

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 09 December 2022

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

GROWTH SERVICES

Economic Infrastructure

We continue to enjoy interest and investment at the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) near Holbeach in South Holland, which being at the centre of the UK Food Valley is creating an impact over a much wider area. As Members will recall, 5 of the 12 plots on the 15-acre phase I have already been sold, and now host two University of Lincoln buildings, with a local business also currently building its own facility on a separate plot. In addition, the Council's new, three-storey innovation centre, 'The Hub', on a sixth plot opened in September.

As the name suggests, The Hub is intended to be the focal point of the development, and our first two tenants have already moved in, taking in total 5 offices. These are Station One Accountants, a local company specialising in the food sector, and Catapult Print and Packaging Ltd., an innovative Florida-based business, originally from Boston, UK.

Following on from the critical mass developing around phase 1, interest in the 27-acre phase 2 is also building, and we are currently in discussion with 3 businesses based in Buckinghamshire, India, and the UAE, and an Australian investor.

At Kirton Distribution Park in Boston Borough, 2 separate investor / developers with significant job creation plans continue to undertake their due diligence with a view to completing the purchase of phases 2 and 3.

At the Eventus business centre in Market Deeping, South Kesteven, the spatial reconfiguration scheme, which started in November 2021 to provide grow-on space for expanding businesses, and to respond to small businesses' new hybrid accommodation requirements is complete, with the new facilities proving popular.

Across the county, we continue to support our small business tenants in our 5 business centres, new innovation centre, and over 80 industrial and commercial units, which total 242 individual leasehold properties across 25 separate estates/locations in 18 towns. Occupancy levels remain buoyant with a health mix of lease renewals and new tenants.

The Council's leadership role in the countywide energy for growth agenda continues with developing relationships with Electricity Distribution Network Operators to understand their plans across Lincolnshire to assist growth, especially where supply is volatile. This is complemented by the Council working with all authorities in Greater Lincolnshire in the commissioning of an 'Energy Options Analysis for Greater Lincolnshire' study, being undertaken through to summer 2023 to identify energy constraints and promote local innovative solutions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I am delighted to let you know that we have won the Federation for Small Business (FSB) regional award for the best Programme of Business Support during Covid-19. Through our lifeline of grants and business support programmes, we really hit the mark and supported the private sector to navigate through the pandemic and helped their longer-term sustainability. We were recognised at the National FSB Awards and were able to showcase our best practice amongst our peers.

The Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub Team continue to be busy providing much needed support to local businesses. In between January and end September, 616 businesses have been supported.

I am very pleased to highlight that our ongoing evaluation activities continue to confirm that our business support services are well received with 92% of respondents either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the service; and 90% of respondents either very or somewhat likely to recommend the service they received / event they attended to a friend or colleague.

We have recently launched our Digital Lincolnshire online brochure for Expressions of interest and there have been 29 responses within the first couple of weeks. The brochure will be developed in a similar format to the very popular Made In Lincolnshire brochure which now features 115 of Greater Lincolnshire's fantastic Manufacturing businesses. The brochures are a useful tool to promote these sectors in Greater Lincolnshire and to encourage inter-trading between local businesses.

We have also launched our new digital skills programme called Mosaic Connects, this aims to bring digital sector businesses together to support traditional industry challenges and collaborate on solutions to help traditional businesses embrace technology.

The Greater Lincolnshire International Strategy has also been launched during the national International Trade week on 31 October and also features in the latest edition of County News. We have recently found out that our Internationalisation Fund grant for businesses who want to export has been topped up by £177,000, so our businesses can apply for grants up to £9,000 for projects which assist them to export, such as Legal Advice, PR support, website updates or participation in Trade Fairs (50% match funding required).

Activities from the Action Plan linked to the International Strategy are in progress including enhancing awareness of the International Trade support for businesses with the wider Adviser Team and improving International Trade related content on the Business Lincolnshire website. A dedicated call to action campaign will commence towards the end of the year and new Peer Networks for Exporters will also be launched.

The eighth Greater Lincolnshire Engineering and Manufacturing Network (GLEAM) event was held on 5 October 2022, which included a factory Tour at Micronclean in Skegness.

