

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
8 SEPTEMBER 2020**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR MRS W BOWKETT (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C R Oxby (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A M Austin, M A Griggs, C Matthews, E J Sneath and H Spratt

Councillor C J Davie, attended the meeting as an observer

Officers in attendance:-

Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer), Nick Harrison (Democratic Services Officer), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment), John Coates (Head of Waste), Helen Jenkins-Knight (Sustainability Officer), Peter Fender (Economic Infrastructure Development Manager), Simon Wright (Principal Officer (Regeneration)) and Warren Peppard (Head of Development Management)

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Hagues.

12 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2020

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place reported on the following matters:

The South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) at Holbeach, had been awarded a grant to deliver an £8.5m accelerated development project as part of the Government's Getting Building Fund. Last week work was completed on the first phase. Work on the next phase would begin within the next couple of weeks.

Construction of the extension to Skegness Business Park which would help to diversify the coastal economy had commenced on 10th August, with completion due in March 2021

There was a mixed picture of how the visitor economy had been impacted by Covid-19. Since the relaxation of lockdown, some tourism businesses such as self-catering and caravan sites had reported very strong business, including forward business into both the autumn and into 2021. However, some other businesses had been finding that social distancing had made their business models uneconomic, and others were very dependent on the event and wedding market.

A Tourism Commission to be chaired by the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place was to be formed that would meet over the next six months to discuss how a county DMO (Destination Management Organisation) might work.

The new Huttoft Boatshed Café was nearing completion, with the off-site constructed modular building due to be installed and commissioned over the next month, which would help to raise the quality of the tourism offer.

In response to Covid-19, support had been given to small business tenants, which totalled around 200, in business centres and industrial units. A three-month suspension of rent collection from April to June had been offered, with phased repayment plans over the remainder of the year in order to reduce the pressure on their cash flow due to the impact of Covid-19.

Greater Lincolnshire had been successful in bidding for Department for International Trade (DIT) High Potential Opportunity (HPO) status for its food chain and technology base. Each year the Government promoted a small number of HPOs to showcase the investment potential in the UK to international investors.

The Government had asked the Growth Hub to distribute grants to help businesses respond to Covid-19 and had been allocated £735,000 of Government funding. Grants would be between £1,000 and £3,000 –so anywhere between 245 and 735 businesses would be able to get a grant. The grant pot had been hugely oversubscribed within an hour so it had been reluctantly decided to close the bidding round.

The Head of Environment reported on an opportunity to raise the profile of the County and promote Lincolnshire at a forthcoming DEFRA workshop to be attended by the Secretary of State.

15 SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE (FEZ)

Consideration was given to a report from the Principal Officer, Regeneration, on the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) in Holbeach. The vision for the FEZ was to create a high quality business park to meet demand from food technology businesses to take space close to existing food producers in South Holland. The

delivery strategy for the FEZ was for a phased approach to bring forward Phase I comprising approximately six hectares (15 acres) of land adjacent to the A151 to the north west of Holbeach which was owned by the Council.

The delivery of Phase I of the FEZ was a key priority for LCC and public sector investment. The wider economic benefits included new job creation, economic growth and enhanced prestige for south Lincolnshire as a centre for innovation and the development of cutting edge technology in the agri-food sector.

A hub building would be completed in 2022 and would include space for small and medium sized enterprises, business support facilities and space for networking, collaboration and potentially conference and catering facilities. The building would be instrumental in the creation of a "community" within the FEZ. The Hub would be built to a high design and energy efficiency standard. It was expected that the design and construction of the Hub would be done in such a way to allow for later extension and addition to the building as the FEZ grew and the need for additional support space and ancillary accommodation increased.

The Committee's views were sought on an initial proposal for the future branding of the scheme, recognising its strategic relationship with other FEZs in Greater Lincolnshire. The report included one suggestion that the scheme could be described as the "UK Food Valley" to reflect the South Lincolnshire FEZ's role and relationship with two other FEZ's being developed in Greater Lincolnshire (on the south bank of the Humber and at Hemswell Cliff) and similar schemes in East Anglia. Looked at as a whole, the South Lincolnshire FEZ sat at the centre of these schemes.

