



Aidan Van de Weyer

Liberal Democrat Candidate for Mayor, 2021

**For a Greener, Fairer
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**



Standing up for our area

As Mayor, I will be a strong voice for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, leading the creation of a greener and fairer Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are wonderful places to live, work and study. Our big, open countryside is easily accessible. We have a rich past that has left us with amazing historic buildings in every town and village. Our businesses and research organisations are dynamic, innovative and outward-looking, working in bioscience, high tech, engineering and other areas shaping our future. We love to walk and cycle, in far greater numbers than anywhere else in the country.

However, there are serious problems here that we are failing to deal with. There are areas of severe deprivation across the whole region, marked by low educational attainment, limited social mobility and poor health outcomes. The economy is becoming unbalanced, with some sectors having low productivity and many low skilled jobs. The natural environment is depleted: pockets of biodiversity are fragmented; our chalk streams are in crisis; our soils are worn out and can't sustain continued intensive farming. We are poorly prepared for climate change and the extremes of weather that it is bringing, such as flooding. We continue to emit high amounts of carbon dioxide and

the majority of us are entirely dependent on the private car for mobility. The public transport network is poor; the cycling network is fragmented and sub-standard; our roads and paths don't make walking appealing. As a result, we have high levels of traffic congestion, which harms wellbeing, reduces air quality and constrains the economy. Extremely high house prices put home-ownership out of reach for too many; too much of our houses are of poor quality.

The Conservatives have dominated local government here for decades. They have failed the residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through their neglect and their cronyism.

We have the opportunity to change this on 6 May and put Cambridgeshire and Peterborough on a course towards a greener and fairer future.

I will tackle climate change and the biodiversity crisis with urgency and vigour.

I will make our society more equitable and inclusive, and give our young people hope for a better future.

I will work collaboratively with all the organisations across the area, as well as politicians of all parties, in the interests of our residents.



Protecting our environment

We are still not taking the threat of climate change or the collapse in biodiversity seriously enough in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Combined Authority has not declared a climate emergency and has not yet even adopted the initial recommendations of the Independent Commission on Climate. It has not started implementing the doubling nature target.

We need action now to get us on the path to net

zero carbon, to build resilience to the effects of climate change in all we do, and to improve nature.

We must take the opportunity to shape the post-pandemic recovery to make our economy greener, and our residents better protected.

My aim will always be to balance the needs of nature and the impacts of change on residents, businesses and farmers.

Tackling Climate Change

On climate change and the transition to zero carbon, I will:

- kickstart a rapid fall in emissions, with actions planned for the first 100 days, so that we can get to net zero carbon with the urgency that is needed, whilst making sure that the transition is fair and equitable;
- start implementing the recommendations of the Commission on Climate that require urgent action;
- develop a climate change resilience strategy to identify measures we can directly support as well as ensuring that all actions of the Combined Authority consider climate resilience;

- require an assessment on how compatible all Combined Authority housing and transport investment is with the zero carbon roadmap;
- support the interim recommendations of the Independent Commission on Climate;
- push for higher environmental standards for housing everywhere, including across the OxCam Arc, which has the opportunity to demonstrate world-class, affordable design, with costs borne by developers and landowners;
- deliver an investment strategy for the transition to zero carbon, in particular in energy infrastructure.

Restoring Nature

On nature and biodiversity, I will:

- create a Doubling Nature Fund to deliver the urgent actions needed;
- support significant and measurable biodiversity net gain;
- support the UNESCO Biosphere designation for the Fens as a way of finding a sustainable balance between nature and the range of human activities;
- work with the planning authorities to build biodiversity restoration into Local Plans and other planning policy;
- bring together Cambridge Water, Anglian Water, Water Resources East, the

Environment Agency and central government to leverage investment urgently for a regional sustainable water strategy that removes the need to take water from the aquifer and helps restore our chalk streams;

- create a spatial strategy for green infrastructure and nature recovery networks, seeking opportunities to create new and accessible green spaces;
- support the Liberal Democrat ambitions for increasing tree planting in Peterborough, with the Forest for Peterborough target of a tree for every resident by 2030, and Cambridgeshire, with a tree for every child in the county over the next four years.