Plans for the Agricultural and Horticultural 'Meet the Grower' event in January at the new FEZ Hub, which formally opened on the 22 September, are being finalised with good interest from

approximately 29 buying businesses and some 23 selling businesses. This pilot event will be invitation only and will take the form of facilitated meetings held between buyers and sellers. The aim to of event is to support our local producers to establish local markets, to help to reduce costs, food miles and increase sustainability

The next #GoDigital23 Conference will be held on 8th March 2023, with a focus on the customer of the future and ideas for an Export Conference in May/June 2023 are developing. As a result of the support provided, between January and end September 2022, 74 jobs were safeguarded. Through the support provided by the Growth Hub Advisers, and even against such a difficult economic backdrop, there continues to be growth in new jobs created with 28 new jobs evidenced in the same period.

In terms of future provision, we have received news of 2 significant bids for new funded programmes for Greater Lincolnshire Businesses.

Following a successful proposition to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), LCC have helped to secure £3m over the next 3 years for the East Midlands region to roll out a “Made Smarter Adoption Programme”, a formal government announcement is due shortly. In essence this programme will boost the implementation of Industrial Digital Technology adoption, focusing on helping businesses to adopt Additive Manufacturing: 3D printing, augmented and virtual reality software, machine learning, sensors and understand industrial cyber security. It will engage with 403 Small and Mid-size Enterprise (SME) Manufacturers, undertake 133 business assessments, provide intensive support to 70 businesses and boost the leadership and management skills of 36 senior manufacturing leaders. This intervention will increase the productivity, competitiveness, and workforce capabilities of the manufacturing sector across the East Midlands region.

Furthermore, in partnership with Leicestershire, Derbyshire and the University of Lincoln we have been successful in securing The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) funding to deliver the Create Growth Programme. The 3-year programme will access £1.275m of grant funding to deliver business support for Creative Businesses, with a strong focus on high growth and investment readiness, with the opportunity to benefit from up to a £7m fund for investor finance.

There has been an extension to our European funded business support programme until June 2023, which means that we can continue to provide generalist and specialist advisory support, business development programmes and implementation grants to businesses. However, there continues to be some uncertainty beyond June 2023 as European Funding becomes superseded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which has been allocated to Lower Tier authorities. We continue to work closely with District Council Colleagues to develop a forward plan for ongoing Growth Hub support and we await the outcome of these discussions.

PLACE AND INVESTMENT

Team Lincolnshire Activity

The 2020-2022 Team Lincolnshire Business Plan activity ended in October 2022 and a new 2023-2025 Plan has been devised. Areas of focus include supporting investment into the UK Food Valley, Humber Freeport, Decarbonisation, Defence and Security, and promoting our “Place” as an investment tool.

The Team Lincolnshire Ambassador programme continues to go from strength to strength with 145 members. During July Team Lincolnshire supported the opening of the South Lincolnshire FEZ’s Hub innovation centre to potential end users. We supported one of our ambassador’s, Stokes 120th anniversary event, jointly delivered a “Getting your business to Net Zero” at the Bacchus Hotel with Business Lincolnshire and we hosted a webinar with ambassador’s VPI Immingham and Phillips 66 on Humber Zero.

Team Lincolnshire partnered with Marketing Humber in September to further cement the ties with the north of our region and to amplify the messages regarding UK Food Valley and the strengths of the agrifood sector in our region. We were involved in the “Leading a Food Revolution” hosted in Scunthorpe which saw 120 delegates come to hear from industry leaders on the future of our food sector. Team Lincolnshire also helped launch the Greater Lincolnshire Defence & Security Network at the Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln attracting significant sign up and attendance on the day supported by the launch of the most recent inward investment proposition on the opportunities within the Defence & Security sector.

Inward Investment and Foreign Direct Investment Key Account Management update

In October Investment Zone proposals were submitted for three sites in Lincolnshire– South Lincolnshire FEZ in Holbeach, Clay Lake in Spalding and Spitalgate Level, Grantham, they focused in the significant opportunities related to commercial and residential development.

