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## #StrongerTogether initiative supports businesses during COVID-19 pandemic

BY CHARLOTTE WATSON

I picked up my two monitors, my keyboard, mouse and the tower and off it went in my car, a very surreal moment, an indescribable feeling, the fear of the unknown, but from that point, all of the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce team had moved to working from home, something new to most, if not all of us.

Swapping face-to-face team meetings for video calls, using instant messaging in place of quick questions in the office, we soon adapted. And after nearly two weeks it started to become the norm.

Lots happened in those two weeks and the weeks before lockdown; Government announced various support measures for businesses and individuals, including grants, job retention schemes and mortgage payment holidays, and, we, YOUR local Chamber launched our #StrongerTogether initiative, showing the importance of clubbing together and against the odds supporting each other as a local community, as friends in business.

### Our #StrongerTogether initiative forms:

#### ■ Supplying you, our members with up-to-date information

Our Coronavirus Advice Hub - a dedicated hub of information on the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce website to help our members access the most up-to-date and relevant information relating to COVID-19, which continued to be updated daily (if not hourly) with new Government guidelines, updates on support schemes, latest news, information and much more.

#### ■ Local voice having national impact

Lobbying and representing your voice, locally and nationally showed its importance and continually highlighted our #StrongerTogether message.

We raised local issues nationally through BCC, as an example we have had things around essential businesses, Small Business Grant Fund, issues with funding and CBILS - showing a cumulative local voice has maximum national impact.

Weekly calls with our partners, locally and daily calls, nationally, with British Chambers of Commerce and the wider UK Chambers, sharing ideas, support and best practices, showing a unified approach across our network.

March 23, 2020, the commencement of UK lockdown, businesses forced to close, people told to stay at home, the day that impacted our everyday life (working and personal) so deeply. A day we'd never forget.

#### ■ Adapting our events to suit a virtual world

With events, training and seminars a significant part of our membership offering, we had to adapt quickly to suit the needs of our members....and ChamberConnect was born - a series of interactive virtual events which supports businesses and their staff through the Coronavirus Crisis.

We welcomed experts from; Greater Lincolnshire LEP, Wilkin Chapman, Duncan & Toplis, the British Business Bank, Carrington Communications and local councils covering topics surrounding; government grants, furlough working and the Job Retention Scheme, managing cash flow, mental wellbeing and much more.

#### ■ No disruption to International Trade documentation

For a lot of essential businesses across Lincolnshire, our export documentation

service plays a vital role in their supply chain and whilst we have all been operating as 'business as usual' to some extent, but with remote working we have been working in a slightly different way to that of the norm, and it was imperative for us to ensure there is no reduction in our documentation services. And through connections from British Chambers of Commerce the transition to a different way of working was made simpler with some countries that had previously required inked stamps, temporarily offering electronic stamps during a period of crisis.

#### ■ Gaining 'on the ground' business intelligence

Talking to, supporting, signposting and guiding our members, understanding the challenges they are seeing or likely to see in the future and continually using this to inform local and national Government.

#### ■ #ChamberConnect

Continuing the engagement with our members across our social platforms, resulted in the introduction of a dedicated weekly Twitter Networking Hour using the hashtag #LincsConnectHour - every

### ChamberConnect



Wednesday and Friday at 11am, businesses can engage with us and each other, so follow us @LincsCham.

#### ■ Sharing the community spirit

The entire county is feeling the impact of this unprecedented crisis and we have been heartened by the way communities have come together to help their neighbour and support their local businesses and we have played a huge part in helping to share those messages, offers of support, good news stories and words of wisdom in what is seen as uncharted territory.

Continuing to support and signpost, connect and collaborate, our #StrongerTogether message was pivotal to the way we supported our members, wider business community, local authorities and other business representation organisations, because that's what we are.....stronger together, we are a louder and a united voice, a support network and somewhere to turn.





## Business minister opens new engineering centre at Boston College

The Business Minister Nadhim Zahawi MP opened the Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology Centre (EMAT) at Boston College in March

The new £4.3 million state-of-the-art centre was developed with funding from the Greater Lincolnshire Skills Capital Investment Programme (administered by the Greater Lincolnshire LEP) and the Midlands Engine.

It provides an industry-driven training facility that will stimulate growth and productivity across the sector with its innovative workshops and suites.

Acting as a hub for local engineering and manufacturing, the centre offers the opportunity for agritech businesses to create a partnership with the college to help train the engineers in line with industry needs.

