

County Council report – October 2025

Suffolk's vision for nature recovery

Suffolk County Council is one of 48 responsible authorities in England, appointed by The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to lead on preparing its LNRS.

The strategy's aim is to address the decline in nature, identify ways to help it recover and deliver wider benefits such as reducing flood risk.

Together these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Other Suffolk local authorities, nature experts, farmers and a wide range of interested organisations have contributed to Suffolk's strategy, along with members of the public. The process of creating the strategy began in 2022 and has had over 50,000 Suffolk engagements recorded at over 250 events. This culminated in a public consultation in Spring this year, with over 500 responses.

"What this process has shown us, is that nature truly means a great deal to the people of Suffolk.

"There is a clear passion for caring for wildlife, but also recognition of the physical and mental health benefits of a thriving natural environment.

"I'd like to thank members of the public, landowners and experts for their contributions, enabling us to agree priorities for nature recovery in Suffolk and propose the actions to reverse this decline.

"This is an important document; it will hopefully be the catalyst to reversing the decline in Suffolk's nature. In turn, this can help in many other ways by mitigating inland flooding risk, creating new green spaces to improve our health and wellbeing, and supporting farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities."

Suffolk has worked very closely with Norfolk County Council, who are also preparing their own LNRS. The authorities formed the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#), to identify common themes and opportunities to enable nature recovery support.

Subject to approval by the cabinet at Suffolk County Council, the LNRS will then be shared with district and borough councils and the Broads Authority for a final consultation before publication by the end of October.

32,000 solar panels and counting for Solar Together Suffolk project

The group-buying programme enables Suffolk residents to buy solar panels and battery storage, helping to save money on their energy bills and cut carbon emissions. It is backed by Suffolk County Council and all local borough and district councils.

Solar Together Suffolk has been running for seven years, and in that time has:

- installed 32,024 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households
- installed 1,768 battery storage systems
- reduced 1,900 tonnes of carbon emissions across the county

It's [free to register with Solar Together Suffolk](#) and receive an installation quote - there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation.

The project helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers and increases their independence from the national grid.

The scheme not only offers solar panels, but also battery storage and EV charge points. Customers who have already invested in solar panels can also get quotes for battery storage, to get more from the renewable energy they generate.

“Solar Together Suffolk has installed an impressive 11.7 MW of solar panels across Suffolk homes.

“Many Suffolk customers have told us that the main reason for installing solar panels was for the benefit of the climate and environment, followed by saving money on bills and reducing their reliance on the grid.

“Homes still account for nearly a quarter of all Suffolk’s CO2 emissions. But we are helping homeowners and landlords reduce these through initiatives like Solar Together Suffolk, and the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.

“We want to help residents make their homes and lifestyles as sustainable and energy efficient as possible – whether through improving insulation, how homes are heated, electric vehicle infrastructure, or solar panels and batteries.”

Second year of £500,000 Culture Project Fund launched

Suffolk County Council is pleased to announce the second year of its £500,000 Culture Project Fund. This initiative is aimed at strengthening and supporting local arts and museum projects in our local communities across the county.

This fund's goal is to improve the cultural landscape in Suffolk, benefiting communities through diverse and impactful initiatives that align with the council's key priorities: health and wellbeing, economic development, environmental protection, and value for money.

The fund offers three tiers of grants:

Small grants up to £1,500

Medium grants up to £10,000

Large grants up to £20,000

This inclusive approach ensures that both grassroots ventures and larger, more established organisations have equal opportunities to access funding. Eligible applicants include Arts and Museum organisations which operate as skilled freelancers, registered charities, community interest companies, non-profits, and social enterprises based in Suffolk.

The fund supports both capital and revenue projects, with a maximum of £10,000 available for capital expenditure.

"The second year of the Culture Project Fund marks a significant investment in the future of Suffolk's cultural sector and underlines our commitment to investment in Arts and Museums. By supporting projects that focus on our key priorities, we aim to create happier, healthier, and more united communities.

"This fund is about more than just arts and culture, it's about building resilience, fostering inclusion, and boosting the wellbeing of our residents. We're excited to see the positive impact these projects will have on our county."

The culture project fund will support projects that have been designed to reach, engage and inspire people and communities to take part in and enjoy arts and museums. The fund is particularly to support projects that reach some of our most vulnerable people and communities with an application process that is streamlined and accessible. This includes activities designed for those on low incomes, isolated individuals, and marginalised groups, the fund aims to support projects that enhance both mental and physical health, creating resilience and improving overall wellbeing through inclusive and accessible activities.

