After one of the driest summers on record, early predictions from the Met Office for this winter suggest we may be faced with frequent rainfall, with possibilities of cold snaps.

As we move into the winter months, there are several things we can do now to keep our homes and families safe. The advice on this page contains details of steps you can take now to ensure you feel prepared.

Tips to prepare your home

There are simple things you can do around the house to prepare for winter. These include:

- checking window and door seals around the frames for deterioration of the sealant and rubber seals
- cleaning gutters and downpipes to make sure they are clear of leaves and debris
- checking any trees that are on or near your property for risks such as falling branches or proximity to power or phone lines
- reviewing your home insurance coverage.

Being prepared for flooding

In more extreme cases, your home may be at risk of flooding. You can check this at **www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk** using your address. If you find that your property carries a medium to high risk, you may wish to invest in some additional materials such as:

- good quality duct tape – this can be used to temporarily seal door frames and provide significant resistance to flood waters
- temporary flood barriers – these may require external fittings but provide a good amount of protection

• “magic” sandbags – these absorb water to create a sturdy barrier that can redirect flood waters around doors and access points such as garages. These can be commonly found in hardware and home improvement stores.

Maintaining your vehicle

For vehicles, general care and maintenance should ensure that your car is able to run safely through the winter. Suggested checks include:

• checking tyre tread and pressure
• checking antifreeze and screen wash levels and having a de-icing kit available
• considering packing a blanket and additional warm clothing, alongside water and snacks in case you become stuck away from home.

These suggestions are of course not exhaustive, and so it is well worth reviewing the guidance from the Environment Agency and the Met Office.

To sign up for Met Office weather alerts, please visit **https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/subscribe-to-email-alerts**

Healthy and supported communities

Know your taxi, know you’re safe

Travel safely and learn what to look for when using taxis this party season.

Christmas is often the time for going out and about, celebrating with family and friends. Buses can be limited in the evening, so the safest way to get home from a night out can often be by private hire vehicle.

As a District Council, we are responsible for licensing drivers, vehicles and operators to make sure your journey is safe and comfortable.

All licensed drivers are required to have:

• a Driving Licence check
• a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) criminal record check, and subscription to the DBS update service
• a vehicle that must go through strict MOT checks and be covered by specialist insurance.

All private hire except executive/chauffeur types must display:

• a yellow plate on the rear of the vehicle
• a yellow internal notice plate the distinctive yellow halfmoon shaped door signs an operator sign showing who they work for.

This all ensures that when you are waiting for your taxi to arrive, you can be sure it is licensed. Private hire vehicles must be booked in advance through a licensed private hire operator. If you’re using an app, this will display the driver and trackable vehicle details.

You must never approach a private hire driver and ask if they are available. If they accept the booking, you will not be covered under their insurance for the journey.

When your taxi arrives, check the car matches your booking confirmation. The driver will also have an ID badge with them - this must be either worn or on display in the vehicle. If you are in any doubt, ask to see their ID badge before you get in the vehicle.

Inside the vehicle, you are covered by CCTV, and if you feel the need to record the audio, push the button on the roof or by the window. This will activate the audio recording for three minutes and you can press it again if needed. Drivers cannot access recordings, which are only accessed by authorised officers for limited reasons.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, Cllr Laurence Damary-Homan, said: “Taking a taxi or private hire vehicle can be a safe and convenient way to get home after a festive night out. The

vast majority of journeys pass without incident thanks to the checks we carry out on drivers and vehicles. For extra peace of mind, try to travel with friends where possible, share your journey details with someone you trust, and if you're travelling alone, sit in the back and keep an eye on where you're going."

If you do have any concerns after your journey, you should contact the operator you have booked with. Alternatively, email us at **taxis@scambs.gov.uk**

Healthy and supported communities

Protect yourself from theft, scams and AI fraud

With presents arriving, homes filling with gifts and more of us shopping online, we can be more vulnerable to theft during the festive period.

A few simple precautions can help protect your belongings, personal information and peace of mind over the holidays.

Keep your home and belongings secure

Expensive-looking packages, gifts and shopping bags can be a target for thieves from homes, cars, and doorsteps. You can help keep yourself safe by ensuring your belongings are not on show in your home and car.

- Leave gifts out of view from windows or letterboxes.
- Draw blinds and curtains before you go to bed.
- Utilise lockers for deliveries or ensure you will be home to receive them.
- If you're going away for the festive season, ask a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your home.
- Avoid posting holiday plans on open social media pages.

For more tips from Cambridgeshire Police, visit **www.cambs.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention**

Don't get caught out by scams, AI fraud and deep fakes

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are making scams harder to recognise, but a few simple precautions can still help keep you safe. While scams are often associated with people who are less familiar with technology, the growing sophistication of fraud and our reliance on digital services mean anyone can become a target, especially when busy or distracted.

