

An Introduction to The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation (DMO)



1 About the DMO

We are delighted to introduce you to the Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and its role in promoting tourism in East Suffolk. As a not-for-profit organisation formed in 2012 in response to cuts in Central Government spending on tourism, the DMO plays a crucial role in driving the visitor economy in the area.

The DMO's focus is on a ground-up approach, working with the local tourism industry to promote the destination through targeted marketing activity. We are committed to supporting local businesses and encouraging sustainable growth in the tourism sector.

The DMO is the official tourism organisation for East Suffolk. We have created the Suffolk Coast brand, through which we communicate a clear, consistent message, raising the profile of the Suffolk Coast, attracting visitors to the area - focusing on improving out of season trade, and working hard to support tourism businesses.

All income generated by the Suffolk Coast DMO is reinvested into promoting the area, this approach ensures that the organisation continues to attract visitors to the area, benefiting both the local economy and the overall tourism experience in East Suffolk.

2 The importance of tourism in East Suffolk

Tourism statistics from 'The Economic Impact of Tourism' annual report offer valuable insights into the economic significance of tourism in Suffolk and, more specifically, in East Suffolk. Here are some key points based on the most recent information for the year 2022:

2.1 Economic impact in Suffolk:

- In 2022, the total value of tourism in Suffolk reached an impressive £2.1 billion.

- East Suffolk, as a significant contributor, generated £680 million of that total figure. An increase of 46% in East Suffolk's total value of tourism from 2021.
- The tourism industry in East Suffolk supported 10,536 full-time equivalent jobs, constituting 14.2% of all employment in the area. This is higher than the overall figure for Suffolk which is 13.1% and illustrates how reliant East Suffolk is on the tourism industry.

2.2 Visitor numbers and activities in East Suffolk:

- Visitors to East Suffolk took over 12.2 million day trips, up 55% on 2021, highlighting the recovery post Covid, and popularity of the destination for day-trippers.
- Additionally, there were 622,000 overnight trips, up 30% on 2021, showcasing the appeal of East Suffolk as an overnight destination.

2.3 Impact of Covid-19:

- The Covid-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the national, regional, and local visitor economy, causing a substantial decrease in the value of tourism in East Suffolk in 2020.
- The decrease of 134% in the value of tourism, along with a reduction in full-time equivalent jobs to 6,537 (9.3% of all employment), shown in the 2020 report, underscores the challenges faced during that period.

2.4 Recovery and Resilience:

- Despite the significant setback due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2022 data shows a remarkable level of recovery, with East Suffolk now only 2% below the pre-Covid total value of tourism figure.
- This recovery demonstrates the strength of the tourism offer in East Suffolk and underscores the industry's importance to the overall economy.
- The Suffolk Coast DMO played a vital role in ensuring the local tourism industry was supported with accurate, timely information from the Government, East Suffolk Council and other organisations throughout the pandemic. It received high praise from its members, some of whom attributed their survival directly to the DMOs excellent communication.

3 The Suffolk Coast DMO team

The DMO team is small but perfectly formed, with a highly effective voluntary board of Directors, and a core staff of 4 freelance marketing experts, making up the resource of 2 full time equivalent posts. The organisation's strengths include:

3.1 Strategic leadership: The voluntary board of Directors comprising local tourism industry leaders brings valuable expertise and strategic insight to the DMO. Their leadership plays a crucial role in guiding the organisation and ensuring that it aligns with the needs and priorities of the tourism industry in East Suffolk. Current Directors include:

- David Scott, Chair - Chief Executive Officer, The Hotel Folk
- Harry Young – Chief Operating Officer, Britten Pears Arts
- Tim Yeo – Managing Director, The Yeo Group
- Nick Attfield – Director of Hospitality & Retail, Adnams Plc
- Julian Evans – Director, Attain Solutions
- Marie Webster-Fitch, Representative – East Suffolk Council
- Simon Amstutz, Representative – Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscapes

3.1 Industry expertise: The use of freelance marketing experts means that the DMO has access to a pool of professionals with specific skills in marketing and promotion. This targeted expertise can be instrumental in crafting effective campaigns and strategies to promote the Suffolk Coast as a tourist destination, without incurring the expense of engaging more expensive marketing agencies.

