

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2020**

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

### **Growth**

The Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub continues to provide vital support to Lincolnshire Businesses. There is real time information, advice and guidance and access to a range of business recovery support and local authority grants.

This information is available via the [www.businesslincolnshire.com](http://www.businesslincolnshire.com) website and we are cascading this information via our Business Lincolnshire newsletter, Twitter, Facebook and Linked-In social media channels which include nearly 8,000 followers. The LCC Covid-19 support helpline re-opened for calls on Thursday 5 November. This includes an option for business enquiries - 01522 782189, option 2.

Should any businesses in your electoral division contact you asking for advice, please encourage them to visit the Business Lincolnshire website where lots of information is available and where they can arrange an appointment with a specialist business adviser.

The EU Transition deadline is just around the corner and we are amplifying government messages to ensure that our businesses are fully prepared. A range of information and resources can be found on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website and the **Building Business Resilience** section of the Business Lincolnshire website. For instant advice and support, our local helpline is 01522 846946, which is provided by our partner organisation, Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce.

Businesses can also access a range of fully funded support to suit their needs. Our dedicated Export Adviser, Mike Stokes [exports@bizlincolnshire.co.uk](mailto:exports@bizlincolnshire.co.uk) will help businesses to develop an EU Exit Action Plan or participate in a Restart Programme for businesses who have import/export needs or our Building Business Resilience Programme, for businesses with contractual, HR, contracting, compliance and data regulation queries which consists of 1 to 1 support and online webinars.

On 22 October, I had the pleasure of launching the new Team Lincolnshire Investment Strategy alongside Samantha Harrison, Head of Economic Development and Karen Seal, Principal Officer for Place and Investment, along with fellow Team Lincolnshire (TL) ambassadors and we showcased the new plan to the rest of the members in a webinar called 'Shaping the Future of Team Lincolnshire Together'. We spoke to ambassadors about how they can come together to help achieve the objectives and help grow the economy of Greater Lincolnshire and create new jobs through their collaboration. We have devised set measures for success and developed KPIs to monitor the ambassadors' progress against the 5 objectives.

The TL Ambassador Programme is moving forward at a fast pace and the new 2 year business plan will help to drive growth and inward investment forward. The ambassador programme is a vehicle to drive forward the wider Investment Strategy and ambitions for LCC and the GLLEP.

There are 5 ambitious objectives for TL focussed around the High Potential Opportunity investment proposition in the Food Processing, Automation and Robotics sector, the construction sector (both residential and commercial), and the office re-location sector.

These are:

1. Attract business investment into our construction sector.
2. Attract business investment into the food manufacturing sector.
3. Attract office-based businesses looking to relocate.
4. Attract investment that benefits all.
5. Provide investors with a comprehensive soft-landing package.

To date we have 120 TL members. All the unitary and local authorities are now members so TL is now truly representing the whole region and showcasing the new TL strapline *'together we're greater!'*

The Tourism Commission meetings have commenced and we are focusing on how we can shape a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) based on the LEP boundaries. The meetings include a cross section of the visitor economy and private sector businesses in Lincolnshire from the Humber to the Wash and Rutland. The work streams include review and analysis of what 'good' looks like in terms of marketing, product offers, investment opportunities and careers and skills.

At the end of October, the 4 LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) covering the Wash and Fens, Lincolnshire Action Zone, Coastal Action Zone and the Kestevens completed the decision making process to award grants to those businesses and organisations applying for support through the summer 2020 call. This 2-stage call was heavily oversubscribed driven by the economic impact of Covid-19.

The privately led LAGs awarded £559,218 of grant support to 26 projects ranging from £3,200 to £56,200, with each, on average, providing match funding of 60%. New jobs, innovations and market opportunities will be created through these investments and they will provide vital stimulus to the Lincolnshire rural economy.

The Rural Payments Agency which oversees the LEADER Programme nationally awarded additional funds to the Lincolnshire programmes in order to meet the demand. This came from national underspends and has been unique to the county.

LEADER Programme staff are now working with each applicant to ensure projects deliver by the end of the calendar year, something which the projects were heavily scrutinised for in terms of deliverability. This noted, a number of new and existing projects are at risk given the impact of the most recent national lockdown which has increased economic uncertainty – particularly in the hospitality sector. Business Lincolnshire referrals are being made in these instances and data is being collected as part of an evaluation exercise to build a case for investment in the rural economy going forward.

Work is progressing rapidly on the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone north west of Holbeach. Following the award in August of £6.4m from the Government's

Getting Building Fund, which is focused on Covid-19 recovery, the Council is moving at an unprecedented pace with the delivery of a Cluster Hub building on phase 1 of the scheme. This will provide a 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, and will be the flagship of the development.

