



# SUFFOLK'S NATURE STRATEGY



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## FOREWORD BY **MARK BEE** LEADER OF SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

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**Councillor Mark Bee**  
Leader, Suffolk County  
Council



**Councillor Rebecca  
Hopfensperger**  
Cabinet Member for  
Localities & Environment  
Suffolk County Council

I am delighted to have the opportunity to provide this foreword on behalf of Councillor Rebecca Hopfensperger and myself.

Suffolk's natural environment is undoubtedly one of Suffolk's key strengths. It is one of the golden threads holding together what makes this county great. People who live and work here often say how much they value its beauty, whether it is our coast, our wild heathland and forests in both east and west, our river valleys and estuaries, or the deeply rural nature of our agricultural landscapes. It is a truly wonderful county to live in.

But we must not overlook the importance of Suffolk's landscapes and wildlife to our society. The 'natural capital' of Suffolk is the foundation of many businesses, particularly in the tourism and farming sectors, and it is strongly associated with physical and mental wellbeing. Leaders of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, the primary audience for this strategy, will read many examples of this throughout this document.

Delivering the recommendations and actions in this strategy will not be without its challenges. There will inevitably be difficult decisions to make and tough choices always require tough trade-offs. Councillor Hopfensperger and I applaud the partnership working that is behind this strategy and would like to thank those organisations who have worked so closely in putting this document together. We happily commend Suffolk's Nature Strategy and its vision for our natural environment to you all. Conserving and enhancing our natural environment is in all our interests and this document shows it is much more than a 'nice-to-do'. The leadership and collaboration shown by the drafting of this document is an important step in that endeavour and we must all now show leadership and work together to deliver its vision. We both look forward to seeing and hearing about the progress achieved in delivering the recommendations and actions put forward here.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## WILD SUFFOLK

Suffolk is a beautiful county. Our natural environment is important in its own right, but the quality of life it provides is also much treasured by people who visit, live and work here. Whether it is wildlife-rich woods and meadows, wild and windswept heaths and estuaries or our stunning coastline, our environment has it all. Indeed, over 36% of the county is either nationally or locally protected for its wildlife or landscape value.

The natural environment of the county is one of its key strengths, providing us with enviable natural capital<sup>1</sup> on which to improve health and wellbeing and to grow our economy. Whether a tourism business, a farmer growing crops, a Suffolk brewer or an international port, the environment is central to our economic growth and should be considered part of Suffolk's business capital.

Access to, and enjoyment of the countryside, is equally important. Physical and mental wellbeing, known to be associated with an accessible and attractive natural environment, are a benefit to business, innovation and entrepreneurship and reduce pressures on social care and health services. We also know that the quality of life here encourages inward investment.

## A 2020 VISION FOR SUFFOLK'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Working together as individuals, communities, businesses and decision-makers, we will ensure Suffolk's natural environment is conserved and enhanced for future generations and continues to be seen as one of the county's key strengths. Its intrinsic value, as well as its importance to our economic growth, is increasingly understood, whilst the people of Suffolk and our visitors are able to gain better access to enhanced enjoyment and a deeper understanding of its unique qualities. We will continue to add to our knowledge of Suffolk's wildlife and landscapes and to collect high-quality information.





## THE STRATEGY

Suffolk's Nature Strategy describes the challenges and opportunities our natural environment faces. Its purpose is to articulate what we believe are the key natural environment priorities for the county and to convey to decision-makers how the wildlife and landscapes of Suffolk are important building blocks for our own economic growth and health and wellbeing. The recommendations and actions we propose within this document are both forward-looking and challenging. Their delivery will enhance the environment of Suffolk itself, as well as our ability to derive both economic and social benefits from it. Once you have read this document we hope that your understanding of the importance of the natural environment goes far beyond its beauty.

It is aimed particularly at the leaders of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, but we hope it will also be of interest to anyone who cares about Suffolk's natural environment and the role it plays in our prosperity and wellbeing. The messages are equally relevant to businesses, health professionals and community representatives. Whilst conservation of Suffolk's environment is of particular interest to us, everyone has a responsibility to look after it, and of course, many already do. It is in all our interests; it should be the business of us all!

The strategy is set out in three broad sections: natural environment, economic growth and health and wellbeing each containing a number of sub-sections for issues of particular importance to the delivery of our vision.

Suffolk's Nature Strategy is written in the context of Wild Anglia's manifesto<sup>2</sup> (the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) across Norfolk & Suffolk). All the organisations involved in drafting this strategy are closely involved with the LNP and this strategy will contribute to Wild Anglia's vision across Norfolk & Suffolk.





## WHO WE ARE

Many people have contributed to this strategy and commented on the various drafts, and we hope many more will support it. It has been put together primarily by the following organisations: Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and the National Trust, and advised by Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission. We are all involved in leading and advising on wildlife and landscape conservation in the county. Together, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and RSPB have over 120,000 members in Suffolk.

It is our business to champion the conservation of Suffolk's landscapes and wildlife on a daily basis, and this strategy is not intended to recite our ongoing work. The actions and recommendations are forward-looking and most set out new challenges and opportunities for both us and others to achieve, that will enable us all to benefit from and conserve the natural environment. We will support, champion, influence and encourage the delivery of the actions and recommendations herein, and we hope they will empower organisations, individuals and leaders to make the nature and wildlife of Suffolk part of their daily business too.

If you have any comments on this document we would be happy to hear from you. In the first instance please contact Nick Collinson, Natural Environment Manager at Suffolk County Council.  
[nick.collinson@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:nick.collinson@suffolk.gov.uk)





SECTION 1  
**OUR NATURAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
PRIORITIES**



SECTION 2  
**A FOUNDATION  
FOR ECONOMIC  
GROWTH**



SECTION 3  
**OUR HEALTH &  
WELLBEING**





## THE RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

Across the three sections: natural environment, economic growth and health and wellbeing and the sub-sections in each, we have set out a series of actions and recommendations. These are both forward-looking and challenging.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendations** are set out as challenges for others to deliver. They are aimed at leaders in a range of sectors including businesses, health and education. We will give our full support as others take up the challenges we have set.

### ACTIONS

**Actions** are challenges we have set ourselves. They are mostly new areas of work that we believe we need to deliver in parallel with the recommendations delivered by others.

There is more information and context on all of these within the document.



**SECTION 1  
OUR NATURAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
PRIORITIES**

	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION
Protected wildlife sites	<b>Recommendation 1:</b> In line with Government's Biodiversity 2020 strategy vision, Outcome 1, by 2020 at least 50% of Suffolk's SSSIs will be in favourable condition, whilst maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition.	<b>Action 1:</b> We will work towards all protected sites in our ownership or management being positively managed and in favourable condition for the wildlife they support.
Protected landscapes	<b>Recommendation 2:</b> The active partnerships in our protected landscapes should seek to ensure these areas are exemplars of landscape scale conservation. Where development is proposed in these areas, such as Sizewell C in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, they should work to ensure they are of the highest quality as 'environmental exemplars'.	<b>Action 2:</b> We will work with others to develop new and existing partnerships to deliver landscape scale conservation.
Priority habitats & species	<b>Recommendation 3:</b> In line with Biodiversity 2020, Outcomes 1 & 3, we wish to see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and for further degradation to have been halted. Public bodies and statutory undertakers should ensure that, in exercising their functions, they have access and pay due regard to appropriate ecological evidence and advice so as to ensure that their duties under the relevant legislation are met.	
	<b>Recommendation 4:</b> Enforcement agencies should take appropriate action against perpetrators of crimes against wildlife.	
Urban green space	<b>Recommendation 5:</b> In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, developers should include design elements that protect and enhance wildlife within new developments. Plans should complement and enhance wider ecological networks, such as actively supporting the management and design of existing and new green spaces.	
	<b>Recommendation 6:</b> Public authorities should proactively engage with environmental organisations, voluntary groups, developers, businesses and Parish Councils with regards to supporting and delivering wildlife-friendly and sustainable open space management. Further Local Nature Reserves should be designated, in both urban and rural areas, as appropriate.	
Agri-environment	<b>Recommendation 7:</b> We wish to see the contribution from agri-environment schemes maximised towards the multiple benefits of ecological restoration at a landscape scale, to halt further degradation of our wildlife and landscapes as set out in Biodiversity 2020, Outcome 1.	<b>Action 3:</b> We will engage with farmers across Suffolk to promote wildlife-friendly farming within profitable, modern, farming businesses. We will work collaboratively to make effective use of available funds outside areas specifically protected for wildlife.
Woodland & forestry	<b>Recommendation 8:</b> New woodland planting should be of the right trees in the right places, particularly where they can buffer and expand designated sites, enhance landscape character or improve the extent of natural green space close to where people live.	<b>Action 4:</b> We will support the Forestry Commission as it reviews and implements forest design plans in Suffolk, in developing opportunities to enhance wildlife and landscape, and through the restoration of open ground habitats in our public forest estate, targeted to meet biodiversity objectives.
	<b>Recommendation 9:</b> By 2020 at least 50% of Suffolk's woodland SSSIs will be in favourable condition, whilst maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition. This can be achieved by making strong links between new woodfuel and timber economies, improving access and by appropriate control of deer.	<b>Action 5:</b> We will work towards Suffolk's woodlands, particularly SSSI and CWS woodlands, being brought back into positive management to improve their condition for wildlife and people.
Suffolk's changing climate	<b>Recommendation 10:</b> As a contribution to Biodiversity 2020, Outcome 1, and also the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership's objective for wild spaces, a further 500 hectares of priority habitat should be created in Suffolk by 2020 within natural environment priority areas (Map 1).	<b>Action 6:</b> We will work with planning authorities, developers, landowners and communities to support the development of ecological networks across Suffolk as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Communities developing neighbourhood plans and those who own or manage land, particularly those in agri-environment schemes, will play an important role.
Marine	<b>Recommendation 11:</b> Marine Conservation Zones should be considered for designation in Suffolk when qualifying data has been assessed.	
	<b>Recommendation 12:</b> The implementation of the East Area Marine Plan must take a balanced approach to the use of our seas, particularly in terms of our marine environment and seascapes.	