Since April, 33 inward investment enquiries have been received and serviced by the Place & Investment Team. Currently 39 enquiries (across all financial years) are at an active status, with intensive support being given to support the companies’ investment ambitions into the region. These are from a variety of sectors including 16 from agrifood, 6 from construction and 4 from the energy sector.

The team have been proving a ‘soft landing’ support offer with businesses ranging from a biofuels inward investor looking to use food, garden and verge waste, through to a pioneering data centre business looking to revolutionise the way IT servers are cooled and the opportunities for the residual heat usage. Ongoing support is being provided to manufacturers of temperature-controlled storage facilities and a multitude new salad production plants which seek to create up to 500 new jobs.

Relationships continue to be built with 34 foreign owned businesses who are located in Greater Lincolnshire, of which there are 14 expansion and investment projects underway.

Visitor Economy: The recommendations of the Tourism Commission are continuing to be delivered and are having a great impact.

The www.visitlincolnshire.com website goes from strength to strength and much work has been done on its search engine optimisation to ensure that it comes top in most searches.

- The website received 34,454 visits in month – an increase of 30% over 2021 and increase of 301% on 2020.
- Average conversion rate is 15.3% across all content (at least 1 in 6 people are continuing on to make a booking for accommodation or an attraction).
- Through the October location trends show 15% traffic is from Lincolnshire, 13% from Near Lincolnshire, 50% from Further Afield (UK), 2% international, 20% unknown -not set on their device.
- In the year to date, Jan – Oct 2022 there have been 308,398 visits, which is a 110% increase on 2021, and an increase of 520% on 2020.
- Pageviews in the year to date are up to 1,150,000 views - up 81% on 2021 and up 1156% on 2020.

Businesses continue to learn from their peers, our masterclass videos have been well received and more have been placed on www.business.visitlincolnshire.com, including Media Training, How To Write A Good Press Release and Using Zoom. These will shortly be followed by What is Business Tourism, Sustainability and Business Tourism, Websites and Branding for Business Tourism. Video Case Studies have also been completed for Stokes Coffee (Sustainability) and Ancaster Leisure (Diversification) and will be seen for the first time during the Hospitable Boost 2 programme; before being uploaded to the website as programme legacy content.

The Green Tourism Toolkit has been very well received since its launch in March and continues to be downloaded and viewed by local, regional and national audiences. A pilot green tourism ambassador programme has recently completed on the coast using Coastal Communities Fund money, this has now led to a countywide role out of a 'Hospitable Green' programme. This programme will support and enable businesses to become more sustainable. Recruitment is underway and the first session is due to start in January 2023, attendees will gain an IEMA certificate in Environmental Sustainability Skills and become a recognised 'Green Ambassador'.

Building on the success and momentum of the first round of Hospitable Boost, a second round has now launched. Again, the programme is fully subscribed, and this cohort comprises of 22 businesses undertaking this business development programme.

Additional product development support has been progressed with the commission of a Creating Bookable Visitor Experiences Toolkit, especially tailored for the Lincolnshire tourism market. The Toolkit guides businesses through the elements required to create an engaging and marketable experience and includes content covering costing, distribution, and regulation. The toolkit is supported by on the ground delivery with workshop/ presentations planned for upcoming B2B events in the county; in addition to being available on the Business.

VisitLincolnshire platform as a downloadable resource. This will launch in the Winter 2022.

Further product development will focus on maximising the potential in Lincolnshire's great outdoors. Our green and blue spaces. Previously rather undersold, this market is year-round, has the propensity to be less price sensitive, and is an excellent fit with some of our recent developments such as North Sea Observatory, Huttoft Boatshed and the coastal birdwatching trail. Nature Tourism presents considerable new and exciting opportunities for the sector; and we are well placed to take advantage of this growth area. The long-awaited England Coastal Path work across the Greater Lincolnshire coast will come to fruition over the next 2 years. To engage businesses and amplify outcomes from this development we are working to create an 'England Coast Path – Lincolnshire Toolkit' - which will encourage businesses to take advantage of the potential benefits such as increased footfall and opportunities for events and promotion. It is anticipated that The Coastal Path will lead to an increase in active tourism and walking and cycling visitors. These visitors will require different packages, services and experiences; and we recognise the need to support, encourage and guide our businesses to develop appropriate product offers.