Many traditional warning signs still exist, such as unexpected messages, suspicious requests, or claims from unknown contacts. However, AI is now being used to create convincing phishing emails, texts and phone calls with more professional language and realistic details. Fraudsters can even make fake messages appear in the same text thread as genuine messages from your bank.

Awareness is also important concerning the rise of AI deepfakes – both of celebrities, and even family and friends of the victim. Today, AI can imitate voices and create realistic fake video calls, making this much less reliable. Every scam ends with a request. Judge the request, not who it appears to be coming from.

If you'd like to learn more or need support after experiencing fraud, visit: **www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk** or **www.reportfraud.police.uk**

Remember these three rules

1. Never feel pressured to act quickly, share personal information or make a payment.
2. Verify independently by contacting the organisation directly using contact details you've obtained yourself, not those provided in a message or call.
3. Consider agreeing a password with close relatives or friends. If you receive a suspicious call or video message asking for money or sensitive information, ask for the password before continuing.

Healthy and supported communities

Taking action against antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) can make people feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their homes and neighbourhoods.

The term antisocial behaviour covers a wide range of issues which may be dealt with by a combination of different organisations including the police, ourselves, housing providers and support services.

Examples of antisocial behaviour include:

- groups causing noise, intimidation or vandalism
- loud or dangerous driving
- neighbour disputes
- fly-tipping and environmental nuisance
- dogs that are out of control or causing problems
- misuse of public spaces
- illegal use of e-scooters on roads, pavements and cycle paths.

Many people are unaware that privately owned e-scooters cannot legally be used on public roads, pavements or in other public spaces. Police may seize e-scooters being used illegally, and they could be destroyed. If you're thinking about buying one as a gift, please check the law before you do.

Report it, don't just post it

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities, Cllr Dr. Lisa Redrup, said: "My message to anyone experiencing antisocial behaviour is simple: please report it. We know many residents discuss concerns on social media, which can help raise awareness locally, but it's important incidents are also reported to the appropriate authorities. The more information received, the better placed they are to investigate concerns and take action where needed."

If ASB is not officially reported, the organisations that can help may not know there is a problem. Social media posts can also show only part of the picture and may unintentionally increase concern within the community.

How to report ASB

For noise complaints, environmental issues, animal-related concerns and fly-tipping, visit our homepage at www.scambs.gov.uk and select the 'Notify' option.

For most other antisocial behaviour, report directly to Cambridgeshire Police by visiting **www.cambs.police.uk/ro/report/asb/asb-v3/report-antisocial-behaviour**

There are different options to select on the reporting forms. These can feel overwhelming but please just make your best guess and explain any uncertainty in free-text space. The important thing is that the information reaches the organisations that can investigate and act.

When reporting, include as much information as possible, such as:

- dates and times
- locations
- descriptions of people involved
- names or addresses, if known.

You may not always receive updates about what action has been taken, but that does not mean nothing is happening. Some investigations, safeguarding work and enforcement activity cannot be shared publicly.

Need advice or support?

If you are affected by antisocial behaviour, independent charity ASB Help offers free information, advice and support: **www.asbhelp.co.uk**

Always call 999 if a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger.

Financially secure and fit for the future

Building skills, confidence and careers through work experience and internships

This summer, we welcomed the next generation of talent through our work experience and internship programmes.

These schemes give young people the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of local government and discover the wide variety of careers available across our services.

Nine year 10 and year 12 students joined us for week-long work experience placements across our Greater Cambridge Shared Waste, Transformation, Climate and Environment, and Finance teams. Students worked alongside experienced colleagues, contributed to real projects and gained valuable insight into how our services make a difference to residents every day.

The placements were designed to provide more than just an introduction to the workplace. Students were encouraged to build new skills, develop confidence and explore potential career paths in a supportive environment. The positive impact of the programme was reflected in the feedback we received from students. One participant said: “I wanted to say a huge thank you for allowing me to complete my work experience with the Council, and I appreciate all the work and opportunities I was given. I really enjoyed my time and learned so much from the experience.”

We’ll be opening applications for next year’s work experience and internship programmes soon.

Alongside our school placements, we delivered a 12-week summer internship programme for university students and recent graduates. Interns were embedded within teams across the Council, working on live projects that supported our services and priorities while developing valuable professional skills and experience.

At the end of the programme, interns presented their work and achievements to our Leadership Team. Several reflected on how the experience had changed their perception of local government, explaining that they had never previously considered it as a career option. After spending three months with us, they said the programme had opened their eyes to the range of opportunities available and they were now considering local government as a potential career after graduation.

The programme also had a significant impact on confidence. One intern shared that at the start of their placement they would not have felt comfortable presenting in front of a group, but by the end they were confidently delivering a presentation to our Leadership Team.

These programmes play an important role in investing in future talent, helping young people develop skills, confidence and career aspirations while showcasing local government as a rewarding and impactful place to work

Applications for our next work experience and internship programmes will open soon. For further information, contact **scdcrecruitment@scambs.gov.uk**

Being green to our core

Quick wins: low and no-cost home energy efficiency improvements

Looking for ways to keep your home warmer, healthier and cheaper to run this winter? Councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have launched a new 'Your Home Energy Upgrade Guide' on the Action on Energy website.

