

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 26 SEPTEMBER 2014

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

Economic Development & Tourism

In my last statement I explained how I have been working with my LEP board members to promote schemes for government funding. Since that statement, just over £60m of funding has been awarded to the Greater Lincolnshire LEP for schemes that we support as a council which will bring about transport improvements new economic infrastructure, education, technology, business support, and housing projects across the county. The Greater Lincolnshire LEP might only be the 25th biggest LEP in the country but it has secured the 12th biggest allocation of funding. A good example of Lincolnshire punching above its weight!

With funding now confirmed through the GLLEP we have begun making significant progress on projects such as the Skegness Relief road and Business Park and the Grantham Southern Relief Road and growth quarter. My officers will be heavily committed to managing the delivery of these projects over the next 24 months.

In addition, officers also remain tasked to deliver the replacement building at the Corner of High Street and Tentercroft Street, Lincoln (a fundamental part of the East West Link Road Scheme), the new visitor facilities at Gibraltar Point and Chapel Point, the Sutton Bridge Marina and other Waterways Projects such as that recently completed at Hubbards Bridge. All told this represents well over £100m capital investment into the county's infrastructure.

These projects will make a major contribution to the economy of Lincolnshire by creating new business opportunities for the private sector.

Looking to the future and recognising the need for a pipeline of strategic economic investments, I expect another round of funding for LEPs to be announced during the autumn. We will be working hard to submit schemes that attract funding once more, with proposals including a mixed use urban extension of Holbeach, and new visitor attractions at Scampton and Willingham Woods.

As I drive into Lincoln for meetings it is interesting to spot the signs of new economic activity within the county. Nowhere is this more evident than in the city itself where the signs of new construction seem to be everywhere with new flats being built off Tritton Road, continued redevelopment within the Brayford Enterprise Park, Refurbishment of Danesgate House and continued activity around the Castle.

The City of Lincoln Council has submitted a £20M bid to the Single Local Growth Fund to provide an integrated transport hub based around Lincoln Central Station. The main elements of the proposal include a new bus station, a new multi storey car park, and a new footbridge over the railway connecting to the proposed East/West Link Road and the Sincil Bank area. The bid, which was supported by ourselves and the LEP has achieved provisional approval, subject to the submission of more information. A planning application is expected to be lodged with the City Council later this year, with the hope that this scheme can begin construction by summer 2016.

We must always remember however that Lincolnshire's rural communities and businesses provide excellent opportunities for economic growth too. We have some world-leading businesses tucked away in our villages and market towns. Our regular employer survey has just been completed, and it is showing that confidence amongst our businesses is improving. A high proportion of those businesses state that they believe Lincolnshire is a great place to be based and to do business. A number of these businesses have approached my officers seeking support to overcome particular barriers to growth and we are working closely with these firms to seek successful intervention. A number of opportunities for joint working on significant projects such as a mixed use development in the A15 corridor are also currently being explored, as are sector focused products such as a major foodpark. I look forward to providing more detail on these projects in the future months.

In order to maintain the confidence of our local businesses, we have submitted four bids for EU funding. If they are successful, they will provide grants of around £8m for small businesses and rural communities to access. The four bids will cover the whole of the county, but I would particularly like to thank my Executive Support Councillor, Jo Churchill, for leading the work on a bid for the Kestevens area. The area has not often been able to attract EU funding, so it would be good if this one were to be successful.

On the subject of businesses, the team continue to meet and support a wide variety of businesses. We are actively working with several companies on assisting with their expansion plans, and we have recently launched a supply chain development programme too. That programme will help more than 50 Lincolnshire companies to win additional business. Again, this is an example of how we as a council directly support businesses alongside the wide range of other services we provide that support economic growth.

Finally, I have been working with my colleague Cllr Nick Worth, Executive Councillor for Heritage and Culture, on the Historic Lincoln programme. Nick will explain about the progress on the Lincoln Castle Revealed scheme, but I would just like to give one example of how businesses from across the county can benefit from the opportunities that 2015 brings. Bateman's Brewery will be producing a special Magna Carta Ale which will be available widely; I look forward to sharing a glass with Nick.

Environment

The Chalk Streams project has been hosted by the Wolds AONB partnership and the Council since 2005. It has won awards for its work to restore the chalk stream habitats rising in the Wolds, and has now achieved a £214,000 grant from WREN to extend its work with schools and local communities into 2017.