EMAT includes an innovative hub, two workshops that will provide



space for traditional engineering and manufacturing skills and modern industry practices, an electronics laboratory, a Computer Aided Design and Manufacture (CAD/CAM) suite, three classrooms and a break-out space.

Mr Zahawi was taken on a guided tour of the facility, where he talked to learners who are currently training to become engineers of the future, before officially opening the centre.

"The new facility at Boston College brings together some of the UK's finest academics, students and local businesses, all of whom will be instrumental to helping us realise the UK's engineering and manufacturing potential," he said.

"By boosting crucial skills and fuelling local growth, this state-of-the-art building will help our local agriculture and manufacturing businesses stay at the forefront of the technology revolution."

Other guests at the opening included Matt Warman MP, Mayor of Boston Councillor Anton Dani, Councillor Paul Skinner, Pat Doody (LEP Chair) and Ruth Carver (LEP Chief Executive) as well as Boston College governors, local employers and school representatives.

"The EMAT Centre forms part of the LEP's £7.34m Skills Capital Investment Fund Programme, which aims to strengthen our local training infrastructure to respond more effectively to business needs and enable employers to upskill their existing workforce or attract relevant skills locally," said Pat Doody.

"Our £2.8m grant will support key strategic sectors and invigorate and support innovation for businesses, stimulating economic growth through access to resources and advice.

"As one of the key sites making up the emerging Lincolnshire Institute for Technology, the EMAT Centre will undoubtedly help our young people achieve their ambitions and realise their full potential."

Boston College Principal and Chief Executive Jo Maher added: "We are honoured that Mr Zahawi has opened our brand new EMAT centre and we're extremely grateful for the support and funding provided by the LEP.

"EMAT is part of £10m learner-focused investment on our campus to help develop the highly advanced knowledge, skills, and behaviours our learners need for careers in a technology-driven world."

## Class act - Guess who's won Lincoln's top honour

There was fantastic news for the team behind one of the city's most popular entertainment venues – despite it having been forced by the Government to close its doors to the public and postpone its productions due to national restrictions

imposed due to coronavirus.

Natalie and Mike Hayes-Cowley, who are the custodians at the New Theatre Royal Lincoln (NTRL) and the drivers of the much-loved venue's regeneration, were over the moon to learn that it had been

chosen as the winner of the prestigious Lincoln Civic Award 2020.

Lincoln Civic Award Trustees Chairman Henry Ruddock said: "The judges were unanimous in choosing the theatre as this year's winners, after nominators praised the venue for its impact on the city.

"They said it was making a real difference to the city for both local people and visiting tourists. One of the NTRL's nominators congratulated Natalie and Mike on their determination and commitment to making the theatre a real success story."

Artistic Director Natalie Hayes-Cowley said: "The whole theatre family is honoured and humbled by the news that we have won the Lincoln Civic Award this year. Securing this prestigious accolade is beyond what we thought was possible when we became custodians of the theatre back in 2016, and to be recognised as an organisation which has "brought credit to the City of Lincoln" is simply wonderful.

"Like all of our achievements at the theatre, it is very much a team approach, and without the passion, hard work, long hours from all our staff and our amazing front of house volunteers, it just wouldn't

be possible to create this magical place that the people of Lincoln know and love.

Managing Director Mike Hayes-Cowley said: "Being a Lincoln Civic Award winner puts the theatre in amongst some incredibly successful people and businesses who have really given something extra to the City of Lincoln.

"We are elated with this award and this recognition for the theatre and the team behind it makes all the hard work worth it.

"Whilst we are all anxious about the future of the theatre during this challenging time, we want to give our sincere thanks to everyone who continues to support us in keeping this historical venue available for all future generations to enjoy."

The City of Lincoln Council's Civic and International Partnerships Manager Kate Fenn said: "We warmly congratulate Mike and Natalie on winning the Lincoln Civic Award.

"Although the presentation ceremony that was planned to take place on April 20 has had to be postponed, owing to the current situation, the NTRL will be receiving this prestigious award from the Mayor of Lincoln at a celebration ceremony in the Guildhall in the very near future."







## Melvyn Prior links LIVES and local gin distillery Pin Gin, to make life-saving alcohol sanitiser

LIVES First Responders went live on BBC Radio Lincolnshire with Melvyn Prior, to appeal for hand sanitisers for their life-saving volunteers.