Packed with practical advice, the guide highlights simple, low-cost improvements you can make yourself to help keep your home warm and comfortable during the colder months. As well as improving energy efficiency, these changes can boost ventilation, create a healthier living environment and help reduce your energy bills.

Low-cost upgrades can be an effective way to improve the energy efficiency of your home at minimal cost, relatively quickly. Simple improvements can include:

- getting a free energy smart meter installed
- setting your thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature for your needs. For most people, this is between 18°C and up to 21°C. For people vulnerable to cold, it may be higher
- fitting a draught excluder inside your chimney or around the fireplace to reduce heat loss
- choosing energy-saving lighting and appliances
- installing draught excluders on doors and windows
- sealing gaps, cracks, service entry points, and areas along skirting boards
- carrying out DIY insulation on lofts and storage hatches and being mindful of ventilation so you don't create condensation issues
- ensuring extractor fans are fitted in kitchens and bathrooms
- insulating pipes that run through a cold loft space and sub-floor spaces and insulating hot water pipes that run through spaces that don't need heating, such as through a utility cupboard or storage room.

The guide provides lots more ideas and information and has cost estimates for quick-win projects, including helpful tips throughout.

When you are ready to move onto more significant home upgrades, the guide offers a step-by-step approach to things like insulation, heating systems and solar panels.

Other helpful information can be found on the Action on Energy website. This includes key guidance on installation protections and planning and building control, as well as information on wider support.

To get started, learn more about home energy upgrades and find other helpful resources, please visit **www.actiononenergycambs.org/guidance-and-installation**

Find out more about Action on Energy here: **www.actiononenergycambs.org**

t: 01223 457340

Facebook: Action on Energy

Instagram: @actiononenergycambs

x-twitter: @ActionOnEnergy

Being green to our core

Three simple ways to prevent fly-tipping

Few things frustrate us all more than seeing unwanted rubbish dumped in the countryside, on our streets or in public spaces. Not only does fly-tipping spoil the places we live, but it can also harm wildlife, damage the environment and cost taxpayers money to clear up.

Since the start of 2024/25, we have received more than 3,800 reports of fly-tipping in South

Cambridgeshire. That's why we launched a campaign called 'your waste, your responsibility', encouraging residents to take a few simple steps when getting rid of unwanted items.

While most people want to do the right thing, problems arise when waste is handed to someone who is not legally authorised to carry it. Whether it is old furniture, garden waste or household belongings, residents have a legal duty of care to make sure their waste is disposed of responsibly.

Our campaign's message is simple: Check it. Trust it. Prove it. Before paying someone to take away your waste:

- Check they are a licensed waste carrier by looking them up on the Environment Agency's waste carrier register.
- Trust that your waste will be taken to a legitimate disposal or recycling facility.
- Prove it by keeping a receipt, invoice or waste transfer document.

There are also several legal an environmentally responsible alternatives for getting rid of unwanted items.

Book a bulky waste collection through our Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service for large household items.

Visit a Household Recycling Centre to recycle a wide range of materials and belongings.

Donate good-quality items to local charities and community groups so they can be reused.

Sell or give away unwanted items through trusted online marketplaces.

Residents are also being reminded not to leave donations beside charity clothing banks. Items left outside can become damaged by the weather, create litter problems and leave charities with the cost of disposal.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, Cllr Laurence Damary-Homan, said: "Nobody wants to see rubbish dumped in our villages, countryside or public spaces. The good news is that preventing fly-tipping can be as simple as taking a few moments to check who is collecting your waste and making sure they are properly licensed."

"Every resident can play a part by disposing of unwanted items responsibly, whether that's using a licensed waste carrier, booking a bulky waste collection, recycling, donating or reusing items."

www.scambs.gov.uk/your-waste

Being green to our core
Give yourself a kinder Christmas

If you find Christmas stressful, you're not alone.

Whether it's hosting Christmas dinner, worrying about the cost or battling through crowded shops to buy the 'perfect' gift, many of us struggle with some aspect of the season. So how can we get the balance right and be kind to ourselves, the planet and others?

Get ahead

If you're hosting Christmas dinner, you don't have to leave all the work until the big day. More people are prepping bits of their meal weeks ahead and stashing them in the freezer – and you can get all the family involved in this, kids are great at peeling spuds! You can save by buying veg when it's on offer, spread costs and waste less food. For tips and tricks visit **www.thefullfreezer.com/freezemymeal**

Spread the load

If the thought of hosting stresses you out, don't be afraid to do things differently. Asking everyone to bring one dish to share not only takes the pressure off you, it gives guests a specific thing

to contribute and the chance to show off their cooking skills! Leftovers can go back home with them too.

Don't panic!

