

ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	23/07/2026
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Lincs Inspire Annual Report 2025/26
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The partnership with Lincs Inspire Limited (LIL) supports the delivery of key priorities in the Council Plan, contributing to a Stronger Economy and Stronger Communities. Through the delivery of culture, sport and leisure facilities and services, LIL supports people of all ages to be more active, improve their health and wellbeing, and take part in community life. These services help children and young people get the best start in life, reduce social isolation, and provide opportunities for learning, active recreation and personal development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report provides an update on the impact and performance of LIL services over the recent period of 2025/26 and how they continue to support the Council's priorities.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The report has been submitted to update the panel on the delivery of services provided by LIL. The panel are asked to consider the report and the annual headline performance indicators.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 LIL work in partnership with the Council to deliver important facilities and services to residents across the borough covering culture, sport and leisure. A headline list of services includes our libraries, leisure centres, sports development activity and the auditorium.
- 1.2 Through the delivery of these facilities and services, the partnership with LIL helps residents to live healthier and more active lives, supports learning and skills development, provides opportunities for social connection and volunteering, and contributes to community pride and participation. Collectively, these services improve physical and mental wellbeing, reduce social isolation, enhance quality of life, and support the delivery of stronger communities and a stronger local economy.
- 1.3 LIL have provided an annual report for the recent period (see Appendix 1, Summary Business Report 2025-26) to give an overview of their services, the

performance for the period and highlight the contribution of the partnership.

- 1.4 It is important to note that the value of the partnership and culture, sport and leisure more generally should not be measured solely by the financial investment made by the Council. Through culture, sport and leisure facilities and services, social value is generated by supporting healthier lifestyles, improving mental wellbeing, fostering community participation, developing skills and creating opportunities for volunteering and employment. These wider benefits contribute to stronger, more resilient communities and can have a positive effect on reducing future pressures on public services.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

- 2.1 The report highlights LIL service delivery within the funding resources available; it is important to recognise that for wider culture, sport and leisure delivery there is an ongoing reliance on securing external grant funding.
- 2.2 The culture, sport and leisure sector faces ongoing challenges with rising costs that continue to place financial pressure on services.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The report supports the Council in monitoring the progress of the partnership with LIL and can support the communication of whether the partnership is contributing to wider benefits for communities physical, mental and social health. Therefore, depending on whether impact is demonstrated, there is the potential for both positive and negative reputational implications for the Council.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Council budget linked to the Lincs Inspire partnership for culture, sport and leisure services for 2025/26 was £3.228m. This budget allocation contributes to the partnership with LIL and associated costs of delivery of LIL services including repairs, maintenance and utilities.
- 4.2 The partnership with LIL and wider culture, sport and leisure services generate significant social value for the area, reaching beyond the direct service outcomes. These benefits will have a role in reducing demand on wider public services, have economic impact and support improve overall quality of life for residents.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

Taking part in cultural engagement, participating in sport or being physically active has many positive outcomes for children and young people whether these are physical, mental or social benefits from these activities. The reporting of LIL service delivery will support in monitoring our progress in providing opportunities and reducing barriers for children and young people locally to access these services in North East Lincolnshire bringing forward these associated health and wellbeing benefits.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The services delivered through the partnership with LIL includes a portfolio of facilities that would be considered high users of energy, for example swimming pool provision. The Council is working in partnership with LIL in the delivery of energy conservation measures across both Grimsby Leisure Centre and Immingham Swimming Pool through secured Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grant funding. In addition, the role of active travel has an important part to play in reducing the number of vehicles on our roads and bringing forward the associated environmental benefits. The positive performance of the Bikeability scheme should be noted and the importance of teaching a valuable life skill of cycling safely on the road to young people.

7. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

The partnership with LIL supports several Marmot Principles by promoting lifelong wellbeing, reducing social isolation, improving access to physical activity and learning opportunities, and helping residents develop the skills, confidence and connections needed to live healthy and fulfilling lives. Through a preventative approach, these services contribute to reducing health inequalities and building stronger, more resilient communities.

8. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

9. WARD IMPLICATIONS

LIL service delivery impacts across all wards.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Sport and Physical Activity Annual Update, November 2025: [Copy-to-follow-27th-November.pdf](#)

11. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Nick Browning
Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure & Tourism

CAROLINA BORGSTROM
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL
ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY MEETING



DATE: 23rd July 2026

REPORT OF: Lincs Inspire Limited

SUBJECT: SUMMARY BUSINESS REPORT – 2025-2026

STATUS: Closed/Open

1. OVERVIEW

Lincs Inspire Leisure and Cultural Trust was formed by North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) in 2013/14, working in partnership to support the sustainability of key public sport, leisure, and cultural services across the borough. A shared purpose ensures a continued focus on community priorities linked to healthy lifestyles at all ages, creating the best start possible for children, and building community engagement that helps to reduce isolation and improve physical and mental wellbeing.

In addition to working with our local authority partners, our partnerships extend across the health, education, and VCSE sectors. As a registered charity we are compliant with Charities Commission requirements, having an independent board of trustees, a not-for-profit trading subsidiary (Lincs Inspire Venues & Enterprises) and a published charitable purpose (aims and objectives).

Lincs Inspire has a 25-year Partnership Agreement (contract) in place with NELC, commencing 2015, for the delivery of sports, leisure, and cultural services, with all public building ownership being retained by NELC. Contract funding focuses mainly on the commissioning of statutory services, i.e. libraries and public archives.

Since inception NELC has benefitted from ongoing financial savings within the contractual arrangement and avoided increasing service costs arising from a variety of factors, including the impacts of national minimum wage increases, changes to employer national insurance contributions, taxation, and inflationary increases for goods and services.

The trust model is based on the recycling of funding, with profitable services cross-subsiding those community facilities that are invaluable for public benefit but unlikely to break even. Patronage at our largest leisure facility in Cleethorpes enables us to support smaller venues including Immingham Swimming Pool and KGV Athletics Stadium, both vital community assets.

Lincs Inspire benefits from NELC's continued maintenance of buildings and provision of utility services, which maximises buying power and the use of internal resources/expertise. Working together, we aim to reduce energy consumption and carbon footprints.

In a similar approach, Lincs Inspire buys-in information technology services from NELC, ensuring systems are robust and measures are in place to keep data secure.

As a local organisation we contribute an investment of c. £6.5 million pa, directly supporting local employment for c. 450 people, including full and part-time opportunities, and access to training and apprenticeships across our operational and support service areas.

The following report provides a summary of performance, highlighting our community impact across 2025-2026.

1.1 What We Do:

- Sports and active leisure services, helping everyone to stay active and be healthy.
- Inspiring live entertainment from nationally acclaimed artists through to amazing local dance, music, and stage schools.
- Friendly and accessible public library & archive services, supporting a love of literature, learning and local history, alongside offering a wide range of community services/activities.

1.2 How We Make a Difference:

Community Health & Wellbeing –

- Targeted physical activity programmes supporting residents with high-risk health conditions.
- Boroughwide healthy weight management programmes.
- Social activities that help to reduce loneliness and isolation.
- Co-designed GP/Health professional exercise referral programmes, alongside free health check events within leisure and library facilities.
- Extensive 'read yourself well' library collections, catering for a wide range of health conditions and life stages.

Supporting Young People –

- Keeping children safe -- delivering cycling skills/road safety training.
- In-school and after-school activity programmes, plus a boroughwide holiday activities programme.
- Weekly learn to swim programmes at all pools.

- Access via Libraries to trusted information and support; learn to read, help with ICT skills, pass your driving theory test and find help with career planning.
- Inclusive activities for children of all ages and abilities, including regular disability awareness days and taster sessions, plus access to our sensory room and wide range of special educational needs resources.
- Children's live theatre performances, embracing learning and having fun.
- Grant giving for schools/VCSE sector to assist in bringing young people to live performances (made possible through customer donations).

2. HEADLINE PERFORMANCE

The following headline performance data is based on participation/engagement across service areas during 2025/26:

2.1 Health and Wellbeing -

- **1,004,331 participations in physical activity (all ages)** - supporting healthy lifestyles.
- **1,164 GP/Health professional referrals** - supporting health and mobility improvements via our assisted exercise programmes.
- The overall participation figure includes **65,387 active engagements** by individuals from targeted/at risk groups.

2.2 Learning and Cultural Engagement -

- **131,996 library visits**, supporting improved literacy, digital inclusion and community learning. Resulting in over 189k reading transactions and over 43k digital interactions.
- **39,884 young people's engagements** in organised physical and creative activities (including learn to ride courses)
- **123,526 live event and experience attendances**, increasing cultural engagement and supporting positive mental wellbeing.

