

**Caistor Development Trust**

# **CAISTOR ECONOMIC REVIVAL**

## **Consultant's Brief**

**4<sup>th</sup> February 2002**

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# Caistor Economic Revival

## Summary

The **Caistor Development Trust** wishes to appoint Consultants to develop the economic and business aspects of a Strategy that will lead to a revitalisation of Caistor town centre. Revitalisation is concerned with maintaining the viability of the existing services and enterprises and the fostering of new economic activity. The issues to be addressed within the scope of this brief include:

- Retail business
- Non-retail business
- Property development
- Competition / Promotion
- Tourism
- Organisational, financial and management aspects
- The need for Town Centre Conservation

Consultants are invited to submit proposals for work to be done which will result in a plan of action. This commission will involve putting forward recommendations for a practical and achievable plan to meet the Caistor Development Partnership’s vision of a thriving and attractive town.

A public consultation exercise has taken place (Reference 1), objectives have been identified and a strategy to achieve those objectives has been put forward. An early version of this strategy has been published (Reference 2) . However the Partnership recognises that the stage has been reached at which professionally competent advice is necessary to take forward the business and economic aspects of the strategy. Hence the publication of this brief.

The three objectives of the Partnership’s strategy are:-

**Economic:** To increase economic activity in the town.

**Town Centre:** To improve the appearance of the town centre through conservation and refurbishment.

**Promotion:** To promote awareness of Caistor as an attractive centre for tourism and as a desirable place to live and work.

These objectives are mutually dependent and an integrated strategy is needed. This brief is concerned primarily with the economic objective and with promotion in support of the economic objective.

## **Brief for Consultants**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

#### **A1 General**

Caistor is a small market town on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds. The centre is largely Georgian, with the conservation area containing a large number of listed buildings. The Lincolnshire Wolds at our doorstep are a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Caistor is close to an English ideal of a place to live. With a population of 2600 it is small enough to have an identity as a community, and yet large enough to provide shops, pubs, Post Office, good schools, medical practice, bank, solicitor, accountants and public library, all within walking distance for many residents. In and around the town centre there are many pretty views, and the overall impression is one of intimacy and quiet domesticity. Experts have described the town as a ‘Jewel’.

The town is within commuting distance of Grimsby / Immingham / Humber Bank and is 15 minutes (8 miles) from Humberside International Airport.

#### **A2. The Problem**

##### **A2.1 Symptoms**

- Decline of traditional small retail businesses in the Market Place and nearby.
- Hollowing out of town centre, and local economy, empty retail properties, declining business confidence and property values.
- Boarded-up shop windows and derelict properties in the very heart of the town.

##### **A2.2 Causes**

Caistor’s situation is well described in the Rural White Paper section 7.2.2 (Reference 3). The problems of small market towns like Caistor have accumulated for a generation and intensified in the last ten years. Factors include structural changes in the global economy, intensification of agricultural production, local government re-organisation, increasing aspirations of young people, increased mobility of the work force and most significant of all, aggressive competition from out-of-town multiple retailers.

#### **A1.2 Caistor Development Partnership**

The Partnership is a working group of volunteers, formed after recent public meetings in the town. Membership includes a wide representation from local organisations, businesses and residents including Caistor Society, Caistor Town Hall Committee, Caistor Sports & Social Club, Caistor Town Council, West Lindsey District Council ward members, Lincolnshire County Council district member, AONB

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Countryside Service, Schools, Methodist Church, Police, the young people of Caistor and local businesses: Cherry Valley Farms Ltd., J W Varlow & Son, Allison & Cadle, Marmax, the Loco Shop. The number of members is now 25 which is about 1% of the population. West Lindsey District Council and Lincolnshire County Council are currently represented by the ward and district members respectively but it is anticipated that both authorities will be fully represented in due course.

### **A2.1 Consultation and Evidence Gathering**

Three public meetings took place in the latter half of 2000, at the initiative of local members of West Lindsey District Council, Caistor Ward. The purpose of these meetings was to consider the concerns of the community over the evident sharply worsening decline of commercial activity in the town centre and the accompanying very visible decay of town centre properties towards a neglected and derelict condition.

