

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – JANUARY 2025



Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division

• SUFFOLK REGIMENT ARCHIVES NOW AVAILABLE TO VIEW

Historical records charting more than 270 years of active service for the Suffolk Regiment have found a new home thanks to support from two councils. The charitable trust which runs the newly refurbished Suffolk Regiment Museum at the historic Gibraltar Barracks on Out Risbygate, Bury St Edmunds, had been looking for somewhere nearby to bring its archives, including those on loan – under one roof.

West Suffolk Council already has strong links with the Suffolk Regiment, including a gallery on display at the council run Moyses Hall Museum. Now the co-owners of West Suffolk House, West Suffolk Council, and Suffolk County Council have worked with the Suffolk Regiment Trustees to bring its archives to the public building where they will be available for people to view by appointment.

The Suffolk Regiment Archives will be available to view by appointment on Wednesdays and Thursdays from April 2025. Anyone wishing to view the archives should contact the Museum, contact details on the Museum website below.

For more on the Suffolk Regiment Museum including opening hours visit: www.suffolkregimentmuseum.co.uk

• SUFFOLK'S RURAL COMMUNITIES HIT BY LOSS OF £3 MILLION IN GOVT FUNDING

£3 million of vital public funding - designed to support rural communities in Suffolk - will be cut by the government in 2025 it has been revealed.

The funding, known as the Rural Services Grant (RSG), was introduced in 2016/17 to support councils who serve rural communities and sparsely populated areas where it costs significant amounts of money to deliver public services. Suffolk County Council will, from April 2025, no longer receive the grant. [The government announced last week that the funding will be redirected elsewhere](#) – adversely impacting rural areas like Suffolk.

Nationally, the Rural Services Grant is worth £110 million a year to rural communities. Other counties, including Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire and Northumberland have also spoken out about the removal of the rural grant.

• CABINET APPROVES BOLD NEW VISION FOR SUFFOLK'S FUTURE

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet has approved ambitious new plans to position Suffolk as a national leader in sustainable growth and innovation. Suffolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, has been developed by the Suffolk Business Board in collaboration with businesses, partners and stakeholders across the county.

It seeks to harness Suffolk's unique strengths, including its thriving renewable energy sector and innovative, collaborative business environment, to transform the region into a hub for clean technology, long-term economic prosperity and competitiveness.

By 2045, the strategy sets out to achieve:

- An additional £14 billion contribution to the economy, surpassing the average growth rate in England
- 45,000 more people qualified to Level 3 or higher

- 35,000 more people participating in the workforce
- A significant increase in average wages across the region.

At its core is EPIC Suffolk, a framework to guide investments and funding priorities built on four key pillars: **Economic wellbeing, Productivity, Inclusivity, and Clean growth.**

The strategy identifies several key areas for economic growth:

- **High Growth sectors:** Suffolk is already a national leader in clean energy, with offshore wind and nuclear projects at the forefront. The county's agri-food and drink sector is set to grow through sustainable practices and agri-tech innovation, while the county's ports and logistics sector is a critical gateway for UK trade.
- **Emerging and Value Growth sectors:** Suffolk's technology sector also shows strong potential for growth, in areas such as ICT, digital creative industries, life sciences and financial services. Elsewhere, there are opportunities to further improve productivity and job quality in advanced manufacturing, construction, health and social care, and the visitor economy.
- **Tech Convergence:** Suffolk has the potential to become a leader in Tech Convergence, where technologies such as digital, AI, clean tech, robotics and satellite applications intersect and integrate with existing industries, creating an environment ripe for innovation and growth.

To support Suffolk's continued growth, the strategy places a strong emphasis on workforce development and infrastructure. Investments in skills, housing, digital connectivity, and road and rail networks will be critical to meeting the demands of a growing economy and ensuring that the region remains competitive in the global marketplace.

The strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive investment plan which aims to attract £4 of private investment for every £1 of government economic funding, including a multimillion-pound pipeline of projects to boost productivity, create jobs and attract new companies to Suffolk.

The Suffolk Business Board was mobilised in May 2024, following the government guidance that the work of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership should be brought to a close. The Business Board comprises 17 members representing business, education, voluntary sector and local government and is responsible for the economic strategy for Suffolk and steering of former LEP-led functions.

• COUNCIL CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO PREVENT SCRAPPING OF INFLUENTIAL DEPARTMENT

The CAA is intending to close down its Airfield Advisory Team. Through its work on major infrastructure projects, officers at Suffolk County Council have learned that the team will not be available to provide advice to planning officers or planning inspectors after March 2025. Suffolk County Council has written to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, to review the proposal.

The Airfield Advisory Team has been instrumental in helping to shape improvements to infrastructure projects and informing planning across Suffolk. This includes the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, as part of National Grid's 'Great Grid Upgrade' and other proposed energy projects such as solar farms and wind turbines.

Without this team, it is anticipated that there will be no robust and effective advice to support the design and delivery of new infrastructure projects, and that this will compromise scrutiny of their design and delivery.

The impact of obstructions such as where pylons are placed or the glare from solar farms may also limit the commercial, strategic, and recreational operation of airfields across Suffolk and the rest of the country.

In July 2024, Suffolk County Council raised its concerns about the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project when it formally objected to plans, published at the time.

Amongst a number of fears, it cited that there would be “serious implications on nine airfields” with pylons close to runways which, in some cases, could possibly stop flying all together.

Suffolk County Council’s letter to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, can be read on [suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

• SUFFOLK DISCOVERIES REWRITE THE HISTORY OF THE EAST ANGLIAN KINGDOM 1,400 YEARS AGO

A new book details how 5,000 items of metalwork discovered by four local metal detector users during 10 years of archaeological fieldwork in Rendlesham, Suffolk, have helped change the way academics think about the earliest English kings and their kingdoms.

The fieldwork and significance of the finds, co-ordinated by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS), are shared in the new book, *Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800*, released this week.

The journey started in 2008, when a landowner contacted SCCAS for assistance following finds made on their property. Over the following decade, SCCAS co-ordinated archaeological investigations of the local area that identified the site of an East Anglian royal settlement - with the invaluable expertise of four experienced detectorists recovering and meticulously recording thousands of metal finds of archaeological interest, including precious metal jewellery and coinage.

A team of experts, funded by a project grant from The Leverhulme Trust, reconstructed the layout and history of the settlement, its place in wider landscape, the social connections and trade networks of those who lived there, and details such as the metalworking techniques of the master crafters who worked there.

As a result of all this work, experts have determined that:

- The royal centre at Rendlesham – covering an area of 50 hectares (approximately 70 football pitches) – is the largest and wealthiest settlement of its time known from England
- For 150 years, from AD 580 to 730, Rendlesham was the centre of royal power in this part of the kingdom – the place where the kings stayed, dispensed justice, feasted followers, received envoys, and had coinage minted
- Analysis of metal-detected finds from other places in Suffolk and Norfolk has enabled the identification of similar settlements to Rendlesham – centres from which royal power was exercised over other parts of the kingdom

Following these significant discoveries, the journey continued with SCCAS conducting a separate phase of archaeological fieldwork as part of the *Rendlesham Revealed* project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, involving local communities to undertake further excavations that have uncovered additional evidence of the royal settlement, including a great hall and possible temple.

Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800 is published by the Society of Antiquaries of London, with grants from the Marc Fitch Fund, The Sutton Hoo Society, University College London, Historic England, and the Scarfe Charitable Trust.

The book was made possible following project funding by The Leverhulme Trust through the Institute of Archaeology, University College London working in partnership with the University of East Anglia, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800 is available to order from the [Pen & Sword Books website](https://www.penandswordbooks.com).

The metal-detected finds from Rendlesham are held by Colchester and Ipswich Museums and will be on permanent display at Ipswich Museum when it reopens.

