

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 18 SEPTEMBER 2015

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

Economic Development & Tourism

At the time of writing this statement I am looking forward to welcoming a Chinese delegation to Lincoln and signing an economic agreement with Hunan Province, China. Our relationship with Hunan represents an excellent way to promote Lincolnshire's businesses. We already have a wide range of businesses that trade successfully with the Far East, and our relationship with Hunan is intended to greatly increase trade opportunities. Early rewards for this investment are already being secured with an example being the contracts that local company Delta Simons have secured to provide consultancy support for construction projects in China.

In parallel with direct actions to increase foreign trade, the economic development team attended the UKTI National Conference and as a result are in detailed discussion with the Government's Trade and Investment Department designed to secure better support for Lincolnshire businesses so that they are well placed to take advantage of these opportunities.

It is not all about foreign business however, and in addition to the above, we have invested significant time in managing an inward investment enquiry from the Know-how Group who are considering expanding their facility at Newark but recognising that this would offer job potential for residents of Greater Lincoln.

Other direct involvement that my officers have had with helping local businesses to grow and creating new job opportunities include facilitating Duckworth Land Rover to expand its operation in the south of the county by selling them land at Kirton Business Park. Duckworths will join SportsbikeUK Ltd who are currently building a 5000 sqft new distribution facility on the same park. These sales (plus others which are under negotiation) will take this park to 50% occupancy.

The reputation of the Council's Economic Development team as a provider of valuable support to local business continues to grow. We have been successfully active with local construction sector consultancy companies such as Pygott & Crone, Hodgson Elkington, Globe and Morgan Tucker in developing a business network which is now beginning to support activities designed to promote Lincolnshire as an investment location.

The Council's investment in Lincoln Castle continues to be successful. We had an excellent Official Opening in June; in July I had the pleasure of welcoming the 100,000th visitor since our re-opening, and the past two weeks have seen a wide range of artistic activities taking place under the banner of 'Festival 800'. I would like to thank the Arts Council for England for their substantial financial contribution towards events that have been held in the city during the summer and I would also like to thank the commercial sponsors who got behind the great events of the summer especially Siemens. The redevelopment of the Castle, and the events that have been held will continue into the autumn, and will all help to place Lincolnshire on the tourism and investor map. I will work hard to ensure that Lincolnshire remains on that map.

As well as the excellent events that the Council has led, there have been many other activities during this summer. Lincoln BIG's Barons' Trail has been very successful, and newspaper reports indicate that the National Cycle Championships generated over £2m.

I recently circulated a Members' newsletter, and I described the Government's proposals for a Midlands Engine. I anticipate that Government will want to focus its economic growth and productivity activity through initiatives like this and the Northern Powerhouse, and I am working to make sure that Lincolnshire is seen as a core element of both. In fact, I recently represented the Greater Lincolnshire LEP at a meeting with Ministers about the Midlands Engine and I was pleased that Ministers specifically acknowledged that the Midlands Engine will only be successful if it is relevant and productive for counties at the edge of the Midlands such as Shropshire or Lincolnshire.

Finally, I continue to be grateful for the work of the Economic Scrutiny Committee which is ably led by Councillor Tony Bridges. Since the last full Council meeting we have had useful debates about skills, which included a question and answer session with some of the County Council's own apprentices, which was particularly relevant given that the highest ever percentage of businesses surveyed said that they expect to recruit in the next 12 months. The committee has also done some very effective prior scrutiny of the Enterprise Commissioning Strategy and it continues to identify examples of transport projects that will trigger economic growth – that work in particular will help us to develop strong Single Local Growth Fund bids which will add to those previously successfully submitted such as Holbeach Peppermint Junction and Skegness Countryside Business Park, both of which are progressing well and where the latter should see construction commence in early 2016.

Planning

Minerals and Waste

Following public consultation on the Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, a public hearing has been arranged with the Planning Inspectorate. A total of 56 separate organisations and individuals responded to 37 different questions set out within the document. A total of 680 comments were duly made. The Core Strategy will set out the key principles to guide the future winning and working of minerals and the form of waste management development in the county. The Development Management Policies set out the criteria against which planning applications for minerals and waste development will be considered.

