

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 18 DECEMBER 2015

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

The British Guild of Travel Writers has named Lincoln Castle its 'Top UK Tourist Attraction for 2015'. This is just reward for the leadership and hard work of councillors and staff over the 10 year journey that the Castle project has been. We hope to exceed 250,000 visitors by Christmas.

Added to this, both I and Nick Worth were delighted to hear the news that the Poppies:Wave sculpture will be displayed at Lincoln Castle. The Poppies are a poignant reminder that many service personnel from Lincolnshire have lost their lives. They will also become a magnet to attract visitors to the Castle and we will work hard to make sure that visitors have a memorable experience and that they are encouraged to visit many parts of the county when they come to see the Poppies.

In early November, the Council hosted a national Coastal Communities Alliance Conference in Skegness with more than 70 attendees from across the country. This event is a good example of the County Council working with Government agencies which I hope will reap rewards through Government prioritising Lincolnshire above other areas for grants and investment.

An example is the Chapel Point Coastal Observatory where an important milestone has been passed in this project, which will help to extend the season and create quality jobs in Chapel Point and the surrounding area. Tenders have now been returned, and we will shortly be contracting with a Lincolnshire business to start building this important and iconic structure.

The Council is in the final stages of negotiations on one significant sale of land to a business on land that we have serviced and developed. We have also sold a significant parcel of land to a major manufacturing employer. These sites are in different parts of the county, and they are a good indication that investors are bringing projects to all of Lincolnshire.

Towards the end of October I spoke at a Lincolnshire Dinner at the MIPIM UK event. This is an event which brings together the biggest investors in the world. Our Dinner was primarily sponsored by Lincolnshire businesses. We had 71 investors in attendance and I am aware of a number of follow-up discussions that have already taken place between national investors and local developers about sites across the whole of the county.

A number of developers and intermediaries have said they are keen to work alongside us on promoting Lincolnshire for investment – a 'Team Lincolnshire' is starting to be talked about. Clearly the developers will look to the Council as facilitator and supporter, but they recognise the budgetary constraints that we face. Meetings with the developers have been arranged and I shall give you further updates as our work progresses.

The Greater Lincolnshire LEP's Annual Business Live Event was held towards the end of October. Several Councillors attended and found it useful. The Council had

a stand to promote our business centres to growing businesses who are seeking larger and more business-oriented premises. Interest in our centres was high, especially for Mercury House in Gainsborough.

My colleagues Martin Hill and Marc Jones will comment on the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on LCC's finances. However, CSR also set out a clear path for how the Government sees its role in increasing national productivity. This includes changes to training, business support, and innovation systems along with a greater emphasis being made on the link between economic growth and infrastructure schemes. The Chancellor announced a shift from the State paying for training, business support, etc, to the beneficiary making that payment. An emerging role for the council, therefore, is to help individuals to understand why they should invest and what they will gain from making that investment. The Chancellor also announced the continuation of the Single Local Growth Fund, and I am working with the economic development team on a set of strong bids that we will make for projects that meet the council's priorities.

Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Environment and Economy Directorate and Lincolnshire Police Economic Crime Unit is now in place. The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) seeks to remove all financial benefit from those who have committed criminal offences and who see crime as an economic alternative to compliance with the law. Recent case law has confirmed that the Proceeds of Crime Act applies equally to all criminal offences including those committed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The MoU sets out the understanding of how any seizure investigation under POCA is to be managed and monies distributed. It is expected that the seizure of any gain made by those convicted of criminal planning offences will serve as a strong deterrent to those considering not complying with planning and other relevant legislation.

PLANNING

Minerals and Waste

Following public consultation on the Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, a public hearing has now taken place in front of a Planning Inspector. 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 held an Examination in Public during October. The Inspector was largely supportive of the policies put forward by the Council with the main issues being challenged during the hearing relating to the amount of the sand and gravel that should be provided during the plan period (to 2031) and the need for further inert landfill sites. The next step is that the changes to the Plan that were agreed with the Inspector during the hearing are out to public consultation until 8 January 2016. Following this consultation the Inspector will produce a report with his recommendations. If acceptable, the Inspector's report will be reported to full Council in spring 2016 and subject to Council approval the Plan will be adopted.

Running slightly behind the Core Strategy is the site location document which sets out the Council's preferred waste and minerals site to meet the projected need for minerals and waste site during the plan period. The site location document went out to consultation in November and will run until February 2016. Following this process, the consultation responses will be reviewed and a pre-submission document will be prepared. This will be subject to an Examination in Public in Autumn 2016 in front of a Planning Inspector and follow a similar process to the Core Strategy Document.