These public meetings resulted in the formation of the Caistor Development Partnership (see above) Among the first actions of the Partnership was the undertaking of a public opinion survey in February 2001 A questionnaire was distributed to all 1100 households in Caistor, with a response rate of approx. 20%. The report is attached as (Reference 1)

### **A2.2 Analysis Of Results**

An analysis of responses to the opinion survey indicates that the matter of greatest concern to the townspeople is

- To Bring back shops and businesses to the town

Second only to this is :

- To improve the appearance of the town centre

### **A3 The Vision**

The vision of the Partnership for the future of Caistor is as a picturesque small market town, set in beautiful countryside, with an unspoilt Georgian centre and a thriving economy. Retail businesses in the town will be a mixture of shops serving the needs of the local community and “niche” businesses drawing customers from a distance. The town will be welcoming to visitors, with teashops, restaurants, B&B and hotel accommodation, and attractive to tourists for its historical and architectural heritage .

The town will be seen as a desirable place in which to live, to work and to raise families, not least because of the 3 excellent schools. Thus the town will be a favoured location for professional and creative enterprises. The advent of small and medium enterprises (high-tech, agri-tech) will strengthen the local economy and improve employment prospects for the town’s young people.

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### **A4 Wider Implications Of The Project**

The long-term implications of the project are that the resulting plan will serve as the basis for a sustainable revitalisation of the economic life of the market town of Caistor. Further funding will be needed to provide startup capital and funding for the regeneration of the town.

Various sources may include:

- EMDA Investment Strategy
- Potential SRB 7 funding round bid
- East Midlands European Objective 2 programme
- Lincolnshire Development Partnership
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- English Heritage
- Lincolnshire County Council
- West Lindsey District Council
- Caistor Town Council

Public funds are, however, limited and capital projects are only likely where private sector funding can be generated. The Partnership believe that with a modest amount of startup capital, the project can become self-funding.

The Partnership also believe that the Caistor project may serve as a useful model for other towns in a similar situation, for the following reason. The economic dimension is seen as fundamental to making Caistor once again a thriving and attractive town. Conservation and refurbishment measures are beyond question necessary to a revitalisation of the town but are not the be-all and end-all. In itself, conservation may have little more than a cosmetic effect. Thus the Partnership places emphasis on the need for a thorough analysis at the outset of prospects for business, and an understanding of the conditions necessary for success. One model, or precedent, for this project is the Gainsborough Development Trust, but Gainsborough’s situation is somewhat different. Otherwise there are relatively few precedents and in this respect the Caistor project is regarded as ground-breaking. The lessons learned in developing and implementing a business plan for Caistor are expected to be of value in a wider context.

## **B. INFORMATION AVAILABLE**

### **B1 Background information**

The following reports have been produced and are available for consultation.

West Lindsey District Council	Tourism Development Statement 2000
West Lindsey District Council	Local Plan Policy Statement
West Lindsey District Council	Economic Development Statement 2000
Lincolnshire Tourism	Market Towns Benchmarking
Lincolnshire Tourism	Volume & Value Study on Tourism in Lincolnshire 2000

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### **C. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

#### **C1 Scope**

The scope of the study is to be the economic and business aspects of an integrated strategy (outlined in Reference 2) for the revitalisation of Caistor. The result of the study is to form an essential part of the strategy.

#### **C2 Key Issues**

The key issues for this study are considered to be:-

1. To provide evidence, quantitative as far as is possible, as to whether a plan for revitalising commercial, retail and other business enterprises in the town (a “business plan” which will result in maintaining the viability of existing enterprises and services and fostering new economic activity) is achievable in order to justify initial investment of public funds in implementing the plan.
2. To identify the conditions, assumptions, or factors, relevant to Caistor, on which the successful implementation of a business plan is dependent. Of these conditions, to identify those which can be brought under control, through actions by the partnership, and to identify those other conditions which represent risks. To identify ways of managing risks.
3. To recommend the legal, financial, management and accountability structures which must be put in place for implementation of the plan.
4. To take account of the need to preserve the existing character of the town centre, and hence for the plan to be integrated, where appropriate, with proposed conservation measures, so as to create investment opportunities for existing site owner/occupiers.
5. To establish a well defined business plan.
6. To analyse the effect of competition, especially in the retail sector, and of the location of markets and customers, as factors in the viability of business located in Caistor.
7. To make recommendations for the promotion of tourism in order to bring tourists, visitors and shoppers to the town.
8. To establish working relationships with initiatives in wider contexts, at the district, county, regional, national and European levels.