Furthermore, the fund aims to strengthen Suffolk's economy by supporting projects that enhance skills development, promote social enterprises, and attract visitors. By focusing on these areas, the Council seeks to foster a thriving cultural sector that contributes to the county's growth.

For information on what was funded in 2025.26 see [Culture project fund - Suffolk County Council](#)

Key Dates:

Fund opens for applications: 15 September 2025
Medium and Large grant applications deadline: 28 November 2025
Medium and Large grants awarded by: End February 2026
Small grant presentations: Announced end of March 2026

Suffolk County Council encourages all eligible organisations to apply. For more information or to apply, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund or contact the Arts & Museum Team at PH&C Culture Project
Fund cultureprojectfund@suffolk.gov.uk

One Suffolk proposal approved ahead of government submission

The One Suffolk proposal for a single unitary authority was approved by Suffolk County Council on Tuesday 16 September.

One Suffolk proposes scrapping Suffolk's current six councils and replacing them with a single new council that is smarter, simpler and better - delivering both local and county-wide services.

This comes in response to the government's drive for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across the country.

Cabinet members voted in favour of the proposal, which paves the way for the final business case to be submitted to government by 26 September 2025. The proposal was also considered by all county councillors.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:

"Today marks another essential milestone in the process of Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk, and this welcome decision means we can progress with formal submission of our business case.

"LGR provides a unique opportunity for Suffolk to revamp local government for the first time in over 50 years through the implementation of a new, more streamlined, authority. One Suffolk will provide a smarter, simpler and better option for residents and is the only financially resilient model, ensuring that savings are reinvested into local services.

"The One Suffolk model will save £39.4 million each year, while the proposal for three councils will cost significantly more than the current model - £13.1 million a year to be exact. These are essential funds that should be reinvested into services, making improvements that will directly impact communities in Suffolk.

"We also know how important it is that residents see the benefit from day one, which is why we strongly support the idea of harmonising council tax to the lowest level possible

– meaning all residents will see either a reduction, or freeze, in their bill.”

Secrets of 1,500-year-old Suffolk cemetery revealed for the first time

The large cemetery, where cremation was the sole rite, is the first of its kind discovered in Suffolk and one of only a handful found in the country.

Analysing human and animal bones from the site for the first time, the book reveals that the Anglo-Saxons buried there had been cremated fully clothed on a pyre.

The book also reveals details of many personal items discovered alongside some of the remains. These include glass beads, ivory bag rings, antler combs, gaming pieces, glass vessels, and metal objects such as pins, pendants, brooches and tweezers.

Although its full extent is not known, at least 1,500 individuals were likely to have been cremated and subsequently buried at the site. The cemetery is thought to have been used for generations by several small communities living along the River Lark and its tributaries, including people living at nearby West Stow.

The site was first excavated in 1947-49, and then again in 2015-16. The book explores the more recent excavations and re-examines the earlier excavation archive – giving new insights into the Anglo-Saxon cremation rite and the people buried at Lackford.

Authors of the book are Sue Anderson, Faye Minter, Jude Plouviez, Ian Riddler and Nicola Trzaska-Nartowski. They said:

“Reassessing all these items sheds new light on the fashions and grave goods in early Anglo-Saxon Suffolk, as well as the ceremonial activities involved.

“Burnt bones would have been carefully collected from the pyre site and placed in a pot. Sometimes food, such as pork, was burnt with them, and other animals such as horses were sacrificed whole on the pyre.

“The most recent excavations found the remains of 52 individuals, with men, women and children of all ages identified.”

“Suffolk has an amazing Anglo-Saxon past, and this latest book adds to our understanding of those people who made this county their home over 1,500 years ago.

“Thanks to the authors and Historic England, the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service has been able to produce an account of all the cremations found at Lackford to date and make them available for future research.”

The most recent excavation archive will be held by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service and made available to future researchers. The earlier 1947-49 excavated archive is held by the Cambridge University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology.

Ipswich council's selfish attitude means Suffolk communities will suffer

Ipswich Borough Council's selfish attitude means communities across Suffolk are going to be left at the mercy of energy and water project developers, Suffolk County Council has said.

On Friday 19 September, Suffolk's six council leaders met with the police and crime commissioner (PCC) to consider a proposal to collectively invest public money in a project to help parish councils across Suffolk respond to and deal with multiple and uncoordinated nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) – like Sizewell C in the east, Sunnica solar farm in the west and the Norwich to Tilbury pylons that cut through Suffolk from north to south.