## SECTION 2 A FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

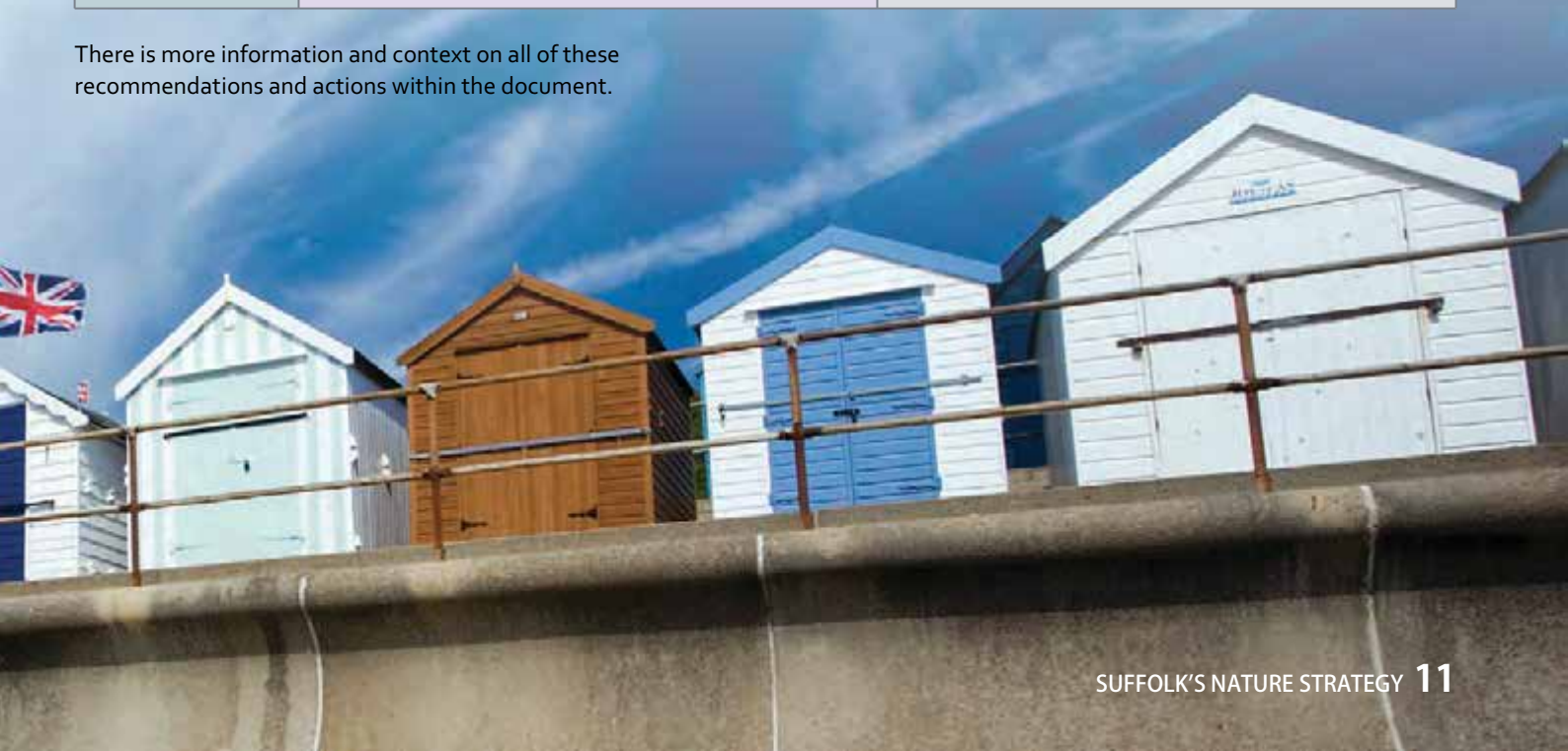
	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION
Natural capital	<b>Recommendation 13:</b> Given the importance of our natural capital to growth, by 2018, we would expect to see public and private sector decision-makers increasingly reflect its value in all future growth plans for the area.	<b>Action 7:</b> We will work with partners to produce an evidence base for the economic and social value of Suffolk's natural capital by 2016. Such information will support local decision-making.
Inward investment	<b>Recommendation 14:</b> The quality of Suffolk's natural environment is one of our key strengths. The advantage it offers in terms of our competitiveness should continue to be a strong feature of inward investment plans for the area.	<b>Action 8:</b> We will support public and private sector leaders in producing strategic approaches within Suffolk that support the maintenance and development of Suffolk's natural capital.
Energy infrastructure	<b>Recommendation 15:</b> New energy infrastructure should be sensitive to place. Relevant policies as well as national and local guidance, appropriate biological data and Suffolk's Landscape Character Assessment should be used to assess suitability of new energy infrastructures, and other developments, to particular places. A Strategic Renewable Energy Strategy, produced by 2018, will help ensure that all new energy infrastructures are appropriately sited.	
Tourism	<b>Recommendation 16:</b> Tourism leaders, such as Visit Suffolk and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), and businesses, should promote the quality of our natural environment to potential visitors and play a key role in its conservation and enhancement.	
	<b>Recommendation 17:</b> Tourism leaders and tourism businesses, should be at the forefront of sustainable tourism initiatives to ensure they are enhancing the area's natural 'tourism' capital. By 2020, 100 tourism businesses operating in natural environment priority areas (Map 1), will be measurably contributing to protecting the natural environment of these areas.	
Food, drink & agriculture	<b>Recommendation 18:</b> Suffolk's food and drink sector has an important role to play in promoting the conservation of our natural environment. By 2020 a Suffolk brand will have been developed and linked to conservation of the natural environment. This will help the sector to market strong credentials for environmental conservation.	<b>Action 9:</b> We will engage with farmers across Suffolk to promote wildlife-friendly farming within profitable, modern, farming businesses.
Water management & water resources	<b>Recommendation 19:</b> Water companies working with partners, should be at the forefront of developing new innovative and nature-friendly systems for the capture, storage and conservation of water, together with changing consumer behaviours.	<b>Action 10:</b> We will support, and where possible champion, improvements to the ecological and hydrological condition of water courses, through implementation of measures, appropriate to place, to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
	<b>Recommendation 20:</b> Where possible, Sustainable Urban and Rural Drainage schemes (SuDS) should be designed to maximise wildlife and landscape potential.	<b>Action 11:</b> We will support steps to develop partnership solutions to the management of water which look at more holistic management of water (economic, social and environmental) in the water cycle and at a catchment scale.
	<b>Recommendation 21:</b> All water courses should either be in Good Ecological Status or have Good Ecological Potential by 2027, or have measures in place to meet full compliance.	
Biodiversity offsetting	<b>Recommendation 22:</b> Biodiversity offsetting must follow Government guidelines and the mitigation hierarchy, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Offsetting should only occur when all steps to avoid and mitigate impacts have been exhausted and should not be seen as a licence to damage sites where less damaging alternatives exist. Offsetting should not apply to internationally or nationally designated sites.	



### SECTION 3 OUR HEALTH & WELLBEING

	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION
Health & wellbeing	<b>Recommendation 23:</b> The benefits of people being able to enjoy our natural environment should be embedded in Suffolk's health and wellbeing agenda by 2016. Community leaders and senior public health officials should champion the role the environment can play in prevention, cure and recovery. We would like to see a significant increase in GPs use of 'green care' referrals, such as Health Walks or Care Farms.	<b>Action 12:</b> We will work with Suffolk's Health and Wellbeing Board through their strategy and action plan to make the natural capital that Suffolk has to offer part of Suffolk's health and wellbeing solution.
Environmental education	<b>Recommendation 24:</b> Education leaders, with our support, should ensure that, by 2018, all strategies and plans reflect and include the opportunities that our natural environment and countryside present to learning in Suffolk.	<b>Action 13:</b> We will develop the Suffolk Environmental Education Network's (SEEN's) role as the champion of environmental learning in Suffolk, making links with schools, academies and community groups, to ensure natural environment opportunities are embedded in learning initiatives aimed at young people.
	<b>Recommendation 25:</b> By 2020 all of Suffolk's school children will have had an opportunity to participate in a SEEN partner activity.	
Volunteering		<b>Action 14:</b> We will increase opportunities and levels of our own volunteering for individuals and for businesses. By 2020, volunteer numbers will have increased by 50% on 2014 levels and the number of places where natural environment people engagement opportunities exists (Map 5) will have increased by 25%.
Neighbourhood & parish plans	<b>Recommendation 26:</b> By 2018, all Neighbourhood Development Plans and Parish Plans should ensure the natural environment is fully considered. They should maximise opportunities to conserve, enhance and link Suffolk's green and natural spaces. We will support the development and implementation of these plans.	
Coastal communities & partnerships	<b>Recommendation 27:</b> Coastal partnerships should identify opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural environment as part of their work. The adoption of the ecosystem approach to realise multi-benefit opportunities such as salt-marsh restoration that can improve flood defences for communities as well as benefit wildlife and improve public access, should be the norm. Appropriately-sited managed realignment projects can provide significant environmental opportunities.	
Public access	<b>Recommendation 28:</b> Suffolk County Council should seek opportunities to improve the connectivity of the public access network and the development and improvement of the public rights of way network.	<b>Action 15:</b> We will work in partnership to ensure physical access improvements go hand-in-hand with wildlife sensitivity and quality interpretation, to enable people to access and understand our natural environment.

