

FeCRA – The Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations



To Chair of Environment and Sustainability Committee via email, 8 July, 2020 (copied to Committee)

Dear Councillor Schumann,

Natural Cambridgeshire

The Environment and Sustainability Committee meets tomorrow Thursday, 9 July at 10.00 to approve terms of reference for Natural Cambridgeshire as a charitable interest organisation. There has been no publicity even though there is input from local govt.

Residents, some of them environment and conservation experts, have expressed serious concerns to FeCRA about Natural Cambridgeshire's community representation. They say that the board and its sub groups are making key decisions about Cambridge's green spaces and the river. Who is being represented? How are these members selected? What is its standing in local government and local community organisations, voluntary groups and NGOs, and why it is so seemingly dominated by business interests?

Residents ask how conflicts of interests will be handled? What about connections with water companies, agritech, food supply, power, utilities and developers? Will board members and/or organisations and/or individuals involved declare funding or sponsorship? Wages paid by business, including water companies? There has to be greater transparency.

Natural Cambridgeshire's 'doubling nature' vision supports the CPIER high growth strategy^[2]. This strategy is sustained by inward migration, the OxCam Arc Expressway and other transport initiatives and by building one million homes in the Oxford Cambridge Growth Corridor by 2050. Recent media reports ask if NGOs which signed up to supporting 'Nature's Arc', with curated parks, new woods and wetlands are "greenwashing" a level of growth that is unsustainable.^[3] Some of the NGO's have since amended their press releases.

The Natural Environment and Planning Policy Group of Natural Cambridgeshire has been merged with the board of the Local Nature Partnership, Natural Cambridgeshire, following the board's decision to apply to become a Charitable Interest Organisation.^[4]

Natural Cambridgeshire is now the **Natural Cambridgeshire Partnership Forum**.

The directors of Water Resources East (set up by Anglian Water) and the Environment Agency said at a recent Zoom meeting that there will be no formal consultation on the regional water plan and that Natural Cambridgeshire will be a consultee. Many residents are concerned that Natural Cambridgeshire's "doubling nature" vision was not consulted on and that the high level of growth it endorses is incompatible with the Cam chalk stream crisis and this region's acute shortage of water.

It is not clear on what basis Natural Cambridgeshire is prioritising green belt landscapes for investment ahead of and separate to the Local Plan process. This is important as the Deputy Director of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, Paul Frainer, writing to the FeCRA Committee, on 1 June, 2020, said:

‘Ahead of and separate to the Local Plan process, the Local Nature Partnership (as a separate body albeit with some local authority input) has identified priority projects it would support if funding were to become available in the short term, but **no decisions** have been made through the Local Plan process about which green spaces to prioritise.

The Local Plan green space evidence base study will identify priority projects, and will advise which should be included in the Local Plan, and which should be delivered through land management as opposed to development processes. This priority list will in future also inform biodiversity net gain offsetting, and bids for funding from other sources’.

The minutes for the last meeting state Natural Cambridgeshire board members will

- ‘Work with developers to enhance nature either on site or through offsets’ –Cameron Adams, the Environment Agency
- ‘Consider how best to engage with farmers and other landowners, and help them get better returns from their investments’ –Rob Wise NFU
- ‘Collaborate with Natural Capital East’ –Cameron Adams
- ‘Review progress of Doubling Nature at end 2020’ –Richard Astle - Athene Communications

Best wishes,

Wendy

Wendy Blythe,

Chair, FeCRA

[\[1\]](#)

https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc_live/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1517/Committee/61/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx

[Appointment to External Boards - Local Nature Partnership \(Natural Cambridgeshire\) Governance \(262Kb\)](#)

1. [Appendix 1 - Draft Natural Cambridgeshire Terms of Reference \(469Kb\)](#)
2. [Appendix 2 - Natural Cambridgeshire Delivery Plan \(587Kb\)](#)
3. [Appendix 3 - Charitable Incorporated Organisation \(CIO\) Constitution \(931Kb\)](#)

^[2] <https://naturalcambridgeshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/cpa-strategic-spatial-framework.pdf>

^[3] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-5306461>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/24/how-did-wildlife-groups-start-collaborating-in-the-destruction-of-nature>^[3]

^[4] <https://www.fecra.org.uk/update-7th-jan-2020>

^[5] <https://www.fecra.org.uk/update-7th-jan-2020/>

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