

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – JULY 2025

It's been a busy and productive period across our communities, with important developments shaping the future of Huntingdonshire. This month's update highlights upcoming public consultation on the Local Plan, a new partnership to protect and celebrate the Great Ouse Valley landscape, long-awaited success in securing public access to the extended Paxton Pits Nature Reserve from Diddington and a consultation on Local Government Reorganisation. Each of these projects reflects our shared commitment to protecting what makes our area special - while preparing responsibly for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Local Plan Update – Preferred Options Consultation

This autumn (October–November 2025), Huntingdonshire District Council will launch a **six-week consultation** on its *Preferred Options Draft Local Plan Update*.

Key documents open for feedback include:

- **Preferred Options Local Plan** – sets out draft policies, proposed site allocations, and outlines the amount of housing, employment land, and infrastructure needed to support the district's future.
- **Sustainability Appraisal** – evaluates the environmental, social, and economic impacts of the proposed plan.

A communications strategy is in development to ensure broad engagement with residents and stakeholders. This will include:

- Clear **objectives** for gathering public input and raising awareness;
- Defined **audiences**, from local residents and businesses to statutory consultees;
- Use of demographic data and social media reach to **target communications** effectively;
- A multi-channel **engagement approach** to encourage inclusive participation;
- Metrics for **evaluating success** and improving future consultations.

This is an important opportunity for communities to shape Huntingdonshire's growth over the coming years.

Protecting the Great Ouse Valley – A New Partnership for Landscape Designation

Huntingdonshire District Council has partnered with the Great Ouse Valley Trust to commission a study into the potential benefits of self-designating the Great Ouse Valley as a protected landscape.

This joint initiative reflects the Council's long-term *Huntingdonshire Futures* vision - particularly the goal of instilling *Pride in Place* by 2050. It will assess the Valley's unique environmental,

social, and economic value, helping to safeguard its distinct character for current and future generations.

Following a formal procurement process, **Arkwood Ltd** has been appointed to develop a business case for landscape designation. Their work will explore how enhanced protection could improve quality of life, boost the local economy, and recognise the Valley's regional significance.

Both organisations are committed to ensuring residents feel proud to live in, work in, and enjoy the rich natural heritage of the Great Ouse Valley.

Diddington Footpath 1 – Now Open!

After sustained community support and lobbying efforts, access to the **Paxton Pits Nature Reserve extension from Diddington** is officially open. As of yesterday, Diddington Footpath 1 has been certified and is now in a safe, usable condition for public enjoyment.

This new route loops around **Diddington Pit** and offers a scenic walking route to Little Paxton with an expanded access to nature – it's brilliant!

- Currently a **public footpath**, cycling is not permitted - yet.
- Future plans will upgrade many of the paths to **bridleways**, linking up with the eastern side of the lake as part of the next phase of the Paxton Pits Public Rights of Way Scheme.
- The **eastern connection to the Ouse Valley Way** remains on hold pending finalisation of a lease transfer to the District Council.

Thank you to everyone in the village who lent their voice and persistence to making this access a reality. It's a great step forward for local walking routes and connecting our communities to nature.

Local Government Reorganisation – Share Your Views

Residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are being invited to take part in a once-in-a-generation conversation about the future of local government. A public **engagement survey is open until Sunday 20 July 2025**, giving communities the chance to shape how local services will be delivered from **April 2028**, when the government plans to replace current district, city and county councils with new **unitary authorities**.

These new councils would deliver all local services—such as roads, waste collection, education, housing, social care and planning—under a single authority. Parish and town councils would continue as they are.

Although three options for how this reorganisation could work have been published, **no decisions have yet been made**. Your feedback will help inform the business cases submitted to national government this autumn.

Community voices matter. Whether you're a resident, run a business, or are part of a community group, please take a moment to complete the survey and share your thoughts on priorities, local identity, and what really matters to you when it comes to local government.

The survey is available online - <https://can-campaigns.co.uk/local-councils-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-are-changing/>, in council offices, and local libraries.

Wishing you well,

Martin

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