There is more information and context on all of these recommendations and actions within the document.





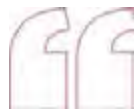




# OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES



**Richard Powell OBE**  
Chairman of Wild Anglia Local Nature Partnership

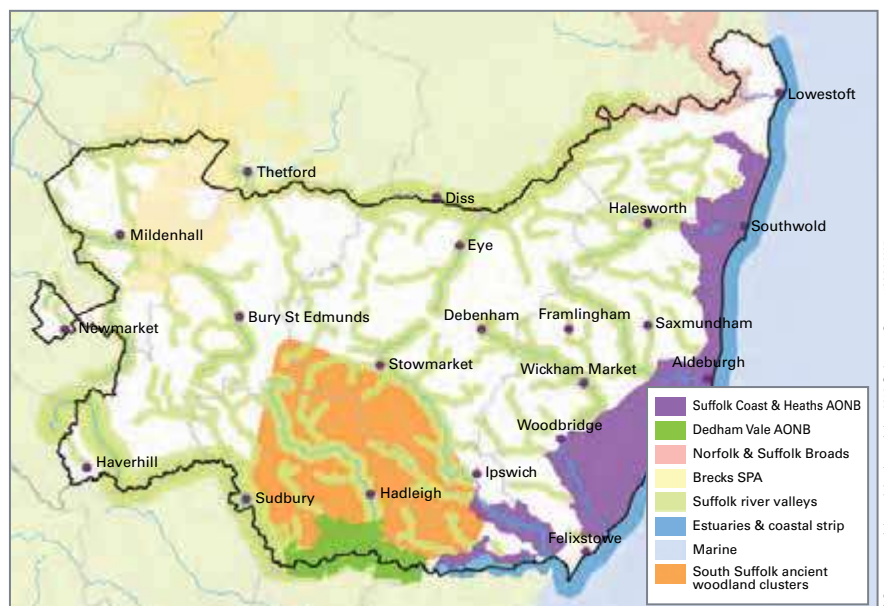


In 2013, when Wild Anglia launched its manifesto, I said that I am convinced we still have the opportunity to get sustainable development right. Wild

Anglia's manifesto threw down the challenge that we must think differently about nature. It is now plain to see that enhancing nature enhances the economy. When nature is truly recognised as an essential foundation of a prosperous economy and healthy society, it will naturally receive investment and will be a legacy for future generations.

But we are not yet in that enlightened place; we are losing this precious asset and we must commit to investing in Suffolk's nature to maintain its AAA rating. Now is the time for each of us to think differently about nature and to challenge our leaders and organisations to work in a different and truly collaborative way. The Suffolk Nature Strategy places Suffolk's nature in context – I encourage you to use it and make something different happen today.

Map 1: This map identifies areas of principal importance for landscape-scale conservation in Suffolk. Other parts of the county are also of importance and are highlighted later in the strategy



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## RECOMMENDATION 1

In line with Government's Biodiversity 2020 strategy vision, Outcome 1<sup>8</sup>, by 2020 at least 50% of Suffolk's SSSIs will be in favourable condition, whilst maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition.

## ACTION 1

We will work towards all protected sites in our ownership or management being positively managed and in favourable condition for the wildlife they support.

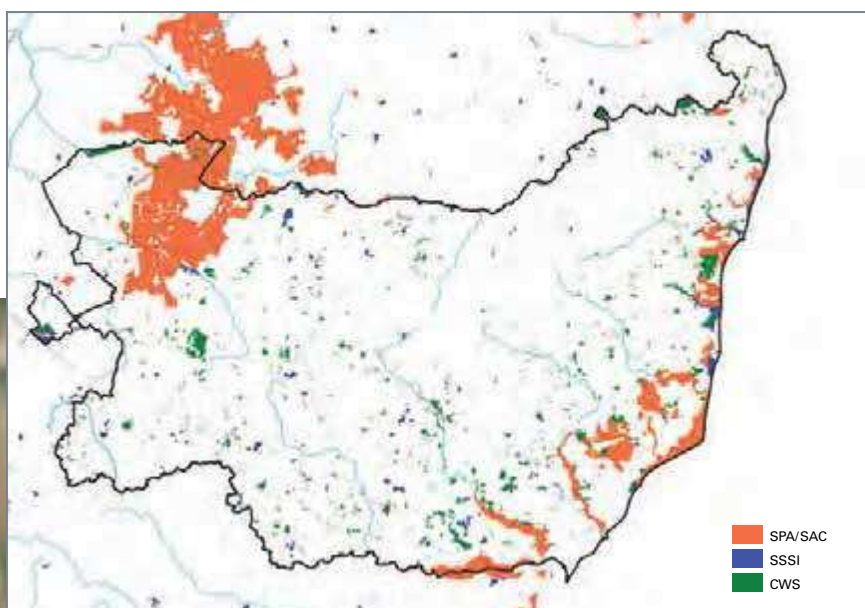
# PROTECTED WILDLIFE SITES

The quality of the natural environment in Suffolk is reflected by the area of land protected for wildlife. Many of Suffolk's nationally designated wildlife sites are designated for their European and International importance (SPA/SAC) and 8% of the county is nationally protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest<sup>3</sup> (SSSI) due to the importance of the species and habitats found here. A further 5% of the county is locally designated as County Wildlife Sites<sup>4</sup> (CWS). Without these sites, much of Suffolk's wildlife would have been lost or severely depleted.

Protected sites have a vital role to play as the focal points of landscape-scale conservation from which species can move into, and across, the wider landscape. These ecological networks<sup>5</sup> will help wildlife to respond to environmental change across Suffolk and beyond, but only if there are appropriate sites of good enough quality to move to.

Protected sites are not only hotspots for biodiversity providing crucial homes for wildlife; they also provide a range of important ecosystem services<sup>6</sup> on which we all depend. Wetland sites, for example, can improve water quality and play a key role in reducing flood risk; indeed the water-quality benefits of inland wetlands are valued as high as £1,500 million/yr<sup>7</sup>. While all land provides a range of services to society, the extra role that protected sites play as the crown jewels of our county's wildlife should not be understated. It is in all our interests that sites that are important for wildlife continue to be protected and managed sensitively.

Map 2: Local, national and European designated wildlife sites



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**Wetland sites can improve water quality and play a key role in reducing flood risk**

RSPB Minsmere nature reserve







Flatford in the  
Dedham Vale AONB

## RECOMMENDATION 2

The active partnerships in our protected landscapes should seek to ensure these areas are exemplars of landscape scale conservation. Where development is proposed in these areas, such as Sizewell C in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, they should work to ensure they are of the highest quality as 'environmental exemplars'.

## ACTION 2

We will work with others to develop new and existing partnerships to deliver landscape scale conservation.

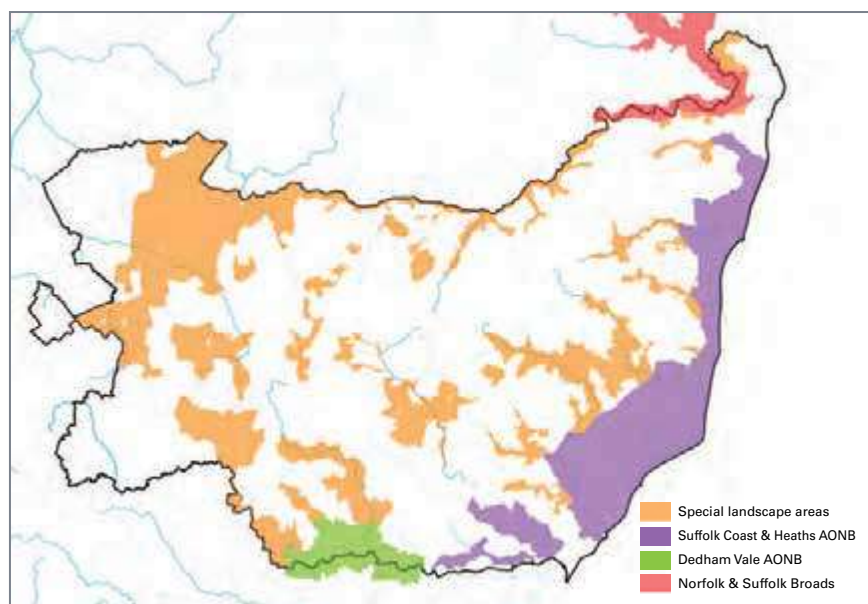
The landscapes of the **Broads** and the two **AONBs** are much treasured, playing a crucial role in **attracting visitors** to the county

# PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads, are places in which the quality of landscape is formally recognised and given special statutory status to conserve and enhance natural beauty, and in the case of the Broads, an additional duty to promote open-air recreation. These special qualities are protected under legislation and through planning policy. Together they cover 13% of Suffolk. Locally designated Special Landscape Areas cover a further 22% of the county.

