

Suffolk Rail Prospectus 2026-2040

Executive Summary



A proud history and with an exciting future

Suffolk has a proud history of railways, and an exciting future connecting communities and businesses and facilitating international trade. Our vision is for a thriving, electrified railway network in Suffolk that is well-connected to other modes of transport, supports active travel and is an attractive alternative to road for passengers and freight users. This will support our local economy and boost job opportunities for local people as well as reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality making Suffolk an even better place to live, work and do business.

In 2025 we published our [Local Transport Plan \(LTP\)](#) outlining our ambitions across modes for Suffolk. This document replaces our 2014 prospectus and expands on the critical role rail will play connecting communities and businesses and opening opportunities for residents.

Good progress has been made since the 2014 prospectus with our passenger services consistently being some of the most punctual in the country – getting Suffolk residents to work on time and making it easier for them to visit friends and family. This has been delivered in no small part due to brand new trains now operating across East Anglia. They offer a more comfortable, spacious journey with WiFi, charging and most importantly, far greater accessibility.



There have been a number of service frequency increases including for residents on the East Suffolk Line where a £4 million investment at Beccles has significantly increased capacity. Other stations have also been improved including Halesworth, Lowestoft, Saxmundham and Brampton.

Freight

Freight services have also seen improvements including the delivery of the Ipswich Chord, gauge clearance, allowing larger trains to access Felixstowe, and a new freight loop on the Felixstowe Branch Line. Improvements since 2014 have meant that capacity has increased on the Felixstowe route from 33 to 47 trains per day.

We are ambitious to do more and improve services even further for passengers, businesses and freight users across Suffolk.

This prospectus is set in a very different context to our 2014 edition. At the time of writing the rail industry is undergoing major reform representing the biggest root and branch reform of the railways for a generation. Passenger services are in the process of being renationalised as privatised franchises come to an end. This process is expected to conclude in 2027. In the meantime, Great British Railways (GBR) is being set up and will be both the infrastructure manager, taking on the role of Network Rail, and passenger operator.

Furthermore, political devolution in England will mean a new Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) with different and potentially stronger powers concerning transport and rail.

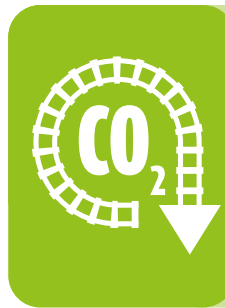
The context of devolution and rail reform mean it is more important than ever to have a clear vision and plan for rail to make sure our local communities and business benefit from a changing context and a mayor who is prepared from day one.



Our vision and plan for rail

We are not primarily responsible for delivering everything in the prospectus. However, we have an important role to partner with delivery bodies and to promote the schemes and interventions that are going to have the biggest benefits for residents and businesses. Regardless of whether we are responsible for delivery, we will continue to be a champion for high-quality, reliable rail services that our communities and local businesses deserve.

This prospectus is organised into five key themes that align with our LTP:



We are committed to decarbonising Suffolk by 'getting on track'.

Specifically, this means encouraging and incentivising more people and goods to move off road and electrifying more of our services.



We want to create better places that are better served by rail.

This means supporting our villages, market towns, large towns and new developments with more frequent services that are easy and safe to access.



Rail services must support health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

This involves making our network more accessible to all users and improving health by facilitating active travel and improving air quality.



A strong, stable and fair local economy in Suffolk is underpinned by rail connectivity.

This is enabled by connecting local businesses and facilitating a thriving international gateway while providing quality jobs and skills for local people.



And finally, we want local rail services that we can be proud of.

We are proud to support community rail partnerships and are looking forward to a future where rail services are more closely shaped by the people who use them.

Under each of the themes we have outlined what success will look like as well as our commitments as a local authority to help deliver them. Headline interventions are shared throughout the document with a longer list in the appendices. We have categorised the interventions needed on the railways to illustrate our role in delivering them:



Provider

We are responsible for delivering the work and (usually) funding it. For example, an active travel scheme accessing a railway station such as improving Princes Street in Ipswich.



Partner













Someone else is responsible for delivering the works but we may be funding, sponsoring or enabling the works. For example, working with Greater Anglia (future GBR) to improve active travel connections at stations.
























Promoter













We have no formal role in delivery, but we are influencing whether a project happens, what we would like it to look like and/or whether it gets funded. For example, major infrastructure enhancements such as Haughley junction.












Theme	Category	What does success look like?	To support success we will:
<p>We want to create better places that are better served by rail.</p>	<p>Getting to the station should be easy and green</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Partner: A better bus to rail connection where there is demand and a solution that meets a local need. This will include real-time information technology where possible.  Partner: Increased number of electric vehicle (EV) chargers at stations.  Partner: Quality cycle storage at all our stations.  Partner: Lighting and CCTV coverage for main walking routes at all our stations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Partner: Help deliver improvements to stations from Cambridge into Suffolk that support an inclusive and accessible transport network.  Partner: Support EV charging infrastructure at stations that benefit train passengers and residents.
	<p>Stations are at the heart of communities, new and old</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Partner: Westerfield Station enhancements and frequency improvements delivered to support the new garden suburb by 2035, aligned with the Local Plan.  Partner: Modern, inclusive and accessible facilities at all our stations including sheltered waiting areas, cycle parking provision and additional ticket machines.  Promoter: See success for multi-modal connectivity and active travel to stations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Provider: Identify stations where Hub Stations would be appropriate and prioritise potential developments based on new housing developments and local need.  Provider: Produce 'Hub Station' plans with input from stakeholders, including residents and businesses.  Partner: Work with GBR to input to their plans for local station development.