A Green Recovery

To enable a green recovery, I will:

- support business focussing on climate change and the environment that also help increase skills and provide long-term jobs;

- require environmental measures and conformity with the climate change roadmap as part of business support.





A sustainable transport revolution

The residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough deserve a green, sustainable and attractive transport network.

Current transport usage, dominated by the private car, has hugely damaging effects. Traffic congestion impacts the well-being of residents - both commuters and those who live on through routes - and is harming the economy. Vehicles reduce air quality with fumes and particulates. Carbon emissions are far too high. Cars' requirement for road space and parking pushes out other uses, particularly walking and cycling, but also civic uses of public space.

For all the laudable aims contained in the

Local Transport Plan, the Combined Authority continues to plan transport investment, and especially road schemes, without regard for opportunities to rebalance the system in favour of sustainable travel.

I will transform the transport system, with improved bus provision; measures to make Peterborough, Cambridge and other towns attractive, low-traffic destinations; mass rapid transport built quickly in the major cities; a huge boost to the quality of routes for cycling and walking. Together, these measures will attract a high proportion of people away from car use towards sustainable journeys.

Integrated Sustainable Transport Strategy

The elements of the transport network needed to produce a large modal shift cannot be looked at in isolation. A much more robust and ambitious Integrated Sustainable Transport Strategy is required urgently.

All the policies adopted by the Combined Authority and all the investments that we make must follow the zero carbon roadmap. We must

press for partner organisations to do the same.

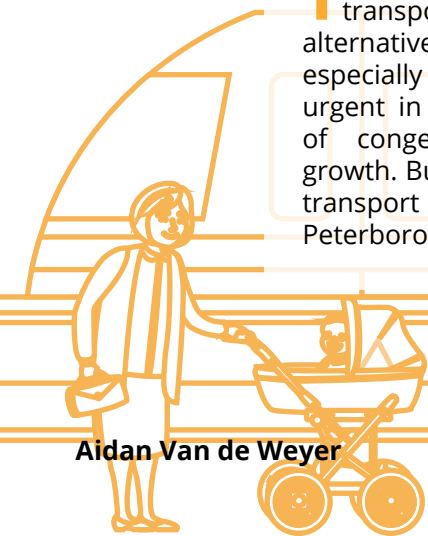
Of particular concern is the possibility that East West Rail might not be electrified, might have diesel passenger trains from the start of operation and might allow other diesel trains to use it. It is not clear how this could possibly fit with either the Combined Authority's or the government's own zero carbon strategies.

Mass Rapid Transit

There is an acute need for a reliable public transport system that is an attractive alternative to the car for a great many journeys, especially trips to work. This need is most urgent in Cambridge, where the rising levels of congestion are threatening economic growth. But a transformation of the way public transport works would bring huge benefits to Peterborough and many other towns.

Numerous studies over the last five years have indicated that only a system of mass rapid transit will be able to address the issue adequately. Although the CPCA has been working on this since its inception, the specifications of this system are still to be decided.

I will work quickly to establish a new plan for a mass rapid transit and start implementing it.



A new and expanding system of mass rapid transit needs to meet some fundamental objectives. It needs to be attractive enough to get people out of their cars. It needs to be reliable and frequent. It needs to have permanence to allow people and business to plan in the longer term. It must be affordable. It needs to be well integrated with other forms of transport so that people not directly served by the mass rapid transit are able to benefit from it. It must not cause pollution or harm air quality.

It also needs to be low risk. The current plans for a new transport system have many features that introduce huge risks. It relies heavily on autonomous technology and on other untested solutions; it can only function properly when the whole of the central tunnelled section is completed in a decade's time. The consequences of spiralling costs, of unreliable technology, of delays or even of failure would be huge.

Rather, we need a system that can start delivery benefits quickly, that can be built in parts and

that uses tried and tested technology where possible.

