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ISSUE 3 WINTER 2008

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**Why
commute
when you
could be
working
right here?**



**How to
make
perfect
compost
for your
garden**

Our last eel catcher

Preserving an
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A message from Councillor Brian Ashton, Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council



At the beginning of the year, people tend to take stock of what they have done and what they want to do over the next twelve months. As a District Council we are no different.

Last year we began the process of laying the foundations for East Cambridgeshire to grow and succeed.

Importantly, we did this by listening to what the residents of the District want. Hence we decided to retain weekly waste collection, introduce plastic kerbside collections and opened a new car park which is already being used beyond our expectations.

We are looking to the future too by planning not just for next year or the year after but for the next 20 years. The Ely Masterplan will have an impact on the whole of East Cambridgeshire as we develop a clear, constructive and coherent view of the developments which will affect our futures.

Further planning work for the towns of Littleport and Soham will also help shape plans for the whole of the District.

This is not just about new homes or roads, it is about looking at how we live our lives and providing the services, infrastructure and facilities to meet these needs.

To fund this work we put together a budget for the year consisting of efficiency savings, government grants and council tax. We have striven to make significant savings over the last year to offer better value for money to enable the authority to set a reasonable council tax rate. However all this hard work was severely disrupted when the Government announced only a one per cent increase in the funding we receive despite the 1.8 per cent more homes in the District.

In spite of this major shortfall of resources, we are determined to make the best of it. To this end we have set a Council Tax increase which is still less than the rate of retail price inflation and therefore less than the increase in old age pensions.

The future for us is indeed bright and I assure you we will work harder and, hopefully, smarter to deliver the services you need and at a standard which is the best we can achieve.



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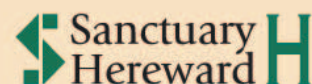
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©All rights reserved. No part of East Cambridgeshire magazine may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior permission in writing from the copyright owners. The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Publisher or of Cambridge Publishers Ltd. In accordance with Section 51(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 2000, notice is hereby given that East Cambridgeshire District Council adopted a new Code of Conduct for Members on 22nd May 2007. This code applies to all Councillors and Co-opted Members of the authority with voting rights and replaces the previous code adopted in March 2002. Furthermore a renewed Register of Members' Interests has been established. The Register of Members' Interests and copies of the new Code of Conduct are available for inspection by members of the public at the Council offices, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely between the hours of 8.45am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am to 4.30pm Friday. John Hill, Chief Executive, East Cambridgeshire District Council.



1880s...



...2008

The catcher in the fen

Every village and hamlet in the Fens used to have its own eel-catchers; they have been a vital part of the economic life of our region for centuries. Today, there is just one left working in the whole of East Cambridgeshire. Tony Taylorson reports

Meeting Peter Carter is, in many ways, like coming face to face with living history. The man is a bit of a legend. His family have caught eels for more than 200 years, and he still uses ancient methods to catch them. Even his car is half a century old... and, to be honest, I have no real idea how old he is.

To hear Peter's lore and his tales

of the past is like listening to the voice of a traditional fen lifestyle that, for most of us, is a mystery. And the man really knows his eels.

"They all come from near Bermuda in the Sargasso Sea," Peter explains. "They are tiny at the beginning, starting as small, flat fish less than an inch long. Then they get in the ocean and swim all the way over here."

The journey of the supposedly humble eel is an incredible one. They have travelled more than 2,000 miles by the time they get to the UK, and in that time they grow to become elvers or "glass eels" as they are more commonly known – and they are still only around two inches long when they reach our shores.

"Elvers are see-through, they

only mature and change colour as they settle down somewhere to eat. To be fair, the lifespan of an eel is a bit of an unknown. People think it is about 20 years, which they spend feeding, growing and getting fat. They also change colour, becoming yellowish – hence the name 'barley eel' – while growing up to about 80cm. Then it's off back to the Caribbean to spawn and then die.

"They all come from near Bermuda... they get in the ocean and swim all the way over here"

"On the journey back their gut dissolves, so they have to go back all the way on stored-up energy... their eyes get bigger, and they turn a silver colour. This is pretty much the basic story, but a lot of their lives still remain a bit of a mystery."

If you have dismissed eels as just a slimy-looking fish that sometimes ends up on a pub or restaurant menu, then think again – these fish can do some amazing things, as Peter describes.

"They are one of the very few water creatures who can travel across land. As long as they are travelling through something which is moist – like wet grass – they're fine. By using the moisture on their skins to breathe, some have been known to travel for miles. There's a loch in Scotland where eels have been found and caught but the nearest other water or river is over 30 miles away. It's an impressive feat."

"They travel in groups, hibernate in the mud during the winter and come out in spring. As someone once told me: 'When the willow comes to bud, the eels come out the mud.' While they are here, they are mostly hermaphrodites, although there are more male eels in the fens. In Somerset, though, if they are to be single sex, they become female. People think it's the diet."

And when it comes to eating, it appears that eels will eat just about anything. "Oh yeah," Peter smiles, "they'll eat up any old rubbish from the river. Live fish, dead animals, insects – the lot. Throw a dead bird into the river and they will come up and tear it to pieces."

Eel catching has been in Peter's family for more than two centuries. Based at Isleham Fen, they have witnessed the changing face of the fens. In recent times, Peter has witnessed the near-death of commercial eel fishing in the fens.

"In the 1980s you could catch, on a good night, about 150lb of eels... now, if I'm lucky, in season I'll catch about 50lb a month. The eel population just died in the 1980s. There are lots of theories – there always are – over-fishing,

disease, habitat destruction... and, to be fair, it is probably a bit of all of these. Also, as we've spread out across the land, reclaiming it from the Fens, we've filled in ditches and created flood banks which stop the spread of eels.

"But to me, the biggest change was when the river agency changed the sluice gates from wood to concrete. Now, a little elver can make its way through a gap if there is wood – but he isn't going to be able to get through a solid wall!"

"There was almost an instant drop in the number of eels. And it was a big drop too – people have estimated the population fell by 95 per cent nearly overnight. It has taken 20 years, but attempts are being made to put things right. The Environment Agency is putting special tubes and pipes at the gates now to help the elvers get through."

"There's also talk about bringing in quotas for the big trawlers out at sea which Hoover up a lot of the elvers before they reach us. This has to be done to give the numbers a chance to recover. Hopefully, this will work but only time will tell. The sad thing is you can't make a living by catching eels now."

Despite the cost of eels rocketing to £9 a kilo at Billingsgate market – "It's seen as a delicacy in fancy London restaurants" – Peter has had to find other ways of making money.

"I probably make just as much money now from making my eel hives and griggs [the traditional willow traps used to catch the eels] for people as ornaments and items of furniture as I do from catching and selling eels."

The hives and griggs are intricate works of art in their own right. Each taking up to six hours to make, they are designed to let eels swim in to get the bait but stop them then getting out. Based on a 1,000-year-old design, willow is far more effective than anything modern technology can come up with.

"The willow traps are far safer than anything else. Otters have been caught in the metal traps, but they ignore the willow ones."