The sector continues to struggle to recruit and retain skilled staff, manage the increasing cost of energy and associated knock on costs such as food supplies and logistics, and the ability of effectively promote their services to the UK and international markets. Work on the Tourism Commission actions will continue to support the development and growth of the sector until March 2023.

We continue to hear very positive reports from first time visitors to Lincolnshire who are very favourably impressed with the county. There is no doubt that spend is down with visitors being very cautious. There is some forward booking with visitors assuming future price rises.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE)

Significant work continues to take place regarding the SUE's around the county.

The North East Quadrant (1400 dwellings – plan period) has been granted outline planning for the first phase of 500 dwellings, which secured S106 contributions towards the Lincoln Eastern Bypass and sustainable travel improvements. Construction has now commenced on site and LCC is monitoring build out of the development to ensure that we receive the requested S106 contributions as and when triggers are met.

The South-East Quadrant, Bracebridge Heath (3500 dwellings – plan period) was subject to 2 separate planning applications which have both been granted planning approval. S106 contributions have been requested by LCC for a number of sustainable transport improvements. The S106 agreement is currently being drafted by Legal Services, the developer, and the planning authority.

Western Growth Corridor (3200 dwellings – plan period) has been granted outline planning approval with the initial phase proposing 300 dwellings accessed only from Skellingthorpe

Road; the second phase providing a bridge link to Tritton Road for the next 2,500 houses, and phase 3 proposing 400 houses and commercial development which will occur following completion of the Beevor Street link. LCC are in discussions with the developer regarding S38 and S278 technical checks required for Phase 1. City of Lincoln Council has submitted a Levelling Up Fund bid for the construction of the bridge link to Tritton Road, the decision for which is expected end of 2022.

South-West Quadrant, North Hykeham (1,600 dwellings – plan period) discussions continue to take place pre-planning application submission. The Local Plan policy requires the South West Quadrant to provide the first section of the North Hykeham Relief Road (NHRR) from the A46 to the site, if the development site is brought forward prior to the delivery of the NHRR. The Spending Review in November 2020 awarded funding to the NHRR which provides more certainty on the delivery of this infrastructure. In response to enquiries to bring forward parts of the SUE early, LCC has referred developers to Local Plan Policy 28 which requires concept plans for the SUE to be developed to ensure timely delivery of key infrastructure and mitigation. The Local Plan is currently being reviewed and the draft wording of the relevant policies continue to ensure that the SUE is considered as a whole, and that any phasing considers the necessary mitigation needed.

Southern Neighbourhood, Gainsborough (1,400 dwellings – plan period) Multi-agency group meetings have been held for the first development phase of 400 dwellings. An indicative Housing Infrastructure Fund allocation of £2.1m has been secured to cover upfront highway infrastructure costs that have stalled delivery of the development. A variation of condition application for the original outline has been submitted and discussions with a potential developer for the first phase are currently taking place. Highway improvement works have commenced on Foxby Lane under S278 and S38 agreements. A new amended planning application for later Phases (2046 dwellings) has been submitted to the planning authority which LCC are currently reviewing and will provide a consultation response in due course.

Northern Neighbourhood, Gainsborough (1,400 dwellings – plan period) planning application for the first phase of development for 700 dwellings has been granted consent. Associated with the consent, highway improvement works at the Corringham Road/Thorndyke Way junction have now been completed.

Handley Chase, Sleaford (1,400 dwellings – plan period) the outline planning application for 1,450 houses has been granted consent. The main site access has been completed via a S278 agreement which delivered a ghost island right turn lane on London Road. Various discharge of planning conditions and reserved matters applications have been and granted approval for a number of early phases of development. These initial phases are under construction and the local centre has now been built and opened.

Sleaford West (1,400 dwellings – plan period) the outline planning application has been approved by committee, subject to S106 agreement. LCC has requested S106 contributions towards highway improvement works at Holdingham Roundabout and for sustainable transport improvements which include improving transport connectivity between the site and Town Centre. The drafting of the S106 had stalled due to the application involving several landowners. However, the planning authority has now restarted the drafting of the S106, and

it is anticipated to be signed in 2022, which would finally result in planning consent for this development.

