

# FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **MP and Mayor visit March for update on town's exciting regeneration plans**

Government leaders visited March town centre last week to hear for themselves the exciting progress being made on the town's transformational Future High Streets Fund work.

Steve Barclay, MP for North East Cambridgeshire, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, and Dr Nik Johnson, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, visited the town on Friday (21 January). They were accompanied by Fenland District Council Leader, Cllr Chris Boden, Deputy Leader, Cllr Jan French, and Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage, Cllr Chris Seaton, along with March Deputy Mayor and Town Councillor Ray Jack.

The visit was an opportunity for the District Council to showcase the plans for its £8.4million March Future High Streets project and explain more about the individual regeneration schemes for Broad Street, the riverside, Market Place and Acre Road area.

The group discussed how the 'once in a generation' project will enhance existing assets to create new and inclusive spaces for locals, businesses, and visitors, and heard how grant funding will be used to help property owners bring vacant shops into use and assist in the conversion of upper floor space into town centre living.

Cllr Chris Seaton, Fenland District Council's Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage, who welcomed the leaders to the site visit, said: "We were delighted to update the Mayor and MP on the progress being made with the project and discuss in detail the areas that will benefit from this fantastic investment. The pandemic has taught us more than ever how important it is to build back better high streets, support local businesses, improve the public realm, and celebrate pride in local communities. We want to make March a vibrant, destination market town where people want to live, work and visit, and this Future High Streets Fund project will help us to achieve that."

Steve Barclay MP said: "The March Future High Streets Fund is a once in a generation opportunity to make a significant change to the High Street, with Government providing £6.4million of the £8.4million. It was good to see the plans and get an update on what is going to be happening and I am looking forward to seeing the outcomes over the next few years."

Dr Nik Johnson said: "I'm so proud that the Combined Authority has played a key role in supporting the people of March as they bring to life their vision for a greener,

community-friendly town centre, with a thriving and prosperous future as both historic market town and modern business and tourism hub.

“Investing in March and the whole of Fenland – whether by offering business grants and loans or by developing rail links, digital connectivity, safer routes for walkers and cyclists, new homes and regenerating the entire area – remains top of the list for the Combined Authority. I’m delighted that the new platform buildings we’ve funded at March station will open shortly, ready to welcome visitors and investors to March’s high street, present and future.”

Cllr Chris Boden, Leader of Fenland District Council, added: “The project is continuing at pace to get everything ready to progress to the design phase. It’s an exciting time for March, and I’m looking forward to seeing the schemes come to fruition. This project is one of many the Council will be working on across all areas of Fenland as we move into the future. This includes preparing a bid to the Government’s Levelling Up Fund for Wisbech, which we’ll be submitting in the spring.”

The £8.4million investment into March comes from a range of sources, including £6.4million from the Government’s Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Future High Streets Fund (FHFSF) and £2million from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). March is just one of 72 chosen towns across England to be awarded a FHFSF grant following a successful bid by Fenland District Council in 2019.

The five transformational projects being delivered through the programme by the end of March 2024 are:

- Transformation of Broad Street, to create a welcoming pedestrianised open space in the centre of town
- Opening up the riverside areas into Broad Street, to improve visibility and access
- Redevelop the historic Market Place, re-instating historic features close to the town hall and refreshing the car park
- Regeneration of the Acre Road area, creating a new gateway development to link existing historic assets with the town centre
- Reactivating vacant units and delivering a Flats Over Shops programme – a grant programme to support owners in bringing vacant shops into use and to assist in the conversion of upper floor space into town centre living

For more information on the March Future High Streets Fund project, visit:  
[www.fenland.gov.uk/MFHFSF](http://www.fenland.gov.uk/MFHFSF)

**ENDS**

**Press Office**

**For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226**

