

Combined Authority Board

5 June 2024 – Ordinary Meeting

Title: Combined Authority Chief Executive Highlights Report

Report of: Rob Bridge, Chief Executive Lead Member: Mayor Dr Nik Johnson

1. Purpose

This report provides a general update on the key activities of the Combined Authority and the Mayor since the last Board meeting, which are not covered in other reports to this Meeting. It also provides information on some key developments, risks and opportunities that have emerged.

2. Funding Activity

2.1 Funds allocated by the CPCA

- £2.7m of re-allocated Transforming Cities Fund to deliver enhancements in St Ives, March, Fengate and Junction 3 of the A1260.
- £400k to maintain momentum in delivering and embedding the improvement plan
- £170k to support Natural Cambridgeshire over 2 years.
- £120k to support Fenland soil over 2 years.
- Match funding awarded from within UKSPF and existing MTFP to unlock £310k of further funding from the Careers Enterprise Company.

3. Public Affairs

3.1 UKREiiF

The Combined Authority booked a pavilion at the UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) 21-23rd May 2024 and took the regions first delegation. UKREiiF is the largest cross sector property conference in the UK, with c. 12,000 delegates attending this year.

A small multi-disciplinary team have worked with constituent authorities and the business board to produce a programme of events and marketing materials which we showcased in the pavilion.

It was an opportunity to showcase Cambridgeshire and Peterborough investment propositions to a national and international audience of developers, investors and occupiers. It also acted as a springboard for the Team Cambridgeshire and Peterborough approach to inward investment.

The six core panel events, and two fringe events which the Combined Authority hosted throughout the three days were well attended, with many being standing room only.

Feedback from delegates visiting the pavilion included:

“I’ve been in all the pavilions, and Team Cambridgeshire and Peterborough events have been by far the most interesting.”

“It’s noticeable how much more energy there is in the Team Cambridgeshire and Peterborough pavilion.”

3.2 Transport Summit

The Combined Authority had planned a Transport Summit on June 7th at KingsGate Conference Centre, Peterborough, however it will be postponed until the Autumn in line with pre-election period guidance.

The Transport Summit will aim to discuss, highlight and raise awareness of barriers to delivery which are currently facing the Combined Authority and other MCAs. It will raise awareness of future innovative transport solutions that the Combined Authority are pursuing and highlight where they have successfully been introduced in other MCAs. Following the postponement, we are now working on towards a new date in Autumn 2024.

3.3 In May Mayor Dr Nik Johnson and Rob Bridge welcomed the Rt Hon Sir Conor Burns MP, The Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy for Regional US Trade and Investment to the region. They discussed the region’s international reputation and plans to build on this in the future.

The Mayor and Sir Conor Burns discussed the benefits of fostering strong partnerships with US States with complimentary economies to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This meeting was held as the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was gearing up to showcase the region at UKREiiF, the UK’s biggest trade and investment conference, for the first time.

4. Economy and Growth

4.1 Peterborough AI Summit

Peterborough’s first public AI summit will explore how the rapidly advancing technology is changing both businesses and our lives. Supported by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority and Anglia Ruskin University, the event will be held at the city’s new university, ARU Peterborough, on June 6. The event organisers have held similar successful events in Norwich.

The summit aims to help people and businesses stay ahead of the latest advances in the technology, which has made a mainstream breakthrough with the advent of tools like Chat GPT and Bing AI.

Businesses from micro to large, entrepreneurs, tech enthusiasts or those simply curious, will find out more about opportunities and challenges for AI through expert insight and thought-provoking panels and Q&A sessions.

4.2 XRP eXtended Reality Peterborough

The new facilities at ARU Peterborough, which combine elements of the virtual and the real world to create an immersive educational experience, have been opened thanks to £5.7 million of funding from the Office for Students (Ofs) to support simulated learning in Peterborough and the ARU campuses in Cambridge and Chelmsford.

As part of her visit to ARU Peterborough, Ms Toksvig, who is also the founder of the Women's Equality Party, delivered a guest lecture about the new Mappa Mundi project, which she is leading at Cambridge University. The state-of-the-art facilities will help students to perfect skills, and practice and repeat techniques, in a safe environment.

The future Centre of Excellence is on the ground floor of the Innovation and Research Centre at ARU Peterborough. The three-storey facility has been majority funded with £13.78 million from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Business Board's Get Building Fund, while "The Lab", the third phase of ARU Peterborough, is due to open this summer.

4.3 Cambridgeshire Companies to Benefit from £1.84M Agri-Tech Innovation Fund

Three Cambridgeshire companies are among 12 regionally which have won £1.84 million of funding from the Innovate UK Launchpad for Agritech and Agrifood in Eastern England.

This Innovate UK Launchpad provides innovation support and funding tailored to the wider region's strengths from the forefront of crop and plant research, to harvesting, processing and packaging the food on our plates.

Agri-tech forms a key part of the region's industrial strategy, called the Economic Growth Strategy and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is supporting the growth of the sector including through funding and support.

With the Fens home to 50 per cent of the country's very best 'Grade I' agricultural land, the region is ideally placed to be at the forefront of agri-tech innovation.

The Innovate UK Launchpads support clusters of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and helps the most innovative businesses to progress their projects towards commercialisation, contributing to local economic growth.

The Eastern Agritech and Agrifood Launchpad has been developed through a partnership between the national innovation agency, Innovate UK, with Greater Lincolnshire LEP, New Anglia LEP and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

6. Transport

6.1 Active Travel Update

Unfortunately, the eCargo bike bids with Sustainable Cities Mobility Challenge and DfT's Transport Decarbonisation Demonstrators were not successful and therefore we did not get the funding to roll out the eCargo bike project. The Combined Authority officers are seeking clarification as to why this bid was unsuccessful to learn lessons for future funding applications.

Active Travel Conference

There is a conference set up with Active Travel England on 3rd July. The aims of this technical session from across the region:

- Showcase the Combined Authority area aims and future ambition in relation to the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan
- Highlighting existing behaviour change programmes and infrastructure that demonstrates good practice, including working with businesses and community.
- Identify the challenges and create an environment for meaningful discussion about how we overcome barriers.
- Foster collaboration and partnership across private and public sector.

Active Travel Advocate

The Active Travel Specialist Advisory Board has been consulted on developing the job description for the Active Travel Champion (ATC), including the role's requirements and expectations. Additionally, we have actively engaged with Active Travel England, who strongly recommended that the job description be broadly based on those previously created by Chris Boardman and other ATCs.