Northern Western Quadrant (Rectory Farm), Grantham (1,350 dwellings – plan period) planning applications were received in 2016 which were the subject of revision in 2018. The full applications for the parts of the development fronting Barrowby Road have now been approved by committee, subject to the signing of the S106 Agreement. LCC has requested S106 contributions towards the Grantham Southern Relief Road and towards bus service subsidy. The S106 agreement is currently being drafted with Legal Services, the developers, and the planning authority.

Southern Quadrant - Spitalgate Heath, Grantham (3,700 dwellings – plan period) the outline planning application for this development was submitted in 2014, which was granted permission by the planning authority subject to the signing of Section 106 Agreement. The planning authority and LCC have been in discussion with the applicants regarding S106 contributions that are required to mitigate the impact of this development. These include contributions towards the Grantham Southern Relief Road, Travel Plan initiatives for the business and residential parts of the scheme, and education provision. Since the granting of permission, the development has been awarded funding as a Garden Village, and the developers are working with the planning authority and LCC to modify the application to a development with Garden Village principles.

Southern Quadrant - Prince William of Gloucester Barracks, Grantham (4,200 dwellings) the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and Homes England were jointly developing this site. They had appointed Ove Arup as masterplan consultants and an initial options appraisal was undertaken, and pre-application discussions took place between the developers and the planning authority. The promoters held a public consultation during Summer 2021 and there was some strong opposition to the proposed masterplan from the Woodland Trust and others due to loss of trees. The DIO has now decided not to continue with Homes England as development partner. The decommissioning of the Barracks is to be delayed to 2028 and the DIO are seeking Ministerial approval before re-starting with a new design team and new development proposals.

Stamford North (2,000 houses - proposed allocation in SKDC Local Plan) the planning authority and Rutland County Council have drafted both a Development Brief and Memorandum of Understanding for the delivery of this development. LCC's position is to be engaged with the development as statutory consultee, but not be a signatory to the promotion of the development. Highway network modelling has been undertaken and the developers' consultants are preparing the Transport Assessment for the whole development. Further modelling has been requested by Rutland County Council, and WSP will undertake this when commissioned by the Developers. A planning application for the first phase of 650 houses has been submitted to Rutland County Council which is currently being reviewed. LCC has responded to Rutland County Council stating that the traffic impact on LCC's network is acceptable, but this is subject to National Highways agreeing appropriate mitigation for the A1 junctions and a S106 contribution to bus services.

Holbeach West Sustainable Urban Extension (900 homes, 750 in plan period) a planning application for 110 dwellings north of Northons Lane, which is the first phase of this allocated SUE, has been approved by the planning authority.

COMMUNITIES SERVICES

Planning - Development Management

The bulk of work by the team continues in response to developers wishing to bring forward energy related schemes to the County. The requests relate to renewable energy generation and inter-connections projects to provide the necessary infrastructure to achieve this.

Additionally, in recent months it is evident that sand and gravel operations in Lincolnshire are rapidly working through their existing permitted reserves, and we are starting to see developers seeking to bring forward new sites for future mineral extraction. The waste sector has been through a period of consolidation but applications for developments of further anaerobic digestion plants are now being brought forward.

In November 2021 the Planning and Regulation Committee refused an application to produce up to 28 million barrels of oil from under the Lincolnshire Wolds at Biscarthorpe. The application and Committee's decision attracted significant national and local media interest. The developer appealed against the refusal and a hearing in front of a Planning Inspector took place in Louth on 11th October 2022 with the decision is expected shortly.

At the other end of the energy scale the Council has been in discussion with applicants at pre-application stage for 7 significant solar park projects to the county. Due to the size of the projects, rather than the planning applications being determined at the local level, these are all classed as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) which will be determined by the Secretary of State. The County Council as a host authority has been engaged with the developers over the past year during their pre application engagement process and made it clear to these developers of the particular importance of protecting the County's best and most versatile agricultural land. The first of these schemes is expected to submit their application this year and four others in January. This will result in the examinations for these solar projects taking place next Spring. In addition, discussions are ongoing with developers who will be looking to bring cables from off-shore wind farms on-shore and across the County to connection points to link into the wider National Grid Transmission network.

In total, the team is involved with 16 NSIPs at various stages of the Development Consent Order Process. This is one of the highest numbers of NSIP projects in any local authority area in England and is creating resource pressures on the team. One NSIP project that has the potential to bring to Boston the largest energy from waste facility in the country, with a proposed 1.2 million tonnes of refuse derived fuel being transported by boat, is due for a decision by the Secretary of State in January 2023.

Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Review

The first stage in the review of the Plan was the preparation of an Issues and Options Consultation Draft. This consultation along with a call for potential new mineral sites took

place during the summer. A total of 27 sites have been promoted by the minerals industry and these are now being evaluated to determine which ones are appropriate to take forward to the next stage of site selection. A targeted consultation on these nominated sites has commenced which includes District and Parish Councils which have a nominated site put forward in their Parish. This consultation runs until the middle of December. Any comments received through this exercise will be given careful consideration when the first draft is prepared setting out the council's preferred approach, including the provisional allocation of sites. Subject to the approval of the Executive, the draft plan will then be subject to full public consultation (currently programmed for next Spring). Then in spring 2024, the final Draft, known as the Publication Draft, is programmed to be published for public consultation.

The 3 draft stages of the plan will be subject to the scrutiny of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee and will require the approval of the Executive before they are published for consultation.

Following this final phase of consultation, the approval of the County Council will be sought to submit the Publication Draft for examination to the Secretary of State, together with any proposed modifications arising from the final consultation. It is anticipated that this will take place in summer 2024 and enable the Local Plan to be adopted by early 2025.

Historic Places Team

The team is currently very busy with the planning work for the NSIP projects taking up a lot of staff resource as well as the inevitable pressure associated with projects coming to an end.

Planning and archaeology

Planning and archaeology continue to provide advice to West Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council in Lincolnshire and 2 Nottinghamshire districts, Newark & Sherwood and Bassetlaw. The team also provide advice to the Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Planning Services team on quarries and waste proposals as well County developments, including conservation advice on LCC properties. The quarry work is proving particularly busy as mineral operators look to meet the demand for sand and aggregate. The early discussions on the appropriate way forward for the North Hykeham Relief Road (NHRR) are underway with the consultants about to commission a geophysical survey of the route.

As the Countryside Stewardship programme moves into being the Environment Land Management scheme (ELM) are well placed to provide the necessary advice. The team is being consulted on an increasing number of tree planting schemes.

In addition, the team provide advice on archaeology to government agencies and utility companies. Anglian Water through their Strategic Pipeline Alliance are working on a pipeline which will eventually take water from the north of their region (Elsham, near Scunthorpe) to the Suffolk/Essex border. A lot of archaeological work is underway to mitigate the impact of this scheme. Anglian Water have a number of other schemes which may impact upon archaeological remains, including one along the river Witham in Washingborough parish.

Historic Environment Record

Work has now begun on the concordance project with the National Record for the Historic Environment (held by Historic England). The Lincolnshire Heritage Explorer website continues to be very popular. Just recently they have added some additional features although the level of use means that the usage allowance is being exceeded for mapping. The team have recently begun a new subscription for mapping which will address this issue.

Inns on the Edge

The pubs project is drawing to a close. The gazetteer of pubs and beer houses in the study area now includes 312 entries. Most of the site visits have been completed and any surviving remains have been noted and/or recorded.

The reports for the two subsidiary reports on economy and landscape have been submitted and are now with Historic England for peer review. The final report was submitted to Historic England by at the end of November.

Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)

The historic towns survey was completed at the end of September and are considering what the results of the EUS might be used for.

The end-of-project symposium on 30 August at The Collection was a great success. There was a great deal of discussion about how to use the information generated to better address planning and investment decisions.

Flood and Water Management

The County Council recognises the major environmental and economic importance of the coast to the future of the county; and the need to continue to engage with our partners to ensure that the appropriate strategies are developed to manage the risks of coastal flooding both in the present day and into the future to secure resilience for coastal communities against the impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

The University of Lincoln is continuing to put together a jointly agreed and transparent evidence base, so that authorities can plan how best to adapt to meet the challenges of climate change and continue to thrive and realise its potential economic contribution to the region and the country.

