**Blaby District Council October 2024 Report**

**Press Releases**

* **Appeal allows Enderby Logistics Hub Scheme**
* **New Conservation area approved**
* **Bouskell Park improvements planned**
* **Decision delayed on rail freight hub**
* **Tourism growth success**

**HNRFI decision delayed**

Early in September the Secretary of State for Transport announced she was delaying making a decision on the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange. The recommendation from the Planning Inspectorate was that it should be rejected. It is disappointing that the Secretary of State for Transport, Louise Haigh, has not thrown the scheme out completely. Instead, she is ‘minded to refuse’ the application but has asked for more information and delayed the final decision until March 2025. Developers, Tritax Symmetry, now have another opportunity to convince the Secretary the project should go ahead. An extension has been given to Tritax to the 10th December 2024 to present more evidence. Interested parties will then have until 31st January 2025 to respond. At every stage of the process Tritax have failed to address key issues and impacts in relation to traffic, landscape, noise and nuisance. However, it is important not to give up now and encourage all registered Interested Parties to respond if new evidence is presented.

**Contaminated Land**

The Environmental Services Team are making progress on the delivery of the workstreams detailed within the Contaminated Land Strategy which was adopted in November 2023. A new Contaminated Land Officer has been in post since April 2024.

**District Tourism Growth Plan**

This is an ambitious vision that by 2025 Blaby District will be one of Leicestershire’s leading and most welcoming and sustainable tourism destinations, attracting stay-over and day visitors from across the UK. The three main aims are to:

•Grow the value of Blaby District tourism by £50 million

•Increase the number of visitors by 1.3 million

•Increase the number of tourism jobs by 40%

As the existing District Tourism Growth Plan is coming to an end, the council have started planning for 2025-2030. This includes a review of progress to date and consultation with the Council, the Tourism Partnership and key stakeholders, ready to launch in the new year. The latest data shows a strong recovery post covid in all areas. In particular, the growth in the value of tourism, has been incredible, standing at £216.84 million, surpassing the ambitious target of £209 million already. The Tourism Growth Plan plays a vital role in moving forward the Blaby District Plan 2024-2028. It is key to ‘growing and supporting our economy’ and ‘keeping you safe and healthy’, through increasing visitor numbers, spend and employment in the district. It will also play a pivotal role in the Active Travel Strategy, Community, Health and Well-being Plan and the Economic Development Framework, making Blaby District a welcoming and sustainable tourism destination for both residents and visitors.

 **Update on Local Plan**

The council continue to work on the Local Plan which will guide growth across the district up to 2041, shaping where housing, employment and retail sites should be developed and where development should be restricted. However, now the government has launched a consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), there needs to be a review of Blaby’s proposals in the light of this. The consultation provides guidance to all local authorities about development, including the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets. The consultation has now ended. The council are keen to learn how any changes will impact plans, timescales and potential housing numbers. Whatever the outcome the council will be lobbying government to ensure we are provided with the resources needed to meet any new mandated targets.

**Active Travel Strategy**

The council’s new Active Travel Strategy is progressing as more people are encouraged to make walking and cycling their first choice for short journeys in the district. The council will be working with external partners to enhance existing pedestrian routes as well as create new ones. A project group is being established, made up of community organisations, Parish Councils, schools and businesses, which will help inform the delivery of the strategy. It is realised an essential aspect will be public engagement, including educational campaigns, aiming to help change people’s perceptions and promote the benefits of active travel. Close liaison with housing developers will also be essential. This will ensure new communities feature attractive, safe and comprehensive walking and cycling connections, making active travel easier and more pleasant so people will want to make it their first choice.

**Electric Sweeper**

The council’s first ever electric street sweeper is now out and about in the district with its distinctive ‘zero emissions’ livery. The sweeper was purchased with part of the £573,701 Air Quality Grant received from central government last year, with the rest going towards an electric conversion kit for a diesel bin lorry. It is part of the council’s ambition to tackle pollution and reduce emissions, helping the council to become a carbon neutral district by 2050. It is expected that the electric bin lorry to be ready in the autumn.

**Solar Together Success**

The Council’s group-buying scheme Solar Together has seen another successful year with almost 500 households registering an interest in investing in green energy. The initiative helps people navigate the complexities of solar panel installation by offering quotes from vetted and pre-approved firms following a reverse auction. Support is offered every step of the way to make the transition to renewable energy as hassle-free and cost-effective as possible. For every household which installs solar panels, battery storage or even electric vehicle charging points - all available under Solar Together – the district moves towards net zero aim.