Establishing the funding routes for the mass rapid transit system is a priority given the current lack of clarity. Funding both for the capital costs and the revenue support will inevitably involve a mix of sources. It will be far easier to raise capital if there is a clear and agreed strategy for finding revenue over and above ticket receipts. Local tax revenues simply will not be sufficient, so there will have to be an element of fiscal demand management that will also help to deter car use and allow for a reduction in the space devoted to motor vehicles in congested urban areas.

The funding sources for mass rapid transit cannot be allowed to determine the location of new housing development or the design of the network, which must prioritise the needs of residents and other users. Development enabled by or otherwise related to new mass rapid transit routes must fit with the spatial strategies of the local planning authorities.

Buses

Buses will continue to provide the backbone of the public transport network, reaching the majority of the towns and villages of the area and providing the only means of mobility for many people without a car. But service levels are poor, tickets are complex and expensive, and vehicles are polluting, with the result that buses are often unattractive and not widely used. Bus links from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to surrounding areas are very poor. The collapse in ridership during the pandemic has put the viability of many services into doubt.

We need more direct local control over bus provision along with the ability to get more back for the public subsidy that we put in.

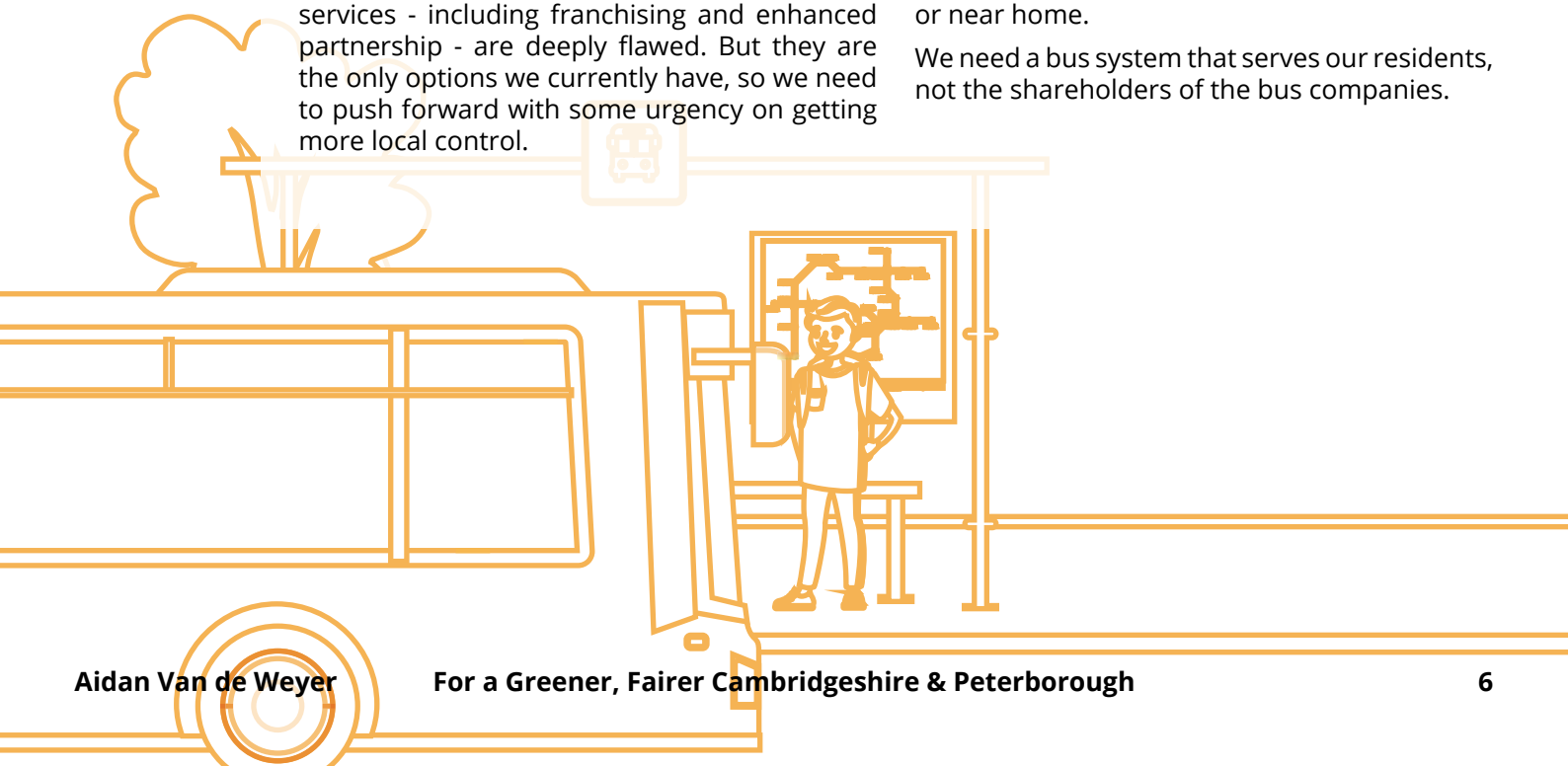
The current options for reforming bus services - including franchising and enhanced partnership - are deeply flawed. But they are the only options we currently have, so we need to push forward with some urgency on getting more local control.