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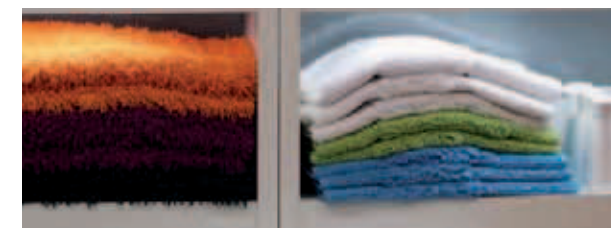
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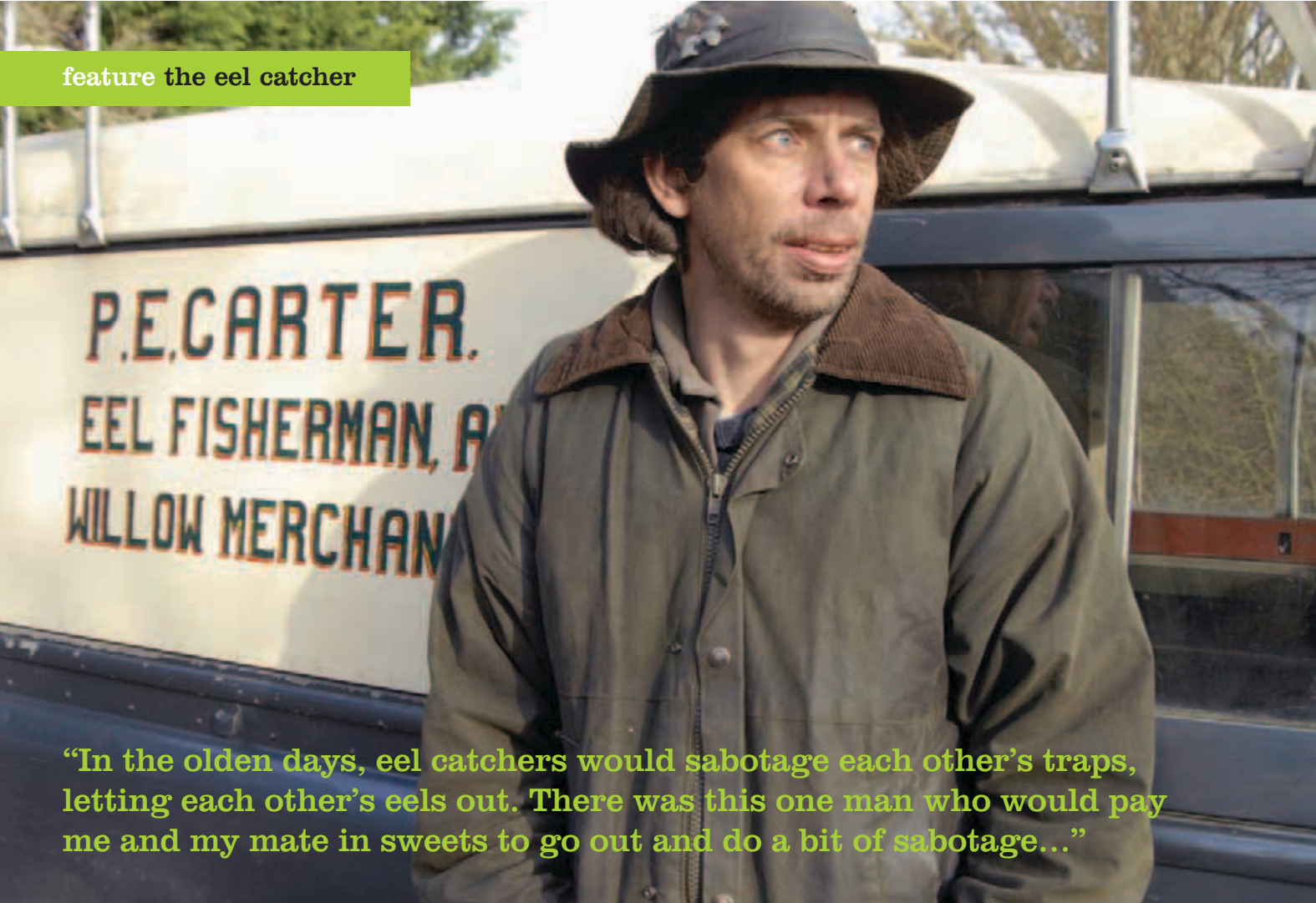
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“In the olden days, eel catchers would sabotage each other’s traps, letting each other’s eels out. There was this one man who would pay me and my mate in sweets to go out and do a bit of sabotage...”

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The key to catching your eel, says Peter, is to use the right bait. (Readers who are eating their breakfast might want to look away now.) He explains with relish: “The best bait, to be honest, is a dead animal, if they’ve been dead awhile – real smelly, like. Eels seem to love them. I go for any old roadkill that I can find on the side of the road. I set the traps in the evening on my boat and then go and check in the morning if I’ve had any luck. Eels tend to move with the tide, so full and new moon are the best time of the month to get a good catch.”

Peter won’t tell me where he fishes, for a simple reason – no eel catcher ever does.

“In the olden days, eel catchers would sabotage each other’s traps, letting each other’s eels out. When I was little, there was one man who would pay me and my mate in sweets to go and do a bit of sabotage. May not be fair... but I did get my share of sweets!”

As well as eel catching, willow craft and hedge trimming, Peter spends a lot of time now giving demonstrations on eel catching – in January, he even showed the Queen how eels are caught when she visited Welney.

“The events and talks are great. People think they know a bit about

the Fens and about eels, but they don’t really understand how they all inter-relate. I mean, Ely paid Peterborough in eels for the stones which built the cathedral – over 80,000. That’s a lot of eels, but then it is a big cathedral.”

Is there a future for eels as modern life continues to creep ever closer to their natural habitats? “Yeah, with more fens being reflooded, I think they stand a good chance. The numbers in Welney and Wicken are starting to grow. And all these recent floods are terrible for those people who have been affected, but for eels they’ve been life-savers, helping them to get past flood gates.”

As the last eel catcher, does Peter feel any responsibility for carrying on the tradition? Is he training any apprentices?

“Well... there is my daughter. She likes to make the traps, but isn’t so sure about catching the eels! But I am passing the tradition down, I am making sure someone knows the skills for the future. It’s up to her if she wants to use them.” ■

• On 3 May East Cambridgeshire District Council celebrates the humble eel with the fifth annual Eel Day in Ely. For more information, go to www.eastcambs.gov.uk

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Hands up all those who resolved to join a gym in the New Year. Hands up all those who are still going? Hmm... Not to worry. Here is some practical advice that we can all follow

Exercise with resolution!

January is long over – and so may be the enthusiasm which greeted the New Year and persuaded many of us that we should definitely get out of our comfy chairs and join a gym.

As many of us know from bitter experience, it is easy to join a gym with great excitement convinced that *this* time you *will* become the toned, super-healthy person you aspire to be. Six weeks later, and things have begun to slip.

No longer is the first thought

upon leaving work: “How quickly can I get to the aerobics class?” More likely, it’s now a case of: “Can I get back in time for *Corrie*?” We’ve all been there, and shaken our heads at our pathetic lack of motivation – but you don’t need to beat yourself up, as Phillip Turner, Leisure Team Leader at East Cambridgeshire District Council, explains: “People need to be realistic about what they can achieve, and to take their time. Joining a gym and



Gym staff can help you put together a satisfying exercise regime that's tailored to your current level of fitness

“The key is finding something which will inspire motivation”

paying money up front will not force you to exercise.

“For many, the biggest reason they’ve joined the gym in the first place is related to the guilt they may feel for the excesses that have been run up on the way to and during Christmas. People therefore feel the pressure to do something about all that turkey, mince pies and alcohol.

“I have heard that people who join the gym in February are much more likely to stick it out. I guess this is simply because the pressure is off.

“The key is finding something which *will* inspire motivation. So what is it that would make you think ‘I am going to stick with this no matter what, there is no excuse I can come up with for not going out and getting fit’?

“For some it’s about getting a programme at the gym which is realistic. For others, it’s finding the specific goal they need, whether it’s their overall health, their weight – or even going out on a date! Everyone has something that will fix their minds.

“Remember, the gym might not be the answer. All the local gyms in the area are really good and offer support and advice to help people stick at it – but for some, it just doesn’t work. If that’s you, then you need to try something different – maybe swimming,

badminton or some other sport you’ve probably never dreamed of playing. You don’t have to be a world-beater – you just have to enjoy it to keep playing.

“In East Cambridgeshire, we have eight public leisure centres that the District Council supports which offer all sorts of activities from aerobics to indoor football. Most importantly, there are people on hand to help and give advice.”

East Cambridgeshire District Council is doing its bit to help improve the health of its residents through its Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. This has identified five ways where the Council can improve people’s lives:

- Develop and raise the profile of sports activity throughout the District;
- Build stronger and safer communities by using sport to reduce anti-social behaviour;
- Target the health and wellbeing of local people by making them aware of the sporting activities in the district;
- Create the infrastructure needed to increase participation in sport and physical activity; and
- Give children and young people goals through sport.