A lot of us over-buy food because we're worried about running out, but then it ends up being thrown away. Think about how many people you need to feed and try to plan meals and snacks. You'll find a food portion calculator at **www.lovefoodhatewaste.com**

Gift differently

If the cost of gifts or what to get people ruins the Christmas spirit for you, try to talk to your loved ones about it. It's easier than ever to set up a Secret Santa group where each person buys one gift, using apps like the drawnames free Secret Santa app to allocate names and add a list of hints for what you'd like to receive. This saves money, time shopping and stressing about what to get, and cuts out unwanted gifts so you can all enjoy giving and receiving. You can agree a budget, and even limit gifts to second-hand items if you like!

The best things in life are free

Think about what you love about Christmas and make time for it – playing board games, going for a walk to see the lights in your community, baking, singing, watching films together, crafting. All these things are good for your soul, good for your family and better for the planet than spending money on extra 'stuff'.

Being green to our core

Cutting food waste, one week at a time

Weekly food waste collections are now underway across Greater Cambridge.

To help you use the new service with confidence, we've compiled answers to some of the questions we're being asked.

Why haven't I received my food waste caddy yet?

By Monday 14 December, all households, except for those in Eddington, should have received caddies. If you have not received your caddies by this date, please visit **www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste** to notify us so that we can get them delivered to you.

My food waste caddy wasn't collected.

Sorry if we missed your caddy. Our new crews empty over 15,000 caddies each day, so sometimes mistakes happen. Unfortunately, we cannot come back for missed caddies, but it's important to tell us about them so that we can improve. Please use the form at **www.greatercambridgewaste.org/report-a-missed-bin-collection**

If you run out of space before the next week's collection, please put the excess food waste into your black bin.

My caddy/bin is damaged, missing parts, or needs replacing.

Visit **www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste** where you can notify us using an online form.

What can and can't go in the food waste caddy?

You can put all kinds of solid food waste in your caddy. You can recycle a wide range of food waste, including peelings, skins and carrot tops from meal preparation, leftovers such as sandwich crusts and uneaten cooked food, food that has gone off like mouldy bread or cakes, tea bags and coffee grounds, as well as bones, meat, fish, cheese and eggshells. Please do not put liquids like oil or milk in your caddy, or any packaging.

Can I get more caddy liners?

We are not providing more liners, but you have a number of free and low-cost options. You can:

- save and re-use plastic bags from packaging, for example frozen foods, bread or clothing. Please don't use thick or dark-coloured bags as the food waste needs to be visible through them
- save and re-use paper bags from greengrocers
- use folded sheets of newspaper. This doesn't contain the food waste but it keeps your indoor caddy clean
- buy plastic bin liners online or in supermarkets. These should be between 10 and 15 litres to allow room to tie the liner shut
- buy caddy liners online or in supermarkets. These are usually compostable which makes them more expensive. Caddy liners are removed before the food waste is processed, so they will not be composted and for these reasons we do not recommend them, but you can use them if you prefer
- use no liners. This means you will need to clean your caddies more often.

If we haven't answered your question here you can find lots more information about weekly food waste collections at **www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste**

Once your food waste foodwaste collections have started, please only use your green bin for garden waste.

Being green to our core

Milton recycling centre set for major transformation

Redevelopment of Cambridgeshire County Council's busiest Household Recycling Centre (HRC) is expected to begin in early 2027, creating a larger, more modern facility that will help meet future demand.

The new Milton HRC will be built on the existing site and adjoining land at Butt Lane. The redevelopment will create a safer, more accessible recycling centre with improved traffic management, additional parking, a dedicated reuse area and a split-level design, making it easier for residents to unload waste and recycling.

To allow construction work to take place safely, the current Milton HRC will close in early 2027 for around 15 months while the new facility is built.

During this period, residents will still be able to use any of the county's eight other household recycling centres, including those at Bluntisham, Thriplow and Witchford. As Milton currently welcomes a significant number of visitors each year, a temporary booking system will be introduced at these three sites to help manage demand and reduce queues.

The booking system will be simple and convenient to use. Residents will be able to book online in real time, including on the same day if slots are available. Visits will be booked in 15-minute slots to help improve traffic flow and the overall visitor experience. Anyone unable to book online will also be able to arrange a visit by telephone.

To help residents prepare, the County Council will provide clear guidance, answers to common queries and a step-by-step video explaining how the system works ahead of the closure. These will be added online at **www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/miltonhrc**

The booking system will only apply at Bluntisham, Thriplow and Witchford while Milton is closed. Residents will still be able to use Cambridgeshire's other household recycling centres without booking.

Existing e-permit arrangements for certain larger vehicles and trailers will continue, with 30-minute slots available for those requiring a permit to use the site. Residents using vehicles such as panel vans, pick-up trucks or larger trailers will need a valid permit before making a booking.

While the temporary closure will mean some residents need to travel further for a period, the redevelopment will deliver a modern, fit-for-the-future recycling centre that will serve local communities for many years to come.

