

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 9 DECEMBER 2011

**Statement from: Councillor E J Poll, Deputy Leader and Executive Councillor
for Economic Development**

Total Environment

The Council has recently received high praise from the Minister for Flooding, Richard Benyon, who has publically recognised the excellent progress Lincolnshire is making in developing new ways of managing and funding flood risk management in the county. The Defra initiated pilot, Total Environment, is closely linked to our other Community Based Budget pilots and sees Lincolnshire again at the forefront of innovative thinking. The pilot is looking at how all water management agencies, Environment Agency, Districts, Internal Drainage Boards and Water Companies can work more effectively to fund and deliver improvements in reducing flood risks in our communities. Excellent progress is being made, managed through our Environmental Management team, working with our partners in the Lincolnshire Flood & Water Management Partnership.

Play at the Collection

Improvements have been undertaken at The Collection on the existing shop area to create an under 5s learn and play area. This will create the opportunity to engage with a new audience in a vibrant way. In addition changes to the café will provide an improved visitor experience and a destination café that yields additional income for the museum. Stokes have been appointed to run and manage the café.

These works have been made possible due as a result of securing Renaissance funding the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, now the Arts Council England and are creating both an improved offer to museum visitors and a more efficient sustainable public service.

Investment in Archives Environmental System

We have invested £510,000 in Lincolnshire Archives to protect the county's archives for future generations. Lincolnshire Archives holds uniquely significant documents detailing nearly 1,000 years of Lincolnshire's history including collections 'Designated' as being of National and International importance. To ensure that the records are preserved and irreplaceable information they contain is safeguarded, they are kept in strong rooms in which the air temperature and humidity are controlled. The air handling plant, controlling the environment in these rooms, has reached the end of its working life and will be replaced by December 2011.

Race on Line

The Race Online 2012 campaign which was launched in March 2010 aims to "make the UK the first nation in the world where everyone can use the web". Throughout November Staff and volunteers from across Lincolnshire have been using nearly 400 People's Network computers in libraries to support the national 'Go on Give an Hour' campaign to give hour long Internet taster sessions.

Library Book Fine Amnesty

Throughout November libraries around the county have been holding an amnesty on overdue books. This means customers will be able to return books they have held on to beyond the normal loan period to libraries without paying the usual late fees. It is expected that the amnesty will return much needed books to circulation within the library network.

The government's Business Link service officially closed its doors in Lincolnshire on 25th November. Business Link assisted several thousand Lincolnshire businesses each year. The Economic Scrutiny Committee felt that helping small businesses to grow was important to LCC and undertook a review. We've carried out recommendations of the committee, and I am pleased to announce that the flagship action from that review, the creation of a website to provide advice to the Lincolnshire business community, is now live, see BusinessLincolnshire.com.

We continue to work on the redevelopment of Lincoln Castle. Work has now started on site on a Heritage Skills Centre, which will provide training in the skills that our nation is in danger of losing. It will also provide another attraction for tourists to visit in historic Lincoln. And whilst mentioning tourists, I am pleased to say that the Lincoln sausage festival -which was organised by Lincoln BIG with help from our Tastes of Lincolnshire team - attracted a record number of visitors this year: 11,000.

Since the last report we have achieved the following highlights:

- Officially reopened Grantham Market Place following refurbishment works. Plans are now being drawn up for the next phase within Wide Westgate which we will look to implement when the worst of the winter weather has passed;
- A planning application for the development of a new office park at Grantham's Station Approach has been submitted and is expected to be determined in March 2012;
- Negotiations to acquire a number of buildings along the line of the new East West Link in Lincoln are on-going;
- Planning permission for the Kesteven Mews Development has been secured and construction of this new office space funded in part by ERDF is due to start in the New Year;
- Construction of Teal Park is continuing with Siemens now having started the erection of their new factory.

The first phase of our automatic metering programme for some schools and corporate properties which enables over 800 electricity and gas meters is complete. This will give us a better understanding of our energy use than ever; which is critical in complying with government legislation such as the Carbon Reduction Commitment. Work is now underway to make sure we make best use of the information so we can target the worst performing buildings to improve their energy efficiency and thereby save money and carbon. To date we've invested over £1million which has reduced our annual energy costs by £390,000.

The County Council has taken the lead in coordinating the development of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the Central Lincolnshire Joint Core Strategy Authority; the lead being taken by the County Council is innovative and has attracted Government interest. The work is critical to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner to support growth aspirations centred on the Growth Points Lincoln and Gainsborough.

Working in partnership with the Lincolnshire district councils, we are about to pass 10,000 households having benefited from HELP support for energy efficiency investment in their homes. This means over 11,500 cavities or lofts have been insulated which will save Lincolnshire households in the order of £1 million on their energy bills.

The Council continues to lead nationally in developing its approach to flood risk management. We submitted the first preliminary countywide assessment of flood risk from surface water before the statutory deadline, and we are informed by colleagues in the Environment Agency that this was one of two chosen as examples of best practice nationally. We have now begun work with our partners to develop a comprehensive joint Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which will provide a single overarching approach to managing flooding and drainage in the county, with a single programme of works prioritised on the basis of need. In doing so we will work through our established partnership arrangements, and will draw on recent successful work such as our coastal change pathfinder. Nationally we continue to play our part in influencing Government policy through the LGA, the Association of Drainage Authorities and the North Eastern Coastal Group.

Turning to the natural environment, which is such an important part of the character of Lincolnshire, the project to manage and restore the Lincolnshire Limewoods has concluded its first phases, and we are now developing proposals for consolidating the benefits we have achieved here into a wider, more comprehensive landscape-scale approach to the Lincolnshire's environment. Our aim is to link up the most important sites that we manage with our partners, so that we can maximise the benefits offered by our environment to local people and visitors. This is the rationale behind the development of important projects like the Coastal Country Park, and as a pivotal part of this approach we are now consulting on a new Management Plan for the Wolds AONB. This is a statutory duty on the Council and its partner local authorities, but provides an opportunity to take up the key principles of the Government White Paper 'The Natural Choice' and to fully realise the economic potential that exists in sustainable management of the natural environment.