In Suffolk, the beautiful and distinctive landscapes of the Broads and the two AONBs are much treasured, playing a crucial role in attracting visitors to the county. They are also potential hot-beds of landscape-scale conservation activity.

Map 3: Suffolk's  
local and national  
landscape  
designations



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### RECOMMENDATION 3

In line with Biodiversity 2020, Outcomes 1 & 3<sup>10</sup>, we wish to see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and for further degradation to have been halted. Public bodies and statutory undertakers should ensure that, in exercising their functions, they have access and pay due regard to appropriate ecological evidence and advice so as to ensure that their duties under the relevant legislation are met.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

Enforcement agencies should take appropriate action against perpetrators of crimes against wildlife.

**It is essential that decision makers have access to high quality ecological advice in order to meet these requirements**



## PRIORITY HABITATS & SPECIES

All public bodies have a statutory duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity, as set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. The Act also requires the publication of lists of living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State's opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. There are 262 priority species and 23 priority habitats in Suffolk.

Suffolk's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), which comprises our list of priority species and habitats, is embedded in local planning policies. Impacts on legally protected species are a material consideration in the planning process whilst impacts on priority species and habitats are also capable of being material considerations. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes a range of requirements to conserve and enhance the natural environment as well as requiring local plans to promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations. It is essential that decision makers have access to high quality ecological advice in order to meet these requirements.

There are also a number of protected species in Suffolk with legislation, such as the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981), in place to prevent deliberate or reckless persecution. Wildlife crime is defined as any action which contravenes current legislation governing the protection of the UK's wild animals and plants<sup>9</sup>. Current UK priorities include badger, bat and raptor persecution, as well as poaching.



**Suffolk's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), which comprises our list of priority species and habitats, is embedded in local planning policies**

Barn owl (above) and water vole (left) are both BAP species



## URBAN GREEN SPACES

Those who live within 500 metres of accessible green space are 24% more likely to meet recommended levels of physical exercise<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, Department of Health and UK National Ecosystem Assessment<sup>12</sup> figures suggest that adequate access to greenspace can lead to reductions in sedentary behaviour, providing £2 billion/yr savings to treatment of coronary heart disease, colo-rectal cancer and stroke. Evidence shows that urban green space can facilitate social contact and give rise to strong neighbourhoods, important as we seek to combat loneliness, particularly in older age groups. Such a network of accessible 'natural' green space would also support the enhancement of ecological networks, to allow wildlife to move more easily across our landscapes.

Ipswich alone has 500 hectares<sup>13</sup> of green space and wildlife habitats within the town. Across Suffolk urban green spaces are a vital asset for biodiversity as well as human health and wellbeing. Some species such as house sparrow and starling are increasingly reliant on urban green spaces for their survival, and swifts need suitable spaces in buildings to nest. Urban parks and gardens have the potential to connect communities to local wildlife and can provide numerous environmental, social and economic benefits. Evidence in England shows that close proximity to green space can add £2000 to the capital value of houses<sup>14</sup>, emphasising the economic and social benefits of such amenities. There are 36 Local Nature Reserves<sup>15</sup> (LNRs) across the county providing important green spaces for people to enjoy and relax in, homes for wildlife and they also help support ecological networks. Protecting these places within our communities is vital for the wellbeing of future generations.

As the pressures on wildlife continue to build in the wider countryside, urban areas are increasingly important in providing nature a home. Gardens, for example, can provide excellent habitat for wildlife, and simple measures, such as installing a pond, creating a log pile, planting wild flowers or leaving areas of lawn uncut can make a real difference.

Green spaces in urban areas are also important for the management of water and flooding, providing areas where water can infiltrate into the ground.

### RECOMMENDATION 5

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, developers should include design elements that protect and enhance wildlife within new developments. Plans should complement and enhance wider ecological networks, such as actively supporting the management and design of existing and new green spaces.

### RECOMMENDATION 6

Public authorities should proactively engage with environmental organisations, voluntary groups, developers, businesses and Parish Councils with regards to supporting and delivering wildlife-friendly and sustainable open space management. Further Local Nature Reserves should be designated, in both urban and rural areas, as appropriate.

**Adequate access to green space can lead to reductions in sedentary behaviour, providing £2 billion/yr savings to treatment of coronary heart disease, colo-rectal cancer and stroke**







## RECOMMENDATION 7

We wish to see the contribution from agri-environment schemes maximised towards the multiple benefits of ecological restoration at a landscape scale, to halt further degradation of our wildlife and landscapes as set out in Biodiversity 2020, Outcome 1<sup>37</sup>.

## ACTION 3

We will engage with farmers across Suffolk to promote wildlife-friendly farming within profitable, modern, farming businesses. We will work collaboratively to make effective use of available funds outside areas specifically protected for wildlife.

**Farmers play a crucial role in Suffolk by shaping large areas of our countryside**

## AGRI-ENVIRONMENT

Agri-environment schemes play an important role in supporting wildlife conservation and strengthening landscape character in Suffolk. They also provide a practical means of supporting landowners to conserve and enhance our natural capital, such as through supporting saltmarsh creation that improves coastal biodiversity and also helps reduce flood risk. In 2012, 53.7%<sup>16</sup> of Suffolk was covered by Environmental Stewardship, Environmentally Sensitive Area or Countryside Stewardship Schemes. Wildlife conservation in the wider countryside, outside protected sites, is a vital part of our conservation effort. For example, the central Suffolk claylands have one of the highest densities of ponds in the UK; most of these ponds are outside protected sites. They provide a stronghold for great-crested newt, a European protected species of which the UK has globally significant populations.

Farmers play a crucial role in Suffolk by shaping large areas of our countryside, supporting the distinctive sense of place and other ecosystem services. For example, the fate of farmland birds in the county is almost entirely in the hands of our farmers and agriculture, and forestry can also have a significant influence on water quality within rivers and estuaries. Farming is not just about food production, but also about delivering a broad range of public goods from which we all benefit.





## WOODLANDS & FORESTRY

Suffolk has over 35,000 ha of woodland which provides a range of benefits for wildlife, for resource protection such as reducing soil erosion and flooding, as well as providing a range of economic and recreational benefits for people. The importance of woodlands and forestry to nature, our society and economy has recently been highlighted by a report<sup>18</sup> published in 2012 by the Independent Panel on Forestry, and the subsequent Government response, the 'Forestry and Woodland Policy Statement'<sup>19</sup>. Government Policy is also set out in Keepers of Time<sup>20</sup> and the Open Habitats Policy<sup>21</sup>. There is 9,709 ha of public forest estate in Suffolk however not all of that is plantation. Thetford, Rendlesham, Tunstall and Dunwich Forests make up most of the public forest estate in Suffolk. The majority of Suffolk's woodland, some 19,500 ha, is broadleaved.

The improved management of woodlands in Suffolk (over 15,000 ha is under-managed<sup>22</sup>) should be delivered with a view to maximising benefits for the natural environment as well as supporting social opportunities, such as improved public access and economic growth, through improved woodfuel and timber markets and commercial recreation.

**Woodland provides benefits such as reducing soil erosion and flooding**

### RECOMMENDATION 8

New woodland planting should be of the right trees in the right places, particularly where they can buffer and expand designated sites, enhance landscape character or improve the extent of natural green space close to where people live.

### RECOMMENDATION 9

By 2020 at least 50% of Suffolk's woodland SSSIs will be in favourable condition, whilst maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition. This can be achieved by making strong links between new woodfuel and timber economies, improving access and by appropriate control of deer.

### ACTION 4

We will support the Forestry Commission, as it reviews and implements forest design plans in Suffolk, in developing opportunities to enhance wildlife and landscape, and through the restoration of open ground habitats in our public forest estate, targeted to meet biodiversity objectives.

### ACTION 5

We will work towards Suffolk's woodlands, particularly SSSI and CWS woodlands, being brought back into positive management to improve their condition for wildlife and people.



## RECOMMENDATION 10

As a contribution to Biodiversity 2020<sup>25</sup>, Outcome 1, and also the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership's objective for wild spaces<sup>26</sup> a further 500 hectares of priority habitat should be created in Suffolk by 2020 within natural environment priority areas (Map 1).

## ACTION 6

We will work with planning authorities, developers, landowners and communities to support the development of ecological networks across Suffolk as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Communities developing neighbourhood plans and those who own or manage land, particularly those in agri-environment schemes, will play an important role.