As Mayor, I will also be arguing strongly that we need full powers over timetables, routes, fares and ticketing mechanisms so that we can create a more integrated and comprehensive service that is easy to use. In particular, I will press for the removal of the ban on local authorities owning and operating their own bus companies.

For buses to contribute to the fight against climate change and to improvements to the environment, we need to put Cambridgeshire and Peterborough at the forefront of the rollout of electric buses.

The types of service that we offer to residents can be widened further, for example through the development of 'mobility as a service', which can reduce isolation and help people work from or near home.

We need a bus system that serves our residents, not the shareholders of the bus companies.



Walking and Cycling

There is enormous pent-up demand for cycling across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Even in areas that already have high rates of cycling like Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, it is clear that the potential for more people to cycle more often is huge.

Awareness of the barriers to walking - as well as to the use of mobility scooters and wheelchairs - is increasing. Too much of our public space has poor accessibility, whether because of poor design or neglect.

I will work with the highways and planning authorities to raise standards for cycling and walking infrastructure.

While there are already some high quality cycle routes, they are too often fragmented. This is particularly an issue in Peterborough, where excellent routes in new areas don't link well to the city centre. This means that cycling just isn't attractive and previous investment has not realised the full benefits hoped for.

I will develop a plan for a comprehensive network for walking and cycling that will identify what the most urgent and effective interventions are as well as guiding future development.

Making our villages, towns and cities better for walking and cycling also makes them more attractive places to live in and visit, improving health, wellbeing and the economy.

Rail

Rail will be the backbone of our future low carbon transport system, with a far greater role than now. Rail provides excellent local connections as well as a sustainable transport mode for long-distance journeys and for moving goods.

The use of the railway in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will be boosted by a number of investments across the region. As Mayor, I will incorporate them into my own plans and policies, and I will press for government and other partners to support them. These rail projects include:

- Electrification of the whole rail network, including East West Rail, so that diesel trains can be banned entirely from the railway in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- Construction of the central section of East West Rail from Bedford to Cambridge serving St Neots-Tempsford and Cambourne
- Agreement with government that the eastern sections of East West Rail need to

be upgraded and integrated with the other sections

- Construction of Cambridge South station
- Progress plans for a Peterborough South station
- Increase the capacity of the Cambridge to Newmarket line, doubling the track where necessary, allowing more frequent trains and possible reopening of stations
- Completion of Soham Station
- Reinstatement of the Snailwell rail link allowing Soham-Cambridge direct trains
- Improvements to Ely North
- Continued progress of work on the March-Wisbech line
- An assessment of options for reopening the Cambridge-Haverhill line
- Looking again at the case for new stations north of Peterborough and Alconbury Weald



Making society fairer

The deep inequalities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are a result of decades of political and policy failure. Too many residents have limited educational and employment opportunities. The enormous income disparities between areas are accompanied by unacceptable differences in well-being and health outcomes.

