

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 FEBRUARY 2015**

**Statement from: Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for  
Economic Development, Environment, Planning, Tourism**

### **Economic Development & Tourism**

I am delighted to announce that Lincolnshire County Council attracted £1.75m from the Coastal Communities Fund for our projects to improve tourism facilities at Gibraltar Point and Chapel Point. I have set the objective that we should double the value of tourism in Lincolnshire over 20 years, and these two schemes will contribute greatly to that objective.

I was also very pleased to hear the Government's announcement of £15m for projects championed by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The budget included a substantial grant towards schemes to strengthen the food sector in and around Holbeach, both through new infrastructure to open up land and through a new university facility to provide skills and technology to the sector.

The Lincolnshire food sector has been a focus of the Government's work over the past few weeks. As well as the grant awards that I mentioned earlier, George Eustice MP (Minister for Farming and Food) visited the inaugural meeting of the Greater Lincolnshire Food Board in January. It was very useful to have a detailed discussion with the Minister about the priorities and opportunities for the local food production sector, but the most impressive point was that our Food Board was comprised of the leaders of multi-national food businesses that are based in Lincolnshire but contribute massively to UK plc. The Minister firmly understood that if he wants to talk to the food production sector, then he should talk to Lincolnshire.

Our work with developers continues to flourish as they show interest in the county. Their interest is not solely about asking for support from us. As well as that, developers are prepared to contribute to our objectives – for example, a group of ten developers are funding the Lincolnshire presence at the MIPIM property development conference this year.

The annual Select Lincolnshire awards took place on 3 February. These awards celebrate the excellent food and hospitality in Lincolnshire. I would like to congratulate all of the businesses who won awards or were highly commended. Members will remember that Select Lincolnshire was originally an LCC initiative, but we agreed an arrangement for the Chamber of Commerce to take it over. The popularity of the recent awards night shows that Select Lincolnshire goes from strength to strength, and is a good example of how an effective council can commission a service without affecting its quality.

As we are all aware, 2015 marks the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta, which has great significance for us in relation to tourism in the county. Cllr Worth will include in his statement an update on the progress of the Castle works but we look forward to a busy year.

Our official opening has now been arranged for 8 June, and there will be a number of celebrations in the Castle on that day and during the week until the anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta on 15 June.

As well as these celebrations, there will be lectures at the Cathedral and the two universities in the city, arts events, a carnival, and even a trail of barons. We are clear, though, that the benefits of our investment will be felt across the whole of the county and the Visit Lincolnshire tourist guide that I recently launched makes the 'Castle Connections' appealing to visitors and residents alike.

## **Environment**

We have recently learned that our bid for £1.75m Coastal Community Funding to support delivery of the Coastal Observatory at Chapel Point and the refurbishment of the Gibraltar Point Visitor Centre have been successful.

Gibraltar Point is a very important asset to Lincolnshire, a National Nature Reserve that draws some 180,000 people to the county every year. Members of Council will be aware that Gibraltar Point was severely damaged in the coastal floods of December 2013. We have worked hard with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust to ensure that it has remained open to the public. With the news of this grant funding we can now proceed to the next step of reinstating quality modern facilities ensuring Gibraltar Point continues to attract people to enjoy our county's environment.

Further north, the new coastal observatory will provide a unique visitor attraction, acting as a gateway to the Coastal Country Park, while helping to reinforce the links between the different sites on the coast, and helping visitors to explore more and stay longer.

## **Climate Local**

In 2013 we signed up to the joint Government/Local Government Climate Local to demonstrate our commitment to both reducing our carbon footprint, and adapting to the effects of climate change. We will shortly be publishing the annual review of our Action Plan which will demonstrate continued commitment and delivery across the Council.

Activity has progressed under all six overarching commitments, and stakeholders have provided updates with details of progress. Furthermore, in some areas new projects are being developed which improve our resilience to the effects of climate change and reduce our carbon footprint. Examples of progress include:

- A significant increase in registrations for the Floodline Warning Direct Service.
- Targets have been surpassed for the percentage of LCC employees who cycle to work, or use public transport.
- Delivery of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan is ahead of schedule.
- The internal SAGE green champion network has increased in the number of members and a recent energy saving campaign resulted in a 9% decrease in electricity consumption compared to the same time the previous year.
- The collective switching scheme has been implemented and is in progress.
- The Energy from Waste plant creates enough electricity to power over 24,000 homes.

## **Flood Risk Management**

As reported in my last statement, the Environment Agency national consultation came to a close at the end of January, and my officers provided a robust response with strong support from our partners locally.

Further to delaying its original plans for implementing the proposals for Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) legislation in the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act, Defra issued a rapid six-week consultation in September/October last year, outlining a very different approach. This would, in effect, seek to deal with SuDS provision through the National Planning Policy Framework and local planning policy, with local planning authorities determining SuDS proposals as part of the planning process. Arrangements for long term management of any agreed SuDS schemes were left open, although the consultation suggested a range of possible approaches, to be secured through the planning process, including management companies, local voluntary approaches and Water and Sewerage Companies (should they choose to undertake maintenance responsibilities).

In the consultation, Defra recognised that local planning authorities would require expert advice to undertake this new role and indications were given that upper tier authorities, as Lead Local Authorities, may be asked to provide this. I am pleased to inform you that just before Christmas, Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, announced that from the 6 April 2015, Lead Local Flood Authorities will not only undertake this role, but as outlined in a subsequent parallel consultation from DCLG, may undertake a wider role as statutory consultee in the planning process, not only for SuDS but in relation to all 'local flood risk'.

The Environment Agency would still remain the statutory consultee for coastal and fluvial flood risk, but the County Council would become responsible for responding to planning applications with respect to SuDS and flood risk from surface water, ground water and ordinary watercourses. Whilst I am very pleased with these proposed changes, as it reflects our holistic role in local flood risk management, and preventing flood risk to proposed development is one of the best investments we can make, it does place an additional burden upon us. It is essential that this additional burden is funded by Government and we are currently working, at a national level, with the Local Government Association in lobbying Defra and DCLG for the full costs to be met.

## **Strategic Planning**

In support of the Central Lincolnshire and South East Lincolnshire Local Plans, the County Council is leading preparation of Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs). This is in partnership with District colleagues and infrastructure providers. IDPs identify the physical, social and green infrastructure to support plan objectives over the relevant period. In developing the IDP, the type, scale, distribution and phasing of infrastructure is informed by those factors for development as identified in the Local Plan.

The IDP will identify the costs of infrastructure, proposed sources of infrastructure funding, known funding gaps, proposed delivery mechanisms and proposed delivery partners. Work to inform the content of these documents included a workshop for utility providers covering central Lincolnshire in August 2014 and a wider request for

information from infrastructure providers in October 2014. From both exercises, a significant amount of evidence has been gathered and captured in a matrix for each Plan area on infrastructure themes, deficiencies, needs and potential phasing.

Detailed information about the infrastructure requirements for the Plan areas will become clearer as they move forward and the location and amount of growth in the various settlements is known. Draft IDPs will be available to inform the next stage of the Local Plans production later in 2015. Key decisions that the County Council and District Councils will need to make include infrastructure priorities and delivery, for example through the Local Enterprise Partnership and other funding, Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).