The site is expected to close at the end of operating hours on Sunday 17 January 2027 to allow redevelopment work to begin. Residents will be kept informed throughout the project, with the latest information on the redevelopment, temporary closure and booking arrangements available on the County Council's website as plans progress.

Being green to our core

Helping nature whilst powering a greener future

Work is almost complete on our renewable energy solar park that will power electric bin lorries used by the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service we share with Cambridge City Council. The project is also providing a new wildlife haven.

All of the renewable energy infrastructure, including solar panels and battery storage, is expected to be completed and operational by the end of the year.

There are also lots of biodiversity and environmental benefits that form an important part of the wider scheme. Located next to the service's depot near Waterbeach, the five-acre site was previously part of a wider landfill area and is being transformed into a space that delivers benefits for both nature and positive action on climate change.

As part of the project, wildflower areas are being created over two acres of the site with a mix of native species selected for the location, which will provide a good habitat for insects and invertebrates.

A drainage pond is being incorporated within the wildflower areas, creating wetter grassland habitats planted with species suited to pond-edge environments. This will help increase the diversity of habitats across the site and support a wider range of wildlife.

A further 280 metres of hedgerow will be planted using a mix of native shrub species, while gaps in existing hedges will be filled. Sections of some established hedgerows will be coppiced, encouraging dense regrowth from ground level and creating richer habitats for wildlife.

The inclusion of these works to help nature will add to carbon benefits while boosting biodiversity. To ensure the habitats become well established, the newly planted hedgerows and wildflower areas will receive ongoing care in their early years. Longer term, management will follow a wildlife-friendly, "less is more" approach.

Hedgerows will be cut less frequently, with some sections left untouched each year to allow them to grow and produce more food for wildlife and food for birds over the winter months. Wildflower areas will be cut once a year, after flowers have set their seeds, and areas of grassland and strips along hedges will be left uncut each year to leave small havens for wildlife.

The £6.1 million scheme for the renewable energy park is jointly funded by ourselves, Cambridge City Council, and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority - which agreed its contribution in December 2022.

Being green to our core

Nature on your doorstep across South Cambridgeshire

South Cambridgeshire is home to some of the country's most important wildlife habitats, many of which are closer than you might think.

Some of the special habitats found across our area include:

- chalk streams: The River Mel, River Granta and stretches of the River Cam, which are fed by underground chalk aquifers and support species including brown trout, water voles and

kingfishers. Most of the world's rare chalk streams are found in England

- wetlands and former fen landscapes: These provide food and shelter for a wide range of wildlife, including wintering wildfowl and the booming bittern
- chalk grasslands: These include sites around the Gog Magog Hills and Fleam Dyke, which are rich in wildflowers and support pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- farmland and hedgerows: These provide vital food, shelter and movement corridors for species such as skylarks, yellowhammers and many small mammals and insects.

These habitats do more than support wildlife. They help store carbon, improve water quality, reduce flood risk and create places for people to enjoy and connect with nature. Protecting and restoring these special places is a key part of our Climate and Nature Strategy.

Working alongside the priorities identified through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the aim is to help double nature and create more joined-up habitats across the district.

Whether you're walking along a village stream, enjoying views from the Gog Magog Hills or spotting birds and butterflies in local green spaces, these habitats all contribute to the character and quality of life that residents value across South Cambridgeshire.

Ways you can help include:

- planting native flowers for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- letting part of your garden grow a little wilder to provide food and shelter for wildlife
- recording wildlife sightings through iRecord to help build a picture of nature locally
- volunteering with local conservation groups to help care for important habitats
- speaking to your parish council or community group about opportunities to support nature through wildlife-friendly planting, habitat creation or wider community projects.

All these small actions can make a big difference.

Want to learn more or get involved?

Sign up to our Climate and Environment Team's quarterly newsletter for local climate, nature and community updates, by emailing **ZCC@scambs.gov.uk**

Being green to our core

£1 million awarded by our Zero Carbon Communities grants

Communities across South Cambridgeshire are continuing to take action on climate change, with more than £1 million now awarded to local projects through our Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant scheme since its launch in 2019.

Now in its eighth funding round, the scheme has helped community groups turn ideas into practical projects that reduce carbon emissions, enhance biodiversity and encourage local climate action. This year alone, more than £171,450 has been awarded to 14 projects across the district.

The latest round of funding means the scheme has now distributed a total of £1,026,608 to support community-led projects tackling the climate and nature emergency, marking a significant milestone for the programme.

The largest grant award this year went to Cambridge Sustainable Food, which received £19,457 to establish a South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Food Partnership. The partnership will bring together organisations, businesses and local communities to develop a climate-focused food action plan that promotes healthier, more sustainable food systems and encourages long-term behaviour change.

Claire Ives, Senior Project and Operations Manager at Cambridge Sustainable Food, said: "We're delighted to receive this funding as it will help us bring more people together to take practical action on food and climate issues across South Cambridgeshire. By working with local communities and organisations across the food system, we can help address the root causes of

food and climate insecurity and make it easier for residents to enjoy sustainable, affordable food while reducing food waste and supporting the environment. This funding will help us build on existing work and create lasting benefits for both people and the planet."

