

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 18 SEPTEMBER 2020

Statement from: Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Economy and Place

Flood Management September 2020

The exceptionally dry period over the last six months has been a stark contrast to the widespread and unprecedented flooding in 2019, which resulted in over 150 flood investigations, two and a half times the number in 2012, which was the previous worst year. The size of the task should not be underestimated, and despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, work has continued to complete the flood investigations with extra resource being brought in as required.

We have submitted an ambitious nationally-funded capital programme for the next six years beyond into the next planning cycle. Despite the deferment of Flood Defence Grant in Aid last year, we have been successful this year in securing nearly £300,000 of national funding to prepare five flood alleviation schemes so we are ready to start work as at the start of the six year plan in April next year. Ours is an ambitious programme to protect more residents of Lincolnshire; it is a programme which can only be delivered in partnership with others, not just national government but also local agencies who understand the impact of flooding on our residents. We are also looking further ahead than other authorities by including flood risk management schemes for communities at risk of flooding not just those with a history of flooding.

Members will of course recall the severe flooding that occurred at Wainfleet in June last year. I am pleased to be able to report that work continues in the Steeping catchment; weed cutting is underway, and it is expected that dredging will start late in September in a special operation to remove silt from the bed of the river into specially constructed holding lagoons. The water is filtered out and returned to the water course whilst the silt is retained and can then be used on farmland to enrich the soil.

In what is possibly the last ever tranche of European funding, we have successfully led on obtaining an ESIF grant of over £500,000 in support of an £850,000 project to develop the Black Sluice catchment into a 'smart' catchment, using instrumentation with remote monitoring to gauge river flows, rainfall, groundwater levels and levels in surface water systems to facilitate better decision making towards a sustainable, catchment-based water management plan by mid-2023.

Growth

Work is on-going to secure funds and develop new support offers to support delivery of the Business and Economy Covid Recovery Plan.

The South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) at Holbeach has been awarded a grant to deliver an £8.5m accelerated development project as part of the Government's Getting Building Fund. It is one of seven projects supported in

Greater Lincolnshire which received a total of £25.8m from the fund, and is targeted on Covid recovery.

The vision for the FEZ is 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. It is a partnership between Lincolnshire County Council, South Holland District Council and the University of Lincoln, in which £5.4m from various sources has been invested in the Council-led elements to date. With work expected to start on site in October 2020 and finish by March 2022, the new project will create a new 'Cluster Hub' building, providing high quality business and collaboration space for small and start-up businesses working in the agri-tech sector and related businesses in the food supply chain. The project also includes further access roads to open up additional plots on Phase 1, and the foundations for Phase 2.

The Hub building will complement the purpose-built national Food Centre of Excellence on Phase 1 of the FEZ which is due to be completed in February 2021.

Further north in Skegness, construction of the extension to Skegness Business Park started on 10 August, with completion due in March 2021, so that it can be opened up to employers in sectors which will help to diversify the coastal economy.

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

There is a mixed picture of how the visitor economy has been impacted by Covid-19. Since relaxation of lockdown, some tourism businesses such as self-catering and caravan sites are reporting very strong business, including forward business into both the autumn and into 2021. Other businesses are finding social distancing makes their business model uneconomic, whilst others are very dependent on the event and wedding market. Some are facing the equivalent of three winters in a row. The County and District Councils have contributed to a recovery plan which will see a considerable investment into www.visitlincolnshire.com and a marketing campaign that will raise the profile of Lincolnshire as a safe, welcoming, and enjoyable destination post Covid through a campaign that is targeted locally and regionally. A Tourism Commission is to be formed that will meet over the next six months to discuss how a county DMO (Destination Management Organisation) might work.

Across the county, we have been supporting our small business tenants, which total around 200, in our business centres and industrial units, by offering a three-month suspension of rent collection from April to June, and then putting in place phased repayment plans over the remainder of the year to reduce the pressure on their cash flow due to the impact of Covid-19.

Greater Lincolnshire has been successful in bidding for Department for International Trade (DIT) High Potential Opportunity (HPO) status for its food chain and technology base. Each year DIT promotes a small number of HPOs to showcase the investment potential in the UK to international investors, and Lincolnshire is delighted that its food sector has been recognised in this way. Over 2020/21 the HPO would drive recognition for our priority sector giving investors the opportunity to

enter the UK food market to take robotic innovation from concept to commercial scale and aid new investment opportunities from 'Farm to Fork'.

The Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub has secured funding to deliver 25 Peer Networks across Greater Lincolnshire (they are part of a new National Peer to Peer networking programme). They will focus on High Growth, Visitor Economy, Manufacturing, Agriculture and Horticulture, Health and Care and Charities/CICs. The programme will launch in September and will be available for business owners who want to grow and develop their organisations. Support will be delivered through a series of virtual high impact group sessions with a trained facilitator. Benefits include help to overcome challenges and creating a trusted network of connections to support businesses now and in the future.

In addition, the Growth Hub will provide Visitor Economy Kick-Starter grants and Covid Business Recovery grants of between £1,000 and £3,000 to support businesses with Covid-19 recovery projects, including for use on new equipment and technology or to access specialist advice. The Growth Hub will administer these grants, which are due to be launched at the end of August.

Two new programmes have been developed; the Manufacturing Transformation programme and the Lincolnshire Supply Chain Improvement programme will be live from September. The aims of the programmes are to help businesses to diversify, innovate and develop robust local supply chains.

A call for businesses and community groups to apply for LEADER funding has been in great demand. Applications have been received from a range of sectors, including farming, tourism, heritage and forestry. The team will now support those who have been successful at the first stage to complete a full application.

For further information on any of the schemes please email:
Businesslincolnshire@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank