



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

**MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME
Investment Prospectus**

Appraisal Report

2nd March 2022

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1. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority issued its eighth call for Market Towns funding projects with **one application** received by the agreed timescale.
2. We were asked to act as the independent assessors for the call and this report is prepared to assist the Entrepreneurial Advisory Panel (EAP) conduct its review before the bids are presented onto the Combined Authority's Board for a decision on each project.
3. The application was submitted by Soham Town Council for the **Soham to Wicken Fen Cycle Way**. This project links Soham's new Station to the National Trust Nature Reserve and the national cycle network. It is estimated that some 15% of visitors to the site will use the station, a footfall of circa 10,000 visitors a year. With the station now fully operational this project aims to encourage visitor footfall to the town's High Street. The application is estimating £100,000 of extra high street spend per year within the local economy.
4. Wicken Fen. The area is one of Europe's most important wetlands and supports an abundance of wildlife. Charles Darwin is said to have collected beetles on the site in the 1820s and many eminent Victorian naturalists collected specimens that can still be found in museums across the country. Wicken Fen is part of the National Trust and currently has some 65,000 visitors a year. As there is no public transport service to the site it is estimated that 90% of all visitors arrive by car.
5. This application is the construction of the cycleway to deliver a year-round connection between Soham's station and its outstanding nature reserve. This has been a long held local ambition and the byway route was subject to a detailed study by Sustrans in 2013. Matching funding of £325,000 is to come from a East Cambridgeshire District Council grant application which is pending final confirmation.
6. We have recommended the project for approval totalling **£330,000** from the market towns programme subject to confirmation of matching funding; assurances that any cost overrun will be met by the District and Town Councils; and agreeing an appropriate monitoring framework be agreed to assess the project's impact on high street visitor spend..
7. The detailed recommendations are set out in the next section. This report should be read in conjunction with the appraisal matrix which is provided as a separate attachment.

App No.	Applicant	Project	Grant Requested	Recommendations
1	Soham Town Council	Soham to Wicken Fen Cycle Way	£330,000	Approval for the requested amount of £330,000 subject to the following conditions: 1. Confirmation of matching funding. 2. Confirmation that any capital cost overrun will be met by East Cambridgeshire District Council and/or Soham Town Council 3. An appropriate monitoring framework be agreed to assess the project's impact on high street visitor spend.
	TOTAL		£ 330,000	

Market Towns Programme Investment Prospectus

Application Appraisal Matrix (summary)

Weighted Score (max 99 available)	
	Minimum pass is 74 marks (75%)
Project Title / Town:	East Cambs - Soham to Wicken Fen Cycle Way
Criteria	Mark - Edit
Rationale	4
Timescales	4
Activities/Milestones	3
Delivery Arrangements	9
Outputs/Outcomes	15
Strategic Fit	15
State Aid	3
Costs	6
Resourcing	8
VFM	15
Risks	6
Total Score	88.0
Percentage Score	88.9%