A wide range of projects secured funding this year, highlighting the breadth of climate and environmental action taking place across South Cambridgeshire.

Several community buildings, including those in Orchard Park, Cambourne, Harston and Comberton, will benefit from renewable energy and energyefficiency improvements such as solar panels, battery storage, low-carbon heating systems and improved insulation.

For more information about the ZCC Grant scheme and future funding opportunities, visit our website at **www.scambs.gov.uk/zcc** or contact the team at **zcc@scambs.gov.uk**

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

Cambourne to Cambridge busway approved

The new route from the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), which we are a member of, will provide quick, easy and reliable travel between homes and jobs to the west of Cambridge.

The new busway between Cambourne and Cambridge has been approved and will now progress to detailed design phase.

In September, the Secretary of State for Transport gave the go-ahead for the new busway. Plans also include a new active travel route, an emergency and maintenance track used for walking, wheeling and cycling, and a new travel hub at Scotland Farm. The project will be delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council, on behalf of the GCP.

Busway route

The busway will mostly be a single carriageway road with no access for private cars. At some locations it will run on existing roads.

The chosen route will better connect existing and planned communities to the wider transport network. Stops are planned for Cambourne, the new development at Bourn Airfield, Hardwick, Coton and the university's Cambridge West campus. Communities will enjoy quicker journeys into Cambridge and to key employment hubs such as the Cambridge West campus.

New travel hub at Scotland Farm

Just off the A428, the travel hub will provide up to 2,000 parking spaces and a range of cycle storage options. Drivers can easily switch to bus, helping to reduce congestion and provide better conditions for all.

While the project has been designed to reduce its impact on the environment, building a new busway will inevitably affect some existing habitats. To mitigate those impacts, the GCP is creating new and improving existing spaces for nature across Greater Cambridge, including woodlands, grasslands, orchards, ponds and streams.

Now that outline plans have been approved, the County Council is beginning the tender process for the detailed design of the scheme. A contractor is expected to be appointed next spring. Main construction will follow the detailed design phase, although some preparatory work may begin earlier.

With thousands of new homes and jobs set to come to the area, work is needed now to meet growing demand in a sustainable way. The Cambourne to Cambridge busway is a key part of plans to bring new developments into an effective transport network. The government's decision to approve the route marks an important milestone in the journey towards sustainable transport in South Cambridgeshire.

For more information, visit **www.greatercambridge.org.uk/cambourne-cambridge**

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

Planning a home improvement project?

Whether you're thinking about adding an extension, converting your loft, creating a garden room or making changes to your property, deciding whether you need to apply for planning permission can often be confusing.

To make things easier, our Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service has launched a new free online tool called "find out if you need planning permission".

The tool is designed to give residents quick, tailored guidance before they start their project. By answering a series of simple questions about their property and the changes they are considering, residents can find out whether planning permission may be required and identify any planning constraints that could affect their property within minutes.

For example, it can identify whether a home is in a conservation area or is a listed building, both of which can affect what changes can be made. It can also help explain whether a proposal may fall under permitted development rights, meaning a formal planning application might not be required.

While the guidance provided is not a formal planning decision, it can be a valuable first step before investing time and money in detailed plans. Residents who require a legal determination on whether changes of use or building works, proposed or existing, are lawful should apply for a Lawful Development Certificate.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning processes more than 7,000 planning applications each year and receives many enquiries from residents seeking advice about smaller projects. The new self-service tool has been introduced to help people access answers to common questions more quickly, while enabling planning officers to focus on more complex planning matters.

To find out more and use the service, visit **www.greatercambridgeplanning.org** and follow the links to 'check if you need planning permission'.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Henry Batchelor, said:
"Planning a home improvement project should be exciting, but understanding whether planning permission is needed can sometimes feel complicated. By guiding people through a series of questions, this new online tool aims to remove some of the uncertainty that often surrounds planning rules and provide information when residents need it, at a time that suits them."

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

Greater Cambridge Local Plan consultation concludes

The Greater Cambridge Local Plan has reached an important milestone, with the latest public consultation on the Proposed Submission Plan closing at the end of September.

The Local Plan will help guide how Greater Cambridge grows over the coming years, covering issues such as new homes, jobs, green spaces, transport, community facilities and the design of future neighbourhoods.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to get involved. Nearly 3,000 comments were received during the consultation. That is as well as input from over 300 people who attended our online event and visited one of the 14 exhibitions held across South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge.

Alongside the consultation, our Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service has have been working to ensure younger voices are heard. Our Youth Engagement Service (YES) worked with more than 200 children and young people from across Greater Cambridge, including pupils from Red Balloon Learner Centre in Milton and young people with experience of the youth justice system.