Similarly, the Humber 2100+ project has been generating baseline data to understand the risk of tidal flooding affecting the estuary and surrounding land prior to developing a range of strategic options. Earlier this month the partnership started a communications campaign to raise awareness of tidal flood risk, to help communities understand the impacts now and in the future, and how they can live with this risk by being prepared. A pack of new materials has been produced by the partnership to help communicate risk to people living on and around the estuary. Wider engagement with stakeholders and communities is expected in the new year and members will be kept informed as both these programme progresses.

I am pleased to inform members that the preparations for the Council commemorating the 70th anniversary of the devastating effects of the 1953 floods on January 31st 2023 are

progressing well. A service of remembrance and thanksgiving will be held at Ingoldmells Church followed by an exhibition highlighting the effects the 1953 floods had on the area and also the work of those continuing to ensure that the coastal communities remain safe.

Anglian Water have commenced a non-statutory consultation on the proposed Lincolnshire Reservoir, the closing date for which is 21 December 2022. This exercise is an opportunity to shape the plans for the reservoir as Anglian Water consult with stakeholders, communities and landowners. As part of this process they are seeking local intelligence and knowledge giving consideration to opportunities to improve and reduce impacts. They are also seeking feedback on ideas and options to create benefits and comments on the early concept design. The County Council will be providing a response to the consultation, identifying there is an understanding of the importance of ensuring adequate water supply for the future but there needs to be careful consideration to ensure that local interests and the wider environment are protected. In any future proposals we would wish to see potential wider economic benefits being realised to ensure that, if a new reservoir is constructed, it fulfils its potential to become a visitor destination. The County Council, along with other organisations, will continue to discuss the needs of the county and local communities with Anglian Water as plans develop in the coming years.

Through the Floods and Water team, the County Council, supported by a range of partners and stakeholders has made a successful bid into the Defra funded national Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation programme. 1 of 25 successful projects in England to make it onto the programme, this project will focus on groundwater in the Greater Lincolnshire area, the least understood of the sources of flood risk faced. The programme provides the opportunity to develop understanding of a broad range of groundwater risks and opportunities across multiple Lead Local Flood Authority areas, leading to a range of practical actions delivered in partnership between now and 31 March 2027. It is intended that these actions should incorporate multiple benefits, such that environmental and social resilience are built into the approaches developed.

On 9 November the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project received its 'letter of award of grant' to allow us to deliver the project under the Defra funded Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. This follows successful approval of the Outline Business Case by the Environment Agency's National assurance team. The grant award is for £7,184,000 and the project will now deliver against this allocation between now and March 2027.

We have recently appointed a Flood Resilience Programme Co-Ordinator to help support the delivery of the project, which is in addition to the existing Community Engagement Officer appointed through the National Flood Forum, who has already been meeting with communities in Grimsby and Scopwick, 2 of the pilot areas identified within the project.

Consultants are also shortly to commence a review of the existing Lincolnshire Chalk and Limestone models to better understand the implications of Groundwater across the Greater Lincolnshire area. LCC working in collaboration with other organisations, will now work to deliver against the wider project objectives to create a better understanding of groundwater and how it can be managed both in terms of flood risk and resources; in the process improving the resilience of 3 trial communities in Scopwick, Grimsby and Barton and Barrow-on-

Humber. Learning as part of this project will develop a legacy for future management of groundwater both locally and nationally.

Submission of an Outline Business Case (OBC) for assurance and approval by the Environment Agency's national project assurance groups has been made, led by officers at the Council. This has now been approved and confirmation has now been received of the award of grant of nearly £7.2 million to deliver the project. This is the second highest grant allocation of the 25 successful projects which made it onto the programme. This project will now be taken forward to deliver against the four identified work packages across the Greater Lincolnshire area, namely;

- Improving understanding of groundwater flooding.
- Regional Improvements to Groundwater Resilience.
- Improving groundwater flood resilience in Grimsby, Barton and Barrow-upon-Humber.
- Improving groundwater flood resilience in Scopwick.