• **SUFFOLK AND EAST OF ENGLAND COUNCILS SEEK FAIRNESS IN THE FACE OF ENERGY PROJECTS**

Suffolk County Council is joining with other local authorities in the region to challenge National Grid and the government on energy projects, demanding fairness for their communities and environment.

The county councils from Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Lincolnshire all face similar challenges with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being planned for their counties.

These are typically related to energy projects, including solar farms, wind turbines, pylons and the infrastructure associated offshore wind farms, such as substations and cabling.

Two of Suffolk County Council's main concerns, shared with the other counties, are:

- The uncoordinated approach to NSIPs - this is creating significant challenges for Suffolk's rural communities under the current planning policy as applied by the planning inspectorate and Secretary of State
- The government's 2030 target for decarbonising the electricity grid – this is too hasty, making it impossible to deliver alternative solutions to pylon projects like Norwich to Tilbury

Suffolk County Council has had a longstanding position to support the need for low carbon energy to provide energy security for the country, and the progress to net zero – but not at any cost.

• **'YOUR COUNTY NEEDS YOU' – SEARCH GETS UNDERWAY FOR NEW ARMED FORCES COMMISSIONER**

Suffolk is seeking a new Armed Forces Commissioner. The successful candidate will play a key role in supporting the UK Armed Forces community in the county for a three-year period from mid-March 2025.

This voluntary, non-political role includes chairing the Suffolk Armed Forces Covenant Board, set up by Suffolk County Council and partners to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the UK Armed Forces and their families, are treated fairly. Suffolk is home to Wattisham Flying Station, RAF Honington, Rock Barracks near Woodbridge, plus reservists based in Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, RAF Honington and Lowestoft.

There are an estimated 30,000 veterans in Suffolk of which around 10,000 are of working age.

The Board's work includes help with wellbeing for veterans and families, encouraging GP practices to become 'Veteran Friendly' accredited, and providing additional educational and emotional support for children from service families.

Anyone wishing to apply must be able to volunteer 16 days (split into 32 half days) of their time in total each year, but it is not a prerequisite for a candidate to have directly served in the UK Armed Forces. They will, however, need to learn about issues affecting the local UK Armed Forces community – consisting of regular military, the reserves, service families, veterans, and cadets.

Applications for the voluntary position will be accepted until 5pm on Friday 17th January 2025, to enable the successful candidate to start their three-year appointment in mid-March 2025.

• **SUFFOLK COUNCILLORS TO CONSIDER DEVOLUTION AND COUNCIL REORGANISATION**

Suffolk County Council will hold an extraordinary meeting of councillors, and a meeting of its Cabinet, to debate and then decide on whether or not to put Suffolk forward for the government's new devolution and reorganisation programme. The government has required that formal notice be given if Suffolk wishes to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme by 10 January 2025. Therefore, the meetings, both to be held on 9 January 2025, will see all 75 councillors debate and vote on a proposal to recommend Suffolk is at the front of the queue. Following the Full Council meeting, the Cabinet will make a final decision.

On 16 December, the Government published its much-anticipated [English Devolution White Paper](#), outlining plans for broader and deeper devolution coupled with a programme of coordinated local government reorganisation. Key to the proposals is a reorganisation of council structures, particularly in two-tier areas like Suffolk, with a shift away from district, borough and county councils towards unitary councils. The government argues that unitary councils can deliver better outcomes for residents and save money that can be reinvested in public services.

For most areas, the government says that this means creating councils serving populations of 500,000 or more, with exceptions where they make practical sense.

Alongside reorganisation, the government is also proposing to create new Mayoral Authorities – with a single directly elected Mayor covering larger geographies (for example Norfolk and Suffolk) and with powers over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, health improvement and blue light services.

At this stage, no decisions have been made about what will happen in Suffolk.

Cllr Stephen Burroughes

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Suffolk County Council*