Further access roads to open up additional plots on Phase 1, and the preparations for Phase 2, in partnership with South Holland District Council, are also underway and due for completion this winter. The University of Lincoln's national Food Centre of Excellence is on track for completion in February. Agents have been appointed to promote the development and soft launch of the new branding – South Lincolnshire FEZ, at the heart of the UK Food Valley – followed by a full launch in early February 2021.

In East Lindsey the Skegness Countryside Business Park extension is due for completion in March, and will provide a much needed opportunity for employers in sectors which will help to diversify the coastal economy to expand. Agents have also been appointed to promote this scheme to local developers and small businesses, with some exciting expressions of interest having already been made.

Nearby in Huttoft, the new Boatshed Beach Café is in delivery, with the off-site constructed modular building due to be installed and commissioned over the winter, ready for the 2021 season, which will help to raise the quality of our tourism offer.

In Boston Borough, the Pilgrim Fathers installation at Scotia Creek is due for completion in January 2021, and will form part of the 400-year Pilgrim Fathers celebrations, delayed from 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Over in South Kesteven, plans are currently being developed to spatially reconfigure the Eventus business centre in Market Deeping, to adapt to small businesses' new ways of working, and this will provide a test bed for new forms of business accommodation which could be developed elsewhere.

Small works are also planned over the winter at Wyvern House in Lincoln, the Carbon Neutral Business Zone (CaNeBuZo) in Long Sutton and Kirton Distribution Park, to improve the offer to small businesses.

Across the county, we continue to support our small business tenants, which total around 200, in our business centres and industrial units. Our offer of a 3 month suspension of rent collection from April to June was designed to support their cash flow as the effect of the initial, national lockdown and other restrictions came into force from March. All but a handful of tenants took up the offer, and many have said what a huge benefit and peace of mind it provided in those days and weeks of uncertainty. We have now put in place phased repayment plans over the remainder of the year to continue to reduce the pressure on their cash flow.

The Development Management team has been supporting the delivery of the sustainable urban extensions (SUEs) across the county. In September 2020, the Northern Neighbourhood SUE for 700 houses at Gainsborough was granted Planning Consent by West Lindsey District Council.

Lincolnshire County Council has submitted an objection to plans for the Western Growth Corridor development in Lincoln. The proposed first phase of development provides direct access to Skellingthorpe Road, which we all know is an already congested part of the highway network. This amount of extra traffic which would be added to Skellingthorpe Road is unacceptable, for which we have no option but to raise an objection. If the development is to succeed, it is vital that residents have realistic alternatives to travelling by car, which means including more sustainable options such as passenger transport, cycle paths and footpaths, and connections to destinations beyond the boundary of the site.

The South Eastern Quadrant (SEQ) SUE at Bracebridge Heath, Lincoln has 2 live planning applications with North Kesteven District Council for a total of around 1,600 houses and a primary school. LCC are resolving the access requirements for the school and sustainable transport mitigation necessary for these applications which are due to go to the Planning Committee early in 2021.

At Grantham, LCC is working with South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) and Buckminster to ensure that the Spitalgate Heath application for 3,200 houses complies with Garden Village requirements for which it was granted funding in 2018. Adjoining this site is the Prince William of Gloucester Barracks which has been allocated for housing in the SKDC Local Plan and Homes England are now starting option appraisal and pre application discussions prior to the expected submission of a planning application in late 2021.

There are also on-going pre-application discussions with developers for Stamford North which is allocated in the SKDC Local Plan for 1950 houses (600 of which are in Rutland). The scope of the Transport Assessment, proposed phasing and delivery strategy are being agreed prior to planning submission in mid-2021.

### **Flood Management September 2020**

I am pleased to be able to report that the flood alleviation scheme to protect 53 homes in Digby is nearing completion. There was an unfortunate delay due to technical issues, but these have been overcome and the contractor is back on site working hard in the current restrictions to complete the scheme by mid-December.

Within the Steeping catchment, dredging of sections of the Steeping River and Wainfleet Relief Channel started at the end of September and will continue until December, when the dredger will return to Holland. Dredging of the remainder of the Steeping and the relief channel will recommence in 2021 using a smaller dredger, again coming from Holland. In the meantime, work is continuing to repair the raised defences around Wainfleet. As I reported previously, the dredging is 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. Around two thirds of the dredging operation has been completed with 16,000 cubic metres of silt being recovered in this way.

In my statement in September, I referred to the successful bid for European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) funding for a project to develop the Black

Sluice catchment into a 'smart' catchment. This project will use instrumentation with remote monitoring to facilitate better decision making towards a catchment-based water management plan by mid-2023. Contracts for the funding have been signed in difficult circumstances through close working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the project itself has now entered the procurement phase. Members will recall that this is an £850,000 project on which LCC is leading, with match funding coming from ESIF (£550,000), Water Resources East (WRE) (£215,000) and the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) (£60,000), providing excellent value for money for Lincolnshire.

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