

Liberal Democrats

It is less than a month since our last report but quite a lot has happened.

The severe bad weather has caused significant problems with snow and flooding stretching council officers

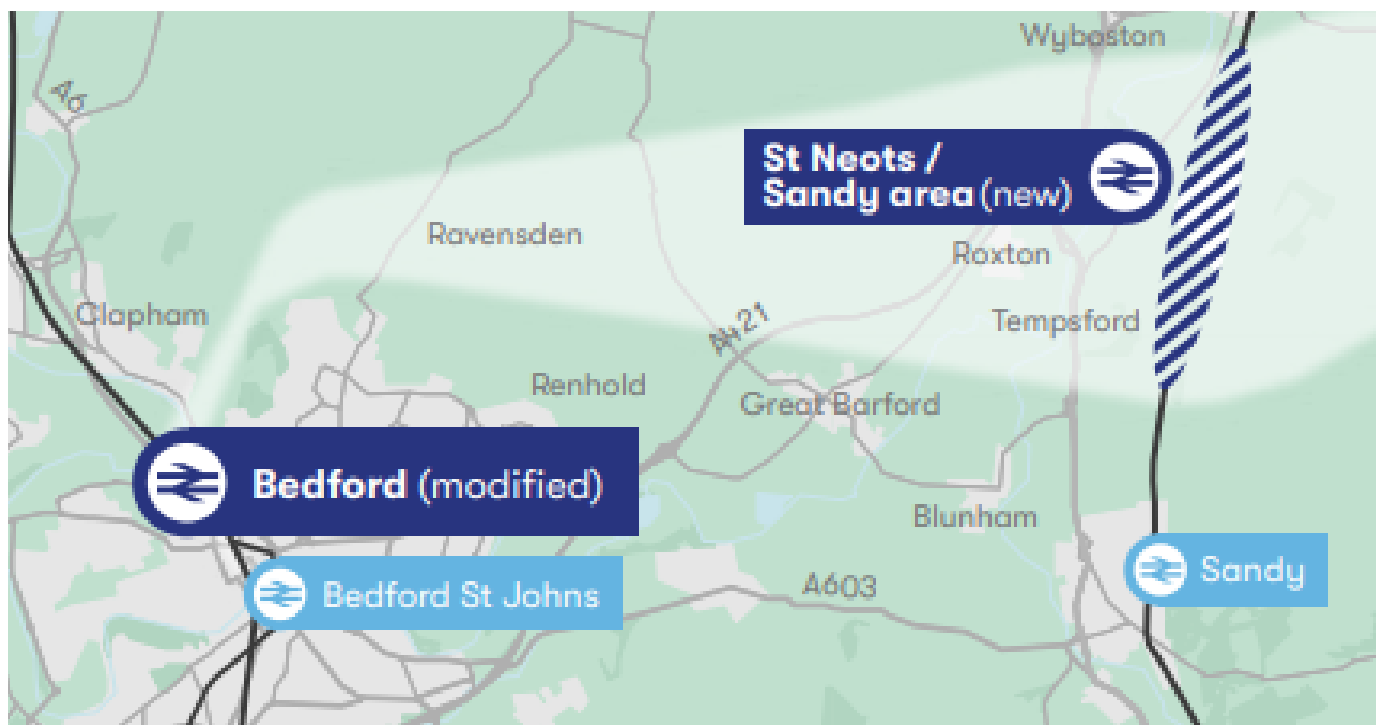
who are already tackling demanding COVID related issues. There are numerous council staff suffering significant illness as a consequence of their duties as key workers. Please be aware that all council staff are working under extreme pressure and still maintaining an extraordinary high level of frontline services. It is expected that green waste collections will be able to resume in March if there is no greater impact on staff.