Central Lincolnshire

Consultation has taken 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 Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee will consider the outcome of this consultation during December/January.

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. LCC have raised concerns over the long term supply of employment land to ensure the economic aspirations for the area can be realised in accordance with the Strategic Economic Plan of the GLLEP.

Triton Knoll

The Examination in Public began on 1 September 2015 and will close on 3 March 2016. Lincolnshire County Council has instructed a Barrister to represent its interests during the examination and has made robust representations to the Examining Authority in the form of a Local Impact Report and Written Representations. Officers are working closely with the Applicant (RWE/Statkraft) in trying to agree a Statement of Common Ground which covers all relevant issues. Of particular concern to LCC are:

- The impact of the landfall and cable route at Anderby Creek and on the grazing marshes;
- The negative impact on the Coastal Country Park and tourism in the area;
- The effect on soil conditions and drainage of the chosen route;
- The cumulative impact of the proposed Viking Link Interconnector;

- Compulsory purchase of LCC land; and
- Impact on holiday traffic during the construction phase (if approved)

All of the above matters have been addressed by the LCC legal team and officers attending open floor sessions and issue specific hearings. I will keep you updated on the progress of the examination and any matters arising.

Early discussions are taking place with National Grid Viking Link about another project that will raise similar issues and concerns.

ENVIRONMENT

Flood Risk Management

On 5 November officers from the County Council hosted a visit by Sarah Hendry, DEFRA's Director for Flood Risk Management and her Deputy Director, Neil Hornby. With colleagues from the Environment Agency, Boston Borough Council, Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and Witham 4th IDB we showed our visitors key sites in Boston Barrier, the Black Sluice Pumping Station, the visitor hub at the site of the Boston Barrier, and toured them around the principal sites in the town centre that had experienced flooding during the recent coastal surge of December 2013. After a visit to the sea defences at Wrangle, where a project is being trialled for an IDB to lead on improving the defences in an area where only limited national funding is available, we concluded at the site of the Horncastle flood alleviation structure.

Our visitors were grateful for the opportunity to see for themselves the scale and nature of the challenges that we face and were very interested in the possibility of exploring ideas set out in Greater Lincolnshire's Devolution Offer as a means of piloting new approaches here in Lincolnshire. My officers are actively pursuing this, and further discussions with senior Defra officials are taking place this month.

I reported last time on the establishment of a Water Management Plan by the GLLEP, with the aim of making a closer link between water management and enabling economic growth. I am pleased to report that this exercise will be largely complete by the end of November, and bids prepared for at least three significant flood risk management schemes on Lincolnshire's coast. This will be the first time we have been able to seek European funds to support our approach to flood risk management, and it is seen as a first step in opening up access to more funding sources than were available to us in the past. With ever increasing pressure on national funding for this essential work, it is essential that we are able to diversify the range of funding sources available to us, and we see these bids as an important step in this direction.

Natural Environment

LCC supported the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership's (GLNP) successful conference earlier in November, the third 'themed' conference since the partnership was established in 2012. This year the focus of the event was on the value of nature tourism – the contribution that tourism connected with enjoying the natural environment makes to the Lincolnshire economy as a whole. This reflects the Nature Partnership's overall strategy of aligning its ambitions with those of the GLLEP and maximising its impact by making a demonstrable difference to the prosperity and well-being of the county.

Alongside a range of speakers, including the Resort Director of Butlins, we heard the headline results of a recent study commissioned by the GLNP to understand and drive upwards the economic impact of nature tourism. In Lincolnshire, this activity already contributes £58m to the economy annually, supporting over 850 jobs. The opportunities to expand on this are considerable, and the partnership is focusing its attention on these in order to help the GLLEP fulfil its growth ambitions for Greater Lincolnshire.

England Coastal Path

Work continues on the first two stretches of the proposed route and officers have undertaken site visits with Natural England colleagues to begin to formulate where the National Trail might go and in particular in relation to some of the stretches which need special consideration such as at Gibraltar Point.

There has been a slight change to the distance of the second stretch where the initial study will now be between Skegness Pier and Mablethorpe and not as far as Donna Nook as originally proposed. This was to ensure that the final stretch to be dealt with after the first two sections will encompass the boundaries of the Humber Shoreline Management Plan. The target date for the first two stretches to be open to the public remains at 2018, with the final stretch to the Humber Bridge available 12-18 months later.

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