3.2 Efficient operation: With a small and focused team, the DMO operates with lower overhead costs, directing more resources toward its core mission of promoting and supporting the tourism industry in East Suffolk. It enables streamlined decision-making processes and the ability to quickly adapt to changing circumstances.

4 The official tourism website and social media platforms for East Suffolk

The DMO has worked hard to present the unique qualities of the area by developing a significant online presence for the Suffolk Coast. The website www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk plays a crucial role as a gateway for visitors, providing them with up-to-date and comprehensive information about the area. The statistics speak for themselves and highlight the effectiveness of the DMO's online strategy in reaching a wide audience:

4.1 Website traffic: With over 801,185 annual website visits (April 2023), it's clear that the website is a popular, user friendly and reliable resource for those interested in exploring the Suffolk Coast. The user engagement on the website shows a strong interest in the content provided.

4.2 Social media reach: The DMO's presence on social media channels, including [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#), with a combined audience of over 48,000 further extends its reach. Social media platforms are valuable tools for promoting the destination, sharing engaging content, and interacting with the audience in real-time.

4.3 Email subscribers: The DMO has an engaged audience of over 30,000 subscribers to its monthly enews broadcast with an average open rate of 27%, which is a testament to the effectiveness of its communication strategy. Regular newsletters can help keep potential visitors informed about upcoming events, special offers, and other relevant information.

4.4 Content: The inclusion of diverse content including [town guides](#), [what's on calendars](#), [accommodation](#), [things to do](#), [experiences](#), [shopping](#), and [food and drink](#) listings sections, along with [special offers](#),

[feature blogs](#), [beautiful imagery](#) and [films](#) on the website, enhances its value for visitors and locals alike. Providing practical travel information and inspirational content ensures that visitors have a comprehensive resource for trip planning.

The DMO's emphasis on maintaining a strong online presence and engaging with its audience through various digital channels is the most effective approach in promoting and showcasing the destination to a broad and diverse audience.

5 Representing the tourism sector in East Suffolk

The DMO's involvement in diverse projects beyond traditional marketing underscores its commitment to the holistic development of the tourism industry in the area.

5.1 Advocacy and representation: The DMO engages in research and delivering reports to represent the views and interests of its membership. This involves addressing a wide range of projects, including infrastructure development, public transport, and major energy initiatives. By actively participating in discussions on these topics and issues, the DMO contributes to shaping policies and decisions that impact the tourism sector.

5.2 Collaboration with industry partners: The collaboration with various tourism organisations such as the [National Coastal Tourism Academy](#), [VisitEngland](#), [VisitBritain](#), [Visit East of England](#), [Visit Suffolk](#) and other DMOs is vital. Working closely with these organisations ensures that the Suffolk Coast's tourism industry has a strong presence and voice at both national and regional levels. This collaborative effort leads to the development of cohesive strategies and marketing activity that benefit the broader tourism ecosystem, as demonstrated by the development of a coalition of 14 DMOs across Suffolk and Norfolk during the pandemic, which delivered targeted marketing campaigns to support the industry.

5.3 Project diversity: The DMOs active representation of East Suffolk's tourism industry with various stakeholders and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects including Sizewell C, ScottishPower Renewables and National Grid Networks, ensures that businesses have a voice when it comes to the sustainable and responsible growth of the area, aligning tourism with broader economic and environmental considerations, whilst ensuring impacts on the visitor economy are monitored and mitigated wherever possible.

By actively engaging in this way, the DMO plays a crucial role in shaping policies and projects that contribute to the overall well-being of the Suffolk Coast.

6 How are we funded?

It's important to understand the funding model of the Suffolk Coast DMO, how we sustain its operation and support the tourism industry. The DMOs operating costs, enabling it to perform in line with the last 3 years, are £143,000 per annum. Core activity is funded through various income streams as highlighted below:

6.1 Partial funding by East Suffolk Council: The DMO receives financial support from East Suffolk Council, the amount of core funding provided over the last three years has been £55,000 per annum. This funding plays a crucial role in supporting the DMO's core operations and initiatives, enabling strong collaboration between the organisations.

