



# Suffolk Growth strategic development workshop: Creating a Carbon Net Zero and environmentally friendly Visitor Economy in Suffolk

## Workshop summary report: 28 May 2021

### Overview

A key priority of Suffolk Growth's visitor economy programme is to build collaboration and connectivity across the range of contributors in the sector. We also want to connect our visitor economy with key strategic development areas that will support and enable sustainable growth, including areas of skills, transport, planning, environment and economic development.

To support this goal Suffolk Growth has developed a series of strategic and best practice networking events with partners for 2021. The workshops are available to key stakeholders and practitioners working in the visitor economy, across public, private and community sectors. Our aim is to bring together individuals from the broad range of areas that contribute to the sector from travel, hospitality, retail and leisure, to culture, heritage and countryside to support sharing best practice, innovation, and development.

Further workshops planned over the remainder of 2021 include:

*24th June 2021* - Developing the Suffolk Visitor Economy – Embracing digital and tech- tourism.

*17th September 2021* - Skills and workforce – raising our ambitions for Suffolk's visitor economy.

*21st October 2021*- Developing the Suffolk Visitor Economy - Extending the year- round visitor economy.

This summary has been prepared following the second strategic development workshop - Creating a carbon net zero and environmentally friendly Visitor Economy in Suffolk.



**Context to the workshop:**

In 2019 our Local Authority members all declared / acknowledged a 'climate emergency'. As part of this, Suffolk's public sector organisations are working together with partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county carbon neutral by 2030.

*"Suffolk wants to be an exemplar in tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing its natural environment...to be the county with the greatest reduction in carbon emissions"* (Source: Suffolk Climate Change Partnership Vision).

A Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan (SCEP) has been produced and will be presented to Suffolk's public sector leaders this summer. Delivery of the Plan will support central government's commitment to a green economic recovery in Suffolk as well as addressing the urgent need to deal with the climate emergency.

Suffolk's developing Visitor Economy framework includes a cross cutting priority to enable sustainable growth and productivity through a focus on carbon net zero and an environmentally friendly sector. This ambition is shared within the developing Visit East of England Destination Management Prospectus promoting the East as a leading environmentally friendly, sustainable travel destination in the UK.

The recovery and growth of the visitor economy will see increasing visitor numbers and trips, domestic (and international in the future) as we develop our year-round experience and attractions across the region. The sector's recovery and reset presents an opportunity to focus on developing sustainable clean growth and utilising this as part of our attractive brand for our visitor market. How can we use this carbon net zero thread as an opportunity to bring the sector together for a shared sector wide improvement ambition?

This strategic workshop, facilitated by Suffolk Growth Partnership, is supporting the development of a coordinated sector approach to achieving our carbon net zero ambition, while supporting sector growth and productivity.

This paper provides a summary of the workshop and presents a short-term "next steps" plan to be led by Suffolk Growth with local authorities and key stakeholders, including Visit East of England. Suffolk Growth will also use the workshop outputs to develop and inform future work programmes for the visitor economy. A full list of attendees can be found at the end of this report.



## Session summaries

Presentations from the workshop are available as a PDF and this has been appended to this note.

The workshop format was:

- **Opening presentation:** Richard Hunt, Strategic Lead for the Visitor Economy, Suffolk Growth Partnership. This introductory presentation set the scene to understand how the work towards carbon net zero in Suffolk is a key part of the draft Suffolk Visitor Economy strategic framework (please refer to appended slide pack) and set out the ambitions within an East of England tourism zone.
- **Guest speaker / plenary presentation and Q&A:** David Walton, Programme Manager - Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. David's presentation explained and started discussions on: The Suffolk Climate Change, Environment & Energy Board is bringing partners together across the county and region to achieve our aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030. What does the evidence tell us about Suffolk's challenges and opportunities, and how the visitor economy can play its part in supporting the developing Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan priorities and actions?
- **Case study guest speakers and Q&A:** Ned Harrison from BEE Anglia and Sadie Lofthouse from Adnams Plc provided a series of exemplar case studies to demonstrate how carbon net zero strategies can be embedded within visitor economy businesses from SME businesses to larger scale businesses.
- **Baseline survey:** workshop participants were asked two survey questions at the outset of the session to capture baseline thinking on the challenges that need to be addressed.
- **Facilitated group discussion:** The group were split into smaller breakout groups and asked to consider and discuss two questions facilitated by a group leader and provide feedback to the main group.