NSIPs are detailed and complex, meaning it's often difficult for communities to engage with proposals and ensure local concerns are addressed through decision-making processes. This often requires access to technical expertise beyond the capability and capacity of residents and parish councils. Across Suffolk, there are around 20 NSIPs either proposed, submitted or approved.

The proposal put before leaders was to invest £80,000 in a programme to provide dedicated support to parish councils – which would boost the £30,000 already committed by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC). The support would include help to understand the process, deadlines and opportunities for dialogue with developers – as well as connect those communities with experts willing to do pro bono work in this area.

At the meeting, the leader of Ipswich Borough Council, Councillor Neil MacDonald, said he could not support the proposal because the county town does not have any parish councils and questioned whether SALC was the right organisation to host the additional resource. This is despite his council supporting a proposal to subsume 66 parishes into the new Greater Ipswich Council.

Investment decisions require unanimous support – so although all the other councils and the PCC supported it, the proposal was rejected.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:

“If this isn't a perfect demonstration of the need to scrap all of Suffolk's councils and have one organisation that supports the whole of the county, I don't know what is.

“This is exactly the kind of narrow-minded selfish approach that will hold Suffolk back if we end up with three councils not doing what is right for our county. If Ipswich Borough Council leaders seriously want to subsume 66 parishes into their expanded council border, then they should try to understand organisations like SALC, and parish councils, that do vital work for residents.

“The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group has previously invested in both county-wide and local projects – including some that have benefited Ipswich specifically. Yet faced with the opportunity to act in the clear interests of the county, our borough council has turned its back.

“Ipswich’s MP recently signed a deal with Sizewell C to create 500 jobs for people in the town. Now when it comes to supporting the areas affected by this and other projects, political goodwill seems to have evaporated.

“Frankly this is an embarrassing and shortsighted position to take, and I expect our colleagues in the district councils will be angry about the borough’s approach. This is exactly the kind of thing that will happen under a three-council model.”

Ambitious new plan to Get Suffolk Working

At the heart of the draft Get Suffolk Working strategy is the launch of Connect to Work, a major new programme designed to support people with health conditions, disabilities and complex barriers into sustainable and meaningful employment.

Backed by up to £9.5 million in funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Connect to Work aims to support more than 2,700 Suffolk residents over the next five years.

The programme will offer tailored training, personalised support and job placements, helping people find meaningful work that aligns with their strengths, aspirations and work experience.

Connect to Work forms a key part of the wider Get Suffolk Working strategy – Suffolk’s local response to the government’s national Get Britain Working initiative, which seeks to reduce economic inactivity and help people find good work.

The cabinet will be asked to approve the draft plan and delegate authority to the Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board to finalise and oversee its delivery. The final plan is expected to be published by the end of October 2025.

Get Suffolk Working will complement and enhance existing local strategies – including the Suffolk Economic Strategy, the Local Skills Improvement Plan, and integrated care and health strategies – ensuring public investment delivers the maximum impact for residents and employers across Suffolk.

New Pippins footbridge in Gipping Valley opened

A new footbridge in the Gipping Valley has been installed by Suffolk Highways.

Pippins footbridge is now open on the riverside path between Needham Market and Baylham.

Construction began in June 2025 and concluded in August, following a seven-week build programme managed in a challenging remote location.

It has now been formally opened by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Operational Highways, and Councillor James Patchett of the River Gipping Trust.

The previous bridge was closed after being deemed unsafe due to abutment failure. The new bridge now is 4ft (1.2 metres) wide – doubling the previous width - and features compact earth ramps with a gentle 1:12 gradient, eliminating the previous stepped access and making it fully wheelchair-friendly.

With new abutments constructed behind the damaged originals, the bridge is now significantly longer and designed to last more than 100 years.

The bridge was commissioned by Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way team and built by Parc Civils on behalf of M Group, which delivers highways services in Suffolk.

Extensive environmental surveys were undertaken prior to works, including monitoring for otter activity.

No evidence of a holt was found, allowing construction to proceed without ecological disruption.

Councillor West said: "I am delighted that Suffolk Highways has been able to work with the Gipping Valley Trust to install a new bridge.

"The Parc Civils team have done a fantastic job in building a bridge that will serve people enjoying walks along the Gipping for many years to come."

Councillor Patchett said: "The River Gipping Trust is delighted to have Pippins bridge reinstated after many years of closure.

"The bridge is now wider, with accessible earth ramps which open this beautiful stretch of the Gipping to even more people."