The 700-strong group of volunteers attend 999 calls in and around their communities – often arriving well before paramedics can.

Turning to their BBC local radio station in a time of need, they put the call out for sanitiser.

And within no time, Pin Gin, a local distillery based in Louth, answered their call for help, managing to produce the alcohol needed.

Martin Slack, News Editor at the station comments, "We knew a local gin distillery had recently started producing hand sanitiser because the owners knew there was a shortage. So we called the distillery and asked if they could help. They said yes and agreed to come on air and make the offer to the

charity live on the programme."

Gemma Shaw from LIVES comments, "Being able to go on BBC Radio Lincolnshire and ask for help has allowed us to get our wheels going again – it is really amazing. Medical emergencies don't stop and this means our First Responders are still there supporting our colleagues in the NHS. People like Amy mean the world to us – so we can keep going."

Amy Conyard from Pin Gin said: "We know it can be a matter of life and death. Melvyn Prior invited me onto his show last week to speak with Nikki – the CEO of LIVES – and after that it was obvious we needed to get it out to their teams.

"From the first batch we've managed to get 25 litres down to the LIVES team – so that can go straight out for the First Responders who don't have any at the moment."



## Lincolnshire Action Trust welcomes new chair



Jo Mead and Alison Goddard

After 19 years at the helm Sheridan Minshall has retired from Lincolnshire Action Trust's Board of Management, making way for new Chair Jo Mead.

Sheridan became Chair of the charity, which supports people in the criminal justice system with everything from health and well-being to accommodation and finance, in 2001 after having been Lincolnshire's Chief Probation Officer for 15 years.

He has worked closely with Lincolnshire Action Trust's Chief Executive Alison Goddard to oversee the running of the charity, including a merger with families' drug and alcohol support service Oasis in 2015 – which later became Young Oasis.

During Sheridan's time as Chair, the trust also established the country's first Departure Lounge at HMP Lincoln which provides a temporary safe space for people when they've been released from prison.

"It has been a privilege to serve in the role of Chair of LAT and to support our skilled and dedicated staff and volunteers in their work to help those whose problems have brought them into contact with the criminal justice system over the last 19 years," said Sheridan.

"LAT was founded to continue the partnership work between the statutory and voluntary sectors started in the county when I was Chief Probation Officer between 1986 and 2001.

"It has since grown and developed to become a widely respected and valued organisation in the field of rehabilitation and family support.

"I am confident that it will continue to grow and prosper in the capable hands of my successor Jo Mead, the other trustees and the team ably led by Chief Executive Alison Goddard."

Taking on the role of Chair was a natural

progression for Jo, who has known of LAT since it was set up in 2000 and has signposted people to its services.

Jo's background is in probation and adult social care and, until four years ago, she was Chief Executive of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland Community Rehabilitation Company.

"I'm excited to have joined LAT as Chair of the Board," said Jo. "During my time as a Chief Executive, I learned a lot about the

Together with Alison, we will ensure LAT continues to be as successful as it has been for the last 20 years

inner workings of an organisation and the importance of a board.

"Board members are led by a legal framework and are responsible for things such as pay, setting the tone of the organisation and its long-term strategy and enforcing health and safety to keep staff and clients safe.

"Like anything, the governance of an organisation is best done as a team and our board is certainly developing as a team; as we say a fond farewell to those who are retiring, we will be welcoming new members.

"Together with Alison, we will ensure LAT continues to be as successful as it has been for the last 20 years."

Alison said: "Having known Jo since before LAT was set up, I'm thrilled that she has been appointed as our new Chair. This is the start of a new chapter for LAT and I am really excited that Jo will lead the next period of development for us."



# Rilmac provides support for Lincoln County Hospital during Covid-19 crisis

Rilmac Insulation are pleased to have been able to provide practical support for NHS staff working at Lincoln County Hospital during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Following up on a proactive Facebook message from a member of the public Rilmac approached the ICU (Intensive Care Unit) and Estates Department at the hospital to offer some unique support.

With increased numbers of healthcare staff working at the ICU basic employee welfare was proving a challenge.

There was a shortage of available toilets, showers and refreshment space for all the hardworking staff. An issue

Rilmac were happy to solve.

In their day-to-day business of asbestos removal Rilmac Insulation use dedicated DCUs (De-contamination Units) to ensure operative safety and to remove potential contamination. These units are also ideal for providing shower facilities to frontline staff in the Covid-19 crisis.