6.2 Voluntary support from Board: the DMOs Board members, contributing their time and expertise, play a vital role in guiding the organisation and ensuring its strategic direction aligns with the needs of the tourism industry.

6.3 Membership fees: Membership fees contribute to the DMO's financial sustainability and demonstrate a commitment from industry members to actively participate in and benefit from the DMO's initiatives. The DMO has grown from a membership of 40 businesses to over 250 in the last 10 years, with a retention rate that runs at 94%. Current membership fees for 23/24, are among the lowest and best value of all tourism marketing organisations in the region at £131+VAT for the year, representing excellent value for money!

You can find out more about membership, what it includes and how businesses benefit, including video testimonies from existing members here <https://www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk/join-us>

6.4 Advertising and sponsorship opportunities: Leveraging advertising and sponsorship opportunities on various platforms is a strategic move to diversify revenue streams. This approach not only supports the financial health of the DMO but also allows businesses to promote their products and services to a targeted audience interested in the Suffolk Coast. The DMO offers a range of advertising opportunities to suit all marketing budgets, which you can view here <https://www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk/join-us>. We offer sponsorship opportunities through our annual industry conference which attracts more than 180 delegates annually.

By combining public funding, voluntary support, membership fees, and revenue from advertising and sponsorship, the Suffolk Coast DMO helps to mitigate financial risks, and provides the organisation with the resources needed to carry out its operation effectively.

7 Access to research and reports:

7.1 The availability of research and reports on the local visitor economy is crucial for stakeholders and businesses. The link provided on The Suffolk Coast website <https://www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk/tourism-research-and-reports> serves as a valuable resource for accessing the latest information.

7.2 The recent investment in T-Stats by East Suffolk Council is a strategic move that reflects a commitment to utilising data-driven insights for assessing and monitoring the performance of the tourism industry in real terms. The Suffolk Coast DMO is working closely with East Suffolk Council to help recruit tourism

businesses to use T-Stats, which is a vital component of the platform's viability. Key points highlighting the significance of this investment include:

- **Data-driven decision-making:** T-Stats, as a tourism statistics system, provides a data-driven approach to understanding the performance of the tourism industry. By leveraging real-time data and analytics, decision-makers can make informed choices and develop strategies based on current trends and patterns.
- **Comprehensive industry assessment:** The use of T-Stats allows for a comprehensive assessment of the tourism industry. It goes beyond simple economic figures to provide a nuanced understanding of visitor behaviour, preferences, and the impact of various factors on the industry's performance.
- **Infrastructure project impact assessment:** T-Stats can play a crucial role in assessing the impact of infrastructure projects on the tourism sector. By analysing the data, authorities can gauge how developments such as energy projects, road improvements, public transport enhancements, or other projects influence visitor numbers, spending patterns, and overall industry dynamics.
- **Long-term planning:** The investment in T-Stats positions East Suffolk Council for effective long-term planning. By continuously monitoring and analysing tourism performance, the council can proactively respond to changing trends, identify opportunities for growth, and address challenges that may arise in the industry.
- **Adaptation to market dynamics:** The tourism industry is dynamic, influenced by factors such as global events, economic conditions, and consumer preferences. T-Stats provides a mechanism for East Suffolk Council to adapt to these dynamics, ensuring that strategies align with the evolving needs and expectations of visitors.

8 How do we view the future?

8.1 TSC's continued aim is to support and encourage a thriving visitor economy in East Suffolk, through delivering data and insight driven campaigns. Over the next three years, alongside our core activity, TSC is perfectly positioned to be the marketing delivery partner for destination campaigns associated with the SZC Tourism Fund and other mitigation funds relating to NSIPs.

8.2 TSC acknowledges that the way the Visitor Economy is managed at both Local, County and National levels is experiencing change. With the disbanding of LEPs, County Devolution Deals and the emerging LVEP structure, TSC is well placed to support the transitions that are taking place and will continue to work closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the success of any new models put into place.

8.3 Over the coming years, East Suffolk will see the development of multiple energy NSIPs. It is vital that TSC engages now with new visitors before the main impact of these projects takes place. We must build allegiance through brand awareness to reassure both existing and new visitors that irrespective of the level of development, the Suffolk Coast has plenty to offer a wide and diverse audience.