Have your say on the future of your local area
Festival Hall, Caistor Road, Market Rasen, LN8 3JA
October 13th: 1.00pm – 3.00pm

This summary highlights the main topics discussed at the event. They are the views of those present at the event, and are not the views of Lincolnshire County Council or West Lindsey District Council.

1   Present
Professor Andrew Atherton (facilitator), Bryn Davies, Rachael Townsend, Richard Glover, M Page, C Page, Wendy Osgodby, David Smith, Helen Trevor, Ken Bridger, John Edser

The big questions we are asking:
- What is going on in the local economy where you live and work?
- What are the important issues we need to be focused on?

2   The big issues
There was a feeling that the level of policing was almost non-existent in the town and consequently business and commercial crime is on the increase, particularly theft. Drug taking and drug abuse is also seen as a growing problem. Some felt they were paying high taxes and seeing little back in terms of police action.

Business growth is slow and the area has yet to recover from the recession, and there is concern about the effects of a double-dip recession. More local procurement would also be advantageous.

Low wages are a problem in attracting people to the area and it also has an impact on local consumption. However, low wages do reduce costs and could be attractive to business moving into the area. However, it is still difficult to attract people to work in the area and a number of the larger employers bus people in from places like Grimsby.

Towns and villages in the area had a “run down” feel to them. There are a number of closed shops, derelict and poorly maintained buildings. This gives a bad impression to those visiting the area and passing through. This is also an issue in the villages (e.g. Brookenby).

Public transport (bus and trains) is very limited and there is a distinct lack of leisure facilities in the area.
When asked to vote on these issues the growth of businesses and better local policing were the most cited issues, followed by the need to renovate derelict buildings and improve shop fronts. Attracting more and higher quality staff, better public transport, and a new leisure centre also had a high priority.

**Biggest issue:**

![Bar chart showing the most cited issues](chart1.png)

- **Growth of Businesses**: 40%
- **Policing**: 20%
- **Derelict buildings**: 20%
- **Public transport**: 20%
- **Can’t get people / staff**: 20%

**Second biggest issue:**

![Bar chart showing the second most cited issues](chart2.png)

- **Look of the Town**: 40%
- **Policing**: 20%
- **Derelict buildings**: 20%
- **Public transport**: 20%
- **Can’t get people / staff**: 20%
- **Leisure activities (swimming pool)**: 20%

### 3 The Big picture

Bryn Davies gave a short presentation highlighting the key socio-economic data for the area. The delegates agreed that the data was correct and that it reflected what was happening in the Market Rasen area. One delegate would have liked some data on business growth in the area.
4 The Economy

It was acknowledged that there was a sizeable manufacturing sector but many businesses were very small cottage industry type developments. Agriculture was also important to the area and whilst Cherry Valley was an important presence, there were also a number of medium sized companies. Whilst a substantial proportion of the area was agricultural land the number it employed was relatively small and had fallen significantly over the years.

There was a great deal of caution amongst businesses and consumers at the moment. It is a “wait and see” attitude given the publicity surrounding proposed cuts in public expenditure. Individuals were much more cautious about starting new businesses, and existing business were wary about increasing investment and taking on new staff.

Consumers were constantly looking for discounts and the difficult market conditions were forcing some businesses to diversify, and to look hard at operating costs. As a result when there is an upturn they will hopefully be more efficient and in a better position to take advantage of it. An added problem for the area is the lack of suitable sites to attract sizeable employers but it is imperative that solutions are found to this issue.

Tourism has not reached its potential for the area. There is recognition that resources to market tourism in the area will be reduced over the coming years. A town centre manager might help the area and neighbouring Louth has benefited considerably from such a development. Poor transport is still likely to be a barrier to development as is the patchy supply of high speed broadband. When asked to vote as to how they felt the economy would develop over the next few years, most delegates were split with some feeling that it would improve a lot and some fearing a slightly worse scenario.

What will happen to the business environment over the next year or two?
5 Jobs

The rural nature of the area was a barrier to people looking for work and recruiting. For those looking for work there is no local job centre and the loss of the weekly “jobs bus” has made the search for work more difficult. An employer indicated they had been advertising for a driver for three months and still hadn’t found a suitable candidate.

Some queried whether the level of benefit payments was discouraging some local people from returning to the job market.

The lack of another major employer in the area was a problem and wasn’t attracting the necessary skills set into area. Amongst the small businesses the cost of training was a big issue, and then subsequently retaining those they may have trained. As a low wage economy those with skills are likely to look to areas where salaries are higher.

Delegates were expecting the job market to worsen slightly over the next year or so.

What will happen to job market over the next year or two?

![Job Market Trends](chart.png)
6 Homes and Housing
There was agreement that although prices had risen sharply in Market Rasen they were still attractive to people from other parts of the country, particularly the South East of England.

Some of the attendees questioned whether the current planning regulations help local communities. Market Rasen and Caistor have yet to see any meaningful returns from Section 106 that was supposed to improve the local infrastructure. In Market Rasen in particular there was a feeling that the current drainage system could not take any further development.

There had been a significant amount of affordable housing built in the area and they had exceeded the amount required in the local development plans. Unfortunately, some of this housing had been sold to outsiders to the area on a buy to let basis. Some questioned whether incentives could be built in to the developments to attract, or be ring fenced, for local buyers. There was also need to attract other types of development and perhaps more for the older person.

It was also suggested that instead of new housing estates, consideration should also be given to renovating existing town centre properties.

When asked to vote the feeling was that the housing market might worsen slightly over the next few years.

Over the next 3 or 4 years the homes and housing market will get…?

- Stay the same
- A little worse
- A little better
- Much worse
- Much better
7 What are the top five community issues?
Market Rasen is seen as a hub for its hinterland and there is a generally a good community spirit. Caistor, in particular, had been successful in developing volunteering, and encouraging and guiding groups through the process of applying for community grants. One delegate felt that this particular approach will be vital in the difficult times ahead.

There was a problem in Market Rasen and Caistor with anti-social behaviour and vandalism, and consequently a need for more activities for young people. There is “nothing to do” was a common response amongst young people in the area. The youth club is not particularly well promoted in Caistor and some felt that its proximity to the school in Market Rasen was off putting to some young people.

When asked to vote delegates felt that community life was likely to improve slightly over the coming year or so.

Will the community…..?

8 If you could change one thing to improve the area, what would it be?

- More local procurement for businesses from local councils in Lincolnshire would be a big benefit. Some had experienced problems talking to the council about such issues and felt that the councils would prefer to use bigger companies from outside the county.
- A relief road for the industrial estate in Caistor, to prevent the traffic congestion in the centre of the town, would be a major benefit.
- Attract one large company employing over 500 people.
- Ensure that all shop fronts are renovated to present a better image to visitors.
- Develop a positive approach amongst the community and promote a "can do" attitude.
- Build a leisure centre with a swimming pool
- Have a shop and a tearoom in each village

When asked to vote on the priority of the change delegates indicated that the need for a more positive “can do attitude” was required in the area, followed by improving the frontage of local shops, councils procuring more services from local businesses, a new leisure centre, and bringing in one large employer into the area.
Lincolnshire County Council, in partnership with the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce, runs a quarterly economic survey providing businesses with a regular update of local economic conditions. If you are not already doing so, would you like to participate in the survey via email and receive regular briefings? If so please email rachael.townsend@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Thank you to all those who attended the event, and for all your useful contributions. Please feel free to contact the Lincolnshire Research Observatory (LRO) with any questions or queries you may have.