Phillip and his team will spend the next year working with partners and community groups

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• Bar/social area

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to ensure the new plans are acted upon at ground level, with the help of a £30,000 potential grant from Sport England.

The Government's advice is that, for general health, adults should "achieve a total of at least 30 minutes a day of at least moderate intensity physical activity, on five or more days of the week." But, as Phillip recognises, it doesn't have to be in one go: "It's not about spending hours and hours in the gym, but about finding ways to build activities into our daily lives.

"Your exercise doesn't have to be sports-related. There are many other things you can do, such as: take a 10-minute walk after breakfast, lunch, and dinner to reach the goal of 30 minutes per day; park your car in the farthest spot when you are out shopping; wash your car by hand; and the old classic – take the stairs instead of the lift! These will all really make a difference.

"Remember, exercise won't make a difference alone. To really feel rejuvenated people need to look at their whole lifestyle. Ask

yourself whether you eat the right food. Do you have five portions of fruit and veg a day? Do you smoke or drink too much? All these factors affect the way you live your life.

"It's estimated that almost nine in 10 adults will be overweight or obese by 2050 and at risk of diabetes, cancer, heart disease and other health problems. This will cost society £50bn a year, according to a recent report by scientists commissioned by the Government. Put like that, motivation seems very easy to find. People need to stay active over the whole of their lives if they are to stave off the threat of obesity and killer diseases like heart disease, type-2 diabetes and cancer.

"I don't want to scare anyone because, from the evidence I have seen when people find an activity they enjoy which keeps them fit, the smile on their face will keep bringing them back. If you promise yourself to try something new or even old, I think people will find staying healthy becomes the natural process it should be."

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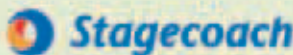
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How to make perfect compost

Recycling is about more than glass, paper, plastic and tins. In the battle to help the environment, home composting is vitally important

Composting is perhaps the one area of recycling which we can all do at home. And there are so many benefits... from increasing the number of nutrients in your soil and creating a flourishing garden, to preventing the build-up of methane gases in landfill, composting is just great for the planet." So says Martyn Stacey, Recycling Officer at East Cambridgeshire District Council.

Currently, around 23 per cent of households recycle their kitchen waste into compost. Of the 77 per cent who don't, many simply don't realise how to go about it.

Martyn explains: "Creating good compost is a bit like baking a cake.

You have to get the ingredients right, but also make sure you do the right preparation. First, you need to decide if you are going to buy a compost bin, make a container, or build your own separate heap. Whichever you choose, find a level, well-drained spot in a partially sunny site. This will allow excess water to drain while letting in worms, which are one of the key components of composting.

"Now to get the recipe right. It is important to get the right balance between 'green' and 'brown' waste. Green ingredients include vegetable peelings, fruit, teabags, plants and grass cuttings. These are really quick to rot and create nitrogen and moisture.

"Brown waste is made up of

fallen leaves, egg boxes and crumpled-up paper. These provide fibre and carbon to the mix, and create the air pockets you need in the mixture to help your ingredients break down into good compost.

"Without these air pockets, it can take a lot longer to create your compost. The rule is that, if it rots, it generally can be composted – for example, not many would have thought you can put vacuum dust in the compost bin!"

However, there are things that shouldn't go anywhere near your compost, as Martyn explains: "Never put any cooked food in your compost, or dairy products, diseased plants or perennial weeds. These will

simply attract rodents, will stink and ultimately produce poor compost.

"The balance between green and brown waste should be about 50:50. Then, over the next few weeks, give the mixture a stir with a garden fork – this lets more air into the mixture. If you get it right, in about six to nine months you will have a finished compost. It should be a dark, brownish-black, spongy texture."

But what happens if your compost mix doesn't quite work? Well, there are plenty of experts out there such as WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) who can help. WRAP works to encourage and help businesses and consumers to be more efficient in their use of materials and recycle more things more often. It aims to help minimise landfill, reduce carbon emissions and improve our environment. WRAP has a number of home compost advisers around the country. In the east of England we are lucky to have Gill Matheson, who has a few helpful tips: "Martyn is right when he says you should have an equal split between green and brown waste but sometimes you have to add a little extra of one or the other.

"For example, if you have too much green stuff, although the bacteria work quickly to break things down with all the excess nitrogen, the mixture heats up. This creates a bit of a soggy mess, which also smells. Importantly for your

compost, it has lost air, but you can easily restore the balance with pieces of newspaper.

"Also if you start to see bees and wasps hanging around your compost then there's a good chance your mixture is too dry. This is easily solved by adding some water."

As well as dispensing helpful hints for articles on composting, Gill spends a lot of her time talking directly to the public about the importance of getting rid of your organic waste at home rather than to landfill.

"The main problem with landfilling the green and brown waste – which you can easily compost at home – is the methane it creates. That is a potent greenhouse gas, 20 times worse than carbon dioxide.

"The message is getting out, though. In the last four years, more than a million homes have bought a compost bin. In the events, fairs and schools I visit, I am increasingly seeing people take the message in.

"Even if you have a small garden you can get a little compost bin to use. The key, as with all recycling, is even if you only do a little bit, it will make a difference. Composting is great because it is the most natural of all recycling. You are taking things that have had a useful life and putting them back to use when their life appeared to be over." ■

Want to buy a bin? Call Martin Stacey on 01353 665555 or go to www.eastcambs.gov.uk

The science of composting

Composting is a completely natural process which occurs as any organic matter decays.

Composting transforms raw organic waste materials into biologically stable substances. It is easier to handle than manure and other raw organic materials, stores well and, if made properly, is odour-free.

Bacteria are the primary decomposers. Then, as the compost matures, other organisms such as fungi and worms, woodlice and even slugs come in to refine it. They eventually produce a really fine substance that's nice to handle and easy to use in the garden. Plants love it, and it promotes plant growth and produces very healthy soil.

Composting is an ancient technology, and is referred to in both Roman texts and the Bible.

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Commuters setting out to Cambridge and London from Ely.

Every morning thousands of East Cambridgeshire residents commute out of the District to their jobs in the cities of Cambridge and London. Of those leaving by train, 60 per cent have a degree and 26 per cent have a postgraduate qualification. Can these talented people find satisfying, well-paid jobs in East Cambridgeshire? It is looking increasingly likely, as **Tony Taylorson** reports



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Here is a startling figure: the total number of jobs within East Cambridgeshire is forecast to rise by over 50 per cent by 2031. And this is not a figure which has been plucked out of thin air; it follows careful modelling by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), which has the role of promoting economic prosperity in the region.

EEDA has been looking at economic growth in the District and the housing and labour market outcomes that go with it. As developers seek to build cheaper properties to soak up demand driven out of housing hotspots like Cambridge, more and more skilled workers are expected to settle in the District. New businesses will be able to establish themselves here and find many of the staff they need living nearby.

Which begs a couple of questions. Firstly, how attractive is East Cambridgeshire for young businesses? And secondly, how will those new businesses be able to attract local people away from high-paid jobs in Cambridge or London? To find out, I spoke to four young and growing local businesses.

Richard Copping is a director of the web agency Isle Interactive. "Ely is a great place to work and our clients genuinely love coming here to meet us. In a short time we have managed to achieve a lot of success, and I would put some of that down to where we are based."

The company, launched by Richard and his business partner Iwan Moore, has grown in less than three years to be a leading web development agency with national and local clients including Warner Music, British

"We have been working with commercial agents in order to encourage developers to come and build business parks"

Interactive Media Association and Cambridge City Council.

Richard realises that companies like his may be hard to find out about for newly-arrived residents looking for local work: "One of the problems I think is that people don't realise the companies which are on their own doorstep."

Iwan agrees: "I think everyone has this idea that East Cambridgeshire has a bit of manufacturing, some shops and a couple of business parks. However I'm not too sure that anyone really knows who is on them or what they are achieving. In reality there are a lot of innovative companies based in Ely and beyond who can benefit from the recent influx of new homes and wider growth."

