

**Lincolnshire County Council LCC
North Kesteven District Council NKDC**

DECEMBER 2013

News from your local, Independent Councillor,

MARIANNE OVERTON

*Wishing you all the very best for
Christmas and the New Year!*



National Good News

It has been a busy month of national conferences and meetings, with councillors, leaders, ministers and a few key people who influence planning and broadband. The Local Government Association (where I am Vice Chairman) represents 40,000 councillors in England and Wales. Our representations were accepted by Central Government. Local Government has had a 34% cut in our share of tax received by Central Government and was expecting a further 10% cut, which was averted this week.

The Independent Group, which I lead nationally, had a superb annual conference in early November which was packed out. Our numbers increased significantly at the last election taking our share of the councillors of England and Wales at the LGA up by a third. A series of conferences and training has kept me busy informing and hearing from our members countywide and nationally.

Some Recent Events



Kirsty Gale launched her spectacular collection of beautiful dresses in Branston Last week. A packed house was graced by Miss England and Miss Lincolnshire, from Scunthorpe, as well as some handsome support staff.



Above: Part of the Read-a-thon for Branston Library.

Left below: Children of Branston Junior School brilliantly created their own Talent Show and coffee morning last week.



Local Campaigns

Libraries

Branston has a very cost-effective partnership library, providing education and information, (including health information and IT training), is a community hub for a host of local clubs and otherwise isolated people and helps our economy, used by job seekers and micro-businesses. It is a vibrant success with over 40,000 visits a year.

Well over 500 people signed the petition for Branston library which I submitted to LCC. We held a public Read-a-thon in the library. Branston Parish Council, Branston Academy and I met Cllr Worth, the Conservative responsible for libraries. We explained Branston's case very clearly.

Lincolnshire Independents proposed an alternative which saved the full £1.9m and kept all of the libraries open and most of the mobile stops.

Our proposal looks at how best to spend a limited budget, without political prejudice; reorganising the mobile routes more efficiently, charging for internet only where people can afford it and by keeping ten hours minimum on smaller libraries to create a core of professional support around which volunteers can muster. That would save the libraries now and in the long term, as requested by over 8,000 people.

We proposed it at Full Council and it was agreed to be considered. I invited all group leaders to scrutinise the details of our alternative proposal, the brainchild of Pauline Palmer, a financial whiz and wife of Lincolnshire independent, Steve Palmer. We fought hard for it throughout, despite some considerable opposition.

This was so obviously a better option, I was amazed the Conservatives finally refused, supported by the Lib Dems. Their proposal now stands: to withdraw professional support from 30 libraries including Branston, so they will close unless volunteers take over. The latest plan does **not** make the savings **and** will cost an extra £1m to change the computer system, necessary if no professionals are on site.

The Conservative-led administration has chosen a more expensive solution which leaves 30 libraries out to dry, when there is so obviously a better solution. This demonstrates to me that the current administration is not concentrating on what is best for our communities but instead is politically driven, focussing on how the Council cease operations.

Core strategy

Following the sudden disappearance of the leading staff member, David Sykes has been temporarily appointed at NKDC.

The Inspector has responded to our representations. It seems our objections have been justified. The plan *is* expected to add up, with infra-structure, jobs and sites identified to match the housing proposed. Also a response is needed to each representation. Some of our responses were taken as 'correspondence' and responses to sites were not sent off. Confusion and lack of transparency is having serious effects. The consultation on how much to set for the infrastructure levy is out *again* now, biased to be less for urban houses than rural.

The crux of the matter seems to be that over the next five years, the sites are not identified, nor the funds for infrastructure, nor the jobs. It seems to me that our fundamental problem is that the numbers of houses is too high, (calculated before the economic decline) and unattainable. That leaves us with the National Planning Policy Framework, which also requires five years land supply, depending on the same "faulty" numbers.

A hearing in public about procedure will be held on Dec 12th at 2pm at the Bentley Hotel in South Hykeham. Representations are sought by January 9th. Joint Planning Unit today decided to suggest delaying the inspection in the hope of getting more in place. The Inspector's admin is Marion Thomas at NKDC 01529 414155

Wind turbines

You may have heard of the application for 150m turbines in Nocton Fen. That is about twice as high as where Lincoln Cathedral sits. They are inefficient and very large indeed. We want renewable energy that is of a size and scale in keeping with the industrial development it serves - all things in moderation.

There is a substantial local voice saying the ones discussed at Hough and at Nocton are too large and conspicuous in the open countryside. "Benefits" are not guaranteed. Applicants can and do renegotiate after gaining permission, for example, if the government subsidy reduces.

Renewed Sleaford Swimming Pool

Do you enjoy the swimming or the gym? NKDC has spent over £2m on the new facilities without borrowing a penny. It is very smart. Enjoy!

Useful Information

Planning changes

National changes mean that more generous house extensions of up to 8m can be granted by NKDC, with a free reduced permission process. Only if neighbours object, will the Parish Council get involved. Then there is 42 days to settle the matter.

Change of use can now happen without permission, from office to residential or commercial and agricultural buildings to more diverse uses, such as a restaurant or storage. This is part of the government's idea that planning is holding up economic development. Local government points out that our role is to facilitate development in a way that does not damage other people's lives and helps keep our rural communities vibrant and attractive.

Parish Council Tax

Properties where residents are on low incomes are no longer counted in the grants from central government, so parishes may need to make this up. NKDC covered it with an extra grant last year, for one year, so that Parishes could plan for it. Have a look at the precept calculator on NKDC website

Wildlife Watch

We have had a very busy year including sea-dipping, bird ringing, badger watching, bushcraft and camping in the wild. We contributed to the Wildlife Trust Bioblitz at Whisby. The annual report and next year's calendar is ready. To join in events, please contact me and I will send you a calendar.

British Trust for Ornithology

The new Atlas of British and Irish Birds is out now. The result of many thousands of volunteer hours surveying, this book is spectacular and provides a benchmark for agricultural and conservation policy for the next 20 years. You can order a copy through www.bto.org/shop

*Very Best Wishes to you all,
Marianne Overton*

A Few December Events

10th Branston Junior Christmas Concert dress rehearsal 10am
10th Business Christmas Supper, Branston Waggon 7.30pm
11th U3A Christmas Event, Wellingore Mem' Ha, 11am
12th Inspection of Core Strategy at the Bentley 2pm
13th Malawi Gathering at the Nomad Trust, Lincoln
17th Branston Junior Christmas Concert 9.30am
17th Breathe Easy Christmas Event, Lincoln 1.30pm
19th Scotter By-election for LCC and WLDC

November Pictures

Kirsty Gale welcomed us to the launch of her new Branston business. She offers the most gorgeous dresses for sale or hire. Contact her on www.redcarpetready.co.uk



A number of stalls, like Branston Biz raised money for the Branston Skate Park Project. Thanks all!



Branston Christmas market was a huge success. Well done all.



As President of Lincoln Breathe Easy, I was pleased to support those in receipt of very poor service to tackle the suppliers of oxygen, face to face. We now expect it to improve.