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Residents of Cambridgeshire village Swaffham Prior are one step closer to achieving a low carbon community heat scheme after Councillors gave approval for the project to move to the next stage.

The decision by members of Cambridgeshire County Council's [Commercial & Investment Committee](#)

([https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/CCC_live/Document.ashx?](https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/CCC_live/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=W5TtyH7d1Uj0dad9R1XLvye9OzhdTxn%2bofqKQWbAY65%2b0DwTRXgpPw%3d%3d&rUzwRPF%2bZ3zd4E7Ikn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNih225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCuBSFfXsDGW9IXnlg%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&FgPIIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5oIA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCPMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJFf55vVA%3d)

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The Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust (SPCLT) first approached the County Council in 2017 to collaborate and support them with a community heat scheme, which will enable the village to stop relying on oil and move to a renewable heat source for heating and hot water needs. After exploring numerous low carbon heating options, a detailed feasibility study suggested that a district heat network with an energy centre, which has a combination of heat being extracted from groundwater and mains gas, would be the most viable option.

The proposed project still has a lot of work and analysis before any implementation can take place, but aligns with the vision of the councils Corporate Energy Strategy and councillors were in high praise of the innovative project.

Cllr Josh Schumann, Chair of the Commercial & Investment Committee said: "The Committee approved development of the important next stages of this project, which could support the village in moving away from relying on oil and onto a renewable energy through heat extracted from ground water. What excites me is the knowledge that by 2021 the village could own its own heating system and not be vulnerable to fluctuating global prices of oil that the residents are currently tied to.

"Boreholes to test the ground water could be drilled as early as next year, which is a vital next step for the project. We will also need access to homes to identify what is needed in the home to connect to the community heat network.

"The project has identified Cambridgeshire County Council land in Swaffham Prior as a location for the energy centre and we are very keen to discuss how this helps the village realise its low carbon ambitions and manage their future

energy costs.”

The proposed project will be retrofitted, one of the first of its kind in the country, and as such will act as a pilot project for both the government and similar villages looking to convert to sustainable heat systems.

The [project team \(https://www.mlei.co.uk/section-1/swaffham-prior-community-heat-project/\)](https://www.mlei.co.uk/section-1/swaffham-prior-community-heat-project/) are working alongside the government department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), who have provided valuable advice and grant funding, as well as a letter of support for the progression of the project. This project exemplifies the principles articulated in the government’s Clean Growth Strategy. The decarbonisation of properties dependent on oil is seen as an important step towards meeting our commitments under the Climate Change Act.

Colleagues at the Cambridgeshire Peterborough Combined Authority are also excited about the prospects of the proposed scheme. James Palmer, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, approved initial match funding on the understanding that the work can be replicated to benefit other communities within Cambridgeshire keen to take on this new energy journey.

Mayor James Palmer said: “What is fantastic about this scheme is that it has come from within the village, via its community land trust, and is potentially creating a replicable model for how our rural communities can thrive sustainably into the future.

“The community has already come together to help meet its housing needs, and it is no surprise to see it now aiming to meet its future energy needs as well. This should absolutely be encouraged and that’s why I was more than happy to agree to match funding to help move the project forward.

“The Combined Authority will continue to keep up to speed on this scheme via its project board and I very much look forward to seeing further progress.”

The next step of developing a business case for the project will look at detailed financing options, scheme design and procurement strategy. Engagement and support of the Swaffham Prior community will be key to ensuring the project’s success, and the project team have already begun engagement work including a presentation evening with table discussions, as well as a legal focus group with residents in the community. Further community outreach will follow.

Cllr David Greenfield, member of the Community Land Trust and Vice-Chairman of the Swaffham Prior Parish Council said: “It is very exciting to get the Cambridgeshire County Council committee approval and sets us up nicely for the BEIS Heat Networks Delivery Unit grant application at the end of the month.

“The project is important for the village but it is also of strategic importance to communities that are off the gas grid and are looking for ways to move from oil based heating to a more sustainable, low carbon options that are also therefore less susceptible to price fluctuations and fuel security issues.”

Further details about the scheme, in the form of a Frequently Asked Questions document, can be found on the Swaffham Prior Parish Council CLT webpage here: <http://www.swaffham-prior.org.uk/pc/CLT.html> (<http://www.swaffham-prior.org.uk/pc/CLT.html>).



The strategic team developing the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Scheme

Above: Cllr Josh Schumann, CCC Energy Project Director Sheryl French, Mayor James Palmer, Mike Barker (RPS) and Emma Fletcher (CLT) stand outside Shire Hall.

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