Richard continues: "We all have the responsibility to tell our stories better. This may be down to the fact that a lot of small companies don't have the time to promote themselves, but once people realise there are companies who have national – and in some cases international – clients in the same city they live in, it becomes another reason to stay in the District to work. What we need is some sort of forum so these new and innovative companies can begin to talk to each other and spread the message."

Iwan agrees, but with a slight twist: "I would like to see some sort of group come together, maybe a web based network, but one where you have to prove yourself to get on it – like an East Cambridgeshire top 50. This can only help to improve local connections and then get the message out that the District is more than just a series of market towns."

"This is fundamental to all our futures. Why should a local or regional company choose to employ a firm from Ely or Soham to do work for them when they can have a London-based agency with a big reputation working on their behalf instead? We all know

we can offer a better service for them, we just need a platform to prove it."

One challenge companies like Isle Interactive have to overcome is trying to find the right office space. With a limited number of spaces for start-ups, that isn't always easy.

East Cambridgeshire District Council has tried to tackle this last problem through two centres created especially for new companies. Espace North and South together have 48 units for start-ups and offer facilities such as IT, meeting rooms and business advice.

"Our aim is to help companies grow from the day they start until they have outgrown us," explains Darren Hill, the Council's Economic Development Officer. "There have been some real success stories of companies that have taken space at the centres, expanded rapidly and then have taken business premises elsewhere within the District. Two recent examples include Asynt, who work in chemical synthesis and are now based in Isleham, and Gregory Fryer Associates, regulatory and clinical consultants, now based on the Cambridgeshire Business Park in Ely."

"We have seen the demand for office space grow, especially over the last couple of years. For example, during 2006/07, 3,350 businesses were officially recorded as VAT-registered in East Cambridgeshire; this is up from 3,210 in the previous year. Clearly we are doing something right. The challenge is to make sure there is the platform in place to grow."

"We have been working with commercial agents in order to encourage developers to come and build business parks here. It is clear the District is proving popular with business for a variety of reasons: its close proximity to Cambridge and London, the fact that the area is an affordable and attractive place to work, and it has an ever-growing and skilled workforce as the population here continues to rise."

One of those companies taking advantage of the facilities at espace is Synergy Financial, a recruitment company specialising in financial services and run by Richard Smith.

"We have been going for about 17 months and are one of those companies that have grown out of a home study and moved into the espace centre," says Richard. "We see it as a perfect stepping stone as it allows us the space to grow, has the right infrastructure we need and perhaps most importantly for



Iwan Moore, left, and Richard Copping of Ely's Isle Interactive.

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Darren Hurrell of
Addictive Interactive.

my business it is really convenient for the train station. We work with a number of financial institutions in the City and being able to travel to see them in just over an hour means that our location is almost as good as being in the City itself.

"In my opinion, growth in East Cambridgeshire can only be a good thing. It will bring more skilled people to the area. They will begin to walk and cycle to work rather than spend hours on the train or in the car. I am really positive about the future, there are a lot of opportunities for start-ups if they work hard and smart."

This positive vision for the future and belief in the convenience of East Cambridgeshire is borne out by another start-up working from the space centre.

Addictive Interactive is the brainchild of Darren Hurrell, and it builds social networks on the web for a youth-orientated market. The company is currently being mentored by Walter Herriot – the Cambridge-based business guru – as it attempts to build on its early successes.

Darren comments: "I have been born and bred in East Cambridgeshire so setting up my

business here was a given. It is a cheaper location than Cambridge but still feels the ripple effect from the waves created by the various science and technology parks in the city. Cambridge is such a draw for many people, but for me it is somewhere that I can tap into, where there are opportunities and knowledge waiting to be tapped. As a business based entirely on new technology, I need to make as much use as possible from these connections.

"If I had one wish, though, it would be for companies based here to shout more about what they do. If those who commuted to London realised the opportunities that were within minutes of their front door, would they make that journey? There is a feeling that we are not entrepreneurial enough around here, but I just don't agree. I think there are companies here who are pushing the boundaries, we just need to let people know what we're doing."

The key then appears to be in luring those who have experience and skills back to work in the place they leave so early in the morning, as Darren Hill recognises: "Research tells us that nearly 50 per cent of the working population within East Cambridgeshire commutes out of the District every day to work. What we always suspected, but had confirmed last year, is how highly skilled this cross-section of the population is.

"Clearly we all need to convince them to stay, but perhaps it is not about money or a career opportunity that will win them over. Maybe it is a lifestyle choice.

If you are not commuting to London on the train but are living and working in the same town, you can free up three hours a day for your own leisure. That for many can be a big incentive to either set up in business or find a new job here."

As James Stevens of Cambridge

Richard Smith of Synergy Financial, a recruitment firm based at the e-space business centre.



James Stevens of
Cambridge Commodities,
based at Lancaster Way
business park.

Commodities, based at the Lancaster Way Business park near Ely, also recognises, wages are no longer an issue in recruiting staff. "We supply the ingredients which will eventually end up in many independent health food stores and health food chains such as Holland and Barrett. To do that and strike the right deal at the right time requires skill and experience. These types of salespeople and technicians expect national salaries,

I would say we pay roughly the same salaries as you would find in London, give or take travelling expenses. We have to, in order to get the best.

"From when I started the company in the late 1990s, I have seen the quality of applicants for jobs here improve immensely. So the right people are out there and growth in the District can only improve the situation.

"I would agree with everything I

"I wish companies based here would shout more about what they do. If those who commuted to London realised the opportunities that were within minutes of their front door, would they make that journey?"

have heard so far about why people locate here. The natural place for a business such as mine is the A14 corridor, especially with the close links to Felixstowe docks, but I don't want to go there. I like it here, my staff like being here, and my clients are easily accessible. The key for the future will not so much be in infrastructure but actually how we make better use of migrant workers.

"They are already bringing a huge range of skills to the area and as a businessman I think the key to our future growth is how we utilise this strength and ensure we are able to reinvest our wealth back into the community."

Perhaps the last word should go to Darren Hill: "There are going to be a lot of challenges for East Cambridgeshire in the future and we need to tackle these issues. We have started to plan for the future to get the infrastructure and business opportunities in the right

physical spaces, and we are looking at leisure and retail provision. I can promise you the District Council takes the role very seriously and we are all working very hard to get this right.

"Perhaps ultimately we have to make a much bigger deal about the companies on our own doorstep. There are firms based in East Cambridgeshire who have national and international clients, who are leaders in their field or have the potential to take the best on throughout the country – and our business rates are more competitive than in Cambridge. So perhaps by telling their stories, by creating better networks for these companies to come together and feed off each other's ideas we can create a prosperous future for us all."

• Contact Darren Hill on 01353 665555 or just go to www.eastcamb.gov.uk/business

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Planning your garden

Fresh from planting trees, hedge trimming and maintaining their tools, **Spencer** and **Emma** from the Parks and Open Spaces team at East Cambridgeshire District Council are back to explain what you need to do now to get your garden blooming later this year

Winter is the time of year when your garden can look at its sorriest, but there's work to be done out there! The key to unlocking your garden's box of tricks is to plan now for the spring and summer.

To explain what we mean we have come to the Ely garden of Lucie Turnell, who works for the Council. The garden is fairly large and well established, but it gives us the scope to explain what you need to be

doing to get ready for the warmer months. We will take you on a journey around the garden; explain what to do with particular plants and what to do with areas of your garden that you had given up on.

Firstly, it is important that you decide what sort of garden you want. Speaking to Lucie it is clear that she wants something that looks good but doesn't require a lot of work, and has somewhere to entertain with some extra seating.

Let us start with the herb section, which many people have in their garden. These are mostly Mediterranean plants, and so need full sun and good drainage. Lucie has her herbs in pots on the patio. She has a mixture of rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*), sage (*Salvia officinalis*), chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) and oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) among many others. Herbs require very little

maintenance, just a light trim occasionally through the year to prevent woody growth. Now is a good time to top up potted plants with compost, or mulch and add a slow-release fertilizer.