**Table 1: Baseline survey questions & responses**

Question	Responses
<p>How have you already moved the carbon neutral and environmental sustainability agenda on in your area of the visitor economy, or what good practice is in your local area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We have set up a Sustainability Centre and are working with IEMA to deliver a range of courses to businesses in Suffolk.</li> <li>➤ Showcasing good practice businesses.</li> <li>➤ Lots of active travel plans to build on and link to the visitor economy work.</li> <li>➤ Consistency in our responses to planning applications, co-promotion of campaigns about active travel, roll out of new cycle lanes (and more to come!).</li> <li>➤ Local grants to support businesses investing zero carbon initiatives – aiming for development sites to be net zero carbon.</li> <li>➤ Home working has had an unexpected positive impact and we need to continue contributing to this.</li> <li>➤ Encouraging inward investment for the creation of more cycle routes.</li> <li>➤ Greater Anglia saved 11% of their total carbon footprint in 2019/20 YoY. Further reductions will come as more new trains come in to use.</li> <li>➤ Plug in Suffolk is the first county wide open access fast charging EV network in the UK.</li> <li>➤ Encouraging all stakeholders to make even small changes to their behaviours. Through customers, suppliers and employees. Putting sustainability front and centre and ensuring it's not a bolt on!</li> <li>➤ At Groundwork they provide resource efficiency and net zero advice and support to businesses, schools, communities and government organisations.</li> <li>➤ Planning policy requires new visitor accommodation and attractions to be located in sustainable locations and well connected to existing facilities and PROWS and cycle paths</li> </ul>
<p>What do you need in order to be able to develop your impact further on this agenda?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Genuine collaboration! A consistent message for visitors, that all stakeholders can get behind.</li> <li>➤ Clarity of messaging from core partners – broad engagement needs – businesses need to be convinced that this matters.</li> <li>➤ A dummies guide to making a difference.</li> <li>➤ A better understanding of the gaps in business knowledge around net zero carbon so we can tailor support. Better promotion of all the good work that is already underway, across all partners using the same agreed brand so it's consistent and impactful.</li> <li>➤ Continuous collaboration – further information sharing, a central repository for ideas, a lead body.</li> <li>➤ A common approach and support / collaboration with partners. Political support and a willingness to at least new approaches, even if they might fail!</li> <li>➤ A call to action for more organisations to be looking at / driving towards.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The good lesson from this workshop is the benefits of a joined-up message to show potential visitors that Suffolk is a good choice for a green holiday.</li> <li>➤ Suffolk wide commitment to SCEP and recognition that the visitor economy is a key sector in term of both contribution to emissions and opportunities for change.</li> <li>➤ Qualification of what the carbon footprint is so that businesses understand how it needs to be reduced to net zero.</li> <li>➤ Examples of best practice, sharing knowledge, joined up thinking and collaboration between all parties and clear messaging.</li> <li>➤ Better engagement with businesses, they are doing leading work that we should be shouting about it.</li> </ul>
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**Table 2: Breakout group discussion questions and feedback**

Question	Feedback
<p><b>How can we better engage (i) the visitor and (ii) businesses and services across the visitor economy with our carbon net zero ambitions and influence behaviour change?</b> How can we most effectively engage through the customer journey from first engagement to booking to destination visit, experience and departure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Environment is becoming more of a factor for a visitor to visit a place / hotel etc – this is an incentive to businesses to come on board and should be used to help build the Carbon Charter network and profile</li> <li>➤ Streamlining of existing programmes – everyone needs to get behind one programme. Good practice example provided: <i>The Green Dragon in Wales</i>.</li> <li>➤ Clear &amp; consistent messaging – not having conflicting agendas, embed throughout organisations and businesses, reference everywhere!</li> <li>➤ Opportunities to develop new transport strategies – including, community transport: CATCH good practice example, which is a pilot scheme in Wickham Market, availability of electric minibuses &amp; expansion of charging network is a project expansion challenge. Need to work with partners.</li> <li>➤ How do we get large organisations to influence others? E.g. could online travel advertising sites such as Trip Adviser promote the accommodation and travel methods that are ‘green’? or could businesses rank higher on Google search engines if they are ‘green’ accredited? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adnams looking at accreditation scheme for tenanted premises.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Lack of understanding of Net Zero as a headline goal, and how individual organisations can contribute to that. This needs consistency of messaging from relevant bodies, so that clarity is reinforced.</li> <li>➤ Businesses need support to help them understand their specific impacts (<a href="http://www.carboncharter.org">www.carboncharter.org</a>). Barriers are finances &amp; resources &amp; confidence. Businesses need to know what support is out there, and how it feeds into wider goals.</li> <li>➤ Need to mainstream the support so it’s a focus rather than an add-on. And appeals to the whole sector, rather than those just with personal enthusiasm. Embed it into strategies and requirements for businesses</li> </ul>