Glass Recycling

We receive frequent calls about the bottle banks being full. The lockdown has substantially increased the amount of glass recycled through these facilities. In 2020 a total of 2877 tonnes were collected which was an increase of 726 tonnes or 33%. The bottle banks are emptied weekly but occasionally they will fill up, especially if folks have a clear out! Please do call us if you see them full and we will ask for an additional collection. However please be aware that staff illness due to COVID may mean collections cannot take place immediately.

Oxford Cambridge Railway

In 2019 East West Rail consulted on possible routes for the Oxford to Cambridge railway and the government has just announced more funding for this project to go ahead. Bedford Borough Council has always advocated that the railway goes through Bedford Midland station and this has been the agreed position of all political parties based on the economic advantages it will



bring to Bedford. Following the consultation a corridor has been produced by East West Rail through which the route go from Bedford to St Neots. (See <https://eastwestrail.co.uk>). Unlike the other sections on the route this part will be completely new. The line will go north out of Bedford station and turn east before Clapham towards St Neots. In the further consultation which will take place we will be advocating a route which takes the railway north of Ravensden towards Twinwoods which would ensure less impact on Brickhill and northern villages.

Kimbolton Road – Traffic Signals

Following comments made at the last council meeting we have discussed the problems with council highways officers. Officers have checked the visibility of the traffic lights on the inbound Kimbolton Road approach to the Putnoe Lane junction. While the position of the lights complies with design standards, officers agree that there may still be a visibility issue for the first vehicle waiting at the traffic lights. It has therefore been agreed to add an advance stop line for cyclists at this location, which will pull back the stop line for vehicles by around 4m. This will improve visibility to all of the signal heads while also improving facilities for cyclists at the junction. These works will be carried out together with other measures required following the road safety audit and snagging inspections. We expect this to take place shortly. Highways officers have reviewed visibility to the traffic signal heads on all approaches to the traffic signals and are happy that the recent changes to the signal head louvres do not require any further adjustment, and they also believe that no further signal heads require louvres at this stage; however this will be monitored over the next few months and additional measures will be installed if deemed necessary.

Manton Lane Bedford – Reservoir Site

This project includes the construction of a cycle path and public footpath along Manton Lane, a new heavy goods vehicle entrance and an entrance for private vehicles. This construction will take place imminently.

Manton Lane Footbridge

Thankfully the footbridge was installed over a snowy weekend and is now safely in place. There are some minor works and we expect it to be open to the public in a few days.

Bedford River Festival and the Kite and Motoring Festival

Bedford Borough Council will postpone these festivals until 2022 due to the ongoing uncertainty about big outdoor events this summer due to COVID. The planned new date for the next River Festival is 23 & 24 July 2022.

Bedford High Street

Improvement works have begun as part of the Transporting Bedford Project. Bedford High Street is to become one lane only for traffic, creating more space for shoppers, pedestrians, and giving our High Street a high quality regeneration. Bedford's High Street has been one lane for a number of months now, with temporary barriers put in place to help people social distance during the coronavirus pandemic. The road is expected to re-open by the end of November 2021. The whole road will not be closed at once, and signed diversions will be in place. As part of these works, permanent loading and short term parking bays will be installed

to help shops along the High Street function and attract shoppers, wider pavements will be created using high quality york paving and granite kerbstones, and average 20mph speed cameras will be installed.

COVID Vaccinations. With a new variant at large and infections still high, with 23 new cases in Brickhill this week, this is no time to lower our guard. There were 33 deaths in Bedford Borough last week and 47 the week before and this is not a disease which should be considered only a problem for the elderly. Over the last two weeks the rates per 100,000 people has dropped in Bedford Borough from 484 to 386. This shows that infection is slowly coming down but there are still over 160 people in Bedford Hospital with COVID so please do not take chances and follow the guidelines, hands - face - space.

As your local councillors we will continue to work hard and keep you informed through regular deliveries of FOCUS, surgeries and our website where you can sign up for our Brickhill newsletter. www.puttingbrickhillfirst.com

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