Members considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:

- Sufficient parking should be included for each plot.
- The layout of the park should be as attractive as possible.
- It would be preferred if the word 'Lincolnshire' could be incorporated in the branding of "UK Food Valley", however, it was recognised that the area covered other counties.
- There was a request for Committee members to receive an email detailing costs and any 'matched funding'.
- Where possible, consideration should be given to including electric vehicle charging points and other energy saving measures.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update on implementation of Phase 1 of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone as set out in the report and provided feedback on the scheme as outlined above.

16 COASTAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND ARTS PROJECT

Consideration was given to a report from the Special Projects Officer, which outlined the recent tourism and infrastructure projects completed by the County Council and detailed those in the pipeline aimed at delivering coastal tourism and arts projects to develop the facilities and attractions that the Lincolnshire coast had to offer. The report outlined how the projects would be funded.

A new structure, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers would be installed at Scotia Creek near Boston later this year. The metal viewing platform would allow visitors to look out to the Wash and beyond, at an important spot in the story of the Mayflower Pilgrims and their voyage to New England in the 1600s. The joint project between Arts Council England and Lincolnshire County Council was part of a series of projects in the Boston area celebrating the Mayflower's 400th anniversary. The artwork would be installed in late November 2020 and because of the effects of Covid-19 on travel and tourism the majority of the Mayflower 400 celebrations had been put back to Summer 2021.

Reference was also made to the Haven Arts Project - a series of shelters and lookouts at Frampton Marsh and a series of historic giant mooring bollards positioned in Boston.

Members of Committee were invited to consider the approach to providing new facilities and attractions to the Lincolnshire Coast, to attract new visitors and encourage investment.

Members considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:

- The initiatives were welcomed. It was thought that they would enhance the local environment and further promote local Lincolnshire history.
- The on-going maintenance costs of any future initiatives, and who would be responsible for financing these, would need to be considered.
- The organiser of the Mayflower 400 celebrations was currently developing a programme of events for 2021 and it was confirmed that these would be publicised once launch dates were known.
- It was noted that the previous Mayflower memorial was not visible from the river bank, however the new memorial would be visible.
- There would be a need to ensure sufficient car parking spaces at the Huttoft site.
- The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place confirmed that he had tasked officers to look at how the Coastal Country Park was managed and in particular car parking provision for the expected increase in visitor numbers in the future.

RESOLVED:

The Committee endorsed the approach to provide new facilities and attractions to the Lincolnshire Coast designed to attract new visitors and encourage investment, and submitted their comments as outlined above.

17 GREEN MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Environment, which provided a progress update on the Green Master Plan (GMP). On 17 May 2019, the Council had committed to making its activities carbon neutral by 2050. As a result, the Council had begun to develop a GMP as the mechanism that it would use to deliver net zero emissions. The GMP was a detailed action plan which set out Lincolnshire County Council's roadmap to how it would achieve carbon neutrality, as well as how the Council would support partners and communities in achieving a more sustainable future.

It was noted that consultation with key partners was coming to an end with only a few interviews left to complete. Initial feedback showed support for the overall approach of the GMP. Some key areas of concern raised had been around area wide emission calculations and monitoring and emissions from land use (likely to be a significant contributor to emissions in Lincolnshire). The conclusions of the consultation would be available in late September and would be included within the drafting of the GMP. The final version of the GMP would be presented for scrutiny in November with a view to final approval and sign off by the Council in February 2021. The Plan would be an on line resource and be regularly updated and reflect progress and achievements. Significant carbon reductions had already been made as a result of the impact of Covid -19 and the Council would look at sustaining these in the long term.

The Committee was requested to consider the development of the GMP and the options for delivery and publicity, including any existing networks or activities which could be used.