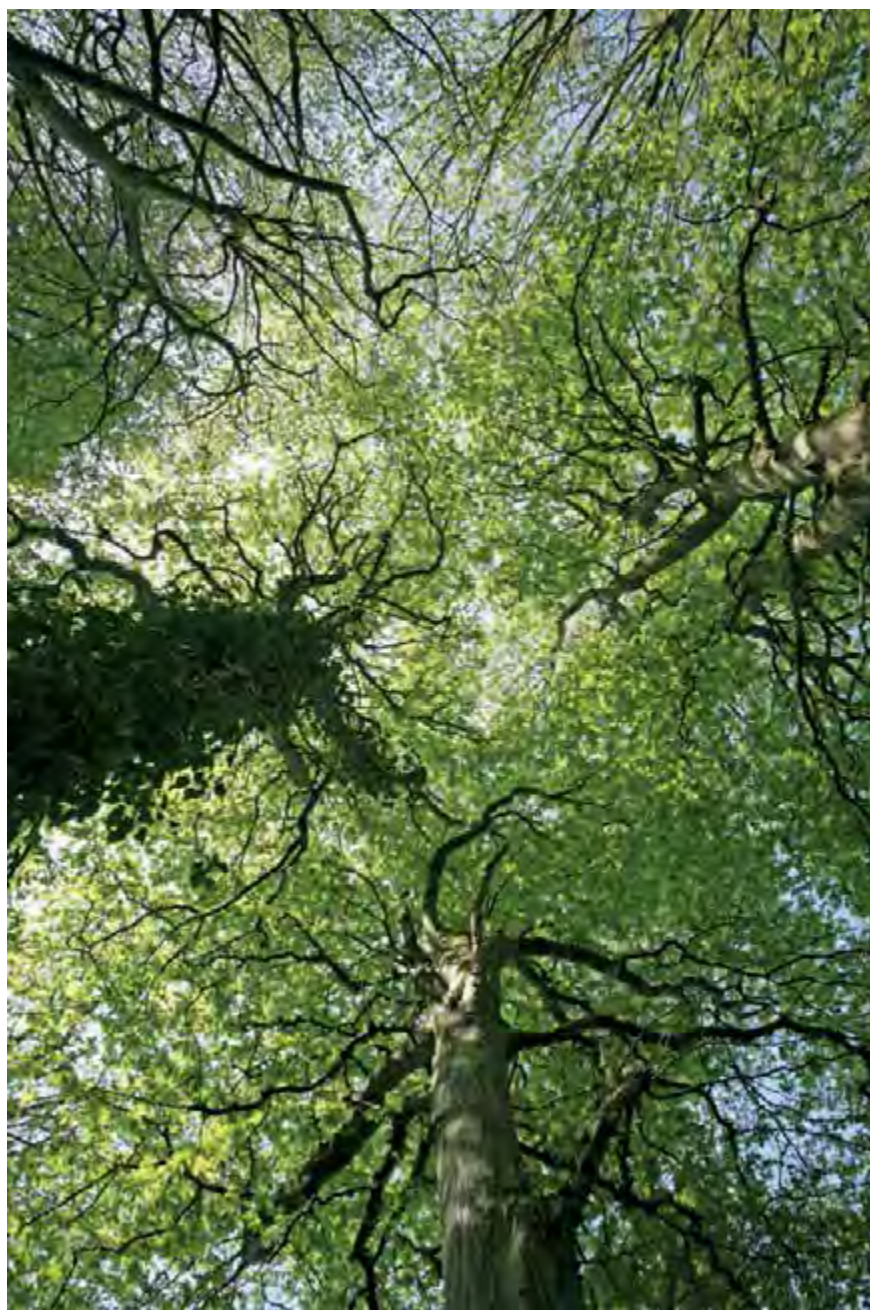
**We support the *Creating the Greenest County* ambition to work in partnership in Suffolk to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2025 and to mitigate the local adverse effects of climate change**

## SUFFOLK'S CHANGING CLIMATE

We support the 'Creating the Greenest County' ambition to work in partnership in Suffolk to reduce carbon emissions by 60% (on 2004 levels) by 2025<sup>23</sup> and to mitigate the local adverse effects of climate change. It is also important that we adapt now to inevitable change.

Suffolk will be subject to the consequences of changing climate over the coming decades which will range from severe weather events, a drier climate in a place already prone to water shortages, through to rising sea levels along a coast prone to erosion and flooding. It is important that EU designated sites lost on the coast are compensated for at a rate that matches their loss.

Species and habitats will need to adapt and so the requirements of the natural environment must be factored into climate change strategies, indeed some specialist species may need a helping hand. Central to these will be the development of ecological networks across Suffolk and beyond, ensuring that wildlife is not fixed and restricted to a series of unconnected wildlife sites. As such the conservation of protected sites together with targeted efforts across the wider countryside is vital. Where appropriate, woodland creation as 'Carbon Code Forestry', can help to enhance ecological networks as we address carbon emissions through voluntary carbon sequestration projects within the county<sup>24</sup>.







Aldeburgh

#### RECOMMENDATION 11

Marine Conservation Zones should be considered for designation in Suffolk when qualifying data has been assessed.

#### RECOMMENDATION 12

The implementation of the East Area Marine Plan must take a balanced approach to the use of our seas, particularly in terms of our marine environment and seascapes.

## MARINE

Suffolk has long been shaped by the North Sea, both physically and culturally. Today, the ecologically rich and diverse marine environment, particularly in our estuaries and inshore waters, contains wildlife of European importance<sup>27</sup>. The marine environment provides a wealth of social, economic and environmental benefits, such as boating, wildlife watching, fisheries and trade.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) could be an important addition to Suffolk's designated marine sites and also a means to protect our local 'inshore' fisheries. The marine environment provides opportunities for economic growth as well as increased recreation. Marine plans must take a balanced approach to the use of our seas, in the same way that planning in the terrestrial environment is designed to ensure sustainable decision-making.

**The marine environment provides a wealth of social, economic and environmental benefits, such as boating, wildlife watching, fisheries and trade**







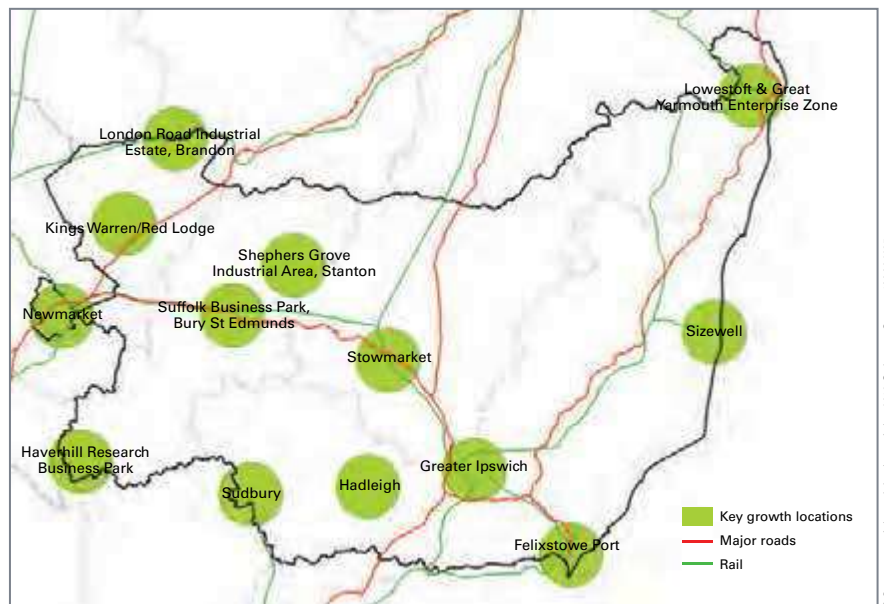
# A FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH<sup>28</sup>



**Mark Pendlington**  
Group Director of Corporate Affairs  
Anglian Water Group &  
Chairman of New Anglia Local  
Enterprise Partnership



The natural environment is crucial to the quality of life in Suffolk, and part of the foundation for our prosperity and economy. Factors cited by companies investing in Suffolk include the area's landscapes, nature and quality of life. The natural environment underpins key sectors, such as tourism, agriculture, food and drink, and supports the recruitment of skilled staff by businesses.



Map 4: Key growth locations in Suffolk, taken from the Suffolk Growth Strategy, where both economic growth and natural environment issues are important





## NATURAL CAPITAL

Natural capital refers to the elements of nature that produce value (directly and indirectly) to people, such as the stock of forests, rivers, land, minerals and oceans. It includes the living aspects of nature (such as fish stocks) as well as the non-living aspects (such as minerals and energy resources). Natural capital underpins all other types of capital (man-made, human and social) and is one of the essential foundations on which our economy, society and prosperity is built. By combining different forms of capital, we are able to enjoy a huge variety of benefits. These range from the food we eat and the water we drink to outdoor recreation and improved health<sup>29</sup>.

By better understanding the value of our natural capital we will be better placed to ensure decisions do not inadvertently undermine it.

**Natural capital refers to the elements of nature that produce value to people, such as the stock of forests**

SWT  
Bradfield  
Woods

Pump Street  
Bakery in  
Orford

## INWARD INVESTMENT

The Suffolk and Norfolk Local Enterprise Partnership, New Anglia, cites, amongst other things, the quality of life here and our magnificent natural assets as key strengths for the area in the competitive global market. Factors cited by companies in favour of investing in Suffolk and Norfolk include the area's quality of life and its environment<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore in Suffolk's Growth Strategy, the vision for 2028, states that Suffolk's beautiful landscapes and wildlife will contribute to Suffolk being confirmed as having the best quality of life in Europe<sup>31</sup>. Our natural environment plays a huge part in the quality of life here and in our existing and future competitiveness. It is one of the reasons why businesses might choose to locate here and also helps support the recruitment of skilled staff.