Before Lucie ventures beyond the patio, she could take the opportunity now to give it a good clean. Get a pressure-washer or a stiff brush to get rid of as much moss and mildew as possible. Sweep behind the pots, and collect and compost dead leaves (see page 12 for more information) as they can make patios slippery and be a breeding ground for pests and diseases. Remember - sorting it out now means less work later.

As we enter the garden, the main feature is obviously the well-established walnut tree (*Juglans*). Trees can be a huge benefit to a

garden, but if they are not maintained they can create problems. In this case the tree is casting a lot of shade across the whole garden, which can wreak havoc with the lawn. And a close inspection showed that the lack of light has indeed allowed moss to take hold and is preventing the grass from getting a good foothold. We would recommend that Lucie gets in a qualified tree surgeon to cut back some of the branches, which should bring a lot of light back into her garden. With established trees like this never try to do pruning yourself; always bring in an expert.

It is clear that the lawn in this garden could do with a really good rake, which for those getting into a fitness drive for the New Year is great for the stomach muscles. Although this will lead to bald

patches in the lawn as the moss is removed, top dressing with the correct seed mixture will soon make it as good as new. For Lucie's lawn, the correct seed mix will be one that is shade-tolerant. Edging a lawn enhances the appearance and creates definition.

Lucie wants her garden to look good, while also being fairly low-maintenance



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Leaving the lawn and heading for the borders, we come across a hydrangea. In full bloom these can have large pink, purple or white flowers. At this time of year you should be deadheading the old flowers.

In the corner of nearly every garden there is always a really dark spot where the sun doesn't reach and plants struggle to survive, and this garden is no different. You don't have to leave it empty, just look for some good shade-loving plants, something like *Aucuba*, *Camellia japonica*, dogwood (*Cornus canadensis*), *Fatsia japonica* and *Mahonia aquifolium* can work really well and provide winter interest.

A key part of your planning should be based on where the sun is going to fall at different times of the day. For example, to make the most of the area that catches the evening sun, set up some benches and other seats there and plant scented plants, such as jasmine, nearby. You also need to think about where the sun is going fall at the middle of the day, when it will be hottest, and in the morning. For example, plants such as *Camellia japonica* which flower in the early spring are best sited away from the early morning sun, because it can scorch the flowers if there has been a frost. And shade-loving plants hate being exposed to the midday sun.

In general, this time of year is a good time to make notes or take photographs of where bulbs and herbaceous perennials are, as they will be just starting to appear. You can use your notes later on in the season to identify vacant planting opportunities.

Looking back at the borders, we come across several more interesting plants including a holly tree, which is slightly overgrown. In this case, we recommend that Lucie trim off the bottom branches; this not only creates space underneath where other plants can be added, it helps prevent the lawn edge being overshadowed. Holly does re-grow from the main stem, but slowly.

Other plants like weigela, which has lovely pale pink or ruby red bellflowers, do best when pruned hard annually. The flower heads of *Sedum spectabile* can be left through the winter for structure and colour but now they need removing to allow the new growth to come through.

Working our way round the garden, we can see some *Mahonia*, *Fatsia japonica*, Solomon's seal and *Heuchera*; these are good to grow together as they are all at their best at different times of the year.

Another job Lucie could do is clear the fallen leaves lying on the surface of the borders and add them to a brand-new compost heap. The ideal site for this would be at the bottom of Lucie's garden, behind the shed.

When you plan a garden, think about how you want to enjoy the space. For example, there is a prime spot in this garden to put in a new bench to get a fresh view of the whole area. A simple bench positioned on paving and backed by trellis with passion flower (*Passiflora*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) growing through it to hide the imposing shed behind would work wonders here, and give Lucie and her husband a great place to sit back and enjoy the visual treat arising from their endeavours. Doing hard landscaping work now means less of a disturbance to plants in the spring and summer, when you want to enjoy the garden.

Now is also the right time of the year to check your climbing plants. The winter winds may have loosened the plants' grip on the trellis or wall so make sure everything is OK and re-tie them if necessary. Check plants have not extended their growth into anything such as the soffits or guttering, as they can either cause damage or block waterways.

So you have trimmed, tidied and composted. Now look at your garden again, take stock of what is there, when existing plants will flower and what could work best in the spaces. Armed with this information you are ready to set off to your local garden centre in the spring to buy the seeds to make your garden come alive.

Early spring is when you can start to think about what annual plants you want in your garden, and what colour themes you want to adopt.

What the team have been up to this winter

The Parks and Open Spaces team at East Cambridgeshire District Council have been busy this winter with a vast array of jobs. From cutting back shrubs to getting on with the general maintenance jobs around the District, there has been a lot to do.

Footpath edges have been tidied, and hedgerows cut back. New trees have been planted to replace old, dead and diseased specimens, as well as any vandalised trees, and existing ones have been checked.

The team have also been planting spring bulbs and preparing new planting schemes for the summer.

Most garden centres will have a vast array of seeds to choose from, a hardy annual seed variety is a good place to start with if you're a beginner. These will give you colour and interest right through the summer till the first frosts.

If you choose direct-sow varieties you won't need to start the seeds off in a greenhouse; just make sure the area you want to sow is prepared well, with any weeds and big stones removed, and give it a rake-over to level the surface off before you sow.

Sow in rows so that, once the seeds have germinated, you will then be able to tell which are your hardy annual seedlings and which are the weeds. It may look a little regimented to start with but don't worry; once you start thinning out the weak seedlings, it will take on that natural, self-sown look.

For a full sowing guide check your seed packet. If you want to get the best return from your investment in seeds, collect the new seeds from your plants in late summer and store them in a cool, dry place ready to plant out the following year. ■

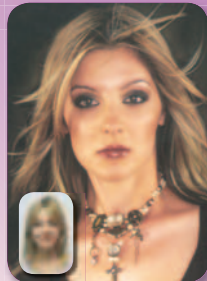


feature gardening

Above: Winter is a good time to clean the patio with a hose and sweep up fallen leaves. Left: Tidying up the herb pots. Below: Raking the moss out of the lawn.

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Left: Skating match at Earith, 1956. Above: Bog Oak dug up near Stretham, 1956. Below far left: Royal sturgeon caught in Hundred Foot River, 1906. Below and left: Flooded houses at Hillrow, Haddenham, March 1947. Photographs by kind permission of Ely Museum and Mike Petty. Copies of these pictures can be seen in Cambridgeshire Libraries' Cambridgeshire Collection and Ely Museum. Mike Petty lectures on the Fens to groups all around the region. Visit his website at www.cambridgeshirehistory.com/MikePetty



It is hard to imagine how much the fenland area has changed in its turbulent history; we take for granted the current views and landscape, but these images from the past reveal a very different land to the one we see today, Geoff Durrant writes.

Many thousands of years ago, the East Anglia fenland basin was a dense forest of gigantic oak trees. Approximately 7,000 years ago a rise in sea level relative to land level caused the rivers to back up and flood the land. Consequently the trees died and then fell into the silt

of the forest floor. Covered in stagnant water lacking in oxygen, the dead trees were preserved.

These great oaks are now often found by farmers, brought to the surface by a combination of deeper ploughing and peat shrinkage, the latter being a result of the drying of the Fens causing the peat to oxidise and disappear. A metal post (rumoured to have come from the Crystal Palace) was sunk into the ground at Holme Fen in 1852 with its top level with the surface.

There is now four metres of that post showing, demonstrating how

much the peat has shrunk down as a result of drainage. It is only in the relatively recent history of the Fens that drainage has been successful and created the type of landscape we can currently enjoy. People often don't understand what the fen environment was like before the land was drained in the medieval period, and more extensively in the 17th century.

This huge region, which extended from Cambridge to Peterborough and almost up to Lincoln, should rather be seen as two areas – one of freshwater marsh and the other of

tidal mudflats – which varied according to the season. Broadly speaking, in winter, most of it would be too wet to walk on or exploit, but in summer much of it would dry out and form extremely rich grazing meadows.

It was this change throughout the seasons that allowed communities to adapt; life was unbelievably harsh, yet somehow the inhabitants learned to use the resources available to them and survive in a bogland landscape that would have been unique in England.

