



# WNDC Board Report

## Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2011-03-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

**Subject:** Chief Executive's Report

**Advice:** That the Board:

1. **Endorse** the progress WNDC is making in respect of the growth and regeneration of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.

## 1. Supporting enterprise and investment

- 1.1 It has been an important period for the Corporation, as we work with our partners to build on the progress we have made across West Northamptonshire. Of crucial importance is the recent confirmation from our sponsor department, Communities and Local Government, of very substantial capital programme funding for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. Alongside the earlier confirmation of our administration (revenue) budget, this now puts the Corporation in a very strong position to support our local authority partners in delivering their vision for West Northamptonshire.
- 1.2 WNDC is supporting Northampton Borough Council (NBC) to try and establish an enterprise zone (EZ), covering the waterside area of the town. In March the Government announced plans for a 'new wave' of enterprise zones, with a total of 21 being created across the UK. An EZ would directly support the regeneration of Northampton, with key benefits including business rate relief for firms within the zone, simplified planning rules and tax allowances to make capital investment more attractive.
- 1.3 The bidding process is being led by Local Enterprise Partnerships, and we have supported NBC in its formal application to our partnership, which covers the South East Midlands. Located at the centre of the UK, with an excellent track record for jobs growth, Northampton is an ideal candidate for an EZ and we are working with key landowners and the local business community to develop a strong proposal.
- 1.4 Last month, John Markham held the first meeting of what was previously the Public Service Board, in his role as the chairman of Northamptonshire Leadership. This newly constituted group aims to transform public sector partnership working in the county and promote Northamptonshire on national and international stages. The Corporation is supporting this activity, and is committed to working with local partners to strengthen the capability of the area to attract investment and support new enterprise.

## **2. New jobs for local people**

2.2 Northampton has continued to build on its growing reputation as a first class business location. In March, WNDC approved plans for a major commercial development that will bring up to 600 new jobs to the town. Located on land off Saxon Avenue, Grange Park, the 348,000 sq ft scheme is being led by Evander Properties Ltd and BA Pension Fund Trustees. It includes the creation of a distribution centre and an office development, which will breathe new life into this brownfield site that was previously used for industrial sand extraction.

2.3 The Grange Park scheme is the latest in a series of high profile commercial developments that have come to the area. In April, WNDC participated in a ground breaking ceremony to mark the start of construction on a 457,000 sq ft distribution centre for BMW at ProLogis Park, Pineham. The Corporation approved the development earlier this year, which will employ 200 people.

## **3. Achieving recognition**

3.1 Northampton's Becket's Park Marina has been shortlisted for a top national award. The transformation of the disused, overgrown boating lake into a modern mooring basin was shortlisted for an award from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

3.2 The RICS 2011 awards are one of the most prestigious prizes in the UK development industry, and to have been shortlisted gives clear recognition to the quality and impact of the Marina development. The Becket's Park scheme is a sign of improvements to come for Northampton's waterside, as our major waterside regeneration programme continues to make strong progress.

## **4. Supporting local communities**

4.1 As well as new jobs, the Corporation's investment activity continues to provide vital new facilities for the local community. In March, South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) and WNDC acquired nearly 30 acres of land in Towcester town centre, which will double the size of the recently opened Water Meadows. SNC and WNDC are jointly investing some

£150,000 to acquire and restore the land, making even more of the grade II registered historic park available for the local community to use and enjoy.

4.2 The first phase of the Water Meadows project was completed in 2010 alongside the renovation of Bury Mount, and the new and expanded Water Meadows is expected to be open to the public later this year. It is a key part of the Moat Lane regeneration project, which will showcase the historic heart of Towcester alongside new shops, offices and community facilities.

4.3 This month, the iCon Environmental Innovation Centre will be opening its doors to the local community. Starting on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May, the building is playing host to a week of diverse community events, including a range of concerts and exhibitions, which will celebrate the opening of this landmark building. With free public tours throughout the week, there's also a chance for local people to look around the iCON and discover the design and technology that makes it such an environmentally friendly building.