2.3 Making Community Connections -

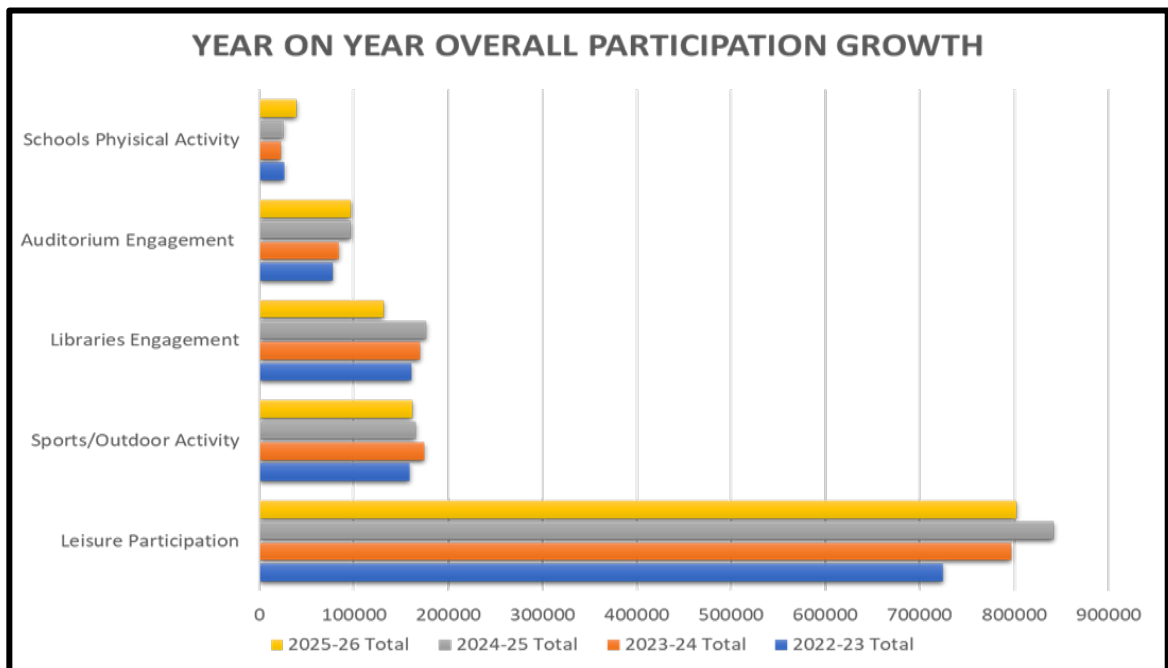
- **22,804 participations in community-based activities** - active seniors programmes, reading and reminiscence clubs, and social activities that enhance belonging and help to reduce loneliness.

2.4 Workforce and Economic Impact -

- **5 Trainees/Apprentices** recruited onto learning pathways, improving their employability.
- **16 Work Experience** opportunities provided across all services.
- **608 business support engagements** - contributing to local enterprise and economic development via the Library's BIPC service.

3. PERFORMANCE BY SERVICE AREAS

Individual service area performance and comparisons to previous years:



Schools Engagement -

- 39,567 school activity engagements, a 150% increase compared to 2024/25. Including 4,450 pupils attending the 'Bikeability' programme (Government funded safe cycling and road safety training), via 86 courses at 52 schools. Lincs Inspire's Sports Development team in partnership with NELC, ranked in the top 10 nationally by the Bikeability Trust, recognised for extensive engagement and achieving high standards.
- HAF (holiday activities & food) Government programme, in partnership with NELC, equating to 3,345 sports and leisure attendances during main school holidays. Rising to 5,318 attendances including attendance by children not eligible for a HAF place. Plus 2,400 further cultural HAF places at activities delivered via the Libraries and Grimsby Auditorium.



Outdoor Sports Engagement -

- 140,175 active engagements at Bradley Football Development Centre, from juniors through to 55 years+ walking footballers. Down by 4.7% compared to 2024/25, however reflecting an increase in the number of local facilities.
- 8,175 women's and girls football engagements which is great to see, alongside 3,195 engagements in football focused targeted health activities.
- 14,435 athletics engagements at KGV Stadium, supported by 9,291 events attendances, an overall increase of 27% compared to 2024/25.