Through interactive workshops, participants explored how planning affects everyday life and designed their own "dream neighbourhoods", considering accessibility, green spaces,

sustainability, safety and community facilities. Their ideas helped test emerging design policies and provided valuable insight into what young people want from future communities.

Now that the consultation has closed, all comments are being collated and considered before the Local Plan and supporting documents are submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of December 2026.

The Plan will then undergo an independent examination, expected to begin in spring 2027 subject to government confirmation. A Planning Inspector will review the Plan, supporting evidence and consultation responses to assess whether it meets legal requirements and is suitable to guide future development.

Subject to a successful examination, along with Cambridge City Council, we will will be able to move towards formally adopting the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. We will continue to provide updates as the Plan progresses.

The Local Plan workshop was just one of many sessions that our YES team works on. Other recent examples include creating a time pebble for the Vitrum building at the St John's Innovation Park in Milton and a workshop focused on the Bourn Airfield housing development.

www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/local-plan

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

Brain injury survivor rebuilds life through our guaranteed rent scheme

Three years ago, Patricio struggled to complete a sentence after a life-altering brain injury from a fall down the stairs.

Today, he sits in a local home filled with paintings, poetry and music, reflecting on what he calls his "second life".

Patricio's story began in Chile, a "revolutionary life with guitars and singing". He left in the 1980s, during the country's military dictatorship. Seeking a new future, and having dual-Scottish heritage, he moved to Cambridge.

From studying politics, teaching salsa, to joining bands, he moved all over the UK. He also built a 16-year education career and raised a family. He never imagined that he could face homelessness.

But in 2022, a fall down the stairs left Patricio with a severe traumatic brain injury. He spent a month in intensive care, undergoing a series of major operations. The injury affected almost every aspect of daily life, including his memory, communication, dexterity and mobility. After ten months of rehabilitation, he was ready to leave hospital, but he had nowhere to go.

Without a suitable home, for Patricio and his family, the uncertainty was overwhelming. They reached out to us for assistance to relocate closer to his family and support network.

He was referred to our non-profit letting agent, Shire Homes Lettings, who provide ethical, affordable tenancies to families and individuals, like Patricio, facing homelessness. Shire Homes lease properties from private landlords for three years and can provide long-term tenancies for people like Patricio.

Having a secure place to call home gave him something he desperately needed: stability. He describes his home as part of his "therapy".

"It was the first time I had something for me since the accident," Patricio recalls. "Life came back to me for the second time."

For Patricio, recovery was about more than medical treatment. It was about having a stable place to rebuild confidence and independence.

Three years on from the accident, he's achieved remarkable progress - living independently and returning to many of the creative pursuits that shaped his identity.

He's learning to read music, reads poetry, plays guitar and cello, and can now paint from memory. Sometimes, only after finishing a piece, he realises he's recreated a memory from his past.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr John Batchelor, said:
"Patricio's story shows how much a safe and secure home can matter. For him, it provided the stability he needed to continue his recovery, regain his independence and start looking to the future again. His recovery highlights the vital role secure housing can play in helping people rebuild their lives."

If you're a landlord in South Cambridgeshire, find out more about Shire Homes' ethical guaranteed rent scheme at **www.scambs.gov.uk/shire-homes**

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

From the Congo to Council housing: Meet Cllr John Batchelor

For the first in our new series getting to know some of our councillors, we meet Cllr John Batchelor, our Lead Cabinet Member for Housing.

Making the first descent of the Congo River by kayak might not sound like an obvious route into local government. But that's exactly what Cllr John Batchelor did in 1974, completing the 2,600-mile journey with his wife Julie in around 120 days.

It was one of several major expeditions during the 1970s and 1980s, including crossing the Sahara Desert, before John took to the lecture circuit. This eventually helped spark another passion: supporting young people.

John has lived in Linton since 1987 and describes its strong community and volunteering culture as one of the things he loves about South Cambridgeshire. He helped establish a youth centre, supported young people in need and spent 20 years as a governor at Linton Village College.

"Youth work is not just keeping people out of trouble," he says. "It is about supporting them and giving them some direction in a way they accept."

That desire to support people has continued throughout a long career in public service. John has been a District Councillor since 1998, apart from a four-year break, and also spent eight years as a County Councillor.

Today, as Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, he oversees a service which makes a profound difference at some of the most difficult points in people's lives. "There are a lot of people in very dire straits when it comes to housing and we do our very best to support everyone as well as we possibly can," he says.

Increasing the supply of Council housing is one of his priorities. More than 600 new Council homes have been delivered since 2018, and around 600 more are planned over the next few years, alongside a major programme of improvements to existing homes. John is particularly proud of the small New Build Housing Team delivering new homes across the district and says the quality of modern Council housing is "fantastic".

But another programme stands out for him: Homes for Ukraine. "It's one of the best things that we've ever done," he says, praising the compassion of local hosts who opened their homes to Ukrainian families. Ultimately, it is the difference the Housing team makes every day that gives John the greatest pride.