Theme	Category	What does success look like?	To support success we will:
<p>We want to create better places that are better served by rail.</p>	<p>Frequency is key to true community connectivity</p>	<p> Promoter: Increased frequency between Saxmundham and Ipswich to every 30 minutes by 2036 timetable change.</p> <p> Promoter: Additional peak services between Ipswich and Peterborough by December 2027.</p> <p> Promoter: A new platform at Ipswich Station by 2036.</p>	<p> Partner: Work with Transport East and others to collaborate with East West Railway Company and Network Rail (GBR) to explore options for increased services east of Cambridge as part of East West Rail (EWR).</p> <p> Partner: Work with Network Rail (GBR) and public Rights of Way Officers (PROWO) to find solutions to level crossing closures that benefit the railway and local communities' pedestrian routes.</p>
<p>A strong, stable and fair local economy in Suffolk is underpinned by rail connectivity.</p>	<p>Frequency is key to true community connectivity</p>	<p> Promoter: A new direct rail services to London and other major towns e.g. service beyond Sudbury to Colchester and/or Clacton.</p> <p> Promoter: Maintained, and where possible improved, on-time performance for Suffolk rail users.</p>	<p> Promoter: Monitor performance and work with the new, integrated GBR not make sure high performance is maintained during rail reform changes and beyond.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See commitments relating to multi-modal station connectivity.
	<p>Suffolk is proud of its role as an international gateway</p>	<p> Promoter: Ely area capacity enhancement project delivered by 2034</p> <p> Promoter: Haughley junction improvements delivered by 2034</p> <p> Promoter: Double track between Coldham Lane and Chippenham Junction installed by 2034</p>	<p> Promoter: Continue to publicly support the benefits of moving freight on rail and work with GBR to make the case for infrastructure enhancements.</p>

Theme	Category	What does success look like?	To support success we will:
<p>A strong, stable and fair local economy in Suffolk is underpinned by rail connectivity.</p>	<p>The rail industry offers high-quality jobs and training</p>	<p> Promoter: A continued commitment by GBR and the freight operators to provide high-quality jobs and training in the area.</p>	<p> Provider: Help connect railway businesses with local schools, colleges and residents to provide high-quality jobs and training to local people.</p>
<p>A strong, stable and fair local economy in Suffolk is underpinned by rail connectivity.</p>	<p>Affordable, frequent and high-quality service can entice people out of their cars</p>	<p> Promoter: Increase in passenger numbers across Suffolk, particularly where this demand is shifting from road use.</p> <p> Promoter: Continued fare promotions by Greater Anglia under public ownership.</p> <p> Promoter: Simplified fares and ticketing regimes implemented by GBR by 2030.</p>	<p> Promoter: Support fares and ticketing reform being led by GBR to make it easier and more affordable for Suffolk residents to use rail.</p> <p> Provider: Promote the use of the railways amongst our residents including sharing information about comparative costs and time with car use.</p> <p> Partner: Work with the new Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor to explore what elements of fares and ticketing powers can/should be requested to be devolved from GBR.</p> <p> Partner: Work with the new Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor on integrated ticketing offer and linking the rail network up with future bus franchises.</p>

Theme	Category	What does success look like?	To support success we will:
<p>A strong, stable and fair local economy in Suffolk is underpinned by rail connectivity.</p>	<p>Rail freight is significantly less polluting than transporting goods by road</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Promoter: An increase in rail mode share from Felixstowe.  Promoter: Achieving 60% of Sizewell construction materials being transported by rail. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See successes for Suffolk as an international gateway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Promoter: Continue to support infrastructure improvements that increase freight capacity.
	<p>Introducing electric and hydrogen trains to the network can help decarbonise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Promoter: Ipswich to Peterborough route electrified by 2040.  Promoter: Hydrogen trains to replace diesel on suitable routes when the current rolling stock is life expired.  Promoter: Introduction of Class 99s on the Felixstowe route by February 2026. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Promoter: Continue to be a proponent of an electrified network.
<p>Rail services must support health, wellbeing and social inclusion.</p>	<p>Easier access to stations is essential for social inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Partner: Delivery of identified priority schemes at Needham Market, Beccles, Halesworth and Marks Tey.  Partner: All Suffolk stations, and stations on the border, step free by 2040. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Partner: Support the delivery of step free access between platforms at Needham Market, Beccles, Halesworth and Marks Tey  Provider: Explore new, accessible and inclusive highways infrastructure approaching stations.  Partner: Support partners to deliver new facilities and technology that assist inclusivity, accessibility and safety at stations.

Theme	Category	What does success look like?	To support success we will:
Rail services must support health, wellbeing and social inclusion.	Making it easier to walk or wheel to the station helps residents be healthier	 Provider: Delivery of active travel schemes in line with aspirations within Area Transport Plans and Rural Strategy Plan.  Partner: Increase in residents accessing Suffolk railway stations on foot, bike and other active travel modes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See successes for improvements in multimodal connectivity. 	 Provider: Monitor travel options through local and national travel surveys and possibly future National Census  Partner: Work with GBR to deliver improvements to accessing stations prioritising active travel options.  Provider: Support residents with protected characteristics as part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010.
	Improving air quality improves health outcomes for Suffolk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See successes for delivery of improvements on decarbonisation. • See successes for mode shift to rail for passengers and freight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See commitments for delivery of improvements on decarbonisation. • See commitments for mode shift to rail for passengers and freight.
Local rail services that we can be proud of		 Partner: A long-term plan for rail services in Suffolk that also support ambitions in Norfolk.  Promoter: Continued increase passenger numbers at Suffolk Stations.	 Provider: Continue to support Community Rail Partnerships  Partner: Where possible, continue to support projects that align with our Local and Area Transport Plans.