**Factors cited by companies in favour of investing in Suffolk and Norfolk include the area's quality of life and its environment**

### RECOMMENDATION 14

The quality of Suffolk's natural environment is one of our key strengths. The advantage it offers in terms of our competitiveness should continue to be a strong feature of inward investment plans for the area.

### ACTION 8

We will support public and private sector leaders in producing strategic approaches within Suffolk that support the maintenance and development of Suffolk's natural capital.





### RECOMMENDATION 13

Given the importance of our natural capital to growth, by 2018, we would expect to see public and private sector decision makers increasingly reflect its value in all future growth plans for the area.

### ACTION 7

We will work with partners, to produce an evidence base for the economic and social value of Suffolk's natural capital by 2016. Such information will support local decision-making.



## ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The low-carbon sector is growing rapidly around the world and the Suffolk Growth Strategy identifies the renewable energy sector as a key source of economic growth in the county in coming years. We recognise the current and future importance of renewable energy, both on and off-shore, and given its climate change mitigation rationale, this sector of energy generation should have strong links and a strong sense of stewardship towards the natural environment. This means that developers must ensure they build on Suffolk's strengths rather than diminish them. We can support developers in planning appropriate design and location of energy infrastructures, to prevent conservation objectives being compromised, with suitable environmental mitigation.

The use of biomass will be an important element of that renewable energy mix and the woodfuel market will be important to the rural economy.

**Suffolk Growth Strategy identifies the renewable energy sector as a key source of economic growth in the county in coming years**

### RECOMMENDATION 15

New energy infrastructure should be sensitive to place. Relevant policies as well as national and local guidance, appropriate biological data<sup>32</sup> and Suffolk's Landscape Character Assessment<sup>33</sup> should be used to assess suitability of new energy infrastructures, and other developments, to particular places. A Strategic Renewable Energy Strategy, produced by 2018, will help ensure that all new energy infrastructures are appropriately sited.







**Alex Paul**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
Gough Hotels and Director of the  
Suffolk Coast Destination  
Management Organisation

“Tourism in Suffolk is founded on the county’s special qualities. The wildlife and landscape here are an important part of our offer. As tourism businesses we should think about the natural environment as part of our business capital in need of maintenance and investment, in just the same way as our pier in Southwold and our hotels are. At Gough Hotels we understand that without a high quality natural environment what we can offer Suffolk’s visitors is much diminished.

#### RECOMMENDATION 16

Tourism leaders, such as Visit Suffolk and Destination Management Organisations, and businesses, should promote the quality of our natural environment to potential visitors and play a key role in its conservation and enhancement.

#### RECOMMENDATION 17

Tourism leaders and tourism businesses, should be at the forefront of sustainable tourism initiatives to ensure they are enhancing the area’s natural ‘tourism’ capital. By 2020, 100 tourism businesses operating in natural environment priority areas (Map 1), will be measurably contributing to protecting the natural environment of these areas.

## TOURISM

Given Suffolk’s stunning and distinctive natural environment and its proximity to London and the Midlands, the county has long-been a popular tourist destination and tourism remains a major employer in the county contributing over £1.75 billion annually to the local economy<sup>34</sup>. The natural environment of Suffolk plays a vital role in attracting visitors with an offer ranging from nationally designated landscapes to locally sourced food and drink.

Our natural environment is a capital asset to Suffolk’s tourism businesses so the development of tourism needs to be appropriate and sensitive to place. We support the increasing popularity of eco-friendly holidays, as seen by the recent Green Traveller guides to Suffolk Coast & Heaths and Dedham Vale AONBs. We also support emerging destination management organisations (DMOs), such as on the Suffolk Coast, which have the potential to minimise the impacts of tourism as well as inform visitors about the importance of the natural environment.

**Our natural environment is a capital asset to Suffolk’s tourism businesses**

Aldeburgh







## FOOD, DRINK & AGRICULTURE

Food, drink and agriculture make an important economic contribution to the county with agriculture employing over 10,000 people, and food and drink processing employing a further 9,000<sup>35</sup>. In particular, locally distinctive and environmentally sustainable sources of food and drink are important aspects of local branding here. The many local food and drink festivals and farmers' markets help people better understand the concept of 'field to fork' and the deep cultural and landscape associations with food and drink. Larger national and multi-national producers, processors and retailers based in Suffolk, have an important contribution to make as they source produce from across Suffolk and beyond.

Food and drink production is highly dependent on the quality of the natural environment. The natural capital of crop pollinating insects is worth £430 million to UK agriculture<sup>12</sup>.

**Food and drink production is highly dependent on the quality of the natural environment**

### RECOMMENDATION 18

Suffolk's food and drink sector has an important role to play in promoting the conservation of our natural environment. By 2020, a Suffolk brand will have been developed and linked to conservation of the natural environment. This will help the sector to market strong credentials for environmental conservation.

### ACTION 9

We will engage with farmers across Suffolk to promote wildlife-friendly farming within profitable, modern, farming businesses.



# WATER MANAGEMENT & WATER RESOURCES

Water is essential to life and one of the best examples of natural capital, whose value to society is almost immeasurable. In the Anglian River Basin District only 18% of surface waters are at Good Ecological Status, as required by the Water Framework Directive<sup>36</sup> (WFD). In Suffolk 9% of our rivers are at Good or High Ecological Status with 30% Poor or Bad. The WFD requires that all streams, rivers and estuaries are at Good Ecological Status by 2027. There are also a large number of internationally important wetlands and estuaries that need to be protected and enhanced.

It is estimated that currently one in five properties in Suffolk are at risk of flooding and increasingly this is from surface water run-off. Future development and climate change will only exacerbate both the risk of flooding and drought and this must be mitigated for by embracing a catchment management approach to water management. The value of green space, sustainable drainage basins and other vegetated areas that allow water to infiltrate into the underground aquifers cannot be underestimated, both in replenishing water resources and managing flood risk.

On the Suffolk coast as much water is pumped to sea in the winter months to drain farmland and other areas, as is needed to irrigate farmland on the sandy hinterland in the hottest and driest of summers. Again this supports the need for embracing a catchment management approach to water management, as is currently being piloted on the Deben in East Suffolk.

To achieve this ambitious WFD target and to maximise ecological status in our rivers and water bodies, we need to work together to address a range of water management and water resource issues, including:

- Physical modification – many of our rivers have been widened, deepened and straightened in the past for land drainage and flood risk management purposes. They have also had structures such as locks, weirs and mills installed on them. This has resulted in us having simplified river habitats in Suffolk that do not support their ecological potential (diversity, number and movement of fish, plant and invertebrate species).
- Diffuse pollution, rural and urban – Suffolk rivers receive an excess of nutrient-rich sediment from a range of sources including road run-off and fields. Excess sediment smothers river beds, which is detrimental to fish and

## RECOMMENDATION 19

Water companies working with partners, should be at the forefront of developing new innovative and nature-friendly systems for the capture, storage and conservation of water, together with changing consumer behaviours.

## RECOMMENDATION 20

Where possible, Sustainable Urban and Rural Drainage schemes (SUDS) should be designed to maximise wildlife and landscape potential.



invertebrates. Phosphorus from agricultural fertilisers binds to sediment and leads to excess plant growth and a reduction in the range of plant species present.

- Over abstraction – Suffolk's Growth Strategy identifies water supply as critically important for growth. We live in one of the driest parts of the country with average rainfall on the coast similar to Jerusalem. Yet water is subject to increasing pressures, impacting both quality and quantity, from a wide variety of uses including domestic, agriculture and industry.
- Climate change – climate change experts predict that we will experience more hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters as our climate changes. Riparian tree planting and increasing river habitat diversity are very effective climate change mitigation measures. They also increase the biodiversity value of Suffolk's rivers.

The value of green space that allows **water to infiltrate** into the underground aquifers cannot be underestimated

SWT  
Oulton  
Marshes



## RECOMMENDATION 21

All water courses should either be in Good Ecological Status or have Good Ecological Potential by 2027, or have measures in place to meet full compliance.

## BIODIVERSITY OFFSETTING

We agree with the principle of biodiversity offsetting<sup>37</sup> as a means of ensuring that there is no net loss to the environment as a result of development, and that we enhance rather than diminish our natural capital. However, it is important to recognise the inherent difficulty of recreating habitats and species populations and establishing acceptable locations for compensatory habitat. Therefore, whilst in some situations biodiversity offsetting can offer an innovative means of reducing environmental loss, it does not offer a licence to remove any habitat for development in any location. In order for biodiversity offsetting to be a success it must be undertaken with the close involvement of the relevant nature conservation bodies and must ultimately recognise that some habitats are irreplaceable. Offsetting also needs to recognise the locational dependency of much of Suffolk's wildlife, for example, it is not possible to recreate heathland on the Suffolk claylands.

## RECOMMENDATION 22

Biodiversity offsetting must follow Government guidelines and the mitigation hierarchy, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Offsetting should only occur when all steps to avoid and mitigate impacts have been exhausted and should not be seen as a licence to damage sites where less damaging alternatives exist. Offsetting should not apply to internationally or nationally designated sites.

**The principle of biodiversity offsetting is a means of ensuring that there is **no net loss to the environment** as a result of development**

## ACTION 10

We will support, and where possible champion, improvements to the ecological and hydrological condition of water courses, through implementation of measures, appropriate to place, to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

## ACTION 11

We will support steps to develop partnership solutions to the management of water which look at more holistic management of water (economic, social and environmental) in the water cycle and at a catchment scale.