"We are looking after some of the most vulnerable people in society," he says. "Our staff are doing their very best to deal with these issues every day."

John's role also encompasses the work behind the 5,500 existing Council homes that we own and maintain. Whether it is helping tenants save money and energy, making improvements and

upgrades to Council homes or speaking with tenants on a regular basis to hear their ideas - it's a big operation.

And when Council work allows? You're most likely to find John enjoying something rather less adventurous than crossing the Sahara: walking in the countryside around his local area. John's son, Henry, is also a District Councillor for Linton and our Lead Cabinet Member for Planning.

Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire

Make the most of winter!

See what events are going on near you and plan some festive outings to brighten up the winter period.

Winter's here already – how did that happen? If you're looking for ways to beat the winter blues, South Cambridgeshire has plenty of festive cheer to lift the spirits.

Christmas events

Across December, enjoy traditional Christmas events including Santa's grottos, late-night shopping, Christmas lights switch-ons, festive food and drink, Christmas tree festivals, wreathmaking workshops and pantos.

Christmas markets, like ours which is featured on the magazine's front cover, are an opportunity to treat family and friends – and yourself – to unique, locally made gifts, crafts and food, but also make for a great day out!

Vote for the best Christmas window display!

Have your local businesses decorated their windows for the festive season? If so, vote for the best in our competition! Voting opens on Saturday 5 December. You can take part by visiting **https://engage.scambs.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/christmas-window-2026**

Things to do over the holidays

There's also plenty to do if you don't celebrate Christmas, like days out at a wildlife park, a tasting tour at Cambridge Distillery or practicing your swing at Whaddon Golf Centre.

January is the perfect time to focus on your wellbeing and there are lovely country walks to help with this - including Wandlebury, Grantchester Meadows or Milton Country Park.

Paus in Bourn, Inspirit Studio in Tadlow, and Knapworth's Chill at the Yard offer an escape from the hustle and bustle and stresses that life throws at us.

Gyms and beauty salons like Inspired Health and Fitness Club in Waterbeach, Beauty by Amineh in Knapwell, or Brooke's Beauty and Spa in Caldecote can help you feel better inside and out.

New year's celebrations

Want to welcome the New Year in? Pubs, restaurants, community centres and village halls across the district are celebrating with parties, discos and live music. Remember to check if you need tickets.

The New Year can be a time to take up a new hobby. Why not sign up for a class with Amber B Pottery in Barton, Cambridge Glass Studio in Stapleford or The Cambridge Flower School in Chittering.

Support us on social media

Our dedicated visitor and tourism sector website **www.visitsouthcambs.co.uk** is the go-to guide for things to do and places to go in South Cambridgeshire whatever the time of year.

Keep up to date with our regular social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, X and support our brandnew TikTok account!

X Instagram and Facebook: @visitsouthcambs

Tiktok: @Visitsouthcambs_

Sign up for a free listing

South Cambridgeshire based businesses can promote themselves with a free listing on the site by visiting **https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/free-listings/**

Competition
Win a £250 Love Cambridge gift card

We're giving one lucky winner the chance to win a £250 gift card to spend in Cambridge!

Brought to you by CambridgeBID, the Love Cambridge Gift Card makes it easy to enjoy more of what Cambridge has to offer. With over 170 participating businesses across the city, there's plenty to choose from, including your favourite shops, restaurants, cafés, hotels, leisure, and experiences.

Whether you're treating someone special, planning a day out or simply want to explore somewhere new, the Love Cambridge Gift Card gives you the flexibility to spend it on something they'll love.

Available as a physical or digital gift card, it's a simple and flexible gift for birthdays, celebrations or just because! The gift card can only be spent in person at participating shops, restaurants and venues across Cambridge, making it a great way to support local businesses.

Love Cambridge Gift Cards can be purchased online or from the Gift Card kiosk located on the ground floor of the Grand Arcade.

With so many brilliant Cambridge businesses to discover, the Love Cambridge Gift Card is a great way to shop, eat, explore and enjoy the city.

Purchase a gift card in time for Christmas, visit **www.lovecambridge.com**

To enter

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer this question:

We recently launched the "your waste, your responsibility" campaign to spread awareness of the dangers of using rogue unlicensed waste carriers when disposing of your waste. What is the simple slogan at the heart of the campaign to help prevent waste being fly-tipped?

A) Bin it. Bag it. Forget it.

B) Book it. Bin it. Done.

C) Check it. Trust It. Prove it.

You can enter the competition online: **www.scambs.gov.uk**

Click 'Apply' and then 'Reader's competition'.

Don't have internet access?

You can enter by post. Send your name, address and telephone number, along with your answer to the question, to: South Cambs Magazine Competition, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, CB23 6EA

Closing date for entries is 5pm on Friday 8 January 2027.

The terms and conditions for our reader competition are available at **www.scambs.gov.uk/t-c** or can be requested by calling us. The winner will be notified in January and announced in the spring 2027 issue of South Cambs Magazine.