

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 22 FEBRUARY 2013**

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

### **Heritage and Libraries**

#### **Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire**

Arts Council England have granted Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire (AHL) £324k from the Museums and Schools Programme to work in partnership with 10 aviation heritage sites and the Royal Air Force Museum to offer more than 100 schools and thousands of students from the county the opportunity to learn about Lincolnshire's unique aviation heritage, visit local sites and share local stories. The experience will extend from history to scientific and artistic learning. This programme is one of a suite of initiatives funded through the Department for Education as a response to key recommendations from *Cultural Education: an independent review* by Darren Henley.

#### **New Community Libraries**

In recent months the library service has supported communities at Ingoldmells, Winthorpe and Irbgy and Bratoft to create community book deposits, of between 300 and 500 books each. In October Saxilby Library was relocated to the St Andrews Centre in the village where it is now operated by Saxilby and Ingelby Parish Council. In December Waddington Library was relocated to the Lincolnshire Cooperative Pharmacy in the village where it is now operated by them. In all cases volunteers have played an important part in making library services available to customers.

#### **Library Management System**

During February the Library Service's existing computerised management system is being replaced with a more modern, flexible and more user friendly one. Although there will be some disruption to services during the changeover, the process should be complete by the end of the month, and the new system will save the authority over £135,000 per annum.

### **Economy**

#### **Support to Business**

Progress still continues on Lincoln Castle to turn it into a visitor attraction that will transform the city's economy. The Heritage Skills Centre was formally opened by Viscount Linley on Friday 8th February -more than 100 people attended and the skills centre now has a programme of exciting courses available to the public and to the heritage construction trade.

The latest quarterly economic survey -where we survey 4000 businesses- shows that businesses are still struggling to attract finance from banks. We have now started our joint initiative with the University of Lincoln -the Lincolnshire Investment Network- which

will provide businesses with advice on how to present their cases to banks. Businesses can register for help through our Business Lincolnshire website.

Staying on the subject of finance and funding, we are leading an initiative to draw down £5m of European funding for Lincoln, East Lindsey, and Boston. Our actions have kept the money so that it can be invested in worthwhile economic projects in Lincolnshire; there was a danger that it would be taken by the Department for Communities and Local Government and redistributed through the sort of challenge fund approach that favours major city areas.

What I am happy to report is that despite what appears to be a relatively low level of business confidence nationally, the creation and survival of small businesses in Lincolnshire appears to be improving. Our network of business incubation centres and workshop units maintains a high level of occupancy, whilst our newest developments Wyvern House in Lincoln and Canebuzo at Long Sutton are generating significant serious occupier interest well in advance of the completion of construction. I believe this bodes well for an increase in the number of employment opportunities available across the county.

I am pleased to report we are one of a small number of organisations to have attracted Coastal Communities Fund support. Our successful bid will draw down £200,000 to help businesses in all sectors on the coast to widen their markets and attract more customers.

## **Major Infrastructure**

Our delivery of major infrastructure projects across the county continues.

In Grantham, working with South Kesteven District Council we have developed and consulted on a masterplan for the proposed Southern Urban Extension. This will now proceed through the processes to become Local Planning Policy and will provide the necessary framework for the making of a planning application for the Southern Link Road before the end of the financial year.

In Lincoln we continue to acquire the properties we need to develop the East West Link road and we are actively working with developers to enable the bringing forward of new developments along the line of the new road. Through this approach not only will the people of Lincolnshire benefit from improved connectivity across the city but the route will also provide a ribbon of new developments, creating new jobs.

Finally I am also happy to report that the improvements to the A46 Lincoln Bypass being delivered as part of the Teal Park project are now completed and the road open. I would like to thank the people of Lincolnshire for bearing with us whilst these works were carried out and I hope that all will agree that our investment has transformed this area into a modern business environment with a much safer road network.