

Councillor Peter McDonald Duxford Division & Ward:
District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.
County Councillor also for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow, Heydon, Chishills, Whittlesford

Parish Council County Report May 2025

South Cambs Council

The seventh round of South Cambridgeshire's Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) grants launch today (May 5) offering a share of £125,000 to successful applicants. The grant scheme supports projects which help reduce carbon emissions or 'lock up' carbon, as well as projects that foster community engagement on climate change.

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Since its launch in 2019, the scheme has awarded over £625,000 in grants, supporting more than 70 community-led climate action projects.

Previous projects include solar panels for community buildings, a strengthened repair café network to encourage waste reduction and an event kit for a local group helping people adopt climate-friendly gardening practices at home. Grants range from £2,000 to £15,000 per project.

The ZCC grants are open to parish councils and community groups in South Cambridgeshire and provide financial support for schemes that demonstrate a sustainable and lasting impact.

This year projects are invited under two themes:

- Projects that reduce carbon emissions or 'lock up' carbon. We've previously supported village halls and other community buildings to reduce their energy use by installing measures such as heat pumps, LEDs, insulation and solar PV. Projects funded under this theme have allowed organisations to reduce their emissions in other ways, such as replacing vans needed for their work with electric vehicles.
- Projects that achieve wider community engagement on climate change and promote sustainable behaviour change. Projects in previous years have included support for repair cafes, sustainable food projects and training for community climate leaders such as Cambridge Carbon Footprint's [Net Zero Now](#) course. You can read [case studies of past ZCC projects](#) on our website.

The ZCC grant scheme is funded through the Council's renewables reserve (business rates from renewable energy projects) and builds on a long-standing commitment to supporting community-level action on sustainable energy.

• Closing date for applications is 5pm on Tuesday 1 July 2025. Applications can be made using the online form on the [grant webpage](#). Updated grant information and application guidance documents have been made available to help applicants.

• An online application workshop takes place from 5 - 6:30pm on Wednesday 21 May 2025. This will be an opportunity to pose any questions to the grant team and discuss project ideas. To sign up, please email zcc@scambs.gov.uk

• For more information visit the [ZCC webpage](#), or email zcc@scambs.gov.uk.

NHS Healthy Start Campaign

South Cambridgeshire has seen the biggest increase in NHS Healthy Start claims in the country, following a targeted campaign by the District Council encouraging eligible parents

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to sign up for free food and milk support. The three-week campaign is projected to have distributed nearly £60,000 of previously unclaimed funds.

The campaign used the District Council's innovative new Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) software to identify families who were likely to be eligible for this support. These families were then sent a letter or text encouraging them to apply if they had not already done so.

The NHS Healthy Start scheme provides vital help for pregnant women as well as parents with children under four, offering free fruit, vegetables, milk and infant formula to those who qualify. It can be worth up to £8.50 a week depending on the age of the child - however many people are unaware of their eligibility.

Thanks to the Council's proactive approach, the number of people claiming from the NHS Healthy Start scheme in the district jumped by over 12% between February and March - from 526 to nearly 600 residents. This increase is higher than any other district in the country for this time period and compares to a national increase of just 1.4%. Using average claim figures, this increase is projected to be worth a total of £42,858.40.

The Council also used the campaign as an opportunity to increase uptake of the Household Support Fund, a one-off payment of £110 to eligible families. 137 Household Support Fund applications were completed as part of the campaign, valued at over £15,000. This takes the financial impact of this three-week campaign to £57,928.40.

The Healthy Start scheme is offered by the NHS to parents receiving certain benefits but were estimated to go unclaimed by more than a third (38%) of eligible parents in South Cambridgeshire which is why the District Council campaign was launched.

The Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) identified 377 households who were likely to be eligible for the Healthy Start scheme. All these households were contacted by letter and text where possible encouraging them to apply if they had not done so already.

Parents are eligible for the NHS Healthy Start scheme if they have a child under the age of four and are on certain benefits. If eligible, parents will receive a Healthy Start card that can be used in most UK supermarkets, like a debit card. The card will be pre-loaded with £8.50 a week for children aged under one, and £4.25 a week for children aged between one and four years old. The card can be used to buy:

- fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables
- fresh, dried, and tinned pulses
- plain liquid cow's milk
- infant formula milk based on cow's milk

The card can also be used to collect:

- Healthy Start vitamins – these support a parent during pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Vitamin drops for babies and young children – these are suitable from birth to 4 years old

A household must be claiming one of the following benefits to qualify:

- Universal Credit with earned income of less than £408 per month from employment
- Child Tax Credit
- Income Support

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- Income-related Employment Support Allowance
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (not contributory benefits) and have a household income below a specified amount

The easiest way to apply for the Healthy Start scheme is [online](#). If residents are unable to apply online, they can call the Healthy Start helpline on **0300 330 7010** and a member of staff will help complete an application.

Cambs County Council

May 1st Elections

Cambridgeshire County Council's largest political group are the Liberal Democrats following yesterday's elections. The final results, declared at counts across the county (Friday, 2 May), saw the Liberal Democrats win 31 seats. The Conservatives won 10 seats, Reform UK won 10, Labour won 5, the Green Party won 3, and 2 seats were won by independent candidates.

The council will agree key political roles – including the Leader of the Council and all key committee appointments – at its Annual General Meeting of the local authority which will be held on Tuesday, 20 May at New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald.

The full list of election results is available on our website.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/elections>

I am very grateful to the 1500 residents who supported me:

Duxford

- Sophi Berridge, Green Party - 193
- Clare Elizabeth Downie, Labour - 260
- **Peter John McDonald, Liberal Democrats - 1,518 - Elected**
- Lina Maria Nieto Pacheco, Conservative - 626
- Paul Martyn Smith, Reform UK - 701

Primary School Places

A total of 94.5 per cent of Cambridgeshire children will be going to their first preference primary school this September, above the national proportion of 93.2 per cent from 2024.

This is marginally down from the 95.9 per cent offered their preferred choice in Cambridgeshire last year. The proportion offered a place at their first, second or third choice school has also slightly fallen – from 99.1 per cent last year to 98.9 per cent this year.

Just over 1 per cent of pupils (76 children in total) have been allocated places at other schools, outside of their expressed preferences, the second lowest number in the last four years.

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This year saw a slight increase in the total number of applications for a primary school place – from 6,418 in 2024 to 6,457 this year.

Parents that have applied for primary school places for this September will receive offers on Wednesday, 16 April.

Sarah Callaghan, Service Director for Education at Cambridgeshire County Council said:
“Our admissions and place planning teams have been working hard to ensure as many Cambridgeshire children as possible are offered places at their preferred schools.

“I strongly advise parents to apply to their child’s local catchment school – this always represents the highest likelihood that they will secure their preferred place.”

Peter McDonald May 5th 2025