Rilmac and long-standing specialist suppliers Thermac have teamed up to donate the use of, installation and maintenance of two of these units at Lincoln County Hospital. Thermac have also donated gas bottles for each DCU.

To meet the requirements for toilets and refreshment

space Rilmac installed a block of portable toilets and a temporary canteen donated by industry supplier SRP Hire Solutions.

The entire set up will make life easier for NHS staff as they tackle the pandemic on a day to day basis.

"These are worrying times, and everyone is looking for ways they can support their local communities through this crisis," said Michael Woods, Managing Director of Rilmac Insulation.

"We would like to extend our thanks to Thermac and SRP for the donation of these units and making this support possible.

"We are proud to have been able to install this support for the NHS at such a critical time."



Rilmac worked with suppliers Thermac and SRP to provide showers, toilets and a canteen at Lincoln County Hospital



## New office opening in Mansfield

Wright Vigar Accountants are delighted to announce the opening of their new office in Mansfield which will strengthen the firm's presence in North Nottinghamshire. The announcement comes as a result of their recent acquisition of Bull Payne and Co. who have been operating for many years in Mansfield.

With six offices including ones at Retford and Newark, Wright Vigar are no stranger to the Nottinghamshire market and this acquisition will help to further their coverage in the area.

Wright Vigar has been operating for over 40 years and offer all the services you would expect from a reputable Chartered Accountancy firm but are not content to simply 'do the books.' They add value by taking a close look at all aspects of a clients' business and financial affairs and help them to achieve their aspirations.

Director Matthew Chadwick will be heading up the new office, alongside Mike Corrigan - formerly a partner of Bull Payne

& Co. Matthew said: "It is a confident step for the company to open a third office in the Nottinghamshire region and we are very excited about the growth opportunities this will bring.

"We are delighted to unite with the team at Bull Payne & Co and build on the reputation Wright Vigar has for offering excellent advice and service.

"Mike, Mandy, Rachael and Vicky will continue to be familiar faces for our clients, and we look forward to being able to offer some additional added-value advisory services to our clients and the wider business community."

Mike commented: "We are all excited about working for Wright Vigar. Their supportive team have made the transition as smooth as possible and I am sure our clients will welcome the additional expertise we are now able to offer on more complex matters such as Research and Development (R&D) Tax Relief, Trusts and Estate Planning, Cloud Accountancy and IT Solutions."



# Imps announce first platinum partner

Lincoln City's partnership with Selenity has been extended for another two seasons as they renew their stand sponsorship and advertising boards at the LNER Stadium.

Neil Everatt, Chief Executive Officer at Selenity said: "What started out as a visit to a Lincoln City FC game after a charity event, has turned into a thrilling five years, where we've seen the club win the National League, League Two, Checkatrade Trophy and that historic FA Cup run.

"It's been a blast, so we're thrilled to continue on this journey with the fantastic team of people at Lincoln City FC. The club is at the heart of the community, a passion we both share and we're excited for this next step in our partnership."

The Imps' Head of Commercial, Andrew Whitham said: "It's great to have Selenity back on board to be able to share the next two years of the Lincoln City story together.

"Selenity have been on this journey with us since the National League

From left, Neil Everatt (chief executive officer at Selenity), Andrew Whitham (head of commercial at Lincoln City) and Deborah Saunby (sales and marketing director at Selenity) at the Imps' LNER Stadium, Lincoln.

days and we are really grateful for their fantastic continued support. Also, to have them join as our first platinum partner is terrific, securing the stand sponsorship for another two years.

"The partnership matrix is a new commercial product which we have introduced at the football club, which is

designed to maximise the commercial value for our partners and to have a local company seeing the full benefit of the package is exciting for Lincoln City too.

"It's very much business as usual here at Lincoln City FC whilst we aim to fulfil our new partnership matrix ahead of the 2020/21 season and we are thrilled that

Selenity are continuing their relationship with us.

"Our exciting partnership model allows you to get involved with the Club to the level that suits you, allowing you to shape the way that you make our creative marketing and advertising opportunities work in your best interests.

## 1990s GMTV star, Mr Motivator, partnered with local charity to get people moving during isolation

St Barnabas Hospice joined forces with fitness star, Mr Motivator to bring #IsolationMotivation to the UK.

