

29 September 2020

Michelle Sacks
Deputy Chief Executive (Place)
Boston Borough Council

By email – michelle.sacks@boston.gov.uk

Dear Michelle

Boston and South Lincolnshire Regeneration and Growth

I am writing further to the recent “Boston Port, Gateway to Growth” seminar during which we heard from a wide range of strategic partners about how the Boston Port can expand and what this means for infrastructure improvements – including a new bypass around the west of Boston leading to the potential of a new port, the positive impact on the skills agenda, the development of the Food Valley to generate further inward investment and international trade and the potential for enhanced flood defences – all leading to the ability for the existing business within the South East of Lincolnshire to remain viable in our region and continue to grow and expand.

The uk Fresh Produce Network Lincolnshire (FPN) is a proactive, member-led organisation supported by the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce. Its purpose is to connect the supply chain, provide a lobbying voice and raise the profile of the fresh produce industry, based in Lincolnshire, as the UK hub of food production. The FPN provides an industry-wide networking platform, bringing businesses together and introducing supply partners regionally, nationally and internationally. Members include importers, exporters, growers, logistics and other businesses associated with the industry. FPN members have a combined annual turnover of £1.6billion and are major employers in the community.

The FPN has developed a close working relationship with the Boston Borough Council and shares the vision for regeneration, to deliver vital infrastructure, to grow the East Coast and create a gateway to growth for Boston, Spalding and the entire East Midlands. We have collectively engaged with the process and are actively working with the University of Lincoln, NCFM and Boston College through the Town Deal Platform on the logistics project.

The Lincolnshire food sector is based on both strong local and regional food production as well as processing millions of tonnes of imports each year from over 39 countries worldwide. Efficient, timely and reliable international and national logistics are essential to sustain the 90,000 jobs in agriculture and food processing in Lincolnshire and neighbouring LEP areas in the East Midlands and East Anglia, the UK Food Valley.

The fresh produce industry is keen to deliver post Brexit growth, adding value to food imports and driving strong export growth, and we believe that with the right skills and logistics infrastructure sustainable growth is deliverable. However, future growth of the food sector in South Lincolnshire and the wider region can only be delivered if we have World Class efficient logistics. Currently this is not the case, with increased road network problems and port delays in the South East which add costs and cause problems with supply chain reliability.

South Lincolnshire's food processing and food logistics cluster, working with the Port of Boston, are ideally suited to address this national challenge. Located half way up the East Coast, we can access 90% of the UK market within 1 day's driving time.

To deliver growth we need to invest in improved road, rail and port infrastructure to link our World Class cluster to UK and international markets, supporting export growth by providing an efficient, slick export route for food trade.

Covid-19 has demonstrated the importance of the food chain and the response from our South Lincolnshire businesses has been immense, to keep retail shelves stocked and to facilitate growth in online shopping. It is often said the food manufacturing and processing sector is low skilled but we operate in this sector and this is not the case. We are investing in cutting edge technology to move away from the traditional employment roles, to those which require highly skilled operatives in a range of digital and engineering roles.

We need help to deliver the new infrastructure and we need it now. The industry is looking to launch new services within the coming months, to address short term needs, in addition to longer term investment to deliver the growth we know is achievable. The ongoing Town Board is crucial to our members in creating strategic partnerships and the potential for maximising inward investment.

Yours sincerely

Angie

Angie Stuart
Head of Fresh Produce
ukFPN Lincolnshire

Neil Kempster,
Boston Town Deal Board

29th October 2020

Dear Neil

Boston Town Deal Bid

I am writing to confirm that the Greater Lincolnshire LEP is keen to support the aspirations set out for Boston in your Town Deal bid. It is really pleasing to see such an ambitious and forward looking plan for the Town and the strength of the partnership which you have assembled around the bid.

The key themes on which the bid focuses: skills and aspirations; sustainable economic growth; and, pride in place, are very well aligned with the themes the LEP have set out in our draft Local Industrial Strategy and our response to Covid-19.

The LEP has of course previously supported the town on major projects, such as the Boston Barrier, and we are pleased to see this next stage of the Town's development so clearly set out. I was very pleased with my deputy chair, Sarah Louise Fairburn, to attend the meeting you held in September to outline the longer term plans for the town and its port. The scale of ambition set out at this meeting and the clear link across to an enhanced regional role for the Town was excellent. As you have rightly identified in the Town Investment Plan, this would build on the substantial food cluster we already have in South Lincolnshire.

The LEP have also been pleased to support the development of Boston College, with its new centres for engineering and digital technologies and the roles they play in the new Lincolnshire Institute of Technology. Working with Boston College, the University of Lincoln and its National Centre for Food Manufacturing, to develop the skills base in Boston will deliver a substantial benefit to the Town. It also builds on recent investments, as part of our Covid recovery plans, at the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone.

The LEP looks forward to working with you to ensure that our skills investment programmes, e.g. ESF programmes for workforce skills, can be aligned with the Mayflower Centre and the Centre for Food and Fresh Produce Logistics. The link within these skills initiatives to digital connectivity is also an area the LEP is keen to support.

The LEP is pleased to see a focus in your plan on improving the railway station and linking this through upgraded cycling and walking routes to the town centre. This is complimentary to the work we are doing across the LEP to deliver more sustainable transport options, with a strong focus on cycling in our Covid recovery plans.

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We are also aware that you are working with the County Council on how to develop the strategic road network and how this may link to Midlands Connect. We would be very supportive of major new infrastructure programmes of this type being brought forward in South Lincolnshire.

As you are aware, we are also developing a LEP wide tourism strategy, led by two LEP Board Members, Chris Baron and Cllr Colin Davies, through a Tourism Commission. The heritage in Boston and its recognition globally as the source of international voyages of discovery, is something we would want to build on for this important sector of our economy.

The strong focus on the visitor economy in your Town Investment Plan is therefore welcomed. With the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers voyages to the USA and the plans you have for St Botolph's, Shodfriars and the Blenkin Memorial Hall, I am sure there is considerable scope to build further on this theme with you.

Finally, I wanted to stress that we see the Towns Fund process as a catalyst for change and we are keen to work with Boston to explore how we can support further projects in Boston.

We will be reviewing the LEP's project pipeline in spring 2021 and it would be good to ensure that larger projects which are beyond the capacity of the Towns Fund to address, such as the growth of Boston Port and your road improvement plans for South Lincolnshire, are included in this process.

The LEP looks forward to working with you to ensure your vision for Boston is delivered effectively.

Yours sincerely



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Chair, Greater Lincolnshire LEP

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30 October 2020

Dear Neil

BOSTON TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

I am writing to confirm Lincolnshire County Council's support for the Boston Town Investment plan.

Our corporate plan identifies the importance of transport and regeneration initiatives to improving investor confidence, and it also prioritises training and education initiatives that give young people the opportunity of employment in our most important business sectors. The Strategic Economic Plan – which the Greater Lincolnshire LEP, all local authorities, and many local businesses have signed up to – also recognises the importance of investments in this type of scheme. I was therefore very pleased to see that both of these are objectives within your investment plan.

Whilst I am sure that you recognise the resourcing pressures that the public sector is under, I can reassure you that Lincolnshire County Council's elected members and officers will continue to provide an appropriate level of advice and support as the investment plan and its projects move through the MHCLG appraisal process. I look forward to hearing about a positive outcome for the plan.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Martin Hill OBE
Leader of the Council