

Presidents Notes – July 2014

Why does Lincoln shire stop at Sleaford?

Is it just me who thinks our County Council and funding bodies believe that the county finishes at Sleaford and there is nothing of importance south of it? When I listen to planned expenditure for the south of the county we simply don't seem to exist. This has been highlighted recently in this paper, the Greater Lincolnshire LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) has secured £40million from the Government's Growth Deal for 2015-16, but the cash will be splashed in places like Grantham, which gets £16million for its southern relief road. There is a further £27.5million for 2016-17, but South Holland has again missed out. It must be questioned whether SHDC robustly put forward projects for consideration?

Recently I met with a number of local growers and transport companies to discuss the challenges they face with our road infrastructure. At the present time they are attracting additional business because we are a low cost production area, they have invested heavily into their plants and machinery and there is currently "reasonable" transport access. Let me share at this stage that these businesses are forecasting growth during the next couple of years in excess of 25%. In this time of fragile economic recovery, this size of business growth is dramatic. There is a but however and that is that we have only a "moment in time" to improve our road access to link Spalding into the national road network. If we fail to take action now this new business will be lost as our roads become totally congested and the advantage of good access is lost and the supermarkets will look for another area to be a distribution hub with better access.

The only major road improvement planned for our area is the Western Relief Road in Spalding and this will only happen when the house builders of the 7,500 homes contribute towards the cost. This road will primarily serve the residents of Spalding and these new homes. Please don't get me wrong we desperately need the Western Relief Road with the rail line upgrade completed this autumn and freight trains being moved from the East Coast line. We will see more and longer trains closing the crossings in Spalding. My question would be, can we wait for these new homes to be built and the inevitable delay between their building and this new road being constructed. It should start now, not in "x" years time.

We also have a "moment in time" to improve our passenger rail services for the future. The upgraded line can carry more and faster passenger trains but the train operator has to make these available. Our current service just isn't fit for purpose. You cannot get to Lincoln or central London for work or for a business appointment until 10am and getting back is not much better. Next year the line operator goes out to tender, let's hope that those in government set a minimum service standard which will allow residents in South Holland to benefit from the services provided. Finally if you visit the station you are greeted by signs advertising "no Sunday service" as if this is a benefit but I suspect it is because the staff are fed up being asked!

Spalding in Bloom

What a great effort has been made by a few hard working volunteers. A big THANK YOU to each and everyone but the challenge how is to keep Spalding looking at its best all of the time. My challenge is to property owners and tenants (shop keepers) in the town centre, please step outside and look at what your customers see. If there are weeds

growing or rubbish lying around please deal with it. Pete Williams and his helpers cannot be expected to tidy up your area. Don't let the town down.

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