Silver-studded blue







# OUR HEALTH & WELLBEING



**Tessa Lindfield**  
Director of Public Health



Evidence informs us just how vital access to green space and nature is for helping to maintain and improve people's physical and mental wellbeing<sup>38</sup>, and the rich assets in the Suffolk environment are a source of great opportunity for people, whatever their age or health status. Public Health Suffolk will work with partners in the delivery of this Nature Strategy to improve access to the natural environment and to promote the health and wellbeing opportunities it presents to the people of Suffolk.

Map 5: Areas where local people and volunteers are actively involved in conserving the natural environment in Suffolk

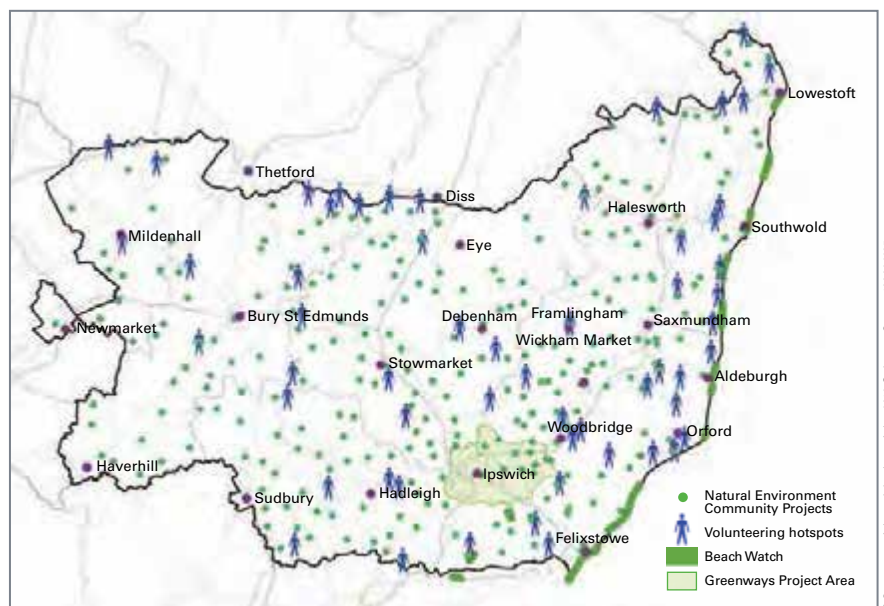






Fig 1: The health map. The environment in which we live is a major determinant of health and wellbeing<sup>43</sup>. The natural environment is a key component

### RECOMMENDATION 23

The benefits of people being able to enjoy our natural environment should be embedded in Suffolk's health and wellbeing agenda by 2016. Community leaders and senior public health officials should champion the role the environment can play in prevention, cure and recovery. We would like to see a significant increase in GPs use of 'green care' referrals, such as Health Walks<sup>45</sup> or Care Farms<sup>46</sup>.

### ACTION 12

We will work with Suffolk's Health and Wellbeing Board through their strategy and action plan to make the natural capital that Suffolk has to offer part of Suffolk's health and wellbeing solution.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

Access to the natural environment improves mental and physical health and wellbeing, prevents disease and helps people recover from illness. Being active in the natural environment makes people feel good, helps them to live longer and connects them to their local area. There is now a large body of evidence to support these claims summarised in the UK National Ecosystem Assessment's chapter on Health Values from Ecosystems<sup>39</sup>. We want more people to experience the county's natural environment, to have fun and get active.

Today, almost half of adults in Suffolk are physically inactive<sup>40</sup> and the health cost of physical inactivity in Suffolk is estimated at £14 million per year<sup>41</sup>. There is also a wealth of evidence showing the beneficial effects that contact with nature can have on health and wellbeing, whether this is post-operative recovery times, increased longevity or reduced stress<sup>42</sup>.

The natural environment offers places for people to unwind, exercise and forge life-long memories. There are many volunteering opportunities in managing these places as well as a variety of ways to explore and appreciate them. Nature can be accessed free of charge and can benefit all levels of society. From deep Suffolk countryside to our urban parks and gardens, the natural world is a key part of making Suffolk a healthier place.

Green space can help to reduce health inequalities. A recent large-scale study in the UK of 336,348 patient records showed significantly less health inequality between rich and poor groups in areas with higher levels of green space than between similar groups in areas with less green space<sup>44</sup>.

**Being active in the natural environment makes people feel good, helps them to live longer and connects them to their local area**





## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

First described in 1995 by fisheries biologist Daniel Pauly and now widely accepted, 'Shifting Baseline Syndrome' describes how those who saw an ecosystem 50 years ago, see normality very differently to those who see that same ecosystem now, given the loss of biodiversity in the intervening period. Our children's concept of what is normal in the natural world is different from their parents' and grandparents, and hence biodiversity decline becomes generationally accepted as a perceived norm. This generational amnesia is increasingly seen as an explanation for the changing understanding and engagement of modern society with the environment.

In order to secure the future of the natural environment we must instil an understanding and appreciation of it amongst future generations. We want to help people understand how the county's natural environment benefits their lives. We recognise the significance of our environmental education centres and visitor centres as well as more common on-site interpretation. All have an important role in disseminating information to people of all ages.

The natural environment has a part to play in Raising the Bar<sup>47</sup> which seeks to raise attainment and aspirations in children and young people in Suffolk. Wildlife Watch<sup>48</sup>, Living Classrooms<sup>49</sup> and general learning about the countryside, its natural processes and our use of it, all lend themselves well to curriculum-based learning.

Networks of environmental educators are also valuable as we can achieve more by working in partnership. SEEN, the Suffolk Environmental Education Network<sup>50</sup>, has a key role to play, as do parents and schools alike. Through SEEN we will continue to make the natural world relevant to the national curriculum and life-long learning.

**To secure the future of the natural environment we must instil an understanding and appreciation of it amongst future generations**



### RECOMMENDATION 24

Education leaders, with our support, should ensure that, by 2018, all strategies and plans reflect and include the opportunities that our natural environment and countryside present to learning in Suffolk.

### RECOMMENDATION 25

By 2020, all of Suffolk's school-children will have had an opportunity to participate in a SEEN partner activity.

### ACTION 13

We will develop the Suffolk Environmental Education Network's (SEEN's), role as the champion of environmental learning in Suffolk, making links with schools, academies and community groups, to ensure natural environment opportunities are embedded in learning initiatives aimed at young people.



#### ACTION 14

We will increase opportunities and levels of our own volunteering for individuals and for businesses. By 2020, volunteer numbers will have increased by 50% on 2014 levels and the number of places where natural environment people engagement opportunities exists (Map 5) will have increased by 25%.

**Volunteers are the back-bone of our sector and in many cases it has been voluntary local action that has led to change**



## VOLUNTEERING

Evidence shows that volunteering in the natural environment improves our mental and physical health, whether it's a vigorous session taking part in practical conservation tasks, a beach clean-up on the Suffolk coast or undertaking a wildlife survey. The natural environment sector has always depended heavily on volunteers to support the work of employed staff. They are the back-bone of our sector and without their enthusiasm and time we would not have achieved a fraction of what has been achieved to date. In many cases it has been voluntary local action that has led to change, such as purchasing a nature reserve or saving an ancient woodland from development.

There are numerous examples of volunteer networks in Suffolk, from those whose records have made our Biological Records Centre the envy of many others nationally, to those who regularly help manage our nature reserves, parks and open spaces. There is personal reward from volunteering, be it a sense of ownership, pride, community, companionship and combating loneliness or simply a means of getting fit.

Local businesses and their staff can benefit considerably from the team-building opportunities that volunteering can bring. Working on nature conservation projects can also considerably raise and improve their credibility to customers.



## NEIGHBOURHOOD & PARISH PLANS

The Localism Act 2011 provided greater power for communities to shape development in their areas. A key part of this reform was the introduction of Neighbourhood Development Plans which are planning documents produced by local communities to set out a vision for their area and develop planning policies for the use and development of land. Once adopted these plans become a part of the Local Development Plan and as such become part of the statutory planning policy framework.

These new powers provide a significant opportunity for communities to recognise, protect and improve local environmental assets. There is great scope for benefitting the environment, from designating green spaces to establishing 'green corridors' by linking open spaces and improving local watercourses. We will support communities' writing and implementing their plans and help describe the wider context as we seek to build ecological networks across Suffolk.

Lavenham

### RECOMMENDATION 26

By 2018, all Neighbourhood Development Plans and Parish Plans should ensure the natural environment is fully considered. They should maximise opportunities to conserve, enhance and link Suffolk's green and natural spaces. We will support the development and implementation of these plans.

**These new powers provide a significant opportunity for communities to recognise, protect and improve local environmental assets**





## COASTAL COMMUNITIES & PARTNERSHIPS

The Suffolk coast has always been a dynamic environment; its soft coastline endlessly reshaped by the power of the sea. Coastal communities are increasingly aware of the reality of coastal change and the need to adapt. Projects that aim to help people understand the dynamic nature of the Suffolk coast are essential parts of the conversation about coastal change.