Following a very well supported Wolds Walking Festival in May this year, work is in progress to build on its success for the future. At the same time the Wolds AONB partnership is hosting the community-based 'Down your Wold' heritage project, improving local access to the heritage of the AONB.

The completion of the Coastal Grazing Marshes project has also opened up the potential to take a broader, strategic view of the economic and tourism potential of Lincolnshire's coast, embracing the Coastal Country Park in a vision for

Lincolnshire's 'wild coast'. This in turn will support the economic opportunities being developed through a co-ordinated coastal vision covering coastal flood risk and environmental management alongside the emerging Growth Strategy of the Lincolnshire LEP.

In the interests of this wider strategic approach, the Council continues to support the development of the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, which is currently defining a set of brief and clear position statements articulating the position of partner authorities in relation to a number of key themes, such as planning and agriculture. The purpose of this is to make best use of opportunities to work across sectors, and support a more joined up delivery of environmental improvement in the interests of society and the economy.

Flood Risk Management

In June, Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State, paid a second visit to Lincolnshire, visiting the flood risk partnership stand and the County Council's stands at the Lincolnshire Show. Government has been encouraging other areas to learn from Lincolnshire's partnership arrangements, and officers are currently liaising with their counterparts in other areas to explore how this can most effectively be achieved.

Following the Cabinet reshuffle, the new Secretary of State Elizabeth Truss will be visiting Lincolnshire in the near future, and we anticipate establishing a close rapport with her.

Defra has officially announced a delay to the implementation of the legislation establishing the Council as SuDS Approving Body (SAB). A firm date for implementation has not yet been announced. Although in some respects this creates difficulties for developers and our colleagues in Local Planning Authorities, we believe it will allow time for Defra to reconsider its options with respect to the way SABs might charge for ongoing maintenance of SuDS features. There is therefore an opportunity in the longer term for a more sustainable regime to be established.

The Environment Agency is developing Flood Risk Management Plans covering England. These cover river basins, and are designed to link flood risk management and water quality management at a strategic level. As such they will need to link with the local priorities established in our own Joint Flood Risk Management Strategy. Council officers have been working closely with national and local Environment agency teams to support them in developing a public consultation version of the Plans. These were scheduled to be released on 22 September.

The Council continues to promote joint working through the GLLEP to integrate flood risk management with economic development, in the interests of achieving a mutually supportive approach. The LEP's Growth Strategy is an important channel for undertaking this work, and has been developed in liaison with the Humber LEP to ensure that shared issues are addressed in a co-ordinated manner.

Planning

The first draft of a new Central Lincolnshire Local Plan to guide the location and development of housing, jobs, shops and schools over the next 20 years will be available for public comment shortly. As one of the earliest stages in setting out the forward vision for growth in Central Lincolnshire through to 2036, this initial

consultation is an essential opportunity for residents, businesses and organisations to comment on the overarching methodology behind the policies which will guide the way planning applications are considered by the councils covering North Kesteven, West Lindsey and the City of Lincoln.

Growth is required to accommodate an increased need for homes as people live longer, are more likely to live alone or in smaller family units and move around more, attracted to the area for work, retirement, education and quality of life. The framework within which the policies for growth will be shaped includes:

- A settlement hierarchy targeting most growth in and around Lincoln, Sleaford and Gainsborough, with named villages and market towns further down the list.
- No specific allocation of sites suited to fewer than 25 homes.
- A pro-growth plan, with protection for sensitive landscape, heritage and conservation areas.
- Infrastructure delivery of roads, schools, shops, utilities, healthcare etc supporting major housing and employment development.
- No delineated village boundaries.

People can review the draft Local Plan and formally write and email their comments to guide the plan's ongoing development. This will be the first of three rounds of consultation. The Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee is developing the joint plan to co-ordinate where, when, how and to what extent growth takes place across the three areas and how this will be supported by new and improved infrastructure. Members of the Central Lincolnshire committee met on 1 September 2014 to consider the initial draft Local Plan, and it will be made public for consultation from 1 October to 11 November 2014. It will be available to view at each partner authority – North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council, City of Lincoln Council and Lincolnshire County Council from 1 October and also on their websites. Comments will be welcomed in writing and online.

County officers have been fully involved in the preparation of this document, especially in the areas of infrastructure, funding, demographics, housing, renewable energy and water management.