

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 17 FEBRUARY 2012**

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

### **Economy**

As you know, I think it is important that we continue to make the case for Lincolnshire with government departments and especially DEFRA. I'm pleased, therefore, to report that the Lincolnshire Forum for Agriculture and Horticulture has been asked to become one of DEFRA's "Rural and Farming Networks". There are only 14 of these in the country, so we have a great opportunity for Lincolnshire's farmers and rural businesses to have a direct route into ministers and senior officials.

Staying with the food sector, we continue to help food businesses to grow. We are offering the county's food businesses the chance to attend the international Food Expo, which is held in Birmingham in March 2012. These events give businesses the chance to meet other food businesses with a view to selling their produce. Previous attendance at these events has led to large amounts of extra trade for our businesses, and I expect that March's event will do the same.

In these tough times for businesses, access to business opportunities such as this is vital. The Olympics is a different kind of opportunity – and we have been notified that contracts won by Lincolnshire firms to support the 2012 Olympics will bring more than £30m into the county.

Since my last statement Lincolnshire County Council has, through its economic regeneration activities, helped secure significant investment into the county.

By providing technical support to the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, we have helped secure a Growing Places fund of £6.4m to be invested over the coming months.

Economic Development Project work across the county is ongoing, but since my last report there has been particular emphasis in the east of the county where we have secured approximately £400,000 European funding to construct new industrial workspace units at Alford.

In addition to this we have now submitted a planning application for our Coastal Observatory project which we hope to construct later this summer.

Last, but by no means least, During January, I met the trustees of the Heritage Lottery Fund to stress our commitment to the Historic Lincoln project. We now expect to hear whether our £12m bid for funding has been approved in late March.

## **Culture**

Investment in other aspects of our heritage and tourism offer continues.

At Gainsborough Old Hall, development works are under way to open up more parts of the building to the public, create a new visitor route using personal digital assistants (PDAs), new guide books and interpretation panels. They also include the co-location of the shop and café, better facilities for school visits and will enable civil ceremony services to take place.

The works will be complete by Easter 2012 and have been largely funded by Arts Council England through the Renaissance programme.

Under the Discover Stamford banner, the heritage offer in Stamford Library is due for completion end January 2012. The Library will house a purpose built permanent exhibition on the history of Stamford which include interactive displays, collections and printed trails around the town. Discover Stamford will be the central hub for visitors and residents to find out more about the town and its history.

Developments in the library service also continue with a new National Information Offer. The council is leading a regional pilot project in libraries that aims to help people find online information about health and social care issues more easily. The pilot will be running in two libraries in Lincolnshire, Birchwood and Boston, plus two libraries in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

Library staffs in these locations have been trained to help customers find local health and social care websites on the Internet. Each library computer will also lead users to NHS Choices and other local health care websites.

The National Information Offer is a national programme funded by Arts Council England and run by The Society of Chief Librarians in partnership with Directgov and other national partners. More than 60 public library authorities in England are participating in the programme.