Life in the Fens spans the

centuries from Bronze Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon times, when habitation was limited to isolated islands and a wide silt ridge formed around The Wash. Between the 11th and 13th centuries, a gradual reclamation of land took place by building banks as flood protection.

The Norman invasion proved just how challenging the Fens could be. Hereward the Wake was an 11th century Anglo-Saxon leader who led resistance to the Norman conquest, and was consequently labelled an outlaw. According to legend, Hereward's base was the Isle of Ely,

and for some years after the invasion he was still able to hold out against the might of the Norman armies as they were simply unable to navigate the impenetrable territory of the Fens for several years.

In 1071, however, he and many others made a desperate stand on the Isle of Ely against the conqueror's rule. Some say that the Normans made a frontal assault, aided by a huge, mile-long timber causeway, but that this sank under the weight of armour and horses. It is said that the Normans, probably led by one of William's knights

named Belasius (Belsar), then bribed the monks of the island to reveal a safe route across the marshes, resulting in Ely's capture. Legend has it that Hereward escaped with some of his followers into the wild fenland, and continued his resistance.

By the early 17th century, economic speculators looking for new lands turned their attention to the peat fens in the south and the remaining undrained silt fens further north. Under the guidance of the fourth Earl of Bedford, the speculators – or "adventurers" as

“Legend has it that Hereward escaped with some of his followers into the wild fenland, and continued his resistance”

Winter fun for the family

Whether you're looking for museums, art galleries, horse racing or ornamental gardens, East Cambridgeshire has some great days out to offer this winter, with plenty to keep the whole family entertained



Above: Rod peelers at work in Ely, c.1904. Below left: Unloading osiers near the site of today's Babylon Bridge, close to the Cathedral. Below: Drainage mills in Soham, photographed for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society Photographic Record, 1914.



they were known – started work on the systematic draining of the Fens. Experienced engineers were commissioned, such as the Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden, who undertook the greatest scheme, constructing the Old and New Bedford Rivers between Earith and Denver.

Drainage schemes continued but, unexpectedly, the land began to shrink at an alarming rate as the soil dried out. As the level of the land dropped, water could no longer drain into the rivers, which were by now higher than the fields. Wind pumps were introduced to draw the water off the land, but it was not until steam power was introduced in the 1820s that the Fens were completely drained.

Throughout these times, local opposition was considerable as the systematic drainage of the land

threatened the local fishing and wildfowling traditions of the fen-dwellers. There were riots and protests, with some damage being caused to the new sluices and drains, and the fierce resistance and destruction of the drainage works earned the protesters the nickname "Fen Tigers".

Some of the traditional crafts considered threatened were reed-harvesting, wildfowling and catching eels, which were more abundant in the Fens than any other part of the country. Wildfowling was so important that the fen hunters developed a particular gun to catch as many ducks as possible, known as the punt gun. Ducks would always group together on open water, and if the wildfowlers shot one duck the remainder would fly away. This problem existed for many years, until the punt gun was

invented. The punt gun is basically a very large shotgun fixed along the middle of the punt with the business end sticking out of the bow.

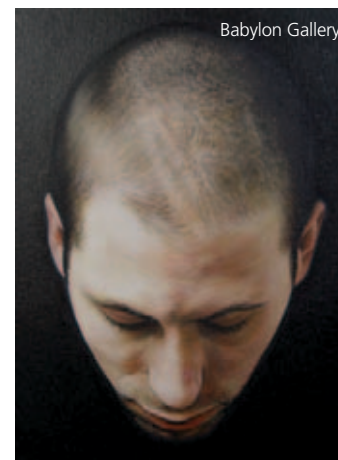
The wildfowler laid low in the bottom of the punt and paddled very slowly towards a group of ducks. When in line he fired the gun, and the spread of shot killed a number of ducks before they had time to fly away. It was not unknown for more than a dozen ducks to be killed in one go by this means. This practice is now illegal.

Anyone doubting whether global warming exists only has to look at the history of fenland winter weather to get their answer. Every year the waters would freeze and this clearly gave the fen-dwellers another problem – how to move from one place to another, as their boats would be useless. This led to another ingenious method of

transport – ice-skating. The Fens would freeze so hard and for so long, this would be the only way to move around away from home, and fen skaters were renowned for their skills on ice.

Also, great races would be held, a tradition that has been re-enacted in various parts of the Fens until recently, as winters are now rarely cold enough for the waters to be frozen hard and long enough for skating.

Today, the area that was once flooded fenland provides some of the most fertile arable land in the country. Its very existence, however, can only be described as delicate, requiring constant careful management to minimise land erosion and ensure that the water, which nature constantly tries to push back over the land, remains in the drains and rivers. ■



Babylon Gallery

Ornithology by Lyndall Phelps. This includes life-size photographs and works on paper relating to Lyndall's residency with the Natural History Museum and its extensive specimen collections and unique coding systems.

Entry is free and the gallery is open Tuesday – Sunday. For further details visit:

www.babylongallery.co.uk

Huntingdon Racecourse

Voted Best Small Racecourse in the South Midlands and East Anglia by the Racegoers Club, Huntingdon Racecourse is an intimate racing venue with an atmosphere all of its own. The course is less than five minutes from Huntingdon and is set in the Cambridgeshire countryside.

Home to 19 Jump race meetings and two Arab meetings, the racing calendar spans nine months of the year.

There are races on: Thursday 21 February, Sunday 2 March, Wednesday 12 March and Monday 24 March (Easter Monday).

Prices begin at £15 for the Main Enclosure, with the Picnic Enclosure (only open weekends/evenings and Bank Holidays) costing £8. Children under 16 are free when accompanied by an adult and parking is also free. For further information contact the course on 01480 453373 or at

www.huntingdon-racecourse.co.uk



Huntingdon Racecourse



Ickworth House

Ickworth House, Park and Gardens

This National Trust property was conceived in 1795 by the eccentric fourth Earl of Bristol to display his collections. The 'Georgian Italianate palace' has an amazing central rotunda and curved corridors housing paintings by Titian and Gainsborough as well as impressive silver collections.

There are acres of parkland and woodland on waymarked walks to explore as well as a play area, family cycle route and 'trim trail'.

Alternatively you can relax in the tranquil gardens and historic Pleasure Grounds before popping to the new restaurant and shop.

The gardens are open all year round and the house itself reopens on 15 March.

Admission prices: Gift Aid Admission (Standard Admission prices in brackets): £8.30 (£7.50), child £3.30 (£3), family £19.80 (£18). Groups (12+) (£6.90). Park & garden only: £4.20 (£3.80), child £1.10 (£1), family £9.50 (£8.60). Contact details: 01284 735270 or www.ickworth@nationaltrust.org.uk

Ely Museum

Ely Museum is a bright and friendly local history museum located in the Bishop's Gaol in the centre of Ely.

The Museum is the history centre for the Isle of Ely and the Fens and it takes you on a journey through time from prehistory to the 20th century.

Displays include original prison cells, fossils that can be touched, Roman remains and an archive film of the Fens including punt guns and eel catching.

A museum guide, children's guide to the galleries and a gift shop make this an ideal destination for all of the family.

Winter opening times are Monday-Saturday 10.30am-4pm (closed on Tuesdays except for school and group bookings) and Sunday 1pm-4pm. Admission costs £3 for adults, concessions £2.50 and accompanied children get in for free.

For further information call 01353 666655 or visit

www.elymuseum.org.uk



Ely Museum



Fitzwilliam Museum

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses world-class collections of works of art and antiquities spanning centuries and civilisations.

Highlights include masterpieces of painting from the 14th century to the present day, drawings and prints, sculpture, furniture, armour, pottery and glass, oriental art, illuminated manuscripts, coins and medals and antiquities from Egypt, the Ancient Near East, Greece, Rome and Cyprus.

From 29 January until 11 May there will be an exhibition entitled: 'Made for Export: Chinese Nineteenth-Century Flower Drawing', which will display beautiful drawings from the first half of the 19th century which were left to the museum in 1973 by The Hon Major Henry Rogers Broughton, second Lord Fairhaven.