Leisure Centre Engagement -

- 802,725 overall leisure centre active engagements in 2025/26, 4.8% less than 2024/25, impacted by a reduction in swim school lessons (national teacher shortage) and reductions in family memberships. Customer surveys acknowledge families not having enough time or financial pressures.
- 105,490 swim lessons provided and an average 2,000 children participating per week. In addition, daytime school pool hires have on average 320 children per week participating. Overall, 10% less swim lessons compared to 2024/25.
- 11,164 group exercise class engagements - 14% growth compared to 2024/25. Including access to virtual classes and light versions of classes to support a range of abilities and health conditions.
- 2025/26 HCP Health & Care Excellence Awards - 'Innovation Award' received for our 'Active Forever' (GP referral programme), recognising the programme's significant impact towards empowering local people to exercise safely and regain independence.
- 170 individuals referred to our Healthy Weight Management programmes during 2025/26, part grant funded by Sport England. 130 people completed the programme, resulting in a cumulative weight loss of c. 367 kg. 31 individuals reached a clinically significant weight loss of $\geq 5\%$, associated with reducing risk from long-term conditions such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. This programme incorporates assisted/light exercise with healthy weight management advice and is specifically for people with underlying health conditions.



Grimsby Auditorium Attendance -

- 96,623 attendances at 181 performances (the highest since Covid), including the ever-popular Christmas Pantomime, attracting 19k attendees to 32 performances.
- The Auditorium continues to offer a diverse range of live performances from orchestras/ballet to rock and comedy, plus a strong programme of community events, including school musical productions, graduation ceremonies and health partner AGMs.



Libraries Engagement -

- 27% dip in visits compared to 2024/25, arising from the closure of Central library. (However, from Q3 to Q4 a positive 12% increase supported by the opening of the temporary library within Freshney Place).

- 20% increase in BIPC (Business & Intellectual Property Centre) engagements, with an extended reach, supporting the wider Lincolnshire business network.
- 18% growth in digital use (43k+ interactions with e-learning, e-borrowing).
- 3,304 extra books borrowed as a result of our first in-house Summer Reading Challenge.
- Libraries HAF programme focuses on creative activities during school holidays for children with special educational needs, sessions are in demand and often have a waiting list.
- The Sensory Room at Cleethorpes Library introduced acoustic sound clouds, thanks to community led fund raising, increasing accessibility for children with sensory and special educational needs, providing an invaluable safe space for parents and children.
- Q4 saw the official start of the National Year of Reading, with monthly events across all libraries, and much more to follow during 2026/27.

4. SOCIAL IMPACT

Using Sport England's published ROI (return on investment) multiplier and percentage impact breakdowns, the estimated social benefit achieved during 2025-26 across all sports, leisure and cultural services equates to **£46 million**, which includes:

- **Wellbeing Improvements (87%)** - benefits worth **c.£40 million**, stemming from increased physical activity, cultural engagement, and reduced loneliness.
- **Healthcare Savings (6.5%)** - potential NHS savings of **£2.9 million** reflected as reduced illness, improved self-care, and less reliance on GP services.
- **Productivity Gains (4.9%)** - gains of **£2.2 million** can come from fewer sickness absences and stronger workforce resilience.

5. PLANS FOR 2026/27

The following is a brief summary of 2026/27 planned actions to support continuous improvement:

- Develop and invest in improved functional fitness facilities at Cleethorpes Leisure Centre
- Explore funding opportunities to improve health and wellbeing services at Immingham Swimming Pool
- Launch our 'Libraries at The Heart of Community Wellbeing' programme, grant funded by Arts Council England and including upskilling libraries staff, providing low impact exercise classes, wellbeing activities, and outreach events.
- Grimsby Auditorium continuing to offer small community grants (made possible by customer donations) to enable schools and not for profit

community organisations to apply for a contribution towards transportation/ticket costs, encouraging children to experience live performances.

- Investing in new technology both in libraries and leisure centres, improving the customer experience and creating greater flexibility/efficiency.
- Actively monitoring and reviewing crowd management to ensure compliance with the emerging Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, responding to enhanced duties required for premises having 800+ capacities.

SUMMARY

Sustainability and resilience are key, ensuring we continue to develop our workforce and in partnership with NELC, develop modern accessible facilities, through exploring investment opportunities, which enable us to respond to community needs.

Sue Wells – CEO
Lincs Inspire Limited
www.lincsinspire.com