We might not be able to solve all these problems quickly, but our actions and our approaches can make a real difference to the lives of a great many residents. The starting point for any actions or any partnerships must be to ask, how are we making Cambridgeshire and Peterborough fairer, more inclusive, more equitable?

Making housing fairer and more affordable

The housing market just isn't functioning for the benefit of all residents. We see that most starkly in the very high sale prices of houses. This area has one of the highest price-earnings ratios in the country. But there are also other problems. Private rental contracts are insecure, making it hard for renters to plan for the future and settle properly in a community. The quality of existing houses is too often poor. Not enough affordable houses with lower rents are being built.

The job of the Mayor must be to increase the numbers of good quality affordable homes being built. The devolution deal gave the Combined Authority £100 million to get at least 2,000 affordable houses built across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with another £70 million just for Cambridge. The current Mayor has run this programme so badly that the government is withholding £45 million of the £100 million pot, putting at risk hundreds of affordable houses. With our reputation in tatters, the government is unlikely to want to do any further deals on locally-controlled housing investment. So, on election, I will immediately seek to re-establish confidence that a Combined Authority led by me can deliver affordable houses on time and on budget - as I have been doing with colleagues at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The housing programme needs to focus on the interventions that do most to improve the lives of our residents, such as:

- prioritising affordable housing for rent over shared ownership, with a mix where that is justified.
- using affordable housing funds strategically to improve places for all residents.
- meeting relevant standards, such as nationally described space standards.
- ending the £100k house scheme.

Alongside the affordable housing programme, the Mayor can lead on a range of issues to make housing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough better.

I will push for local planning authorities, the OxCam Arc and central government to improve the environmental standards for new homes, features that reduce the running costs of homes in particular.

I will work with housing associations, councils, regional bodies and government to greatly increase the support for retrofitting existing homes, focussing on smaller and cheaper homes where we can make the most difference.

I will leverage the Combined Authority's position in the housing market and work with partners

to improve conditions for people renting in the private sector and promote stable long-term tenancies as the norm.

I will explore how the Combined Authority can support local supply chains for Modern Methods of Construction, and other green and innovative construction techniques.

Sharing the benefits of economic growth

The recent rapid economic growth of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has been unbalanced. Inequality has increased, both across the area and within some cities and towns.

The impacts of the pandemic have made this worse. Those in insecure and low-paid jobs that can't be done at home have been hardest hit, in terms of both lost income and Covid infection rates.

On becoming Mayor, I will develop a Sharing Prosperity strategy, with commitments from businesses and educational institutions to work together to improve the economic strength of all parts of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Mayor has a vital role in shaping the post-pandemic recovery. The Combined Authority has considerable financial resources in economic development, including through the Business Board. And the Mayor can take a position of broader leadership. As Mayor, I will make sure that the recovery is both green and inclusive.

I will focus support on new areas of innovative and green growth, on businesses and sectors that can provide skilled long-term jobs and on smaller businesses that are able to add more to the local economy and the local community. I will support the provision of more flexible commercial premises.

Resilient and healthy communities

Strong and inclusive communities are at the heart of a fairer society. Local government has a key role in nurturing and sustaining communities, especially through difficult times like the Covid pandemic and its aftermath, which will last for years.

We are now much more aware of the role that the quality of a place plays in the well-being of residents. So we must focus much more on making villages, towns and cities more 'liveable'.

As Mayor, I will support communities to improve village and town centres, and to rethink how public spaces, community buildings and commercial premises are used.

The recent town centre regeneration strategies are too often driven from above. I will work more closely with communities and town councils to create joint visions and plans.

Peterborough city centre has been particularly badly hit by changes in the retail landscape, accelerated by Covid. We need a strong vision for the city centre that will support long-term vitality alongside a strategy for reviving the local centres across the city.

Vehicle traffic, especially rat-running by cars and HGVs, can have a profound impact on how

well a community functions. These issues need to be integrated into the Local Transport Plan.

I will work with communities to put in place measures to reduce speeding and rat-running, such as strategic changes to the network, 20mph zones, low traffic zones and average speed cameras. Design of roads should use the Vision Zero approach.