The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday 10am to 5pm and Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays 12 to 5pm (closed Good Friday).

Admission is free but donations are welcome. For more information go to:

www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk or call 01223 332900.

RAF Witchford Display of Memorabilia

A display of memorabilia to honour the men and women who served at RAF Witchford and Mepal Airfields during World War II.

Construction began at RAF Witchford in 1942 and it was officially opened in June 1943. The airfield had three runways and housed Wellingtons, Stirlings and Lancasters. A total of 99 bombers dispatched on operations from Witchford were lost, eight being Stirlings and 91 Lancasters. The airfield was not used again for flying and closed in the spring of 1946.

The display, on Lancaster Way business park, is open 10:00 – 16:30 weekdays throughout the year, except Bank Holidays. Telephone 01353-666666/664934 for more information.



February 2008

	Location	Time	Event
21st	Mepal	Village Hall	20.00-22.00 An Evening with Marvyn Stutter
22nd	Ely	Maltings	20.00-01.00 Boogie Night
	Ely	Cathedral	19.30-21.00 Organ Extravaganza with Carlo Curley
23rd	Ely	Market Square	09.00-16.00 Farmers' Market & Craft/Collectables
	Tinkers Drove		10.00 onwards East Cambs Rambler Group: Walk 8 miles (contact 01353 741240)
24th	Ely	Maltings	11.00-16.00 Wedding Fair (Fashion Shows at 12 noon and 14.00)
	Ely	Cathedral	18.00-20.00 Film: 'An Inconvenient Truth' by Al Gore
27th	Ely/Little Thetford	Cathedral West Door	10.30 onwards East Cambs Rambler Group: Walk 4 miles (contact 01353 861205)
	Ely	Cathedral	19.00-21.00 Ely After Dark: Evening Tour of the Cathedral with a Monastic Supper
29th	Ely	Larkfields/High Barns	17.30-23.00 6th Elysian Beer Festival
	Ely	Cathedral	19.30-21.00 Desert Island Discs by Director of Music Paul Trepte

March 2008

	Location	Time	Event
1st	Ely	Larkfields/High Barns	11.00-22.00 6th Elysian Beer Festival
	Ely	Cathedral	19.30-21.00 Ely Sinfonia Presents 'Music of the Nations' (Elgar, Dvorak, Sibelius, Borodin)
2nd	Ely	Maltings	10.30-16.30 Galleon Antique Fair
5th	Ely	Maltings	TBC Blood Donor Sessions
6th	Ely	Ely Museum	19.30-21.00 Fenland Funerals: A Talk by Reg Brown – Friends of Ely Museum
7th	Ely	Cathedral	19.30-21.00 Concert: The King's School Ely presents...
8th	Ely	Market Square	09.00-16.00 Farmers' Market & Craft/Collectables
	Ely	Cathedral	17.30-18.15 Celebration Evensong (200th Anniversary of Dean Merrivale)
14th	Ely	Cathedral	13.10-14.00 Lunchtime Concert : Concertante Rotterdam

15th	Ely	Maltings	20.00-Midnight	The Meeting Point's Singles Disco
	Ely	Ely Cathedral	19.30-21.30	Concert: Ein Deutsches Requiem by Johannes Brahms
19th	Ely	Maltings	TBC	Blood Donor Sessions
	Ely	Cathedral	18.30-19.30	Concert Cathedral Choirs: Stainer's Crucifixion
	Hundred Foot Bank	Oxlode	10.00 onwards	East Cambs Rambler Group: Walk 4 miles (contact 01353 741240)
21st	Ely	Maltings	20.00-01.00	Boogie Night
22nd	Ely	Market Square	09.00-16.00	Farmers' Market & Craft/Collectables
23rd	Ely/Little Downham	Ely City Rugby Grounds	11.00 onwards	East Cambs Rambler Group: Walk 5.5 miles (contact 01353 861205)
28th	Ely	Cathedral	13.10-14.00	Lunchtime Concert: Lincoln Singers
29th	Ely	Cathedral	13.10-14.00	Lunchtime Concert: The Suffolk Singers

April 2008

	Location	Time	Event	
6th	Ely	Maltings	10.30-16.30	Galleon Antique Fair
11th	Ely	Maltings	20.00-01.00	Boogie Night
12th	Ely	Market Square	09.00-16.00	Farmers' Market & Craft/Collectables
	Ely	Maltings	20.00- Midnight	The Meeting Point's Singles Disco
16th	Ely	Maltings	TBC	Blood Donor Sessions
	Witchford	Witchford Church	10.00 onwards	East Cambs Rambler Group: Walk 5 miles (contact 01353 741240)
26th	Ely	Market Square	09.00-16.00	Farmers' Market & Craft/Collectables

Find out more about all these diary dates at www.eastcambs.gov.uk/tourism



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Transformers is a youth-led creative skills programme with Arts Award accreditation for young people aged 11-16 in East Cambridgeshire, delivered in youth clubs in Ely and Littleport. Both term-time and summer programmes. To find out how to get involved see www.eastspace.net/transformers or telephone Louise at ADeC on 01353 616186.

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We're working hard to keep council tax bills down!

The recent Government Revenue Grant settlement has led many local authorities around the country to revise their financial plans for the forthcoming year. In East Cambridgeshire, the District Council had expected to have a 2.5 per cent increase in the grant it receives from the Government. This would have been in line with inflation and the growth in the number of houses in the District. Instead, the Council has received increases of just one per cent for next year with slightly smaller increases in each of the following two years. This creates a budget shortfall for 2008/9 of just over £100,000 rising to £300,000 2010/11 (for full details of the Council's financial position, please see the report opposite).

In order to try and cope with this cut in funding, officers at the District Council have proposed nearly £500,000 of efficiency

savings to help fund recycling programmes, homelessness initiatives and to pay for the statutory services. Further measures to balance the budget have been proposed including an increase in council tax of 3.72 per cent. The average tax charge means in real terms an increase of £4.50 next year for a band D council taxpayer. This works out as less than 9p a week. Councillor Brian Ashton, Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council, said: "Despite the appalling settlement announced last month by central Government, the District Council has decided to set a council tax increase which is below retail price index. "It is slightly higher than the rate we had planned but we feel it allows us to continue to offer excellent value for money, provide high quality services and promote the well being of the whole community."



Plastic bottles recycled at your doorstep!

From 1 April, households throughout the District will be able to leave their plastic bottles out for collection. Residents will be given special bags to put their "washed and squashed" bottles in to be taken away. These will then be collected along with other recyclables including organic waste, cardboard and glass. The plastic bottles will be delivered to a sorting facility where they're separated into the different polymer types. The bottles are washed and granulated then the flakes are dried before being made into new products. Recycled plastic is used in many products, such as carrier bags, bin liners, clothing and furniture.

Date set for Mereham decision

After months of legal argument, impassioned debate and local campaigning, the appeal against a proposed 5,000 home development in East Cambridgeshire has come to an end. The Planning Inspectorate Inquiry over Mereham, which is vehemently opposed by East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, began on Tuesday 9 October at the Arkenhall Centre in Haddenham and officially ended on Tuesday 8 January with

closing arguments from both sides. At the end of the hearing, Planning Inspector Richard Ogier advised the parties that he would be sending his final report to the Secretary of State the week commencing the 21 April. Since then, the Planning Inspectorate confirmed that it expects the Secretary of State to deliver her decision on or before 9 September. In his summing up, Simon Bird, representing East Cambridgeshire District and Cambridgeshire

County Councils, said: "It will be obvious from all the evidence you have heard during the inquiry that existing services, facilities and infrastructure within the locality are under stress. "They should not be expected to bow under the pressure of the appellant's opportunistic and unjustified scheme, nor should the local communities have been subjected to the stress and cost of resisting those proposals. "The Mereham proposal is misconceived and should never have been pursued."