	<p>(see SCC procurement ask - <a href="https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-supplying-us/climate-change-commercial-ask/">https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-supplying-us/climate-change-commercial-ask/</a>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Call to action for the visitor economy. Embed NZ as a green thread through strategies.</li> <li>➤ Businesses need to get better at communicating their green credentials to all customers. That means they need to see the value to them of positioning as green. A Green Guide to Suffolk approach - <a href="https://discovery.com/green-guide-to-brighton/">https://discovery.com/green-guide-to-brighton/</a> - would offer promotion to businesses that fit in with this strategy.</li> <li>➤ Positioning the region that shows it's important. Businesses need to see the value.</li> <li>➤ Engaging with visitors – reaching them at point of contact; typically at their destination, or Greater Anglia.</li> <li>➤ Visit Suffolk is redeveloping its website, so there's an opportunity to link in with that to build a Green destination brand.</li> <li>➤ Starts with a strong tourism brand. And show that you've got the nuts and bolts under that. That you've got that commitment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Visitor linked travel and transport will be a major carbon net zero challenge</b>– What action will enable us to mitigate the impact of travel and transport on our carbon neutral ambitions? (Consider strategic interventions/local interventions/communication and influence/behaviour change)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Could Suffolk offer a carbon neutral holiday – travel, accommodation, days-out. Part of this is product development working with partners such as Greater Anglia, bus providers, hire bikes, businesses and local councils and part of this promotional activity.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Challenge: Cycle networks are sometimes difficult to know where to go – the new 'Way to go Suffolk' website has been created however information hubs are needed with clear and consistent messaging.</li> <li>○ Political support needed for this idea.</li> <li>○ Need to bring other partners on board to make this happen – follow through the customer journey and breakdown the elements required to make this a reality.</li> <li>○ Electric bikes at hotels and pubs are welcomed – Adnams have a similar scheme that they can look into statistics for.</li> <li>○ Needs to be as easy as possible for customers – e.g. being able to switch between EV vehicles and non-EV for shorter and longer journeys or support for journey planning with a EV vehicle.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ What can we do for residents to support making day-trips green?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Greater Anglia and bus operators at the heart of this – build their commercial offer and offer affordable options.</li> <li>○ Promote the benefits of bus and train travel.</li> <li>○ Bus and train options need to be simple – at the right times, right places and easy to know when and where.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We need to understand what is Greater Anglia’s planning for leisure travel going forward following the pandemic.</li> <li>➤ Engagement with events so that they plan around train timetables. Take good practice from large event planning, e.g. Ed Sheeran concerts. Cultural attractions in Ipswich demonstrate good practice in providing information around what people can do locally, and how to travel.</li> <li>➤ Inclusivity of access to visitors with mobility needs (e.g. wheelchair) is something that can’t be forgotten in this.</li> <li>➤ Trains will always have limited capacity for bikes, but there is lots of work around station storage, to make cycling easier.</li> <li>➤ There is an infrastructure issue around cycle friendly routes – speed limits, signage, and cycle routes need to be considered to encourage accessibility. It’s about joined up infrastructure &amp; accessibility (for pathways &amp; waterways as well).</li> </ul>
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## Summary and short-term actions

Key messages highlighted on the day included:

- There is a need for a clear and consistent message to our businesses and visitors – what is Suffolk trying to achieve, the importance of this, what is the one scheme that everyone can get behind and promote and how visitors can take advantage of this?
- Suffolk needs to work with private sector partners such as Greater Anglia and bus operators to understand how we can offer a carbon net zero tourism offer that also offers a commercial return – how can we work in collaboration across private and public sector to have a full customer journey of carbon net zero activities and can we pilot opportunities for a carbon net zero holiday or day-out?
- We need to work with Suffolk transport teams to consider the feasibility of various transport pilot schemes to make public transport cheaper, more accessible (in the right places at the right times), carbon net zero and align with visitor economy offers such as scheduled events and festivals.



The following actions (table 3) have been drawn up based on the discussions at the workshop and within the breakout groups. Suffolk Growth will engage further with Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategic Group (SVESG) and partners (including VEE) on these actions and monitor delivery. Follow up reports will be reported to the Suffolk Climate Change, Environment & Energy Board (SCCEEB), posted on the Suffolk Growth website and made available through Suffolk Growth VE updates.