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### **C3 Other Related Initiatives**

The Consultant will need to be aware and consider the implications of a number of related initiatives including the following:-

1. SRB 6 – Rural Tourism Development Area Partnership
2. East Midlands European Objective 2 Funding
3. Other European Funds
4. East Midlands Development Agency – Strategic Investment Plan
5. East Midlands Regional Development Strategy – Prosperity through people
6. Countryside Agency
7. Lincolnshire Development Partnership

### **D. CONSULTATION**

#### **D1 Groups to be Consulted**

The Consultant is required to consult a wide range of organisations and representative groups to establish the community’s aspirations for the town centre. The principal consultees who must be involved are: -

1. Lincolnshire County Council
2. West Lindsey District Council
3. Caistor Town Council
4. Caistor Development Partnership

Others who may be involved are:

5. Groundwork Lincolnshire
6. The Community Council of Lincolnshire
7. The Civic Trust Regeneration Unit
8. Lincolnshire Development Partnership
9. Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire
10. Rural Tourism Development Partnership
11. Lincolnshire Tourism
12. Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Management Project
13. Wold Community Transport Association
14. Council for the Protection of Rural England – Lincolnshire Branch

Full contact details will be given to the selected Consultant at the pre-commencement meeting.

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### **E. PRINCIPAL STUDY TOPICS**

#### **E1 Feasibility**

The consultant is required to make a reasoned assessment of the overall feasibility of the project envisaged in this brief which will result in revitalising the economy of the town.

#### **E2 Business Opportunities and Constraints**

The consult is required to provide an analysis of those factors relevant to the success of business in Caistor which represent opportunities, including:

- the character of Caistor as small market town
- geographical position, and position relative to larger towns
- possibilities for markets/customer base over a wide area.

The consultant is required to provide an analysis of those factors relevant to the success of business in Caistor which represent constraints, including:

- Competition, especially from out-of-town multiple retailers
- The limited size of a purely local customer-base
- The availability of resources, including entrepreneurial and management skills, capital, staff, premises
- The present condition of the physical fabric of the town centre

The resulting analyses should lead to a set of profiles of enterprises likely to succeed in Caistor, and an indication given of the implications for the overall plan: how opportunities can be exploited and constraints overcome.

#### **E3 The Role of the Caistor Development Trust**

The Partnership’s strategy, as currently envisaged, is that the lead organisation in the implementation of the business plan will be a not-for-profit company called the “Caistor Development Trust”.

It is envisaged that the Trust will be able to attract public and private-sector funding to be used for two main purposes:

- Fostering business developments, startups or relocations by making capital available to its clients on preferential terms.
- Acquisition of property in the town either in whole or in part for refurbishment and resale.

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### F. DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables are required from the Consultant:-

A ‘First’ Report, 1 month from inception outlining the approach to be taken and an assessment of the key study areas. This report must be approved by the Caistor Development Partnership before proceeding to the next stage.

An ‘Interim’ Report, 4 months from inception, concentrating on those issues identified in the ‘First’ report.

A ‘Final’ Report 8 months from inception, presenting a “business plan for Caistor” with assessments and recommendations under the following headings.

1. **Prospects** for Business In Caistor, making the case for the initial investment of public funds.
2. **Plan of Action** Recommendations for specific steps to be taken to move forward with the project.
3. **Legal, Financial and Management Structures** Recommendations for the organisation of the project, identifying roles, responsibilities and necessary qualifications.
4. **Business Policy:** A set of criteria by which investment propositions may be judged as likely to be of benefit to the town and commercially successful.
5. **Financial Model** Estimates should be given of projected requirements for capital, projected expenditures and internally generated income over a period of say 5 years, or to the point when the project may become financially self-sustaining and thus judged successful. In view of the many uncertainties, it is desirable to provide estimates for different scenarios.
6. **Process Model:** Indications should be given of recommended procedures to be followed in the “running of the business” (for example, the fostering of a startup company or the acquisition of a property) focussing in particular on the management of risk.
7. **Funding** Recommendations should be made on securing necessary funding for the implementation of the plan, and the approach to obtaining private-sector investment

The Consultant may be asked as part of the implementation stage of this project to serve as business adviser on an ongoing basis. Any consultation fees would be negotiated separately.

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### **G. PROGRAMME**

The Study shall be completed over an 8-month period commencing at an initial briefing meeting.

### **H. CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Consultant may have access to information provided on a confidential basis. No such information may be revealed to any third party. The report and associated documents shall be treated as confidential and not revealed to any third party without written permission.

### **I. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The Consultant is required to declare any possible conflict of interest as soon as the conflict is identified.

### **J. CLIENT**

For the purposes of this study the client will be Caistor Development Trust.

### **K. CONTACT**

The principal contact for the Study will be Roy Schofield, Chairman of the Caistor Development Partnership and a director of Caistor Development Trust.

### **L. REFERENCES**

1. Report of Opinion Survey, Caistor Development Partnership, March 2001
2. “A Strategy for Caistor”, Caistor Development Partnership, May 2001
3. “Our Countryside: the future”, HMSO, Cm4909, November 2000