Inspector Andrew S Freeman has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to carry out the independent examination of the Plan and Mrs Eloise Shieber has been appointed as the independent Programme Officer. The Programme Officer is responsible for organising the programming and all procedural matters associated with the Examination. The Inspector will hold a number of hearing sessions between 13 October 2015 and 16 October 2015 at The Holiday Inn, Brayford Wharf, Lincoln.

Central Lincolnshire

Consultation will take place during October and November 2015 on the next draft Local Plan. The last round in late 2014 generated a very high level of interest and a good level of responses on a broad range of issues. All feedback has been reviewed and comments have been considered to ensure that policies and development proposals in the Local Plan, can continue to receive a strong level of support from our local communities. The next draft Local Plan will be published in early September 2015, when it will be considered by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee before public consultation opens at the start of October, lasting for 6 weeks.

The next draft will be different to the last draft in several ways. All the policies have been reviewed to ensure they are up to date with the latest available evidence on, amongst other things, economic growth, job creation and housing needs. The area is expected to grow considerably over the next 20 years and the role of the Local Plan is to identify the correct level of growth and to plan for where this growth should occur. Suitable locations for growth are to be identified, based upon the evidence that has been collected. The focus is to ensure that growth is steered towards the most sustainable locations, balancing the planned levels of growth with the clear need to protect Central Lincolnshire's rich heritage and rural character. The draft plan will show proposed land allocations so that all consultees can clearly identify what kind of development will take place and where.

LCC staff have been fully engaged in supporting this work, particularly in the areas of demographics, housing targets, infrastructure delivery and energy policy.

Triton Knoll

On 3 September the Preliminary meeting for Inquiry for the Triton Knoll took place and LCC attended along with local MPs to ensure that the concerns about the process and the implications of the proposed scheme were placed in front of the Planning Inspectorate. I will keep you updated of the process and timetable for the examination

Flood Risk Management

Members will be aware of the challenges that we face in securing the funding needed to continue to provide our current high standards of protection from flooding. In coastal areas this issue is compounded by the need to manage the risk of flooding while sustaining the huge contribution that these areas make to the county and national economy. My officers have been actively seeking solutions to these challenges, and are working on behalf of the Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership to put in place a coherent programme of schemes designed to attract additional funding streams from Government and Europe. This programme – the GLLEP's Water Management Plan – is being put together with all our partners, including the larger coastal businesses, and is expected to be launched in November this year, in time for the next round of Government funding streams.

I attended the official launch of the Louth Flood Alleviation Scheme on 11 August. It's great to see projects being delivered to benefit local communities from our £6m investment.

The Council continues to work actively with its partners to establish a long-term approach to coastal management for Lincolnshire, and we will be exploring the role of private investment in this area during September. The county also continues to play a wider role, recently contributing through the Association of Drainage Authorities to supporting our colleagues in Somerset to establish robust partnership arrangements for the future. Because circumstances in Somerset will require secondary legislation, with potentially wider geographical application, it was important to influence the outcome to avoid any unintended consequences.

Natural Environment

Progress continues with the reinstatement of the Gibraltar Point visitor centre, and the first stages of creating an improved, joined-up visitor experience on the coast has been completed with the 'wild coast' scoping report. This sets out options for implementing a comprehensive tourism offer by improving access to and between major existing sites (such as Donna Nook and the Coastal Country Park).

The wild coast initiative is designed to make the most of our existing environmental assets and programmes, with a focus on improved access for all, support for the visitor economy and improved amenities for local communities.

England Coastal Path

Officers have undertaken an initial start-up meeting with Natural England concerning the Lincolnshire stretch of the national coastal path. The route will be dealt with in three sections with the section from Sutton Bridge to Skegness Pier and from the Pier to Donna Nook being dealt with first, with the section from Donna Nook to the Humber following on after.

It is expected that the first two sections will be complete by 2018 and the final route will become Lincolnshire's only National Trail. Officers are arranging a presentation by Natural England for councillors in October to provide greater details on how the scheme will progress.