I will work with all relevant agencies to plan how to tackle the deep health inequalities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The 10-year difference in life expectancy between different parts of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is a stark indicator of how profound this problem is.

Working patterns have undoubtedly changed for good, with more people wanting to spend more of their working time at or close to home. The Mayor must help make this easier and more attractive in a range of ways, including supporting more local co-working facilities and work hubs, getting faster and more reliable broadband, encouraging the roll out of 5G. Transport provision must consider those who don't live close to facilities so that they have good sustainable alternatives to the car to get there.



A better future for young people

Young people have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. This comes on top of Brexit and climate change, both of which are also a blight on the future of our children. We need to act urgently to reverse this.

As Mayor, I will do all I can to give young people confidence that we are on their side, so they can have some hope for the future.

Careers advice here is currently patchy and inadequate. I will invest in proper support that raises aspirations. We need to get businesses and universities linked up to schools, so that employers have conversations with children about career opportunities - not just once, but several times from primary school until college and beyond.

Apprenticeships are an excellent way of getting the right skills that boost job prospects. But it is really hard to navigate the system, for both students and employers. I will get businesses to

offer more apprenticeship places across a wide range of sectors and levels, and put in place a simple and transparent brokerage for young people to find the best opportunities.

I will work to unblock barriers to post-16 education. I will support new and expanded provision in places that are currently poorly served, such as St Neots and East Cambridgeshire. I will ensure our transport plans help make travel to college easier and cheaper.

I will work with partners to identify particular areas where young people are having difficulties transitioning into further/higher education or into work, and then integrate support measures into the other work of the Combined Authority. For example, we need to make sure that young people whose attainment has been affected by mental health difficulties are adequately supported as they move on from treatment.

University of Peterborough

The project to create a University of Peterborough has made significant and welcome progress in recent months. I will continue to support the setting up and development of the new University.

In these early stages, the vision of the University needs to be refined. It must aim to be a fully-fledged university that isn't solely focused on providing a number of skills that are locally in demand. We need to consider carefully how it can attract students from well beyond the city, how the city can keep many of them after graduation and, more broadly, how it can have a role in boosting the vitality of the city. The absence of coordinated plans for student

accommodation is a particular flaw if we want to bring in students from elsewhere.

It is important that the University develops clear specialisms that give it a distinctive profile in the national higher education landscape and help attract a wide range of students. These specialisms must build on the areas of industry and research where Peterborough is strong, such as environmental and climate issues, helping realise the city's aim to be the Environment Capital of the UK, and high-tech manufacturing. Teaching and research have to be closely integrated to fully realise the synergies of a university.





Working together

The Mayor should be a strong voice for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, representing the area to government and to the world. They need to be fighting for changes that make the lives of residents better, bringing in funding and investment.

Leadership that a Mayor can provide goes well beyond the direct powers devolved from government. As Mayor, I will bring people together around shared aims, cooperating openly with all the councils and the many organisations which have a stake in the future of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

I will always work with the communities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, listening carefully to their concerns and ambitions. Decision-making will be open and collaborative.

The current Mayor has failed to live up to the potential of the role. I will repair the damage he has done and put the management of the Combined Authority on a sound basis.

The criteria for selecting infrastructure projects and the process for applying them need to be transparently explained throughout to ensure that there is no perception of favouritism. I will

end the proliferation of studies and business cases.

Staff need to be appointed on merit. Particular care needs to be taken to avoid giving the impression that political considerations or other links could have any place in employment decisions.

I will put in place transparent monitoring of delivery of all elements of the Combined Authority's work, without cherry-picking.

I will make the work of the Combined Authority far more open and accountable to residents. Decision-making should take place in public, including at the Business Board, unless there are good reasons for confidentiality. The publication of the information on which decisions are based should be as extensive as possible.

I will re-establish trust with government, with local partners and with residents. In particular, I will work hard to make sure we get the full amount of money for housing by reassuring government of the competence and capacity of the Combined Authority.



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