Table 3: Action / next steps	Lead organisation (s) to work with Suffolk Growth	Timeline
<p><b>Strategic connection and funding programmes:</b> Commission research study - understanding the impact of the visitor economy on Suffolk’s Carbon Net Zero (CNZ) ambitions.</p> <p>Work with partners to ensure the visitor economy is identified as an opportunity to impact on Suffolk’s CNZ ambitions, and is a theme aligned to national (for example the UK Shared Prosperity fund) and local strategic funding programme proposals to support activity and development.</p>	<p>Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategic Group/ Suffolk Climate Change Partnership/SODA Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategic Group/ Suffolk Climate Change Partnership</p>	<p>October 2021</p> <p>Ongoing 2021/22</p>
<p><b>Communication and behaviour change:</b> Develop and deliver a <b>sector-wide communications programme</b> in partnership with the Suffolk Climate Change, Environment &amp; Energy Board (SCCEEB) to support consistent CNZ messaging for Suffolk’s visitor economy including-</p> <p>Developing a <b>Call to Action /Campaign</b> - engagement with our ambition for CNZ with visitor economy businesses and consumers, positioning Suffolk as a leader for visitor economy sustainability and a carbon neutral and green destination of choice.</p> <p>Working with partners to develop specific pilot projects: A <b>“Green Guide to Suffolk” mapping good practice business and services, and visitor information to engage in CNZ experience in Suffolk</b></p>	<p>SCCEEB / Suffolk Climate Change Partnership/ Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategic Group / DMO network/VEE/ SCoC/</p> <p>BEE Anglia/Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategic Group / DMO network</p>	<p>September 2021</p> <p>October commission/ Ready to launch in 2022.</p> <p>Ready to launch in 2022</p>

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<p>The <b>“carbon neutral holiday”</b> – including travel, accommodation, local service packages and days-out. Part of this is product development working with partners such as Greater Anglia, bus providers, hire bikes, businesses and local councils and as part of CNZ promotional activity.</p>	<p>SCC / District and Borough Councils/Greater Anglia/ business networks</p>	<p>Ready to launch in 2022</p>
<p><b>Carbon Net Zero resources - Toolkits, guidance and incentives</b> Review current support and take up from visitor economy business, research any specific sector needs that may prevent change and develop potential enhancements to the current resources, and promotion to the sector.</p> <p>Review and <b>build on current accreditation for the visitor economy</b> through the Carbon Charter, and Green Tourism Award.</p>	<p>BEE Anglia/ Suffolk Climate Change Partnership/ Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategic Group / VEE/Town &amp; Parish Councils / SALC</p> <p>Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategic Group / VEE/ Suffolk Climate Change Partnership</p>	<p>October 2021</p> <p>October 2021</p>
<p><b>Transport and infrastructure – enabling change</b> Work with transport partners to align policy that enables a carbon net zero based growth of the visitor economy within developing regional and local transport strategies.</p> <p>Building on local plans, explore the potential for active travel hubs and e bike opportunities to support “last mile” destination connectivity.</p> <p>Explore the potential to scale up EV charging infrastructure to strategically support the visitor economy.</p>	<p>Transport East/SCC Transport/ District and Borough Councils/</p> <p>SCC Transport /SVESG</p> <p>SCC/ District and Borough Councils</p>	<p>Ongoing 2021/22</p> <p>September 2021</p> <p>September 2021</p>



Please visit the following websites for further information on the work of Suffolk Growth. [www.suffolkgrowth.co.uk](http://www.suffolkgrowth.co.uk)

Thank you for attending, please refer any queries to: [richard.hunt@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:richard.hunt@eastsuffolk.gov.uk)

### Suffolk Growth representatives

Name	Organisation
Richard Hunt	Suffolk Growth Partnership
Karen Chapman	Suffolk Growth Partnership
Kay Bonning-Schmitt	Suffolk Growth Partnership
Heidi Bellamy	Culture First facilitator

### Attendees

Name	Organisation
Alex Pointer	West Suffolk Council
Andrew Wheeler	West Suffolk College
Anna Martin-Edwards	Groundwork
Beccy Coombs	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Becky Holloway	Jericho Chambers
Britta Heidecke	West Suffolk Council
David Metherell	Greater Anglia
David Walton	Suffolk County Council
Guy Gibson	Suffolk County Council
Katrina Browning	Suffolk County Council
Matt Jones	Suffolk County Council
Michael Brown	Hydrogen East
Michelle Gordon	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Ned Harrison	Suffolk County Council
Nick Clow	East Suffolk Council
Ruth Chittock	East Suffolk Council
Sadie Lofthouse	Adnams
Sam Kench	Natural England
Sharon Payne	Suffolk County Council
Stuart Freer	Greater Anglia

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