Working in partnership with Mr Motivator, first made famous in the 1990s on GMTV, St Barnabas Hospice announced an initiative which encouraged people to exercise, and fundraise if they wish, whilst staying at home in isolation.

The coronavirus has brought many challenges for charities – How will they continue to raise money for their vital services? How can they engage supporters and help them with their wellbeing and health during these unprecedented times? How can they help to contribute to the national coronavirus effort?

St Barnabas answered all these questions with the fantastic, at-home #IsolationMotivation. They helped members of the public exercise whilst social

distancing, keeping their supporters engaged with a fun alternative to mass participation events.

The Hospice asked for people to visit their Facebook page daily at 10am, where they found Mr Motivator's ten-minute work-out.

While this is a fun and inclusive activity, people were encouraged to set up a Facebook fundraiser to raise £28 for St Barnabas if they can.

This £28 is just £2 per work-out, which is the cost of a cup of tea or coffee that people often buy on their way into work.

Mike Pastor, Challenge Events

Fundraiser at St Barnabas Hospice, said: "Your £28 will help our nurses to care for a patient in their own home for an hour-and-a-half.

"Even during this period of isolation, our nurses will be travelling to visit some of the most vulnerable in Lincolnshire, helping those at the end of their life to die with dignity and compassion.

"It is tough being told you have to stay indoors as much as possible, so we wanted to bring some light-hearted fun to living rooms across the country.

"We wanted to get people up on their feet, get people motivated and raise a smile during this dark time."







## Lincoln family business raises £10,000 for local charities

Local Lincolnshire business, Witham Oil and Paint, held its annual charity ball and raised an amazing £10,000 for local and national charities chosen for being close to the hearts of colleagues.

The company has been hosting the annual ball for employees and suppliers since January 1993 and raises money for charity every year through an auction and raffle.

This year, the money raised has been

shared between four fantastic charities:

**Cancer Research UK**  
**Rainbow Stars Sleaford**  
**Compassionate Minster**  
**Lincoln Bomber Command – Gateway Trust Sculpture**

The event, which was held at the Double Tree Hilton in Lincoln, featured a raffle and auction with prizes donated by employees and their families, suppliers and customers.

This brings the total Witham has raised for local and national charities to almost £95,000 in recent years.

Witham also presented four employees with long service awards for reaching the remarkable milestones of 15, 20, 30 and 35 years of employment.

Charity is very important to the Witham Group, which also raises money throughout the year at various events across the country.

Nigel R Bottom, Witham Group MD, commented:

"We're very proud to have raised this record amount at our charity ball and know that we have contributed to so many great charities over the years.

"Our teams, customers and suppliers have been very generous, raising thousands of pounds that will improve the lives of people in Lincolnshire and across the UK."

## Lincoln UTC student engineers protective equipment for NHS

Sixteen-year-old UTC student, Jonty Horn, responded to requests for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for frontline NHS staff by utilising 3D printing to manufacture face shields in his own home.

Jonty has studied a STEM based curriculum of GCSEs at Lincoln UTC, a specialist college for science and engineering, for the past two years. The current nationwide shortage of PPE prompted the Year 11 student to put his engineering skills into practise by finding a solution to the problem.

Initially Jonty accessed files to create the shields using Creality 3D printing technology and produced his first prototypes, a lightweight and heavy-duty version of the clear protective

face shield. He then approached Lincoln County Hospital, St Barnabas Hospice and his local doctor's surgery to offer the shields to their staff free of charge.

Jonty said: "Having experience with 3D printing and seeing the current challenges faced by the NHS I decided now would be an ideal time to help them by aiding in the production of face masks for COVID-19 PPE.

Once I explained that there was absolutely no cost to them, the nurses were overjoyed! They asked me to continue production of the heavy-duty version and I started straight away."

Jonty's father, Chris Horn, Service Engineer for Ceratizit UK & Ireland's Tool-o-Mat said: "3D printing the

holder for the plastic face shield takes around two hours on Jonty's Creality printer so we can only make so many.

However, the beauty of 3D printing is that the files can be shared so easily, and if more people with access to 3D printing get involved we can really make a difference for our key workers in the NHS in the fight against Coronavirus."

John Morrison, Principal of Lincoln UTC said: "It's fantastic to see one of our students taking the initiative and using his experience in engineering to help others in a time of crisis. Lincoln UTC fosters innovation and I am so proud to see Jonty using his technical skills and enterprising spirit for such a worthwhile cause."



Jonty Horn