Following heavy rainfall on 17 November, 7 reports were received of properties being internally flooded with 1 in Skegness, 1 in Middle Rasen, 2 in Market Rasen and 3 in Tealby. Formal Section 19 investigations have been instigated, although it should be noted this is still a developing situation as more information comes to light. These instances of flooding follow on from the 46 Section 19 Investigations instigated following the storm event on 16th/17th August (involving over 150 affected properties) and the 7 section 19 Investigations instigated following heavy rainfall in October (involving 10 flooded properties).

Despite the numbers involved many of these investigations are well advanced, or in some cases already completed. In parallel to the active investigations, the Floods and Water team are working closely with internal colleagues in Highways as well as external partners to look at solutions to some of these localised issues, as well as considering where more significant interventions may be required.

Sustainability and Natural Environment

The Council continues to deliver against its carbon emissions targets and have reduced emissions by 68% compared to its 1990 baseline. It is recognised that more can still be done, and the Sustainability team are beginning to finalise the revised carbon management plan for the period post April 2023. In doing so the team is working with other council services to establish baseline data against which progress can be measured, and in particular working with Waste and Highways services to consider opportunities for reducing carbon emissions. It is clear that if we are to meet the targets, we have set in this crucial area, we will need all areas of the Council to undertake a drive toward reducing carbon emissions within the services we provide.

The Council also recognises its role in influencing and aiding others in this drive and have continued with engagement in schools throughout this year and also with local communities through the Net Zero Parishes scheme and we will continue to seek sources of funding to aid in the delivery of similar community focussed projects going forward.

I was pleased to be invited earlier this month to the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) annual conference to speak on the work the Council is doing towards the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This is a requirement of the Environment Act and when completed will provide a spatial strategy to establish priorities for nature recovery and map proposals for specific actions to drive this recovery and provide wider environmental benefits as well as helping inform opportunities for biodiversity and the principle of biodiversity net gain within the planning process. The strategy will also bring together land use planning and land management across Greater Lincolnshire as a region to help deliver against Biodiversity Net Gain targets. This work will be delivered through partnership working utilising the strong and well established links we already have within the sector such as with the GLNP and the local wildlife trusts.

I am also pleased to announce that the Council has been successful in its bid to the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund which will help us create the capacity to develop and accelerate our tree planting ambitions.

Countryside Access

It is clear that significant numbers of studies have demonstrated the benefits of access to nature and green space as being important for physical and mental health. The Access team is currently seeking opportunities to link more widely to the public health agenda to ensure that the council is able to continue providing quality access for all.

This is certainly true of recent projects in the Coastal County Park area where a review of routes was undertaken and through discussion and working with occupiers and land managers the access network is being altered to reflect modern demand whilst at the same time reducing the impact on those that need to work and earn a living from the land.

Members may be aware that the Government had been seeking to close the Definitive Map & Statement of Public Rights of Way to claims for routes originally missed off the mapping when it was drawn up in the 1950s. Despite the imminent repeal of the cut off date for such applications, user groups have continued with their projects to research these missing routes in Lincolnshire and have doubled the already lengthy case backlog in the space of just 12 months. This is clearly having an effect on the landowner community in the County and I am pleased that officers are assisting them with advice and guidance on the legal processes involved through discussion with the National Farmers Union and Country Land and Business Association.

At the coast I am pleased to announce that all of the England Coast Path National Trail route in Lincolnshire, from Sutton Bridge to the Humber Bridge has now been approved by the Secretary of State and work to establish the route on the ground will commence in 2023, funded by Natural England and delivered by the Council. In doing so regard will be given to the timing of works to ensure that they have minimal impacts on the environment especially around the Wash, Gibraltar Point and Donna Nook.

Access to the coast has also been better managed in the last year through the regularisation of parking at the 6 council owned sites in the Coastal Country Park area. Whilst this has not been without some difficulties due to the pay by phone system of ticket purchase, visitor

numbers have remained good. The parking scheme has raised £45,000 in revenue after enforcement costs which will be vital for the management of our coastal tourism assets in the area such as the coast path and access sites. Officers are currently seeking to improve the ticket systems at the sites by providing greater options for payment.

This page is intentionally left blank