Members considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:

- Engagement with the New Towns Fund may be useful as they were interested in encouraging tree planting and the recreational use of reservoirs.
- Where possible the County Council should take a lead in developing projects which would set an example in order to influence partners and other organisations. The Council was currently looking to undertake modelling which would highlight where its lines of influence were in order that it could then target work through the GMP.
- It was recognised that there was huge public interest in environmental sustainability at the moment the progress on the GMP was noted.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report and supported the progress to date on developing the Green Master Plan and submitted their comments as outlined above.

18 THE AGRICULTURE BILL

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Infrastructure Investment, which provided an update on the current progress of the Agriculture Bill. The Committee had requested regular updates on the progress of the Bill and the state of the agricultural sector within Lincolnshire, which the report addressed.

The Agriculture Bill would provide the legal framework for the establishment of a new system of agricultural assistance for farmers and land managers. The Bill would include broad powers to current and future governments to provide financial assistance and policy interventions.

The report provided a focus on the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), which had an important connection to the wider environmental agenda – from biodiversity to carbon and had links to the Green Masterplan. The Committee was asked to consider the issues in the report and how members could interact with the Lincolnshire Agriculture and Horticulture Forum. Plans were being developed to bring the Lincolnshire Agriculture and Horticulture Forum, hosted by Lincolnshire County Council, together virtually in the autumn with the DEFRA ELMS team to help coordinate / promote a Lincolnshire ELMS program and to look to widen the membership and remit of the current Forum to be fit for purpose for the implementation of the Agricultural Bill roll out.

Members considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:

- Plans being developed to bring the Lincolnshire Agriculture and Horticulture Forum, hosted by Lincolnshire County Council, together virtually in the autumn with the DEFRA ELMS team were noted.
- A general invite to the Committee to attend the Forum was outlined as an option as membership at present was relatively fluid. Work was on going to encourage a wider range of views and engagement with the Forum. Councillors Mrs Bowkett and Matthews expressed an interest in attending the Forum.
- Lincolnshire Rural Support Network and County Farms Estate should be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee as soon as possible.
- The difficulties experienced by farmers this year in harvesting were noted. Particular reference was made to the effects of Covid-19 and the weather.
- A report back to the Committee would be given on farm labour supply and the 'pick for Britain' campaign. It was noted that encouraging young people to enter this labour market was a current issue.

- There were concerns about the current trend of larger farms taking over smaller farms and the lack of support from Government for the agriculture sector.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted and the work of the Agriculture and Horticulture Forum be endorsed;
2. That Lincolnshire Rural Support Network and the County Farms Estate be invited to make presentations to a meeting of the Committee as soon as possible.

19 BOSTON INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Development Management, which provided an overview of the projects and schemes proposed as part of the Boston Infrastructure Works. The Committee was invited to review the list of schemes and highlight for discussion any additional scrutiny activity which could be included for future updates.

The schemes included: Boston Dock Link Road (South End & St Johns Road); Haven Banks – Flood Risk Investment; Demolishing a Murco garage (200-202 London Road); Strategic Business Case for changes to freight rail loop out of the port; Dolphin Lane – Public realm enhancements; Sleaford Road/Brothertoft Road junction – Traffic signal refurbishment & pedestrian facility upgrade; A1137 Norfolk Street/Witham Place – Junction improvements; Funding a Boston Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan.

(Councillor M Griggs gave his apologies for the remainder of the meeting).

The schemes were in the developmental stages and Committee members were invited to view the full scope of the projects outside of the meeting. It was reported that the schemes were appreciated by the local residents, in particular, those which involved improvements for cyclists and pedestrians.

RESOLVED:

That the update on schemes be welcomed and noted.

20 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report by the Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focussed where it could be of greatest benefit.

The Committee were advised that since the agenda had been issued, the following report *Review of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan* had been put back to the January Committee meeting. Future presentations to the Committee from the

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
8 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Lincolnshire Rural Support Network and County Farms Estate, as requested earlier on in the meeting, would be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme and updates be agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.52 am