Open for business and filling up fast

The new Angel Drove car park in Ely is now open for business to cater for commuters travelling out of the District while also providing a park and ride service on Saturdays. The new facility on the Cambridge Business Park will hold 205 cars to relieve the strain on the city centre car parks and free spaces for shoppers, visitors and workers. The car park will be the only public car park in Ely where there will be a charge, which is £2.50 per day or £11 for a week. The facility has been designed to be safe and secure with CCTV cameras and street lighting.

Council finances for the year ended 31 March 2007



The Revenue Account presents the costs of running Council services between April 2006 and March 2007 and where the money came from to finance these costs along with the impact on the Council's reserves.

	Gross Exp £'000s	Gross Inc £'000s	Net Exp £'000s
Central services to the public	4,955	4,171	784
Cultural and related services	1,795	411	1,384
Environmental Services	4,811	697	4,114
Planning & Econ Development	3,236	1,723	1,513
Transport	577	35	542
Housing	12,892	11,765	1,127
Corporate & Democratic Core	2,490	739	1,751
Net Cost of services	30,756	19,541	11,215
Less: Interest receivable			(698)
Less: Appropriations and other internal accounting			(1,290)
Amount to be met from Government grants and local taxpayers			9,227

Financed by:	
Revenue support grant	(983)
Business Rates	(5,091)
Council Tax	(3,225)
Total Income	(9,299)
Net General Fund Surplus for the year	(72)
General Fund at the end of March 2006	(1,508)
General Fund at the end of March 2007	(1,580)

Balance Sheet

What the Council owned and was owed on 31 March 2007	£'000s
Buildings and Land	14,310
Stock	55
Cash in bank and Investments	7,272
Money owed to the Council	2,433
Money owed by the Council	(11,408)
	12,662

Financed by	
Non distributable reserves	7,983
Distributable reserves (*)	4,679
	12,662

(*) Distributable reserves comprise the following balances:

General Fund Balance:	
Surplus for the year	72
Balance at March 2006	1,508
Useable capital receipts	2,918
Other reserves	181
	4,679

The Council has a duty under legislation to maintain a prudent level of general reserves. The Council has targeted this level to be around £1.7 million. The balance of £1.58 million is, therefore, slightly lower than this objective. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy provides for reserves to be brought up to the target level over the next three years.

How has the finance service performed?

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Population of the District (Mid year ONS Estimate)	77,963	78,500	79,600
Households liable to pay council tax	32,224	32,871	33,100
Band D equivalents	26,300	27,000	27,250

Council Tax Collected in Year (English District Council Average)	98.31%	98.53%	97.92%
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Business rates Collected in Year (English District Council Average)	99.04%	99.19%	99.02%
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Creditors % of invoices paid within 30 days (English Average)	91.92%	97.44%	99.33%
---	--------	--------	--------

Employee Numbers	203	213	208
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Investments Average rate generated on investments	4.70%	4.64%	4.87%
Average benchmark rate for investments	4.70%	4.67%	4.99%

Financial Management			
Annual Accounts prepared on time	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Audit Qualifications (*)	0	0	0

(*) The Council's external auditors are required to give an opinion on the financial statements and this opinion should be "unqualified". Where the opinion is qualified each qualification identifies an area where the financial statements are unreliable. The council's audit has now been completed and an unqualified opinion has been given. Some statistics for 2006/07 were not available at the date of production of this summarised statement (marked "n/a").

Capital Expenditure in 2006/07

Capital expenditure generally represents money spent by the Council on purchasing, upgrading and improving assets such as vehicles and buildings, or giving grants to third parties for these purposes. The distinction from revenue expenditure is that the Council or the grant recipient receives the benefit from capital expenditure over a longer period of time. The Council spent just over £2.5 million during the year financed from Central Government grants and receipts from the sale of assets.

Statement from the Executive Director, Finance

The Council budgeted to make a small surplus in 2006/07 with a contribution of £50,000 to General Reserves in line with its medium term financial strategy. The year end position produced a contribution of £72,000 to reserves. The revenue reserve balance was £1.58 million at 31 March 2007 in line with prudent financial management guidelines. At the balance sheet date, the Council was debt-free and had no external borrowing. The Council's Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with the Accounting Code of Practice. The figures in this summary were originally compiled having regard to proper accounting practice. For the purposes of this statement some modifications were made to provide more meaningful information. The Council's 2006/07 accounts have been audited by an auditor appointed by the Audit Commission. The auditor published his unqualified opinion on the accounts at the end of September 2007. A full copy of the Council's 2006/07 audited accounts is available for examination on request. Please telephone Tony Grzybek (Principal Accountant) on 01353 616269 for more details or to obtain a copy. Alternatively, visit www.eastcambs.gov.uk where the full document can be found online. Alex Colyer FCCA

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RECYCLING

Your fortnightly collection dates

(organic waste bags and recycling boxes)

Recycling collection dates are due to change from 1 April, when a new schedule will be brought in. Details will be available shortly at www.eastcambs.gov.uk and will also be posted as a leaflet to all households in the District during March.

	Weeks starting: 18 February 3, 17 March	Weeks starting: 25 February 10, 24* March
Monday	Isleham Prickwillow Queen Adelaide Haddenham Aldreth	Fordham Chippenham Snailwell Kennett Cheveley Ashley Broad Green Saxon Street Borough Green Kirtling Westley Waterless Upend Brinkley
Tuesday	Ely (centre and south) Sutton	Littleport
Wednesday	Ely (north) Wood Ditton Ditton Green Stetchworth Dullingham	Soham Great Fen Road Hasse Road
Thursday	Mepal Ely (east and west) Little Downham Wardy Hill Pymoor	Burwell
Friday	Lode Bottisham Long Meadow Upware Wicken Swaffham Bulbeck Swaffham Prior Reach Stuntney	Stretham Little Thetford Chettisham Witchford Wilburton Witcham Wentworth Coveney

Please check with Cambridgeshire County Council on 0845 0455207 or visit <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/waste/facilities/hwrcs/> for household waste recycling centre opening times. For further information on refuse and recycling please ring: East Cambs: 01353 665555 Veolia Environmental Services: 01353 863864

REFUSE

Your weekly collection dates

(black bags)

Monday	Aldreth Ashley Cheveley Ely (Broad St and King St area and old RAF site) Fordham Haddenham Isleham Little Downham Little Thetford Prickwillow Pymoor Queen Adelaide (from Prickwillow to Queen Adelaide Way)	Thursday	Brinkley Burrough Green Burwell Dullingham Ely (Witchford Rd and St John's Rd areas) Reach Snailwell Stretham Stuntney Swaffham Prior Wentworth Westley Waterless Wilburton Soham (north)
Tuesday	Chippenham Ely (St Mary St down to station, Cambridge St and Northfield area) Kennett Littleport Soham (south)	Friday	Bottisham Chettisham Ely (Columbine Rd and all new developments in the west of the city) Lode Long Meadow Saxon Street Stetchworth Upware Wicken Witchford
Wednesday	Coveney Ely (High Barns and New Barns) Mepal Sutton Swaffham Bulbeck Wardy Hill Witcham Soham (centre) Soham Downfields Queen Adelaide		

* Bank Holiday arrangements	
Day your black bag/ recycling would normally be collected:	Revised collection day:
March	
Friday 21	Same day
Monday 24	Tuesday 25
Tuesday 25	Wednesday 26
Wednesday 26	Thursday 27
Thursday 27	Friday 28
Friday 28	Saturday 29
May	
Monday 5	Tuesday 6
Tuesday 6	Wednesday 7
Wednesday 7	Thursday 8
Thursday 8	Friday 9
Friday 9	Saturday 10



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Littleport, Cambridgeshire

Don't Miss Out

New release of 3,4 and 5
bedroom homes offering great
choice, design and style

**Please call our sales
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Showhomes open Thursday to Monday 10.00am - 5.00pm
Highfields, Ely Road, Littleport, Cambridgeshire CB6 1HQ



Fallowfields

Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire

Special Offer on selected plots

Fitted carpets included
For February Reservation

Please ask our sales advisor for more details

**Please call our sales
advisor on 01733 200878**

Showhomes open Thursday to Monday 10.00am - 5.00pm
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www.cannonkirk.co.uk

building a sense of place