Localism and the subject of coastal change, both in terms of governance and physical change, has seen the development of a series of coastal partnerships, particularly on the Blyth, Alde-Ore, Deben and Stour & Orwell estuaries. These partnerships are innovative and make a real difference to their local environment for people and for wildlife. Clearly the natural environment is integral to these partnerships and an understanding of how it supports their wider objectives, such as the degree to which saltmarsh acts as a natural flood defence, is essential. The natural capital of these areas is vast. The value of coastal wetlands in protecting against storm surges alone has been valued nationally at over £1.5 billion per year<sup>12</sup>. Evidence from the December 2013 tidal surge demonstrated that in Suffolk's estuaries, river walls protected by saltmarsh were much less likely to have been breached.

### RECOMMENDATION 27

Coastal partnerships should identify opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural environment as part of their work. The adoption of the ecosystem approach to realise multi-benefit opportunities such as salt-marsh restoration that can improve flood defences for communities as well as benefit wildlife and improve public access, should be the norm. Appropriately-sited managed realignment projects can provide significant environmental opportunities.

**Coastal communities are increasingly aware of the reality of coastal change and the need to adapt**



Felixstowe Ferry







#### RECOMMENDATION 28

Suffolk County Council should seek opportunities to improve the connectivity of the public access network and the development and improvement of the public rights of way network.

#### ACTION 15

We will work in partnership to ensure physical access improvements go hand-in-hand with wildlife sensitivity and quality interpretation, to enable people to access and understand our natural environment.

## PUBLIC ACCESS

Public access to nature is a vital means of improving health and wellbeing, as well as connecting and educating people about the natural environment. Without access to the natural environment, people will not value it nor will they be able to gain from the wealth of benefits it can provide.

There are over 5,600 kilometres of public rights of way in Suffolk providing one of the most dense networks of access in England. Suffolk also enjoys a high number of long distance routes, including sections of the Icknield Way, in west Suffolk, the oldest road in Britain. In addition, there are 4,858 hectares of Open Access land providing the public with the opportunity and the right to roam in areas of heathland habitat.

The rights of way network provides strategic links between settlements and into the wider countryside. It caters for a range of local needs including daily dog walking, sustainable commuting routes and promoted village walks. Parts of the network can also be tourism destinations in their own right. The network offers opportunities to link places of historic interest, tourism attractions and businesses, to create a high quality tourism experience for day-trip and overnight visitors to Suffolk.

We are in favour of increased, sensitive public access to the countryside and other green spaces as a means of achieving a wider social good. The appropriate development of countryside access through effective visitor management, information provision and heightened awareness, can help conserve the environment and utilise its natural capital. The development of countryside access can provide a relatively low-cost solution to enabling communities to access and enjoy Suffolk's natural environment. This has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Suffolk's communities and can also be used as a catalyst to position and market Suffolk as a truly accessible county for all.





# No one will look after what they don't care about No one will care about what they have not experienced

Julian Roughton  
Chief Executive  
Suffolk Wildlife Trust

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## References

- <sup>1</sup> "Natural capital refers to the elements of nature that produce value (directly and indirectly) to people, such as the stock of forests, rivers, land, minerals and oceans". It includes the living aspects of nature (such as fish stocks) as well as the non-living aspects (such as minerals and energy resources). Natural capital underpins all other types of capital (man-made, human and social) and is the foundation on which our economy, society and prosperity is built. By combining different forms of capital, we are able to enjoy a huge variety of benefits; ranging from the food we eat and water we consume in our homes to outdoor experiences and improved health to name but a few." (Natural Capital Committee-2013)
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.wildanglia.org/>
- <sup>3</sup> Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are the country's very best wildlife and/or geological sites. SSSIs are legally protected and include some of Suffolk's most spectacular and beautiful habitats: wetlands teeming with wading birds, ancient woods, flower-rich meadows, arid heathlands and windswept shingle beaches.
- <sup>4</sup> County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are non-statutory sites but play a key role in the conservation of Suffolk's biodiversity. Suffolk has over 900 County Wildlife Sites, amounting to 19,200 hectares and covering 5% of the county. Many sites are of county, and often regional or national, importance. They are designated because they support characteristic or threatened species or habitats. Their importance is reflected in national and local planning policy.
- <sup>5</sup> [www.parliament.uk/documents/post/postpn300.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/post/postpn300.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/EcosystemAssessmentConcepts/EcosystemServices/tabid/103/Default.aspx>
- <sup>7</sup> <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>
- <sup>8</sup> Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services is the Government's strategy for people and wildlife in England. Biodiversity 2020 is England's contribution towards the UK's commitments under the United Nations Convention of Biological Diversity. Delivering Biodiversity 2020 is good for wildlife, for society and for our economy.
- <sup>9</sup> [www.nwcu.police.uk](http://www.nwcu.police.uk)
- <sup>10</sup> Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services
- <sup>11</sup> Coombes, E, Jones, AP & Hillsdon, M (2010) The relationship of physical activity and overweight to objectively measured green space accessibility and use. *Social Science & Medicine*, 70(6): 816-822
- <sup>12</sup> <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.ipswich.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents.php?categoryID=200073>
- <sup>14</sup> UK National Ecosystem Assessment Chapter 22 – Economic values for ecosystems  
<http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zeBWV7obaVo%3d&tabid=82>
- <sup>15</sup> Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) is a statutory designation, made by local authorities, for both people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. They offer people special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.
- <sup>16</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4026670?category=3589029>
- <sup>17</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)
- <sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-panel-on-forestry-final-report>
- <sup>19</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/221023/pb13871-forestry-policy-statement.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221023/pb13871-forestry-policy-statement.pdf)
- <sup>20</sup> <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/keepersoftime>
- <sup>21</sup> <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats>
- <sup>22</sup> Forestry Commission – from National Forest Inventory & Managed Woodland Headline Performance Indicator
- <sup>23</sup> <http://www.greensuffolk.org/assets/Greener-County/SCCP/Climate-Change/Suffolk-Climate-Action-Plan-2-FINAL.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/carboncode>
- <sup>25</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)
- <sup>26</sup> <http://www.newanglia.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Green-Economy-Manifesto.pdf>
- <sup>27</sup> Sites designated as they contain species or habitats of European Importance under either the EU Habitats & Species Directive or the EU Birds Directive.
- <sup>28</sup> <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Business/Business%20Services/Economic%20development/2013-05-08%20updated%20growth%20strategy.pdf>
- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/>
- <sup>30</sup> <http://www.newanglia.co.uk/>
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Business/Business%20Services/Economic%20development/2013-05-08%20updated%20growth%20strategy.pdf>
- <sup>32</sup> <http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/>
- <sup>33</sup> <http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/>
- <sup>34</sup> <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Business/Business%20Services/Economic%20development/2013-05-08%20updated%20growth%20strategy.pdf>
- <sup>35</sup> <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Business/Business%20Services/Economic%20development/2013-05-08%20updated%20growth%20strategy.pdf>
- <sup>36</sup> <http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-water-quality>
- <sup>37</sup> Biodiversity offsets are conservation activities that are designed to give biodiversity benefits to compensate for losses - ensuring that when a development damages nature (and this damage cannot be avoided) new, bigger or better nature sites will be created. They are different from other types of ecological compensation as they need to show measurable outcomes that are sustained over time.
- <sup>38</sup> A joint health and wellbeing strategy for Suffolk [http://www.transformingsuffolk.co.uk/files/2013/strategy\\_summary-v07-web.pdf](http://www.transformingsuffolk.co.uk/files/2013/strategy_summary-v07-web.pdf)
- <sup>39</sup> <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>
- <sup>40</sup> 48.8% of adults in Suffolk are physically inactive. (Source: Sport England Active People Survey 6&7 2013).  
[http://archive.sportengland.org/research/active\\_people\\_survey/national\\_indicator\\_8.aspx](http://archive.sportengland.org/research/active_people_survey/national_indicator_8.aspx)
- <sup>41</sup> 2009 Sport England commissioned the British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group at Oxford University to prepare estimates of the primary and secondary care costs attributable to physical inactivity for PCTs across England.  
[http://archive.sportengland.org/support\\_advice/local\\_government/local\\_sport\\_profile\\_tool/costs\\_of\\_physical\\_inactivity.aspx](http://archive.sportengland.org/support_advice/local_government/local_sport_profile_tool/costs_of_physical_inactivity.aspx)
- <sup>42</sup> UK National Ecosystem Assessment, Chapter 23 – Health Values from Ecosystems <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=S9o1pJcQm%2fQ%3d&tabid=82>
- <sup>43</sup> Barton, H. and Grant, M. (2006) A health map for the local human habitat. *The Journal for the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 126 (6). pp. 252-253. ISSN 1466-4240
- <sup>44</sup> 2008 Mitchell R. and Popham F. "Effect Of Exposure To Natural Environment On Health Inequalities: An Observational Population Study" *The Lancet*, Volume 372, Issue 9650, Pages 1655 - 1660, 8 November 2008  
[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(08\)61689-X/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(08)61689-X/abstract)
- <sup>45</sup> <http://www.livewellsuffolk.org.uk/healthwalks.php>
- <sup>46</sup> <http://suffolk.olminfoserve.co.uk/content/doc.aspx?id=5114>
- <sup>47</sup> <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/plans-and-policies/raising-the-bar-briefing/>
- <sup>48</sup> <http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/node/4622>
- <sup>49</sup> <http://www.rspb.org.uk/livingclassrooms/index.aspx>
- <sup>50</sup> [www.seen.org.uk](http://www.seen.org.uk)



## A 2020 VISION FOR SUFFOLK'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES



### A FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



### OUR HEALTH & WELLBEING

